

## FUNDAMENTALS / GRUNDLAGEN

**Ruhi Tyson:** Waldorf education – a survey of empirical research

**Aida Montenegro:** Despertar el interés permanente por la lectura desde la pedagogía Waldorf

**Walter Hutter:** Oberstufenunterricht als Lebensprozess an Waldorfschule

**Frode Barkved:** In the shadow of the corona conspiracies - an investigation of the differences of opinion and polarization in the anthroposophical movement in Norway (under review)

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH / BEITRÄGE ZUR EMPIRISCHEN FORSCHUNG

**Sanda Dale et al.:** Influence of Wi-Fi Exposure on Cognitive and Artistic Performances as well as Social and Individual Behaviour on a Class of Pupils in Elementary School

**Ulrike Barth y Angelika Wiehl:** Viñetas Perceptivas – un método fenomenológico en la formación de educadores (waldorf)

## FORUM ANTHROPOSOLOGY AND SCIENCE / ANTHROPOSOPHIE UND WISSENSCHAFT

**Philipp Gelitz:** Den Kopf voll Verantwortung

**Ruhi Tyson:** Anthroposophy, Bildung and Steiner/Waldorf Education

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## Editorial

### Axel Föller-Mancini

Die HerausgeberInnen, Redakteure und AutorInnen von *RoSE: Research on Steiner Education* freuen sich, hiermit die Edition Vol. 15 / Nr. 1 vorlegen zu können. Die Ausgabe umfasst sowohl methodologische wie auch erfahrungswissenschaftliche Studien im Kontext der akademisch orientierten Waldorfpädagogik und ihrer Referenzwissenschaften.

Die Rubrik *Beiträge zur Grundlagenforschung* eröffnet Ruhi Tyson mit einer weiteren Überblicksarbeit. Sie gilt diesmal dem Bereich empirischer Studien zur Waldorfpädagogik, sofern sie in englischsprachigen, deutschen und skandinavischen Publikationen vorliegen.

Aida Montenegro fragt in ihrem Artikel nach den intrinsischen Voraussetzungen für das Erlernen des Lesens und geht den didaktischen Prinzipien der Waldorfpädagogik für ein nachhaltiges Interesse auf Seiten der Schüler nach.

Welchen Stellenwert das Phänomen des „Sich-Wundern-Könnens“ innehat, untersucht Walter Hutter und markiert dies als Lebensprozessualität, die im Oberstufenunterricht kultiviert werden sollte.

Mit dem Blickwinkel verschwörungsmythischer Auseinandersetzungen analysiert Frode Barkved das Thema „Corona-Pandemie“ in Norwegen. Er weist dabei auf bedenkliche Strömungen in anthroposophischen Zusammenhängen hin.

In der Rubrik *Empirische Forschung* veröffentlichen wir eine Untersuchung zur Wi-Fi-Exposition in einer Grundschulklasse in Rumänien. Das Forscherkollektiv um Jens Uwe Geier analysierte die Auswirkungen der Exposition des WLANs auf die kognitiven, künstlerischen und kreativen Fähigkeiten der Schüler sowie auf ihr individuelles und soziales Verhalten. Das Design der Studie folgte einem Mixed-Method-Ansatz.

Die Autorinnen Ulrike Barth und Angelika Wiehl präsentieren in dieser Ausgabe die spanische Version ihrer Studie zu den phänomenologisch orientierten Wahrnehmungsvignetten aus *RoSE* Vol. 14/1.

Die Rubrik *Forum Anthroposophie und Wissenschaft* eröffnet Philipp Gelitz mit dem Essay *Den Kopf voll Verantwortung*. Unter diesem Titel werden Denkformen untersucht, die Rudolf Steiner in seinem 12. Vortrag zur *Allgemeinen Menschenkunde* dargestellt hat. Die Studie versteht sich weniger als textnahe Interpretation, sondern „umspielt“ mit philosophischen Reflexionen Motive dieses Vortrags.

Ruhi Tyson legt hier einen zweiten Teil seiner Studie zu Bildung, Anthroposophie und Waldorfpädagogik vor. Diesmal fokussiert er auf das von Steiner eingeführte Begriffspaar „Reinkarnation und Karma“.

Wir wünschen allen LeserInnen eine anregende Lektüre.w



Axel Foeller-Mancini

## Editorial

### Axel Föllner-Mancini

The publishers, editors and authors of *RoSE: Research on Steiner Education* are pleased to present this edition Vol. 15 / No. 1. The issue includes both methodological and experiential studies in the context of academically orientated Waldorf education and its reference sciences.

Ruhi Tyson opens the section *on contributions to basic research* with a further overview. This time it is devoted to the field of empirical studies on Waldorf education, insofar as they are available in English-language, German and Scandinavian publications.

In her article, Aida Montenegro examines the intrinsic prerequisites for learning to read and explores the didactic principles of Waldorf education for sustained interest on the part of pupils.

Walter Hutter examines the significance of the phenomenon of 'being able to wonder' and characterises this as a life process that should be cultivated in upper school lessons.

Frode Barkved analyses the topic of the coronavirus pandemic in Norway from the perspective of conspiracy myths. In doing so, he points to questionable currents in anthroposophical contexts.

In the *Empirical Research* section, we publish a study on Wi-Fi exposure in a primary school class in Romania. The research team led by Jens Uwe Geier analysed the effects of Wi-Fi exposure on the pupils' cognitive, artistic and creative abilities as well as on their individual and social behaviour. The design of the study followed a mixed-method approach.

In this issue, the authors Ulrike Barth and Angelika Wiehl present the Spanish version of their study on the phenomenologically orientated perceptual vignettes from *RoSE* Vol. 14/1.

Philipp Gelitz opens the *Forum Anthroposophy and Science* section with the essay *Den Kopf voll Verantwortung*. Under this title, the forms of thought presented by Rudolf Steiner in his 12th lecture on the *General Study of Man* are analysed. The study is not so much an interpretation of the text, but 'plays around' motifs from this lecture with philosophical reflections.

Ruhi Tyson presents a second part of his study on education, anthroposophy and Waldorf education. This time he focusses on the pair of terms 'reincarnation and karma' introduced by Steiner.

We wish all readers a stimulating read.



Axel Foeller-Mancini

## Editorial

### Axel Föller-Mancini

Los editores, redactores y autores de *RoSE: Research on Steiner Education* se complacen en presentar esta edición Vol. 15 / No. 1. El número incluye tanto estudios metodológicos como experienciales en el contexto de la pedagogía Waldorf de orientación académica y sus ciencias de referencia.

Ruhi Tyson abre la sección *de contribuciones a la investigación* básica con una nueva visión de conjunto. Esta vez está dedicada al campo de los estudios empíricos sobre la pedagogía Waldorf, en la medida en que están disponibles en publicaciones de lengua inglesa, alemana y escandinava.

En su artículo, Aida Montenegro examina los prerrequisitos intrínsecos para aprender a leer y explora los principios didácticos de la pedagogía Waldorf para mantener el interés de los alumnos.

Walter Hutter examina el significado del fenómeno de «ser capaz de maravillarse» y lo caracteriza como un proceso vital que debe cultivarse en las clases de la escuela superior.

Frode Barkved analiza el tema de la pandemia de coronavirus en Noruega desde la perspectiva de los mitos conspirativos. Al hacerlo, señala corrientes cuestionables en contextos antroposóficos.

En la sección de *Investigación empírica*, publicamos un estudio sobre la exposición al Wi-Fi en una clase de primaria en Rumanía. El equipo de investigación dirigido por Jens Uwe Geier analizó los efectos de la exposición al Wi-Fi en las capacidades cognitivas, artísticas y creativas de los alumnos, así como en su comportamiento individual y social. El diseño del estudio siguió un enfoque de métodos mixtos.

En este número, las autoras Ulrike Barth y Angelika Wiehl presentan la versión española de su estudio sobre las viñetas perceptivas de orientación fenomenológica de RoSE Vol. 14/1.

Philipp Gelitz abre la sección *Foro Antroposofía y Ciencia* con el ensayo *Den Kopf voll Verantwortung*. Bajo este título se analizan las formas de pensamiento presentadas por Rudolf Steiner en su 12ª conferencia sobre *el Estudio general del hombre*. El estudio no es tanto una interpretación del texto, sino que «juega» con motivos de esta conferencia con reflexiones filosóficas.

Ruhi Tyson presenta una segunda parte de su estudio sobre la educación, la antroposofía y la pedagogía Waldorf. Esta vez se centra en el par de términos «reencarnación y karma» introducidos por Steiner.

Deseamos a todos los lectores una lectura estimulante.



Axel Foeller-Mancini

# Waldorf education – a survey of empirical research

**Ruhi Tyson**

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## Introduction

Today there exists a growing amount of empirical research into Waldorf education and thereby also a growing need to create an overview, especially for English-speaking audiences who cannot fully access the existing German-language ones (Peters 2020a; Böhle & Peters 2011, 2010). There are publications in English and German that provide a selected account (Dahlin 2017; Randoll & Peters 2015; Paschen 2010; Gidley 2010a) but a full survey in English focusing on empirical research has been lacking. This survey is an attempt to both give a comprehensive overview in English and to provide at least a glimpse of what the research has been about. The text is based on the third iteration of a survey done for the benefit of the students at the Waldorf University College (WLH) in Sweden.

A previous article has explored research of a more theoretical nature (Tyson 2023). This survey focuses on empirical studies including historical research from 1990 onward.

## What counts as research?

In contrast to the survey of theoretical research (Tyson 2023) where especially the books to include was judged relatively generously, this one is a bit more restrictive and limits the selected studies to:

1. Doctoral dissertations
2. Research monographs published by recognized science publishers
3. Articles in peer-review journals
4. Other academic studies that are clearly on par with peer-review articles

There are a few exceptions, mostly some early studies on former Waldorf students that were not published in any scientific context but that were done with a scholarly rigor. One issue with surveys of Waldorf research available online is that they also include articles that have not been peer reviewed and master-theses. A master-thesis is, admittedly, considered research on an advanced level and it is common practice to take parts of one and turn it into an article. However, having looked at several research reviews and surveys published in peer-review journals there hasn't been one where master-theses have been included. This could, in itself, be a topic for a separate review since it would further highlight the variety of research being done.

The delineation of what counts as research in this article is, of course, entirely formal and says very little about the quality of research included here nor about the quality of that which has been left out, not an insignificant amount given the long history of publishing at eg. Verlag Freies Geistesleben.

Another issue regards where to draw the line between what counts as theoretical and what counts as empirical. This is not always clear for at least two reasons: first because a study may contain both, eg. a book where some chapters are theoretical and some empirical (these books are sometimes listed both here and in Tyson 2023); second because it is not always easy to decide where one ends and the other begins. In this survey historical studies have been considered empirical although methodologically speaking they might have been mostly done using textual analysis. Other studies such as comparative didactical research have been classified as theoretical and can thus be found in the theoretical survey (Tyson 2023). The reason for this is that historical research also includes, at times, interviews and other more classically empirical methods whereas the comparative studies, to my knowledge, do not. It makes less sense to split the historical studies into two on methodological grounds.

## Earlier surveys

As noted above, this survey has been greatly helped by the ones from the journal *Research on Steiner education* (RoSE) from 2010-2011 and from 2020 (Böhle & Peters 2010, 2011; Peters 2020a). Most of the research listed in these has been included here with the exceptions of a few studies that turned out to be non-peer-review articles, preliminary reports, or master-theses. The basic categories of the earlier overviews were also, for the most part retained but it has not always been easy to sort the studies, and this has at times led to them being categorized differently here (eg. some studies regarding student biographies after school were placed by Böhle & Peters in the category “structural aspects of Waldorf schools” and these have been categorized here as studies regarding “vocational biographies and lifestyles among former students”).

Böhle & Peters (2010, 2011) identify the following areas of research:

- Studies of structural aspects of Waldorf schools
- Studies from the student-perspective
- Studies concerning teachers and teaching
- Studies focusing on the social and emotional competencies of students
- Studies about the health of students and teachers
- Vocational biographies and lifestyles among former students
- Waldorf schools and interculturality (in Böhle & Peters 2011 called minorities)

Peters (2020a) has the following categories although it should be noted that he operates with a wider definition of what counts as empirical than the one proposed here (including eg. Barz 2018, a book about reform pedagogy that in this context counts as more of a theoretical study):

- Foundations of Waldorf education and structural aspects
- Explorative surveys
- Holistic approach of Waldorf education and art
- Developmental psychology
- Achievements of schools and comparisons with regular schools
- Studies about teacher education
- Studies about early childhood education
- Learning, teaching and student-teacher relations
- Resilience and health
- Lifestyles of former students



- Interculturality and inclusion
- Dissertations

Given that Peters (2020a) has a wider scope this survey largely follows the earlier surveys of Böhle & Peters (2010, 2011) in how it categorizes the studies but comparative research has its own category and the three categories of historical studies, studies of early childhood education and studies that were odd/difficult to sort were added.

The earlier research surveys conducted have been mentioned in the introduction and do not require a separate heading below.

## Methodological reflections

Apart from looking at earlier surveys this overview is based on systematic searches in several research databases using the search terms Waldorf, Steiner, Education and Pedagogy in English, German, Swedish and Norwegian. Books were also searched for at online book seller sites such as amazon and in the larger publisher's databases (Belz, Peter Lang, Springer, Routledge). As noted above, there are several studies on an academic level concerning the lives of former Waldorf students that were not published by any academic publishers, but which are nevertheless included here because their contents are relevant and dismissing them on formal grounds makes little sense. A full survey of RoSE has also been done. The large number of references has motivated a split into three: Scandinavian languages, English and German. This hopefully allows an easier overview if one is only interested in the reference-list.

As noted initially, this is the third iteration of the survey and every year when it has been updated at least a few books, dissertations or articles turn up that were overlooked in earlier ones. Books because they are not always easy to look for in a systematic way in research databases. Articles because not every database covers every journal and dissertations because especially older ones are not always listed online. Some dissertations that are listed lack published abstracts and the only thing one has is the title. This makes it impossible at times to know what they were about, and the matter is even more confused by the practice of some institutions to call master-theses dissertations meaning that it can be assumed that at least a few of the studies included here are not doctoral dissertations but in fact master-theses. This is a further limitation of some of the online databases listing research where no distinction is made between the two giving the impression that there is more research done on a doctoral level than is actually the case.

## Empirical research – a survey

### *Structural aspects of Waldorf schools*

Most of these studies are concerned with decision-making and organizational form. Enderle (2018) and Ullrich (2012) have done research into self-governance in schools. Bento (2015) has explored complexity and change and Koolmann, Nörling & Boukal (2016) and Koolmann & Nörling (2015) discuss challenges to the organizational structures in Waldorf schools. Selsfors (2019) has studied the collegium of teachers as a forum for developmental work and Rawson (2014) has discussed practices of teacher learning as well as (2011) democratic leadership in Waldorf schools.

It is possible that Roberts' (1999) and Götte's (2000) studies regarding school autonomy and self-governance belong here. Roberts compares experiences from Germany, Switzerland and Holland. Götte discusses the, at the time, 80-year long experience of school autonomy in the context of a wider German conversation on the subject.

A few studies are concerned with what happens to students who transfer from state schools to Waldorf schools or the reverse (Keller 2012, 2008; Lawton 2016). One study is concerned with the passage from preschool to school in Brazil (Guglielmo et al. 2022).

Yet another group focuses on parents in Waldorf schools. Koolmann, Petersen & Ehrler (2018) have conducted an extensive study of German Waldorf-parents and their socioeconomic status, values and view on the future and Peinelt-Jordan (1998) has studied the socioeconomic status of Waldorf-parents in Berlin. Stehlik (2003, 2001) has conducted a case study of how a Waldorf school in Australia functions as a learning community for the parents. Brodbeck (2018) has explored how parents in Switzerland and Liechtenstein view and value the schools. Weidmann (2023) has studied if there is a connection between resistance to vaccination during the pandemic, esoteric views (where Waldorf schools were one parameter among several used to define esoteric views) and sympathies for the right-wing politics of AfD in Germany. The results speak against there being a clear connection.

Finally, there are a few studies that do not belong to any of the previous groups. Conein (2000) has studied environmental issues/sustainable development and the views of teachers concerning these in Waldorf- and Montessori-schools. Schmude (1990) has studied the regional and social field of pupil-recruitment for the Waldorf school in Heidelberg (this is part of an academic study from the Department of Geography at Heidelberg University and as such one of the exceptions mentioned previously).

## Studies from the student-perspective

This category collects studies that examine various matters from the perspective of students. It is noticeably smaller than the following where the perspective of teachers and teaching are the focus. This suggests that the field covering the experiences, learning-development and achievements of students is somewhat understudied.

Suggate (2013) has studied if early reading instruction helps reading in the long term. Bruhn, Seifert & Aschermann (2007) have studied the influence that musical activities have on the successful completion of education at a Waldorf school. Wallner-Paschon (2009) has written a comparative study about Austrian Waldorf students, their PISA competencies and individual characteristics. Rohde (2022) has studied the Abitur-results of German Waldorf students in comparison with state school students in the Bundesland of Hessen. Brater et al. (2010) discusses how portfolio-documentation as a method can work to surface the competencies of students.

There are three studies that could be classified as studies about the relationship of students to a subject or part of it. Nordlund (2006) has written a dissertation about the subject of art, Heinritz (2012) about a pioneer musical project at the Waldorf school in Dortmund and Montenegro (2017) about the subject of foreign languages.

Finally, there are some studies that discuss the effects and experiences of attending a Waldorf school. Liebenwein, Barz & Randoll (2012) have conducted a large study of the educational experiences of Waldorf students and Peters (2021), Randoll & Peters (2020) and Beaven (2011) have all studied how former students think about their time in Waldorf schools. Idel (2007) has reconstructed three student biographies with the aim of exploring the biographical relevance of Waldorf education. Höblich (2010) has examined the relationship between biography, schooling and sexual identity in a Waldorf school and Rawson (2018, 2019) has studied the process of subjectification at a Waldorf school using Biesta's concept of *subjectification*.

### *Studies concerning teachers and teaching*

A comparatively large number of studies focus on the perspectives of teachers regarding Waldorf education and teaching. There are four sub-themes:

- Subject-studies
- Studies in general didactics and curriculum inquiry
- Studies of teacher-student interactions
- Other studies

## Subject-studies

Hougham (2013) has studied the class 8 play as a rite of passage, Willmann (2014) religion as subject in non-Christian contexts (Egypt, Israel) and Hoffmann (2016) festivals in two non-European Waldorf schools. Ruhnau (2017) and Peters (2020b) have looked at the teaching of mathematics in age-integrated classes, grades 1-5. Breaux (2004) has written a dissertation about the art of teaching mathematics in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade but it is unclear if this is more from the point of theory or more of an empirical inquiry. Sharpe (2022) has studied the views on mathematics held by three Waldorf students and their teacher (this overlaps with the theme of student-teacher interactions). Stene (2018) has conducted a qualitative study on music education and Hoyer & Schiefer (2019) as well as Hallam et al. (2016) have made studies on the subject of art. Kimberly & Brouillette (2021) have studied experiential learning in a first grade classroom. Prendergast has written a dissertation on how painting contributes to the education of the feeling life.

Zech (2012) has written a dissertation on the development of the history subject from 1919 to 2009 and compared it to contemporary history didactics and Nicholson (2000) has explored different representational forms of the history subject in a Waldorf classroom. Ullrich (2008) and Ullrich et al. (2006) have published a case study of a physics-period in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade and Jelinek & Sun (2003) have written an academic survey about the literature on natural science used in Waldorf education. Urbantat (2017) has studied the practice of surveying as a subject in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Rohde (2003) has written a dissertation in the context of *Lehrkunstdidaktik* (“the art of teaching”, a school of didactics in German-speaking contexts, cf. www.lehrkunst.org) focusing on a couple of periods dealing with Faraday’s *Chemical history of a candle* and Goethe’s teaching on plant metamorphosis. Beck et al. (2016) have studied eurythmy-pedagogy. Erasmus (2015) has written a dissertation on the geographical knowledge that Waldorf students develop. Handwerk (2011) has written a dissertation on the educational value of poetry in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Bair (2004) has written a dissertation about establishing a school garden and Grella (2015) one about learning to care for the environment through the nurturing of the aesthetic. Lutzker (2007) has studied both students and teacher-students in relation to foreign language education in *The art of foreign language teaching: Improvisation and drama in teacher development and language learning* and Navascues (1997) has written about early foreign language education in Waldorf schools from an historical perspective. Tsortanidou, et al. (2021) have written about the development of new media literacies from a Waldorf educational perspective.

## General didactics and curriculum studies

Tjärnstig (2020) has written a dissertation about the didactical practice of a group of Waldorf teachers and Binetti (2020) has done something similar in a case study about how teachers transform Waldorf educational theory and philosophy into practice. Attfield (2022) has studied questions of inclusive citizenship education. Reece (2007) has written a dissertation about Waldorf-inspired education and at-risk students. Ciborski & Ireland (2015) have written about how Waldorf teachers measure student progress toward lifelong goals. Green (2020) has studied narrative teaching and Rader (2004) has written a dissertation about developing informational materials that feature stories as teaching tools in the early grades of the Waldorf school. Nielsen (2006, 2004) has written a dissertation and an article on Waldorf education as a pedagogy of the imagination. Nielsen & Smith (2007) have written about the historical origins of how imagination is conceptualized in Waldorf education. Freitag, Gabriel & Peters (2020) and Author (2019) discuss and compare the inclusion of vocational education in various Waldorf upper secondary schools and Author (2021) discusses variations of the standard Waldorf curriculum. Uhrmacher (1993) has studied the educational practice of four Waldorf schools in order to document its forms and Easton (1995) has written a dissertation about Waldorf education based on both studies of literature and observations of practice. Schmelzer (2014) has explored the practical importance of some concepts from Steiner’s lectures *Foundations of human experience*. Jensen et al. (2012) have conducted a didactical analysis of teaching practice in grades 9-12 at Waldorf schools in Denmark. It was published at Aarhus University but it is unclear what kind of academic text it is. Schieren (2008) has edited a series of presentations from a symposium at the Alanus University regarding quality of teaching in Waldorf schools (this is a departure from the choice here of excluding conference papers because they were published with an academic publisher).

### Teacher-student interactions

Burrows (2013) has explored mindfulness and reflection in Waldorf education, Silverman (2015) has discussed navigating moments of tension in a Waldorf classroom and Moore (2016) how to create authenticity in the classroom. Graßhoff et al. (2005, 2006) and Ullrich (2003) have studied teacher-student relations at Waldorf schools and Helsper et al. (2007) as well as Ahsley (2008) have done so focusing on authority. Randoll (2006) has conducted a larger comparative study about how students view their teachers. Randoll, et al. (2014) have engaged in an explorative study regarding the views of students about their time with a class teacher in grades 1-8. Kunze (2007) has studied the oral evaluations of students.

### Other studies

Fiedler (2012) has studied the biographical profiles of East German Waldorf teachers and Kunze (2013, 2011) has studied the vocational biographies of Waldorf teachers. Prager (2001) has written a dissertation studying three teachers in a Waldorf inspired US public school and Oberski & McNelly (2007) have written about holism in teacher development. Randoll (2013) has studied the values of Waldorf teachers. Randoll (2004, 1999) has conducted a larger comparative study about former students and their views about their schools. Harslem & Randoll (2013) have studied Waldorf educational attempts to explore student-centered educational practices (similar to those of Montessori and free alternative schools). Heinritz & Krautz (2012) have studied the factors that make art teachers still enjoy teaching art. Oberski (2006) has studied the views of teachers regarding the development of thinking in children/students. Höblich & Graßhoff (2008) have conducted a critical study about the 8-year long class teacher practice and Graßhoff (2008) has studied the relationship between class teacher, student and the student's family. Barz (2013) has collected a number of studies, in part empirical, about the specific characteristics of being a Waldorf teacher.

### *Studies focusing on the social and emotional competencies of students*

Rivers & Soutter (1996) have studied bullying in Waldorf schools. Baier (2008) and Baier & Pfeiffer (2005) have conducted comparative studies about crime among youth where Waldorf schools are included. Baier et al. (2006) has also studied the views of Waldorf students regarding racism and right-wing extremism compared to students from other German school forms. Idel (2013, 2007, 2004) has reconstructed student biographies and how they reflect Waldorf educational school culture. Mayer (2006) has conducted a comparison of socio-moral competencies between Waldorf- and state-school students. Dahlin, Liljeröth & Nobel (2006) have studied the degree to which Waldorf students are supported in the development of social and other interactional competencies needed to be an active citizen in a democratic society. Siu (2012) has written a dissertation about student engagement at a Waldorf-inspired community school.

### *Studies about the health of teachers and students*

Peters (2013a, b) and Graudenz, Peters & Randoll (2013) have studied the work-conditions of Waldorf teachers. Fischer et al. (2013) have studied the effect of attending Waldorf schools during childhood on health in adulthood, Flöistrup et al. (2006) allergies and sensitivities among children in Waldorf schools and Alm et al. (1999) as well as Schram-Bijkerk et al. (2005) the frequency of allergies among families with an anthroposophical lifestyle. Sobo (2015a) has studied anti-vaccination views among American Waldorf-parents and Brennan et al. (2017) have done a comparative study about the choice by parents to not vaccinate their children in California from 2000-2014. Zdrzil (2000) has researched Antonovsky's concept of salutogenesis and Waldorf education and Marti (2013, 2012) has studied the effect of mental activities and choir-singing on the cardiovascular system. Steiner (2013) has conducted a case study on Adhd and Majorek et al. (2004) has explored how curative eurythmy can have a positive effect on Adhd. Cyzartz et al. (2004) has studied the influence of poetry-reciting on heart- and breathing-rhythm and Honkonen

(2018) has explored how Finnish youth view the influence of music on their psycho-physical well-being. Stiefel (2000) has conducted a case study at a Stuttgart Waldorf school about when girls lose their milk teeth.

### *Vocational biographies and lifestyles among former students*

This category contains two comparatively distinct themes. Studies about the values and views regarding the future among former Waldorf students (Gidley 2010b, 1998; Goldshmidt 2013; Föller-Mancini, Heusser & Büssing 2010).

Studies that document what Waldorf students become after school (this group contains some early studies that were not done in a formal academic context but where the results are academically relevant):

North America (Baldwin et al. 2005; Mitchell & Gerwin 2008, 2007).

Australia and New Zealand (Haralambous & Carey 2022).

Denmark (Hansen 2003; Thuesen 1992).

Switzerland (Thomas 2007; Barz & Randoll 2007a; Holderegger 2001).

Germany (Barz & Randoll 2007b; Brater & Wehle 1982; Gessler 1988; Hofmann, Prümmer & Weidner 1981; Leber 1982; Schopf-Beige 2004).

Sweden: Dahlin, Liljeroth & Nobel (2006) have explored how frequently Waldorf students continue on to academic studies after school and how well they do. Arvas & Öhman (1994) have explored the Kristoffer-school specifically and what the students do after attending the school.

### *Waldorf education, intercultural education and inclusion*

It is perhaps a sign that this was considered a category of such importance that it was given its own heading in the surveys of 2010/2011 even though it was almost empty at the time. Since then, a lot has happened, and several more extensive studies have been conducted.

The lack of studies partly obscures actual practice. In a non-academic format Abouleish & Kirchgessner (2005) have written about the foundation of Sekem in Egypt, Craemer (1980, 1987) about favela Monte Azul in Sao Paulo and Geraets (1993) about Inkanyezi Waldorf school in the township of Alexandra in Johannesburg. Oberman (2007) has published a conference presentation about Waldorf education in American public schools in socially marginalized neighborhoods. Ruf (2014) has outlined the development and practice of emergency pedagogy and Author (2016) presents a case study of eurythmy teacher Wilfried Kessler and the developmental project he has initiated in the village of Masloc in Romania.

Dahlin, Liljeroth & Nobel (2006, the same study referenced above) have studied if and how Waldorf schools might contribute to segregation by exploring the social and cultural homogeneity of Waldorf-parents. They have also studied what Waldorf schools do to support students with learning- and other disabilities. Barth (2020, 2008) has done review studies of inclusion in Waldorf schools and Adam & Schmelzer (2019) have done one on intercultural education and Waldorf education. Handwerk (2019) has studied inclusion focusing on student biographies. Maschke (2018) has written a dissertation on Waldorf education and inclusive learning.

Tang (2011) has written a dissertation on Waldorf education as intercultural education with examples from Taiwanese schools, Munoz (2016) one about integrating Waldorf education with critical pedagogy and indigenous epistemologies and Mor (2017) one about combining traditional knowledge forms and Waldorf education in Nepal. Boland (2015) has written about the globalization of Waldorf education based on a study of Waldorf teachers with Maori-background. Boland & Demirbag (2017) have written about Waldorf teachers at the Waldorf school on Honolulu and their work with integrating the Waldorf curriculum with indigenous traditions.



Brater et al. (2009) and Schmelzer (2012) have done evaluations of the intercultural Waldorf school in Mannheim. Blaeser et al. (2013) have written about the Windrather Talschule and their inclusive form of education. Beckel (2022, 2021) has studied newly arrived refugees and their inclusion at a Waldorf school. Powers (2020) has written a dissertation about public Waldorf schools in the US and equal access to them for minorities. Winther (2022) has studied diversity and the role of art-education.

### *Comparative studies between Waldorf- and state/regular schools*

This category has been somewhat difficult to define given that some comparative studies fit better in other categories and have been placed there.

### **Comparative subject- and didactics studies**

Wright (2013) compares geography as a subject in state schools and Waldorf schools and Erasmus & Obermaier (2010) compare the interest that students have in geography. van Norden & Schürenberg (2019) compare the narrative competence that students in regular and Waldorf schools exhibit in relation to the subject of history. Dorfman & Fortus (2019) have compared students' self-efficacy for science in different school systems. Sommer (2014) compares the didactics of Waldorf education with Klafki's didactical theory. Goral (2010) explores the use of Waldorf methods in regular schools in the USA and Buddemeier & Schneider (2005) the inclusion of Waldorf elements in state schools in Germany. Solhaug (2007) compares the democratic education of Waldorf- and Norwegian state schools at the secondary level. Rose & Jolley (2016) and Rose et al. (2012) compare the development of students' drawing and painting skills in Waldorf and regular schools in England. Cox & Rowlands (2000) compare Waldorf, Montessori and traditional education and their effect on the drawing skills of children. dos Anjos, Abreu & Melo (2012) have compared the natural science aspects of the Waldorf curriculum with Brazil's national curriculum. Rios & Menezes (2017) have compared the views on nature among children in some ecologically oriented schools (among them a Waldorf school).

### **Other comparative studies**

Ward (2002) has compared narrative meaning making and personal development among teachers in Montessori-, Waldorf-, and other primary schools. Pätzold (2011) discusses differences in views regarding learning between Waldorf- and state school students. Diefenbach et al. (2020) has studied children with special medical needs and their development at Waldorf and state schools. Suggate, Schaughency & Reese (2013, 2011) compare the effect of beginning to learn reading and writing at 5 and 7 years of age in New Zealand, Cunningham & Carroll (2011) have carried out a similar study in Britain. Dahlin (2010) compares the values of Waldorf and state school students regarding civic and moral issues. Turós (2023) has compared the moral judgment of Hungarian Waldorf-, Catholic-, and state school students. Kirkham (2017) compares the effect of Waldorf-, Montessori-, and state curricula on children's pretence and creativity. DeLuca & Hughes (2014) have compared views on assessment in early primary education among several alternative pedagogies. Ogletree (1996) has compared the creativity of Waldorf-, and state school students in Scotland, Germany, and England. Besançon et al. (2015) compare French school environments and their influence on the creativity, motivation, and well-being of students. de Bilde et al. (2013) explore if alternative pedagogies (Waldorf & Freinet) increase early school engagement. Henry (1992) has compared the meaning of rituals in a Waldorf and a college prep school. Armon (1997) has compared teachers as moral educators and how they express caring in Waldorf and public-school classrooms. Weary (2000) has compared how looping addresses the academic and social needs of children. Woods, O'Neill & Woods (1997) have discussed spiritual values in education and what British public schools could learn from Waldorf schools. Dahlin, Liljeroth & Nobel (2006, again in the same study as referenced above) have compared the achievements of Waldorf and state school students in Sweden. Sillion et al. (2016) have conducted a psychological study of Romanian

Waldorf students in comparison with students from regular schools focusing on the frequency of impostor phenomenon and test anxiety.

### *Studies about early childhood education*

Early childhood education and Waldorf preschools have seen dramatically less research than schools have even though Waldorf schools are numerically fewer than preschools. As a consequence, there are few common denominators among the studies that exist apart from a cluster of studies on play and movement.

### **Play and movement**

Sobo (2014a, 2015b) has studied the relationship between health and play. Mei-Ju (2014) has studied creativity play, Waite & Rees (2014) have studied play and its relevance for developing empathy and Frödén & Rosell (2019) have explored toys and toy-play in relation to the children's imagination. Darian (2012) has studied movement-based learning. Kodsí (2022) has compared children in Waldorf and Normative Israeli preschools and how technological thinking and design process develop during free play.

### **Other studies**

Parker-Rees (2011) has edited a series of chapters that are part theory, part empirical studies, on beliefs, values and practices in Waldorf early childhood education. Föller-Mancini & Peters (2018, 2015) have done evaluations of the Waldorf preschools in Berlin. Gelitz (2018) has done research on the transition from baby-to child-groups and (2022) on what constitutes pedagogical quality in Waldorf preschools. Frödén (2019, 2012) has studied the environment of Waldorf preschools and how it relates to gender roles. Wilson (2011) has done research into the connection of language, power and gender-socialization at a Waldorf daycare and then (2014) about constructing childhood and teacher-authority at a Waldorf daycare as well as (2022) problematizing the concept of child-centeredness. Knight (2022a, 2022b) has written a dissertation and an article based on it that critically explore Eurocentric or colonial entanglements in Waldorf educational views on childhood. Diefenbach et al. (2018) have developed a test for measuring school-readiness among children in preschool. Lawson (2018) has written a dissertation about how various European alternative pedagogies view early literacy skill development. Boland (2019) has explored Rudolf Steiner's ideas about writing music for young children through his own compositions in a dissertation. Sylwyn (2019) has written an article about generational learning. Astley & Jackson (2000) have studied rituals in Waldorf early childhood education and Bone (2008) has studied how spirituality contributes to the healing of trauma. Lim (2004) has studied painting in early childhood settings. Østergaard (2016) has interviewed six Waldorf preschool teachers about their work. Busch (1998) has written a dissertation about the inclusion of children with special needs in a Waldorf preschool. Drummond & Jenkinson (2009) have studied observation and evaluation of children in Waldorf early childhood education. Arslan & Kartal (2022) have studied: "The effect of the Waldorf approach applied with the collaborative method on the early assessment skills of 48-60 months-old children."

### *Historical studies*

Uhrmacher (1995) provides a brief historical review of the development of Waldorf education and Frielingsdorf (2019) has written a more elaborate history from 1919 to 2019. Dhondt et al. (2015) discuss the possibility of writing an objective history of Waldorf education. Paull & Hennig (2020) have done a survey of the geographical distribution of Waldorf schools and preschools globally in 2019. Paull (2011) has written about the first presentation of Waldorf pedagogy in England at a conference in Oxford 1922 and Burnett (2009) writes about the first Waldorf Academy in England (Academy Hereford). Bak (2018, 2021a, 2021b) describes the founding of Melbourne Rudolf Steiner school in the 70s (2018), two Waldorf schools

in Victoria, Australia in the 80s (2021a) and the spread of Waldorf educational ideas in public schools 1990-2011 (2021b). Stabel (2014) has written a dissertation on the development of the Norwegian Waldorf school movement between 1926 and 2004 and Oberman (1999) has written one about the American development 1919-1998. Priestman (2009) has written a dissertation about the German Waldorf schools during the Third Reich. Wessling (2005) has written a dissertation with the title: *A case study of the life history of a Waldorf school through the lens of parental participation*. This sounds like a historical study, but I haven't been able to review an abstract in order to find out. Myers (2004) has written about the German fin-de-siècle Bildungstradition as it was taken up by Rudolf Steiner and Max Weber.

### *Other studies*

Brater (2000) has evaluated the regional upper secondary school in Jurasüdfuss. Wood (1996) has written a dissertation about the urban public Waldorf school in Milwaukee and Easton (1997) continues the discussion. Boland (2017), using action research, has explored the development of his values over time. Whedon (2007) has written a dissertation about the relationship between Waldorf education and anthroposophy in daily practice. de Souza (2000) has written a dissertation about holistic education. Rittelmeyer (2010) has discussed the compatibility between psychological research and the concept of the four temperaments and Grant (1999) has studied how the conceptualization is used in Waldorf schools. Marti (2011) has studied movement in children between 10-14 and its relation to the development of judgment. Sauer (2014) has studied transitions from special- (Förderschule) to regular Waldorf schools. Oberman (2008) and Abigail et al. (2012) have done surveys of the spread of Waldorf education in American public schools. Schindler Rangvid (2008) has studied private school diversity in Denmark. Hutchingson & Hutchingson (1993) have studied the introduction of Waldorf educational elements in a school in Toronto for gifted children. Woods, Ashley & Woods (2005) have presented an extensive review of the Waldorf schools in England. Kolmos (2019a, 2019b, 2019c) has explored contemplative practices in school.

Finally, there are three studies that consider the role of architecture. Bjørnholt (2014) discusses spatiality, Geier (2018) lighting and Bradley (2022) the design of spaces to support childhood development.

Mulica (2005) has written a dissertation with the title *"An architecture of resistance: an urban Waldorf High School."* My guess is that this is not an architectural study, but I have been unable to find any further information about it. Similarly, Sturbaum (1997) has written a dissertation called *"Transformational possibilities of schooling: a study of Waldorf education"* and here, too, I have been unable to find out more about what this entails.

## **Concluding discussion**

The largest and internationally most well-coordinated empirical research projects seem to be those focusing on former students in Waldorf schools. These are summarized in Dahlin (2017). Other than this the survey highlights the great variety of topics that have been explored.

The great variety of studies and topics is a sign of a young field of research still in the process of exploration. This doesn't mean that the explorative phase is over, there are many conceivable issues that could be raised for the first or close to first time. But, as stated in the survey of theoretical research (Tyson, 2023), the amount of research already done allows for valuable inquiries that deepen and test many of the singular studies that have been made in order to explore if they are replicable or in need of revisions and additions. A lot of the empirical research is qualitative and small scale and does not fully take into account differences between regions and countries in how education is organized. Simply repeating a study in a different country or with a different selection of schools, students or teachers would often yield important further knowledge. In many cases it is also both possible and relevant to do more in-depth comparative reviews of particular topics, eg. studies regarding play in early childhood education.



As noted initially, this survey is based on the third iteration of a survey for students at the Waldorf University College in Sweden. Each time the review has been updated a number of previously unknown studies have been found. This then should be taken for what it is, a systematic survey that with certainty will have missed a few relevant studies, miscategorized others and misunderstood some as well. Future surveys and revisions will hopefully remedy this at least somewhat.

### *Summary of scholarly research*

Roughly speaking there are presently about 50 dissertations,<sup>1</sup> 140 articles, 45 books (of which about 40 are in German) and 35 miscellaneous studies that present empirical research into Waldorf education. All in all, about 270. If one adds to this the studies from the theoretical survey (Tyson, 2023): about 10 dissertations, 160 articles, 105 books and 15 book chapters/miscellaneous it becomes a significant number (even if one reduces the number of articles by 20-30 to account for the mistaken, and sometimes intentional counting of non- or semi- peer-review texts and subtracts maybe 40-50 books from the theoretical survey that were not published by an external scholarly publisher). In all it amounts to:

- Doctoral dissertations, at least about 60
- Articles, about 270
- Books, about 100
- Book chapters and miscellaneous, about 50

Clearly just the amount of scholarly writing regarding Waldorf education is so extensive that it is hardly possible for a single researcher to be familiar with all of it creating a situation where the need for specific more in-depth reviews of various topics has become much more relevant than it was just ten years ago.

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1. Several books, eg. Zech (2012) were initially published as dissertations. When I have been certain of this I have counted the book as a dissertation but it can be assumed that several of the books counted here should in fact be counted towards the dissertations instead.

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## **Despertar el interés permanente por la lectura desde la pedagogía Waldorf**

## **Awakening long-term interest in reading through Waldorf pedagogy**

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**RESUMEN.** ¿Cómo logran los maestros Waldorf motivar a los niños para que aprendan a leer y, aún más importante, cómo logran mantener en sus alumnos el interés por la lectura a lo largo del tiempo? A través de un enfoque en el lenguaje oral, un currículo adaptado a las necesidades del niño y un entorno propicio para la expresión emocional, los alumnos Waldorf se acercan al proceso de la lectura con mayor confianza y motivación. Desde la perspectiva Waldorf, el proceso inicial de aprender a escribir apoya significativamente el aprendizaje de la lectura, ayudando a afianzar la autoconfianza en el proceso lector. El objetivo de este artículo es ofrecer una comprensión detallada de las prácticas pedagógicas Waldorf en el proceso de aprender a leer e identificar las estrategias que fomentan la comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria, una característica fundamental del enfoque educativo Waldorf.

*Palabras claves:* motivación, comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria, narración libre, aprendizaje de idiomas, desarrollo infantil

**ABSTRACT.** How do Waldorf teachers motivate children to learn to read and, more importantly, how do they maintain their students' interest in reading over time? Through a focus on oral language, a curriculum tailored to the child's needs, and an environment conducive to emotional expression, Waldorf students approach the reading process with greater confidence and motivation. From the Waldorf perspective, the initial process of learning to write significantly supports the learning of reading, helping to reinforce self-confidence in the reading process. The aim of this article is to provide a detailed understanding of Waldorf pedagogical practices in the process of learning to read. Furthermore, it seeks to identify strategies that promote interdisciplinary reading comprehension, a core element of the Waldorf educational approach.

*Keywords:* motivation, interdisciplinary reading comprehension, free storytelling, language learning, child development

## Introducción

La adquisición de la lectura es un proceso personal que toma años debido a la maduración cerebral requerida. Esta etapa puede ser estresante debido a la presión escolar, la dificultad para comprender conceptos y el desafío cognitivo que implica aprender a leer en lengua materna y/o en lenguas extranjeras (Montenegro, 2007).

Las prácticas de enseñanza convencionales sugieren que cuanto más antes los niños reconozcan letras y sonidos, más rápidamente se convertirán en lectores competentes (Suggate et al., 2013b). Sin embargo, estas prácticas que enfatizan el reconocimiento temprano del alfabeto no garantizan un interés lector a largo plazo. De igual manera, la obsesión con la alfabetización temprana puede obstaculizar el desarrollo del hemisferio derecho del cerebro, que es esencial para la creación de imágenes mentales durante la lectura (Johnson, 2010).

La lectura es una habilidad fundamental que no solo proporciona acceso al conocimiento, sino que también enriquece la vida interior del niño, contribuyendo así a su desarrollo integral. Se trata de un acto de comunicación en el cual el lector, influenciado por sus experiencias previas, interpreta el texto en relación con su propia realidad. La verdadera lectura se materializa cuando se generan imágenes mentales en las áreas frontales del hemisferio derecho del cerebro, al mismo tiempo que las palabras se identifican fonéticamente utilizando el hemisferio izquierdo (Johnson, 2010). Este acto complejo y multifacético se considera una de las funciones cognitivas más sofisticadas del cerebro humano y desempeña un papel crucial en el desarrollo cognitivo durante la infancia (Uribe et al., 2014).

La pedagogía Waldorf se destaca por su enfoque integral que cultiva un genuino interés en los alumnos por la lectura. En este artículo, se proporciona un análisis de las estrategias pedagógicas esenciales para el proceso de lecto-escritura en el contexto Waldorf. Se examinan aspectos clave, tales como la etapa inicial de la lecto-escritura, donde se sientan las bases para el aprendizaje; la selección de material de lectura que motive y estimule la imaginación; la enseñanza de la gramática para fortalecer la comprensión lingüística; así como la instrucción de idiomas extranjeros para ampliar las habilidades comunicativas y culturales. Además, se aborda el importante aspecto del estímulo de la comprensión lectora, no solo como una habilidad individual, sino también como una práctica social e interdisciplinaria.

## Estrategias pedagógicas fundamentales para el proceso de lecto-escritura

Los maestros Waldorf utilizan diversas estrategias lúdicas e interdisciplinarias para motivar a los alumnos en el aprendizaje de la lecto-escritura. Estas técnicas incluyen el uso de sonidos, actividades de movimiento y la selección de materiales literarios de alta calidad. El maestro Waldorf es un narrador constante. Utiliza la narración libre como herramienta principal para el desarrollo del lenguaje (Easton, 1997; Steinmann, 2012). Esta modalidad oral implica contar una historia de memoria y por lo general prescinde del libro en las manos.

La narración libre, como herramienta pedagógica, estimula la expresión emocional y el desarrollo del lenguaje. Al integrar el lenguaje oral desde los primeros grados y adaptar el currículo a las etapas del desarrollo humano, se crea un entorno propicio para la autoexpresión y el desarrollo de habilidades comunicativas en la escucha, la escritura, la lectura y la expresión oral. Este enfoque holístico fomenta un aprendizaje integral, donde los niños pueden expresar sus emociones, ampliar su vocabulario y fortalecer sus capacidades lingüísticas de manera armoniosa y natural.

El poder de la narración radica en su capacidad para conectar profundamente a los alumnos con el contenido de una lección a través de la voz y los gestos (Bowen, 2022). El currículo Waldorf está lleno de historias, que abarcan desde cuentos de la naturaleza y cuentos de hadas hasta mitos, leyendas, biografías y relatos históricos (Logan, 2022). La narración de estas historias no solo fomenta el amor por la lectura al permitir que los niños visualicen vívidamente las imágenes descritas (Chubarovsky, 2022), sino que también estimula la imaginación y facilita el aprendizaje mediante el poder de los relatos (Bowen, 2022).



El enfoque en la narración busca influir de manera positiva en el desarrollo del lenguaje y potenciar la creatividad y el trabajo artístico de los niños. En general, la narración libre permite una mayor atención a la audiencia y un uso efectivo del lenguaje corporal (Suggate et al., 2013a). Específicamente, la narración de cuentos potencia la creatividad y recuerda a los niños la importancia de las palabras habladas y la escucha activa, estimulando la fantasía y despertando la curiosidad y la atención (Dörnyei, 2001). Además, la repetición de cuentos no solo enriquece el desarrollo emocional y cognitivo, sino que también mejora la comprensión de los conceptos presentados (Chubarovsky, 2022).

La modalidad oral puede manifestarse mediante la narración libre, la lectura compartida (donde el adulto como el niño leen alternadamente), y la lectura independiente (Suggate, 2014). Estas modalidades promueven la adquisición de vocabulario y la comprensión lectora. Estudios experimentales sobre estas modalidades han demostrado que los niños adquieren mejor el vocabulario desconocido a través de la narración libre, seguida por la lectura en voz alta por parte de un adulto, y finalmente, la lectura independiente (Suggate et al., 2013b).<sup>1</sup>

Aunque es esencial en los primeros años, la práctica de la narración libre sigue siendo fundamental incluso en el cuarto grado para el desarrollo del vocabulario y las habilidades lingüísticas de los niños (Suggate et al., 2013b). La narración libre no solo permite a los niños ejercitar su capacidad para expresarse verbalmente de manera fluida y creativa, sino que también les brinda la oportunidad de ampliar su repertorio léxico.

Otra estrategia fundamental es recitar en voz alta un poema personalizado. Los poemas personalizados, o “versos para el niño”, son composiciones poéticas creadas por el maestro con el propósito de apoyar de manera sutil y artística las necesidades individuales de desarrollo de cada niño. Por ejemplo, un maestro que desea empoderar a un niño puede utilizar metáforas evocadoras y potentes, como la imagen de un volcán, para transmitir fuerza y resiliencia. La elección de la metáfora no es casual; el volcán simboliza una energía interna poderosa y la capacidad de superar obstáculos.

El proceso de aprender y recitar en voz alta estos versos con buena pronunciación refuerza significativamente su impacto positivo. Esta práctica no solo mejora la autoestima y el autocontrol del niño, sino que también fomenta la confianza al hablar en público, la correcta entonación y la conexión emocional con sus compañeros de clase. A través de esta actividad, los niños desarrollan habilidades comunicativas esenciales y fortalecen los lazos sociales dentro del entorno escolar.

A través de estos versos, el maestro puede inspirar al niño a reconocer y cultivar sus propias cualidades y potencialidades, fomentando su autoconfianza y autoestima. Estos versos individualizados pueden adaptarse a una amplia variedad de situaciones y necesidades específicas. Por ejemplo, un niño que necesite apoyo en su capacidad de concentración podría recibir un verso que evoque la serenidad y la transparencia de un lago tranquilo.

Una actividad que ayuda a generar confianza en el desarrollo comunicativo es el canto grupal. La práctica de cantar cánones proporciona una estructura musical que es tanto predecible como armoniosa, lo que contribuye a un ambiente de cohesión y confianza. Cuando los niños cantan en canon, cada voz se entrelaza con las demás, creando una sensación de comunidad y pertenencia. Este proceso no solo promueve la seguridad emocional al permitir que cada niño se sienta parte integral de un todo mayor, sino que también fomenta habilidades musicales como la escucha activa, la coordinación y la armonización.

## **Estrategias de aprendizaje y etapas de la lecto-escritura**

En el currículo Waldorf, cada historia se elige cuidadosamente y se presenta a través de una variedad de movimientos (ej. movimientos cruzados), dibujo de formas, poesía y narración libre. Todos estos elementos

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1. Un estudio de dos años realizado por Suggate y colegas (2013) comparó a niños lectores tempranos y tardíos. Los resultados indicaron que, aunque los niños que empezaron a leer más temprano leían significativamente mejor que los alumnos Waldorf al principio, pero a los 9 y 10 años de edad ambos grupos tenían una fluidez lectora similar. A los 11 años, los alumnos Waldorf mostraron un mejor rendimiento en comprensión lectora en comparación con los alumnos de la escuela tradicional, y a los 12 años, ambos grupos eran evaluados como lectores casi iguales. Estos hallazgos sugieren que “el éxito en la lectura no está garantizado por un comienzo más temprano” (Suggate et al., 2013b, p. 45).

respaldan el proceso de aprendizaje del vocabulario y ayudan a descubrir progresivamente las relaciones entre los sonidos y las letras. Al motivar a los niños a dibujar y moverse, se promueve el desarrollo y fortalecimiento de las vías neuronales, sentando así las bases para un mayor desarrollo en la alfabetización (Amor-Zitzelberger, 2020).

En lugar de enfocarse en el desarrollo de habilidades relacionadas con la decodificación en edades tempranas, los maestros Waldorf priorizan el lenguaje hablado, estableciendo así una sólida base para las habilidades que se requieren en el proceso de aprender a leer (Suggate et al., 2013b). Los maestros valoran enormemente el uso del lenguaje hablado acompañado de movimiento desde el primer grado.

El lenguaje, la alfabetización y el movimiento deben considerarse como un único contexto y no pueden separarse entre sí (Zimmer, 2010). Los maestros se comunican directamente con los niños a través de versos, canciones e historias, acompañando y reforzando el lenguaje oral con expresiones faciales y gestos (Kiersch, 2015). Se fomenta el desarrollo del lenguaje oral mediante actividades artísticas, canto y narración libre, juegos de dedos, recitaciones con lenguaje corporal, juegos que requieren equilibrio y caminatas, entre otros (Chubarovsky, 2022; Rawson & Richter, 2000). Estas actividades, fomentan la integración bilateral de los hemisferios cerebrales y mejoran las habilidades verbales de los niños (Johnson, 2010), contribuyendo así a una mejor comprensión de la lectura más adelante (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Sénéchal et al., 2006).

El dibujo de formas es también fundamental en el currículo Waldorf, utilizado para preparar a los niños para la escritura y desarrollar habilidades motoras finas, percepción espacial y coordinación ojo-mano. Comenzando con formas simples como líneas rectas, círculos y curvas, los niños progresan hacia patrones geométricos más complejos, lo que mejora su control motor y concentración. El dibujo de formas se integra gradualmente con la escritura de letras y palabras, ayudando a los niños a entender los movimientos necesarios para escribir.

La etapa inicial de la lecto-escritura es crucial para el éxito académico y el desarrollo a largo plazo de los niños. La pintura, el dibujo con crayones de cera, el modelado con arcilla y el bordado ayudan a desarrollar la coordinación mano-ojo y las habilidades motoras necesarias para la escritura y la lectura. La formación de letras con materiales como arena, tierra, harina o cuerdas permite que los niños experimenten las formas de las letras de manera táctil.

El enfoque Waldorf para la lectura abarca tanto la enseñanza fonética como la enseñanza de palabras completas, combinando esto con un método de ortografía tradicional (Burnett, 2007). Este proceso comienza con la introducción artística de las letras y sus sonidos correspondientes (alfabeto ilustrado). Así, hacia el final del primer grado y en el segundo grado, los niños aprenden a identificar la relación entre las palabras y las letras (Suggate et al., 2013b).

Las letras se enseñan a través de historias e imágenes, permitiendo a los niños asociar sonidos con formas específicas. En primer grado, por cada historia contada, se deriva una consonante a partir de una imagen dibujada para ilustrar la historia. El maestro cuenta la historia en lugar de leerla y dibuja un trazo en la pizarra con la forma de la letra que se aprendió durante la narración libre. Por ejemplo, la letra M puede ser ilustrada con dos picos de montaña y diciendo que el sonido M es el primero que escuchamos al pronunciar la palabra “montañas”. Algunas descripciones se exploran en clase, permitiendo suficiente tiempo para participar. Posteriormente, la historia es revisada nuevamente y probablemente continúe durante la siguiente clase.

Las vocales se enseñan una vez que los niños han aprendido un conjunto de consonantes, permitiéndoles expresar emociones y estados de ánimo internos (van Alphen, 2009). Para enseñar las vocales se evalúan los valores o las emociones (ej. la alegría) que se desean trabajar en clase. Por ejemplo, el maestro podría comenzar la clase contando un cuento que involucre palabras que empiecen con la letra “a”, como “amistad” y “alegría”. El maestro narra una historia sobre un pequeño animal, como una “abeja”, que, a través de su jornada diaria en el jardín, entabla amistades con otras abejas y otros insectos. Esta aventura en el jardín podría enfocarse en cómo la abeja ayuda a otros y aprende el valor de la amistad.

Las letras mayúsculas se introducen primero porque sus formas son más simples y fáciles de reconocer para los niños. Una vez que los niños dominan las letras mayúsculas, se introducen las minúsculas. Los niños

practican las letras minúsculas mediante ejercicios de escritura, juegos y actividades artísticas que desarrollan su destreza manual y fortalecen su comprensión de las diferentes formas de las letras. Estas letras, al ser más complejas en su forma, requieren un mayor control motor fino. Este aprendizaje se realiza de manera gradual en un entorno que fomenta la paciencia y la repetición.

La letra de imprenta se utiliza principalmente para la lectura y la escritura inicial. Esta elección se debe a que las formas de las letras de imprenta son más simples y uniformes, lo que facilita su reconocimiento y aprendizaje para los niños. En el proceso de enseñanza, se enfatiza la claridad y la consistencia de las letras de imprenta, ayudando a los niños a desarrollar una base sólida en la lectura y la escritura.

Una vez que los alumnos están cómodos y familiarizados con las formas de las letras de imprenta, comienzan a aprender la escritura cursiva. Los niños realizan ejercicios de trazado y repetición de letras cursivas, a menudo acompañados de ilustraciones y formas que refuerzan el aprendizaje. La escritura cursiva tiende a fluir más naturalmente y está más conectada con el movimiento de la mano. Este estilo de escritura promueve una conexión más profunda entre el pensamiento y la acción, facilitando un flujo continuo que mejora la coordinación y la motricidad fina.

La transición de la escritura a la lectura ocurre a través de la repetida escucha de historias y rimas, descubriendo letras a partir de historias específicas, y conectando imágenes y emociones con las expresiones. A medida que los niños avanzan en su aprendizaje, exploran el acto de leer a través de lo que ellos mismos han escrito o lo que el maestro ha escrito en la pizarra (Rawson & Richter, 2000). El trabajo interdisciplinario también es relevante. Bowen (2022) explica que las historias son la base para muchas lecciones futuras en materias escolares paralelas. En sus propias palabras,

“... El maestro Waldorf deriva lecciones futuras de las imágenes y eventos transmitidos en las historias. Una lección de matemáticas de primer grado puede basarse, por ejemplo, en el cuento de hadas de los Hermanos Grimm, “Los doce hermanos”. Una lección de artes del lenguaje de segundo grado puede desarrollarse fácilmente a partir de la fábula “El zorro y las uvas”. Una lección de biología de cuarto grado puede surgir de un mito nórdico. Al hacer esto, el maestro presenta al alumno los aspectos “más fríos” y abstractos de las lecciones a través del vehículo de las escenas imaginadas de la historia. Estas lecciones más abstractas incluyen el trabajo con lenguaje simbólico (escritura y lectura) y procesos numéricos (matemáticas). El niño encuentra estas lecciones dentro del contexto de historias contadas vívidamente para ellos, de historias que imaginaron, que construyeron con imágenes enriquecidas y significativas dentro de sí mismos. Por lo tanto, las lecciones subsiguientes están “precalentadas”, presentadas y familiarizadas dentro de las imágenes creadas por el alma.”

En los grados superiores, la imaginación de los alumnos continúa siendo crucial, y el maestro puede fomentarla mediante preguntas que resalten aspectos que enriquezcan la experiencia (Lutzker, 2022a). El desarrollo de la lectura cobra vida en los grados superiores a través de la lectura libre, la recitación, la lectura coral y la lectura en voz alta. Por ejemplo, para el ejercicio de recitación, el maestro puede comenzar diciendo un par de líneas con todo el grupo, luego reduciéndolo a la mitad de la clase, luego a cinco alumnos, y finalmente a dos. Según van Oort (2002), este ejercicio permite que los alumnos más débiles pierdan la timidez y memoricen el texto.

Durante la lectura, se puede despertar y profundizar el interés al dar a diferentes alumnos la oportunidad de leer pasajes en voz alta o interpretar partes de la obra (Lutzker, 2022a). Por ejemplo, durante la lectura coral, los alumnos más débiles son apoyados por los más hábiles sin sentir la vergüenza de recibir atención especial frente a los demás, mientras ganan confianza (van Oort, 2002). Elementos como rápido/lento, tenso/relajado, tono alto/bajo son considerados por el maestro antes de que comience la lección (van Oort, 2002). Crear un ambiente seguro para la autoexpresión y la lectura es importante, permitiendo el desarrollo de un sentido de comunidad en el aula.

## Material de lectura y aprendizaje de la gramática

En las clases principales Waldorf, los niños crean su propio material de lectura a partir de cuentos de hadas, fábulas, mitos, leyendas, poemas y biografías. A los 9 o 10 años, en tercer grado, los niños experimentan

un despertar transformador, cuando comienzan a experimentar el lenguaje de manera más consciente (Röh, 2013).

El cambio de autoconciencia de los niños según Rudolf Steiner, permite un desarrollo gradual de habilidades lingüísticas más profundas y una mayor comprensión del mundo que los rodea. En palabras de Steiner, el cambio en la autoconciencia de los niños se hace más fuerte a la edad de nueve años y comprenden mucho mejor lo que el maestro explica sobre la diferencia entre el ser humano y el mundo (2000).

La enseñanza de la gramática puede iniciarse alrededor de los nueve años. En esta etapa, los niños empiezan a verse a sí mismos como individuos separados y observan su entorno con una nueva perspectiva, lo que les permite comprender mejor la estructura del lenguaje. Al llegar a los nueve años, los niños atraviesan un punto de inflexión conocido como el Rubicón. Para Steiner, cruzar el Rubicón en el contexto del desarrollo infantil significa que el niño está dejando atrás su conexión inconsciente e indiferenciada con el mundo (Föller-Mancini & Berger, 2018).

En esta etapa del Rubicón, los niños pueden escribir fábulas que hayan escuchado el año anterior y resaltar los sustantivos, adjetivos y verbos con diferentes colores para facilitar su identificación. Utilizando lápices de colores y cuadernos, elaboran sus propios libros y cubiertas, que luego pueden leer en casa y en la escuela (Rawson & Richter, 2000). Los niños también pueden inventar ejemplos durante el proceso de escritura. Inventar ejemplos es educativo en sí mismo, fomentando el pensamiento y la creatividad en los alumnos.

En cuarto grado, los niños comienzan a adentrarse en la gramática mediante la creación de sus propios cuadernos, utilizando el material facilitado por el maestro (Navascués, 1993). El trabajo entre maestros juega un papel relevante. Por ejemplo, el maestro de idiomas inicia la enseñanza de la 'forma presente' del idioma extranjero una vez que el maestro de clase ha explorado los principales tipos de oraciones (von Winterfeldt, 2010). Para garantizar el éxito de este proceso, es esencial que exista una cooperación activa del profesorado.

La gramática se explora a través de la creación de cuadernos elaborados por los propios alumnos, lo que fomenta una comprensión lingüística más profunda y promueve su autonomía en el proceso de aprendizaje. Durante esta etapa, los niños comienzan a explorar de manera consciente las estructuras gramaticales y vocabulario a través de los versos que ya conocen, lo que les permite alcanzar gradualmente un nuevo nivel de autoconciencia (Röh, 2013). Por ejemplo, una actividad comúnmente empleada por los maestros Waldorf consiste en tomar un poema sencillo y animar a los niños a cambiar algunas palabras para buscar rimas (Bowen, 2022), lo que les permite interactuar con el lenguaje de manera artística y creativa.

Los fundamentos de la analogía pueden enseñarse entre los nueve y diez años, mientras que la sintaxis puede introducirse de manera más formal a partir de los doce años. Este enfoque graduado permite a los alumnos asimilar gradualmente los conceptos gramaticales de manera que se ajusten a su desarrollo cognitivo, preparándolos para un aprendizaje más profundo y significativo en el futuro.

## Enseñar idiomas extranjeros

La práctica artística es fundamental en el aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros. Una amplia variedad de canciones, juegos, poemas e historias están basadas en el enfoque de "aprender haciendo" (Lutzker, 2022a). Desde los primeros años, los niños de los colegios Waldorf son expuestos a dos idiomas extranjeros, permitiendo que los niños "se sumerjan emocionalmente en el flujo de escuchar y experimentar el idioma" (Röh, 2013, p. 10).

Según Jaffke (2005), exponer a los niños a nuevos sonidos, entonaciones, ritmos y formas de expresión enriquece su conciencia lingüística, lo que a su vez contribuye al desarrollo de su lengua materna. El maestro apoya a los niños en el desarrollo de habilidades conversacionales a través del canto y el lenguaje poético, al mismo tiempo que los familiariza con elementos paralingüísticos como la entonación.

Tanto los maestros de lengua materna como los maestros de lenguas extranjeras brindan a los niños la oportunidad de sumergirse en el mundo del lenguaje a través de una variedad de actividades dinámicas

y estimulantes. Estas actividades incluyen movimientos, dramatizaciones y diálogos, entre otros recursos creativos. Este enfoque no solo busca enseñar el idioma, sino también cultivar un amor y aprecio por la comunicación verbal, haciendo que el aprendizaje sea emocionante y significativo para los alumnos.

Durante los primeros tres años escolares, los maestros se comunican directamente con los alumnos, prescindiendo de herramientas como grabaciones o dispositivos similares. El maestro enriquece su expresión verbal con gestos faciales y movimientos (Kiersch, 2015). Este enfoque destaca la importancia de los sonidos y evita las explicaciones intelectuales o traducciones, con el propósito de fomentar el placer por hablar. Esta habilidad se desarrolla mediante el mismo uso activo del lenguaje hablado (Petersen, 2013). Se incluye un repertorio amplio de trabalenguas, rimas, canciones, poesía, rimas con movimiento, entre otros.

Para aprender un idioma extranjero, los niños necesitan experimentar alegría, ya que “esta alegría es un requisito indispensable para hablar” (Petersen, 2013, p. 29). Para satisfacer las necesidades de los alumnos más grandes, se adopta un enfoque particular en la enseñanza de la lectura. Se seleccionan textos con el propósito de que los alumnos los lean y luego los relaten con sus propias palabras, incorporando comentarios y discusiones (Kiersch, 2015).

Las escuelas Waldorf integran dimensiones poéticas y dramáticas en todas las etapas del aprendizaje. La poesía se utiliza de manera creativa, animando a los niños a interactuar con el lenguaje; por ejemplo, cambiando palabras en los poemas para encontrar rimas. La música también se incorpora al aprendizaje, estimulando la imaginación a través del lenguaje y la melodía (Bowen, 2022).

En los grados superiores, se emplean diversas técnicas de lectura como la lectura libre, recitación, lectura coral y lectura en voz alta. Los maestros consideran elementos como el ritmo, la tensión y el tono para crear un ambiente seguro y fomentar la autoexpresión. El teatro lírico y el teatro de cámara permiten a los alumnos explorar la literatura de manera profunda, enriqueciendo su comprensión y apreciación literaria (Lutzker, 2022a).

## **Motivación en el aprendizaje y comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria**

La motivación del alumno abarca una amplia gama de fuerzas que generan energía, fortaleza, intensidad y persistencia, así como también dirección y propósitos detrás de la acción (Reeve, 2012). La motivación es un factor determinante que precede y da forma al compromiso estudiantil (Reeve, 2013).

El compromiso estudiantil (student engagement) se define como un “evento en el aula relativamente público, objetivo y observable” (Reeve, 2012, p. 167). Este concepto representa un proceso individual que se relaciona con todas las interacciones que tienen lugar en el aula (Schlag, 2021), comprendiendo la interacción entre el material de aprendizaje, los compañeros de clase y los maestros (Montenegro, 2017a). El compromiso estudiantil abarca dimensiones como la conductual, emocional, cognitiva y agéntica.

El análisis de los intereses y comportamiento de los alumnos es crucial para tomar decisiones al momento de enseñar. Por ejemplo, en el contexto de aprender a leer, los maestros pueden tener en cuenta (a) la atención de los alumnos (compromiso conductual), (b) el disfrute o rechazo que experimentan durante el acto de leer (compromiso emocional), (c) el esfuerzo que dedican a comprender la lectura (compromiso cognitivo), y (d) las iniciativas para interactuar y mejorar la comprensión a través de ideas o preguntas (compromiso agéntico). Dependiendo de los niveles de compromiso observados, el maestro puede moldear mejor su enseñanza y escoger el material de aprendizaje.

El interés por la lectura está ligado a la relevancia del material que los alumnos identifican. Es crucial seleccionar literatura de calidad que se ajuste a su etapa cognitiva y emocional, especialmente durante la adolescencia. Los adolescentes, en esta etapa de búsqueda de libertad, se interesan en obras que exploran experiencias de libertad, lo que expande su conocimiento y perspectiva, y promueve el pensamiento crítico (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

La comprensión lectora puede abarcar diversas disciplinas, lo que implica la habilidad de entender, interpretar y analizar textos desde múltiples perspectivas. En el contexto de la pedagogía Waldorf, se aspira a



cultivar no solo habilidades de lectura, sino también a formar ciudadanos comprometidos y responsables que utilicen la lectura como herramienta para contribuir al bienestar colectivo y promover valores. Esta capacidad permite integrar conceptos e ideas de diferentes áreas del conocimiento, lo que facilita una comprensión más completa y en un contexto social y cultural determinado.

Esta habilidad de comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria se observa en clase, especialmente en los grados superiores, cuando el maestro presenta literatura (por ejemplo, una obra clásica) y abre un espacio de reflexión grupal para analizar el texto desde una perspectiva interdisciplinaria. Esta práctica permite a los estudiantes relacionar la obra literaria con contextos y realidades actuales, como el área de la política y la legislación internacional, promoviendo una comprensión más profunda y relevante del contenido.

Reconocer y fomentar los intereses de los alumnos en otros idiomas, otros contextos y otras culturas puede promover una comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria. El objetivo es cultivar hábitos de aprendizaje creativos y duraderos, transformando la educación en una prioridad de por vida en lugar de convertirse en una actividad tediosa. Además, al promover habilidades de comunicación intercultural y actitudes inclusivas hacia la diversidad cultural, se sientan las bases para la comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria.

Las características del enfoque Waldorf implican también un énfasis inicial y sólido en el compromiso emocional (Montenegro, 2017a). Como lo expresan Cambria y Guthrie (2010), “habilidad y voluntad (motivación) van de la mano” (p. 16). A medida que los alumnos adquieren confianza, están “dispuestos a trabajar más duro y pueden aprender más fácilmente” (Au, 2005, p. 175).

La priorización de pedagogías que apoyan la dimensión emocional de los alumnos es crucial, ya que estas pedagogías tienen efectos muy positivos en los maestros y en los resultados de aprendizaje a largo plazo de los alumnos (Kelly et al., 2022). Para los maestros Waldorf, las estrategias pedagógicas que se enfocan en la dimensión emocional ayudan a los alumnos a desarrollar habilidades lingüísticas con mayor confianza y mayor motivación a través del tiempo (Montenegro, 2007b).

En resumen, la comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria, discutida en este artículo, describe a un alumno que ha desarrollado la capacidad de involucrarse activamente en el contenido que lee, explorando ideas, perspectivas y realidades. Este compromiso implica una motivación intrínseca para comprender el mundo que lo rodea. Esta habilidad es altamente apreciada en los contextos educativos de la pedagogía Waldorf.

## Conclusiones

Los maestros Waldorf emplean una amplia gama de estrategias lúdicas e interdisciplinarias para fomentar la motivación de los alumnos hacia el aprendizaje de la lectura. Estas técnicas abarcan desde el uso de sonidos y actividades de movimiento hasta la selección cuidadosa de materiales literarios de alta calidad. La narración libre emerge como una herramienta pedagógica inicial y efectiva que no solo estimula la expresión emocional, sino que también facilita el desarrollo del lenguaje y promueve el interés en la lectura. Al integrar el lenguaje oral desde los primeros grados, adaptar el currículo a las distintas etapas del desarrollo humano y crear un entorno propicio para la autoexpresión, los alumnos desarrollan confianza en sus habilidades de lectura, facilitando un interés duradero y el desarrollo de una comprensión lectora interdisciplinaria.

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# Oberstufenunterricht (an Waldorfschulen) als Lebensprozess

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**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** Im Folgenden wird der unterrichtliche Prozess ausgehend von dem Begriff „sich zu wundern“ thematisiert. Der Bezug zur Waldorfpädagogik wird deutlich, indem die Lebensprozessualität auf die „Fähigkeit sich-wundern-zu-können“ bezogen wird. Im zweiten Teil führen klassische jugendtheoretische Konzepte des 20. Jahrhunderts zu Thesen, die mit den waldorfpädagogischen Ansätzen unmittelbar zu korrelieren scheinen und auch über die Waldorfpädagogik hinaus von Bedeutung sein können.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Waldorfschule, Oberstufe, Lebensprozesse, Rhythmik, adoleszente Entwicklung

## 1. Sich zu wundern – Biographie und Lebensprozess

Unsere Biographie sei nicht mehr *Schauplatz*, d.h. wir seien nicht mehr Dramaturg und Akteur sondern eher ein *Terminal* in virtuellen Netzen. Der Reiz der Differenz weicht heute mehr und mehr, so Jean Baudrillard, einem Selbstprozess, der darin besteht sich selbst zu gleichen, sich überall wiederzufinden und in dem nur noch Sichtbares akzeptiert wird (Baudrillard 2016, S. 53). Dabei sei man nicht selbst gleichgültig und ungeduldig, vielmehr scheint es die Welt zu sein. Wie wäre es daher (so Baudrillard) mit folgendem Lösungsvorschlag: „Die Welt muss durch eine Gleichgültigkeit besiegt und verführt werden, die der ihren zumindest ebenbürtig ist“ (ebd. S. 85). Hannah Arendt beschreibt bereits 1960 diesen sogar schon unbewusst sich einschleichenden gesellschaftlichen Assimilationsvorgang mit den Worten:

„In ihrem letzten Stadium verwandelt sich die Arbeitsgesellschaft in eine Gesellschaft von Jobholders, und diese verlangt von denen, die ihr zugehören, kaum mehr als ein automatisches Funktionieren, als sei das Leben des Einzelnen bereits völlig untergetaucht in den Strom des Lebensprozesses, der die Gattung beherrscht, und als bestehe die einzige aktive, individuelle Entscheidung nur noch darin, sich selbst gleichsam loszulassen, seine Individualität aufzugeben[...]“ (Arendt 1960, S. 314).

Die weiterführende Frage folgt auf dem Fuß: Dafür soll Schule vorbereiten? Die kritische Frage ist berechtigt, denn „die Desorientierung der modernen Gesellschaft über ihre eigenen Ziele spielt sich im Irritationssystem Schule ab wie nirgendwo sonst“ (Sloterdijk 2001, S. 41) Und ein Weckruf mit Blick auf die Erwachsenen lässt nicht lange auf sich warten: In der Schule käme nämlich vor allem die latente Botschaft durch:

„Ihr werdet euch noch wundern. Ich selbst wundere mich schon lange nicht mehr. Mit diesen beiden tödlichen Informationen wird man zum Klimaschädling erster Größenordnung. Man müsste die Kinder durch ein eigenes Emissionsschutzgesetz gegen Erwachsenenpessimismus schützen“ (ebd., S. 43).

Die Ich-Entwicklung erfordere nicht Belehrung oder kalte Stoffvermittlung. Auch würde eine Vorbereitung auf den *Ernstfall* des Lebens nahezu übergriffig anmuten. Vielmehr benötigen wir eine Schule, „die den Eigensinn junger Menschen betont und sie nicht im Blick auf den Ernstfall kolonialisiert. Wir müssen die Schultüren vor Wirtschaft, Mode und sonstigen Terrorbringern schließen und wieder einen *Lebensraum* aufbauen [...]“ (ebd., S. 42).

Wenn also insbesondere die Schule eine »resolut verwunderungsfreie Zone« (Sloterdijk 2011, S. 9) geworden ist bzw. mehr und mehr zu werden droht in einer Gesellschaft, die eher „als selbst-stressierendes, permanent nach vorne stürzendes Sorgen-System“ (ebd., S. 12) begriffen werden kann, stellt sich die akute Frage nach der Bedeutung von Lebensraum und Lebensprozess im schulischen Kontext dringlicher denn je. Optimistischer Hintergrund der Frage ist die ermutigende Einsicht, dass der Mensch ein leiblich-seelisch-geistiges *Ganzes* ist und eine Biographie besitzt. Die Weltverwobenheit und die damit verbundenen Lebensprozesse stellen zudem eine Art Anfang für jedes Menschen- und Seinsverständnis dar:

„Die Irrmeinung ist, dass der Mensch ein Ding ist, dem ein Ding gegenübersteht. Aber sofern der Mensch überhaupt auf etwas zukommt, steht dieses schon in seiner Welt, auch ohne, dass er es weiß ... der Mensch ist von vorneherein das Ganze“ (Heidegger 2005, S. 93 f.).

Setzen wir an dem angedeuteten Risiko einer *verwunderungsfreien* Gesellschaft an. Worum geht es bei dem Phänomen *Wunder* überhaupt? Sicher wäre ein kleinster gemeinsamer Nenner nach der Aussage von Wolfgang Koeppen sofort konsensfähig: „Wunder sind nicht beständig“ (Koeppen 1985, S. 27) Gibt es mit Perspektive auf die Schule diesbezüglich Verluste zu beklagen oder Hoffnungen zu hegen bzw. sogar Auswege zu mutmaßen?

Elisabetta Rabajoli war 2011 Kuratorin einer bemerkenswerten Ausstellung im *me Collectors Room Berlin*. Im Begleitbuch der Ausstellung bespricht Sie das Phänomen *Wunder* ausgehend von der Wortbedeutung des englischen Wortes *wonder* (unter Berufung auf das *Oxford English Dictionary*). Sie weist auf 4 Besonderheiten hin (vgl. Rabajoli 2014, S. 51-53):

*To wonder* bedeutet Verwunderung spüren, verwundert oder überrascht sein, staunen als emotionale Reaktion auf Neues bzw. Unbekanntes. Die Unbedachtheit oder Unmittelbarkeit der Reaktion (Instinkt) ist in der Wortbedeutung verbunden mit positiven Empfindungen (ich bin es als natürliches Wesen, das staunt).

*Wonder* bedeutet als Substantiv das Gefühl, das durch die Wahrnehmung von Neuem hervorgerufen wird. Die Tradition der *Wunderkammern* im 16. Jahrhundert z. B. befriedigte die leidenschaftliche Neugierde nach Originalität, Seltenheit und Exotik. Die Reaktionen der Betrachter tangierten verborgene Welten des Ichs (so reagiere ich persönlich also).

*Wonder* bedeutet auch den Wunsch verspüren, zu wissen und zu erfahren. Dieser Wunsch dazuzulernen, ist gleichsam ein menschlicher Antrieb. Er befindet sich zwischen der Weltverwobenheit (dem noch nicht erweckten Intellekt) und dem systematischen Wissen (den Urteilen über die Welt). Jeder Fortschritt ist letztlich darauf zurückzuführen.

*Wonder* meint unter Umständen auch eine Person – eine gute, bemerkenswerte, effektive. Die menschliche Individualität ist hierbei zunächst maßgeblich: nicht angepasst, *unverschleiert*, echt und real. Vervielfältigte Identitäten oder hybridisierende (wechselweise virtuelle – reelle) Selbstkonzepte (zwischen Simulation und Wirklichkeit) wären in diesem Zusammenhang auch zu berücksichtigen.

Es wäre reizvoll, den *Lebensraum Schule* und das *Curriculum des Unterrichtes* als *Lebensprozess* allein aus diesem vierfachen Wort *wonder* heraus zu entwickeln. In den nächsten vier Absätzen nehmen wir Bezug auf die soeben vorgestellten vier Wortbedeutungen. Die *Begegnung* kommt danach am Schluss dieser Betrachtung als *fünftes Wunder* zur Sprache.

Waldorfpädagogisch brisant ist das *Staunen nach einer vollzogenen Tat und nach deren vielschichtiger Beurteilung*. Eigentlich wäre im Konzept einer aus dem Tun entwickelnden Pädagogik das Staunen überhaupt erst am Ende eines Gestaltungsprozesses voll und gesättigt möglich. Natürlich kann man auch

an einem beginnenden Arbeitsprozess staunen. Aber die volle Tragweite der erkenntnismäßigen Einordnung einer eigenen Tätigkeit und Beurteilung wird besonders in der Oberstufe als Staunen und Bejahen (meiner Position im Weltzusammenhang) erst nach *geraumer Zeit* spürbar. Diesen Zusammenhang methodisch positiv zu belegen und zu stützen heißt: *Zeit geben*. *To wonder* ist also ein Vorgang, in dem man (sich) selbst erarbeitet, in dem man vorweg übend anwesend ist, in dem man zunächst *verdauen* darf. Schnelligkeit und Lernstoff-gebundene Zweckmäßigkeit stören diesen Vorgang eigentlich immer.

*Lasse mich in Deiner Gegenwart tun und Du bist mir ein guter Lehrer.* Diese latente Schülerperspektive hängt mit dem Wunder als positivem Gefühl ganz zusammen. Auf diesen Flügeln kann Gesetzmäßigkeit und persönliche Reagibilität in ein fruchtbares Miteinander zusammenfinden. Die abstrakteste Sache benötigt Menschen, die sie tätig erfüllen, denken und verstehen, d. h. letztlich universalisieren indem sie individualisieren. Im Grunde dient der Oberstufenunterricht dazu, das *Universalisierungserlebnis* zu stärken: *Meine persönliche Reaktion war und ist maßgeblich, ich bin durch einen Arbeitsprozess hindurchgegangen und jetzt kann ich die Situation besser beurteilen.* Personalität heißt nicht Beliebigkeit, im Übungsprozess lernt sich die übende Person neu und erweitert kennen und das Lebensgefühl ist von Akzeptanz für Selbstkorrekturen beflügelt. Diese ontologische Dimension der Pädagogik kann nicht durch erklärenden Unterricht erfüllt werden.

Dass der Mensch sich weiterentwickeln, nach Wissen streben und *sich verbessern will*, scheint keine Frage zu sein. Ja, das Menschliche ist geradezu durch diese Besonderheiten definiert. Dieser rätselhafte geistige Strom unserer Individualexistenz, der sich als Biographie Ausdruck verschafft, hängt auch mit der langen Selbst-Entwicklung im Kindes- und Jugendalter zusammen. Hierzu herrscht ein weiterer gesellschaftlicher Konsens: *Das Selbst des Menschen ist fragil und unantastbar* (vgl. hierzu Morasch 2007). Jede Entwicklung kann nur Selbstentwicklung sein. Aus einem *Ungleichgewicht* (Nichtwissen, Unklarheit) gelangt der Lernende selbsttätig zu einem *Gleichgewicht* (Verstehen, Urteil), um daraus weiterführende Aufgaben und Fragestellungen zu entwickeln. Eine Schule kann diesen Vorgang als eine Lernwerkstatt fördern.

Schließlich ist das Phänomen *wonder* als Person eine das Bisherige maßgeblich ergänzende Dimension: *Lernen geschieht an und mit anderen.* Dieser Umstand führt hier etwa zur Frage nach Formen des Mitmachens im Schulunterricht durch die Lehrperson. Ist ein Tafelaufschrieb, der zeichnerisch-ästhetisch z. B. Phänomenreihen sichtbar macht, von Bedeutung oder genügt eine Flipchart-Notiz? Wann ist der Punkt, an dem methodisch das gemeinsame Schüler-Lehrer-Tun sich verselbständigen kann in echte Schüler-Eigentätigkeit? Wann sollte wieder eine gemeinsame Tätigkeit erfolgen? Lernprozesse werden einstimmend, abgleichend geradezu *angewärmt* und dann erst *angeworfen*. Aus dem Stand kann ein Arbeitsprozess gar nicht in Gang kommen, d.h. Schule ist eigentlich kein Ort, wo Schülern bloße (unvorbereitete) Lernaufträge gegeben werden können.

Man müsste das Motiv *wonder* durch eine fünfte Fragehaltung präzisieren oder dezidiert erweitern. Das ist das Phänomen der Begegnung:

„Die Begegnung hält eine Überraschung bereit, sie provoziert, verunsichert sogar. Und dieses Unvorhersehbare hängt damit zusammen, dass der Kontakt selbst einen Abstand eröffnet: In der Gegenwart des Anderen kommt die Alterität ins Spiel“ (Meister & Nancy 2021, S. 16)

Daran kann man nur lernen. *Wach zu werden am Du* ist in einer gemeinschaftsbasierten Schule mit Lernenden, Eltern und Lehrkräften ein unschätzbare Eigenwert, der Erfahrungen und Erlebnisse noch ganz entkoppelt von gesellschaftlich-normativen Zwängen als Erprobungen zulässt. „Ich habe mir oft gesagt, dass ich das Resultat all meiner Begegnungen bin“ (ebd., S. 28)

Das ist ein sehr subtiler Kontext. Aharon Appelfeld (in der Nähe von Czernowitz 1932 geboren) formulierte: „Wenn Du jemanden triffst, heißt das, dass du ihn treffen musstest, und dann gibt er dir etwas, was dir fehlt. Man darf keine Begegnung ignorieren. Jede Begegnung mit einem anderen Menschen enthält eine Botschaft“ (Appelfeld 2015, S. 17 ff.).

Dabei kann dieser Prozess der Begegnung in seiner ganzen Tragweite kaum reflektiert ge-griffen werden. Jean-Luc Nancy beschreibt ihn als eine „Art von flüchtigem Flug, um nicht zu sagen eine Verirrung oder

Irrfahrt, jedoch in der Nähe des Anderen [...] Die wahrhaftige Begegnung geschieht da, wo diese beiden Unbekannten, diese beiden Flüchtigen sich von ihrer gewohnten Flugbahn abwenden und aufeinander zubewegen [...] Aber es geht nicht darum, irgendwohin zu gelangen. Es geht um Musik und darum, einen Akkord in der Luft verklingen zu lassen – der niemandem gehört und der Begegnung ist“ (Meister & Nancy 2021, S. 94)

Insofern ist Schule an sich ohnehin Lebensraum und wie (in fünf Motiven hier) angedeutet hochgradig ledendig, prozessual. Das nicht abzuwickeln oder zu unterschätzen ist trotzdem eine Herausforderung. Vergessen wir also nicht, wie schön Schule ist, wie schön Eltern-Sein ist, welchen lebensvollen Spiegel uns die Schüler täglich vorhalten. Blicken wir zu ihnen auf, lernen wir von der Jugend, geben wir ihnen Zeit, lassen wir sie *verdauen* und ihre Selbstwirksamkeit entdecken. Es geht um die Freiheit zum eigenen Tun, die erlernt werden kann.

„Die Freiheit ist alledem [...] zuvor die Eingelassenheit in die Entbergung des Seienden als eines solchen“ (Heidegger 1954, S. 16). „Freiheit ist bewegtes, steigendes, mit der Menschenseele sich wandelndes, wachsendes Gesetz“ (Rilke 1927, S. 223).

Das förderlich zu ermöglichen, erfordert vor allem in der Oberstufe Phantasie der Lehrkraft. Rudolf Steiner schloss mit dem Hinweis darauf seinen pädagogischen Vortragszyklus vom 21.8. – 5.9.1919 vor Lehrern in der ersten Waldorfschule in Stuttgart:

„Da tritt (am Anfang der Oberstufe) besonders alles dasjenige hervor, was sich als Phantasiemacht zum Ausdruck bringt – an sie müssen wir insbesondere appellieren [...].“ Es bestehe daher auf Lehrerseite die konsequente Notwendigkeit, „phantasievoll seinen ganzen Lehrstoff zu gestalten, immer neu und neu seinen Lehrstoff zu gestalten. [...] Und wer Pädagogik in sich aufnehmen will, der schreibe sich vor diese Pädagogik als Motto, Durchdringe dich mit Phantasiefähigkeit, haben den Mut zur Wahrheit, schärfe dein Gefühl für seelische Verantwortlichkeit“ (Steiner 1932, S. 213 ff.).

Diese Überlegungen zu den Phänomenen *Wunder* und *Phantasie* legen eine Brücke nahe zur Perspektive, dass fachgebundener Unterricht vor allem auch als Lebens- und Lernprozesse *anhand eines Fachs* verstanden werden kann. Das Aufbauen von Fachwissen findet dabei sehr wohl statt, ist jedoch nicht alleine Ziel. Darauf verweisen auch die sogenannten *21.-Jahrhundert-Fähigkeiten* (4 K's), die jenseits des Fachwissens im Kontext von Bildung und Resilienz maßgeblich seien: *Kritisches Denken, Kommunikation, Kollaboration und Kreativität*. (dem 4K-Modell widmet sich ausführlich die Zeitschrift Pädagogik 12/21: Schnack 2021, vgl. auch Harari 2023, S. 402)

Dadurch kann sich also der Lebens- und Lernprozess näher bestimmen lassen. Insofern sich das Lernen aus dem eigenen individuellen Tun entwickeln *darf*, sind alle Begabungen in einem Klassenverband integriert und am Arbeitsprozess ühend beteiligt. Dadurch wird das schulische Ziel bewusst auf die Weiterentwicklung der Kinder und Jugendlichen als Persönlichkeiten erweitert und sogar mit der Weiterentwicklung der Welt in eine tragfähige Perspektive gebracht: Jugendliche können – gegründet auf eigenen positiven Handlungserfahrungen – in der Welt positiv wirken und sie sind in der Lage, sich um adäquate gesellschaftlich relevante Urteilsbildungen und -weiterentwicklungen zu bemühen. Freude am lebenslangen Lernen, Lebensmut und die Fähigkeit zum Engagement – auch in schwierigen Lebensphasen – erscheinen so betrachtet als Folge der Fähigkeit zum phänomenologischen Denken d. h. (mit Heidegger gesprochen) als Folge von Erfahrung in Übungsprozessen, die vielfältig am selbsttätigen *In-die-Kenntnis-nehmen-dürfen* ihren Ausgangspunkt hatten und zu Urteilsorientierungen nach selbsterlebten Aktionen des *Sichselbstgebens* gelangten. Das Besondere dieser Erkenntnisevolution ist, dass sie maßgeblich von der individuellen Persönlichkeit des lernenden Protagonisten ausgeht, der *das, was er nimmt, als das erfährt, was er selbst eigentlich schon hat*:

„Die *mathemata*, das sind die Dinge, sofern wir sie in die Kenntnis nehmen, als das in die Kenntnis nehmen, als was wir sie eigentlich im voraus schon kennen, den Körper als das Körperhafte, an der Pflanze das Pflanzliche, am Tier das Tierische, am Ding die Dingheit usw. Dieses eigentliche Lernen ist somit ein höchst merkwürdiges Lernen, ein Nehmen, wobei der Nehmende nur solches nimmt, was er im Grunde schon hat. *Diesem* Lernen entspricht auch das Lehren. Lehren ist ein Geben, Darbieten; aber dargeboten wird im Lehren nicht das



Lernbare, sondern gegeben wird nur die Anweisung an den Schüler, sich selbst das zu nehmen, was er schon hat. Wenn der Schüler nur etwas Dargebotenes übernimmt, lernt er nicht. Er kommt erst zum Lernen, wenn er das, was er nimmt, als das erfährt, was er selbst eigentlich schon hat. Erst dort ist wahrhaftes Lernen, wo das Nehmen dessen, was man schon hat, ein *Sichselbstgeben* ist und als ein solches erfahren wird. Lernen heißt dann nichts Anderes, als die Anderen lernen lassen, d. h. sich gegenseitig zum Lernen bringen. Lernen ist schwerer als Lehren; denn nur wer wahrhaft lernen kann – und nur solange er es kann – der allein kann wahrhaft lehren. Der wahrhafte Lehrer unterscheidet sich vom Schüler nur dadurch, dass er besser lernen kann und eigentlicher lernen will. Beim Lehren lernt am meisten der Lehrer“ (Heidegger 1964, S. 56).

Diese *intrinsischen* Lern- bzw. Lebenselemente können durch Hinweise aus der soziologischen Forschung des 20. Jahrhunderts ergänzt werden. Interessant ist, dass zum Thema Jugend (unabhängig von derzeitigen gesellschaftlichen Ausprägungen und zeitaktuellen Besonderheiten) im Rahmen mittlerweile klassischer Konzepte jugendtheoretischer Forschungen gleichsam *Urphänomene* erkannt wurden, die nach wie vor als gültig gewürdigt und angesehen werden. Im Folgenden werden sie kurz genannt (für weiterführende inhaltliche Studien vgl. die Literaturverweise) und durch Thesen aus der Perspektive der (Waldorf-) Pädagogik mit Bezug zur Praxis ergänzt.

## 2. Klassische Jugendtheorien und Waldorfpädagogik als Lebensprozessualität

Zum Abschluss dieser Arbeit sollen vor dem Hintergrund des Bisherigen klassische jugendtheoretische Ansätze des 20. Jahrhunderts mit waldorfpädagogischen Anliegen und den Methoden der Waldorfpädagogik kontextualisiert werden. Die Thesen, die hier zunächst zwar etwas generalisiert formuliert werden, bilden dennoch konkrete Brücken hin zu Möglichkeiten für selbstwirksame Erkenntnisbejahung (Perspektive der Jugendlichen) sowie für prinzipielle Gestaltbarkeit lebendigen und altersgerechten Oberstufenunterrichts (Perspektive der Lehrenden).

Sozialpsychologische und kulturalanthropologische Ansätze für eine Theorie der Jugend wurden durch Kurt Lewin, Margaret Mead und Erik H. Erikson vorgeschlagen. Vorausgegangen waren jeweils genaue Untersuchungen zur Wechselwirkung Person-Umwelt, zum Rollenhandeln und zum Jugendstadium als psychosoziale Besonderheit. Klassische soziologische Jugendtheorien fokussieren den Generationenaspekt (Karl Mannheim), die Autonomie der Jugendzeit (Helmut Schelsky), das System der Peers (Shmuel N. Eisenstadt) und die Jugendkultur als dominante Teilkultur (Friedrich H. Tenbruck). Im Folgenden beziehen wir uns auf diese jugendtheoretischen Ansätze (vgl. für eine Zusammenfassung Griese 2007) und werden abschließend in Form von sieben Thesen mögliche Zusammenhänge zur Waldorfpädagogik des Jugendalters herstellen.

Der feldtheoretische Ansatz von Kurt Lewin (1890-1947, vgl. Lewin 1963) diagnostiziert in Abgrenzung von biologisch orientierten psychologischen Ansätzen, dass die wahrgenommene (nicht die *objektiv* so oder anders seiende) Umwelt prinzipiell entscheidend und somit die Wechselwirkung Person-Umwelt besonders bestimmend ist. Jugend ist eine „Übergangsperiode“. Das individuelle Verhalten (eine Funktion von Person und sozialer Umwelt) ist vom Standort im sozialen Feld bestimmt. Der Lebensraum müsse demnach differenziert verstanden werden. Die Grenzen der Handlungsfelder erscheinen dabei unscharf. Jugendliche befinden sich in einem nicht eindeutig strukturierten Lebensraum, was Unsicherheiten in der Bewältigung von Spannungen zur Folge hat.

**These 1: Lernen als individueller und sozialer Vorgang.** *Das Lernen im Verständnis der Waldorfpädagogik basiert auf der Möglichkeit des Lernens an und mit anderen und ist als Prozess innerhalb einer Gemeinschaft zu verstehen. Integriert wird die Tatsache, dass Jugendliche ihren Lernprozess von den eigenen Lebensperspektiven aus entwerfen und weiterentwickeln. Bestimmend für das Lernen ist also die eigene wahrnehmende und infolgedessen (be)denkende Position.*

Der kulturalanthropologische Ansatz von Margaret Mead (1901-1978, vgl. Mead 1971), die bereits mit 23 Jahren in Samoa über Kindheit und Jugend bei den isolierten Indianern geforscht hatte, stellt heraus,

dass das Sozialverhalten kulturbestimmt ist (Kulturrelativismus) – role taking und role making sind Wirkungskategorien, nach denen auch Geschlechterrollen soziokulturell bedingt sind. Das Rollenhandeln geht insbesondere mit Fremdreferenz einher. Zentral sind die Fragen nach Identität und Bindung (Orientierung). Konflikte zwischen Generationen werden kulturtypisch gelöst. Kommunikationsformen zwischen den Generationen ist eine Herausforderung, da Jugendliche tendenziell aus bestehenden kulturellen Systemen ausscheiden möchten.

**These 2: Urteilsbildung als Entwicklungsaufgabe in der Oberstufe.** *Urteilsbildung in der Oberstufe bezieht ein, dass Schüler:innen als Protagonisten ihres Lernprozesses ihre Urteilspositionen einschätzen lernen. Die Kulturbestimmtheit kann insofern reflektiert werden, als vorausgehend das eigene Urteil auf Basis eigener Betätigungen entstanden ist. Dieses selbst geformte Urteil kann in den kulturellen Kontext eingeordnet und reflektiert werden. Der Aufmerksamkeit für den (unhintergehbaren) Effekt der Kulturbestimmtheit (jeder ist Teil seiner Gesellschaft) geht eine möglichst frei und vielfach erübte Urteilsorientierung voraus, auf Basis derer Kulturbedingtheiten (auch Vereinseitigungen wie Eurozentrismus, patriarchale Gesellschaftsgewohnheiten und mangelnde Diversifizierung) überhaupt diagnostiziert und gesellschaftlich kommuniziert werden können.*

Für den psychoanalytisch-sozialpsychologischer Ansatz von Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994, vgl. Erikson 1973) ist zentral, dass die Entwicklungsperiode der Jugendzeit als psychosoziales Moratorium angesehen werden kann. Dabei sind die in Erprobung befindlichen Identitäten und vor allem Identitätsdiffusion und Rollenkonfusion kennzeichnende Problematiken. Der latent drohende Verlust der Individualität geht einher mit der Diskrepanz zwischen biologischer und sozialer Reife – man ist körperlich reif und wird jedoch von den Erwachsenen nicht als Erwachsener behandelt und anerkannt. Dieser Umstand erschwert die Konstituierung einer stabilen Identität.

**These 3: Jugendbildung gestaltet sich in Freiräumen wesentlich plastisch.** *Die Waldorfpädagogik orientiert sich an den Potenzialen der altersunterschiedlich lernenden Individuen. Sogar eine endgültige Bewertung der Fähigkeiten von Schüler:innen der Oberstufe ist daher tendenziell nicht möglich, da ihre Entwicklung wesentlich plastisch und im Verlauf der Schulzeit nicht abgeschlossen ist. Insbesondere könnten aktuelle Lernschwierigkeiten als vorübergehend eingestuft werden. Psychosoziales Moratorium kann insbesondere so verstanden werden, dass positive Lernangebote und Mut machende Ansätze ‚in Ruhe sein dürfen‘ und Zeit benötigen, um die Orientierung der Jugendlichen zu unterstützen. Moratorium würde so gesehen als ‚Freiraum‘ zur produktiven Entfaltung angesehen werden.*

Der generationstheoretische Ansatz von Karl Mannheim (1893-1947, vgl. Mannheim 1928) bezieht das Denken als essenziell standortgebunden ein, d.h. gleiche Zeit ist andere Zeit für verschiedene Generationen. Demnach sucht die Jugend jeweils den eigenen Weg (im spezifischen Miteinander, in gemeinsamer Erlebnisschichtung) zu einer Generationseinheit. Die Soziologie muss daher Grundtatbestände am Generationenphänomen herausarbeiten (dynamisch-historisch-soziologische Forschung). Es entsteht im Jugendalter ein Konflikt zwischen ererbter Lebenshaltung bzw. Einstellung (Hineinwachsen in ererbtes Kulturgut, gelehrtes Wissen) und selbstexperimentierendem Leben.

**These 4: Die Generationenidentität ist offen und kann impulsiv werden.** *Der Weg zu einer Jugendidentität als Generation ist wesentlich offen. Da die Erwachsenenwelt vorausahnend nicht wissen kann, in welcher Ausprägung sich eine Jugend-Generation formen will bzw. wird, ist eine offene (freilassende) pädagogische Haltung, die freie Urteilsbildungen auf Basis eigener Tätigkeit der Lernenden ermöglicht und einübt, unabdingbar. Zum Beispiel würde eine Phänomenologie der gesellschaftlichen Strukturen (Multiperspektivität) ermöglichen, dass die eigene gesellschaftliche Positionierung der Jugendlichen eine solidere Basis erhält. Man beurteilt eigene Positionen auf Basis von Kenntnis und Überblick. Ebenfalls ist das Angebot des phänomenologischen Denkens*

*im naturwissenschaftlichen Bereich ein Übungsfeld, in dem wissenschaftliche Orientierungen und fachliche Fragehaltungen eine ontologische (nicht formalistische) Rolle spielen und daher Urteilskompetenzen substanziell fördern.*

Im Fokus der phänomenologischen Gegenwartsanalyse von Helmut Schelsky (1912-1984, vgl. Schelsky 1957) ist für die Jugend das Streben nach Verhaltenssicherheit (Grundbedürfnis der Jugend in unserer Gesellschaft) charakteristisch. Jugend ist ein autonomer Gegenstand der Betrachtung (zweite soziale Menschwerdung, Spielart des modernen Menschen), Übergangsphase (aus der konstitutionell jugendlichen Unreife), nicht Subkultur. Was kann uns die Jugend geben und was kann die Jugend von uns Erwachsenen erwarten? Was bedeutet also die Jugend für die Gesellschaft – z.B. starke Realitätsbezogenheit (Realismus und Skeptizismus), Gegenwartsorientierung (einschließlich der Kompensationen durch Anpassung)?

**These 5: Jugend ist wichtig und bereits aktuell vollwertig.** *Jugend fällt auf und ist erkennbar eine besondere Entwicklungsphase. Diese Autonomie (Unkonventionalität, noch nicht Bestimmtheit) geht einher mit dem (hoffentlich vorhandenen) fairen pädagogischen Blick, dass Jugendliche nicht ‚etwas Bestimmtes werden‘ müssen. So, wie jeder Jugendliche sein Leben lebt, ist es augenblicklich zuallererst vollwertig und nicht eine Übergangsphase zu etwas ‚Richtigem‘. Ein solches entgegengebrachtes Bewusstsein kann für Jugendliche sehr beflügelnd wirken: Ich spüre, dass ich etwas (bei mir) verändern kann, und ich bin selbst der Protagonist meiner eigenen Perfektibilität. Einmal mehr erscheint das Streben nach Verhaltenssicherheit gefördert zu werden durch Entwicklungen, die im eigenen Tun und in eigener Einsichtnahme begründet sind.*

Der funktionalistische Ansatz von Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1923-2010, vgl. Eisenstadt 1966) macht deutlich, dass das Sozialisierungssystem der Peers Brüche in der multiplen Moderne (ohne Konvergenzen) zu überwinden sucht. Altersstufen sind Rollendispositionen: Rollenlernen garantiert dabei die Kontinuität eines jeden Sozialsystems. Jugendliche streben nach Anerkennung als Gesamtpersönlichkeit in solidarischen Gruppensammenhängen und -beziehungen. Dadurch ist ein Gesellschaftsbild entworfen, das durch ein Auseinanderklaffen von primären (z.B. Familie) und sekundären Sozialisationsbereichen charakterisiert werden kann. Peer groups sind eine verbindende Sphäre mit einem besonderen Stellenwert (Ablösung von Partikulärem und Vorbereitung auf universalistische gesellschaftliche Orientierung).

**These 6: Gelernt wird im vielschichtigen Austausch mit Gleichaltrigen.** *In Waldorfschulen ist das Lernen insbesondere eine gemeinschaftliche Erfahrung. Das ist wesentlich konstitutiv für das Zusammenleben der Jugendlichen. Man fördert sich selbst auch – oder eigentlich vorwiegend – untereinander. Die Rolle der Peers ist somit nicht eine Feststellung über Freizeitaktivitäten, sondern sie reicht bis in den Schulkontext selbst hinein. So gesehen engt eine (große) Schulklasse nicht ein, sie eröffnet Möglichkeiten im Rahmen des ‚reichen‘ Miteinanders. Lernfelder und -umgebungen in der Schule lassen sich mit Tätigkeitsschwerpunkten gestalten, die Peer-Gruppen unter sich bearbeiten und organisieren. Dazu zählt auch der Respekt der Erwachsenen vor den Möglichkeiten und Fähigkeiten von Jugendgruppen.*

Jugendkultur ist eine dominante Teilkultur, die aus den traditionellen Gruppen (Familie, Gemeinde) „entgrenzt“ ist. Gegenwartskulturen und ihre vielfältig konkurrierenden Einflüsse „schieben sich an die Jugend heran“ und müssen zugleich durch den Filter Jugend (geschichtliche Drehscheibe) ständig passieren. Diesen handlungstheoretischen Ansatz von Friedrich H. Tenbruck (1919-1994, vgl. Tenbruck 1962) beziehen wir hier abschließend ein. Jugend kann also kulturbeeinflussende Wirkung entfalten. Die Gesellschaft als Netz von Beziehungen und Bezüglichkeiten mit hohem Komplexitätsgrad bedingen komplexe Interdependenzen von Rollensystemen und länger werdende Ausbildungsprozesse („Verlängerung der Jugendspanne“), die neben der Familie von organisierten Umgebungen (Schule) begleitet werden. Die Offenheit der Jugend ermöglicht ihr dabei, das eigene Verhalten selbst mitzubestimmen (Selbstkontrolle).

**These 7: Jugend ist Maßstab für die Zukunft.** *Ein waldorfpädagogischer Schwerpunkt ist, dass die Lehrenden selbst Lernende sind, insbesondere von der Jugend Lernende. Hinzu kommt das Verständnis ganz allgemein, dass Jugend wirkungsvoll agiert. So kann etwa die Erwachsenenwelt nicht den Fridays for Future-Handlungsstrom der Jugendlichen ignorieren. Jugend wirkt. Pädagogisch kann beobachtet werden, dass jede und jeder Jugendliche ein hohes Interesse hat und lernen möchte. Uninteressierte gibt es nicht. Desinteresse ist immer eine Folge von Enttäuschungen, Unfairness oder Überforderungen (das wären interessante diagnostische Elemente der Rückfragen an z.B. Schule). Daran wird kenntlich, dass jedes pädagogische Handeln eine bestimmte Anschmiegarkeit an die Erfordernisse der Lerngemeinschaft und deren Individualitäten haben muss.*

Die waldorfpädagogische Methode strebt im Idealbild seit der Gründung im Jahr 1919 diese Motive an. Durch menschenkundliche Vertiefungen werden Aufmerksamkeiten der Kollegien für individuelle und gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge inmitten unserer Natur, unserer Lebenswelten und auch unserer globalen und durchaus verletzlichen Wirklichkeiten (Stress, Klima, Kriege, Nöte) möglich. Die Herausbildung solcher Sensorien für das, was unsere Zeit als pädagogischen Auftrag stellt, könnte in Zukunft noch viel wichtiger werden als bisher. Die Schule könnte zum einzigen (verbliebenen) Ort werden, in dem über die Reichweite von ChatGPT hinaus ein Rilke-Gedicht vernommen und erlebt werden kann, wo Urteile sich entwickeln dürfen, wo junge Menschen die *Poesie des Lebens spüren* und Freude im gestaltenden und lernenden Miteinander erleben. Es ist eine alte Weisheit, dass positive und vielschichtige Bildungshorizonte und Erfahrungen über die spätere Disposition einer mündigen und kritischen Gesellschaft maßgeblich entscheiden.

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# In the Shadow of Corona Conspiracies - Investigating Polarization and Differences of Opinion in Norway's Anthroposophical Movement

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**ABSTRACT.** This article examines the conspiracy narratives based in anthroposophy that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic. These are viewed against the background of the general coronavirus conspiracies that were generated during the crisis and circulated globally, including in Norway. The article discusses the concept of conspiracy theories and references recent research in the field, particularly conspiracy thinking related to the coronavirus pandemic. It also provides examples of corona conspiracies that were disseminated by individuals associated with the anthroposophical movement. The article then considers the recent division and polarization in the anthroposophical movement, as well as the friction between anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy. It concludes with a reflection on the findings and the question of anthroposophy as a subculture versus counterculture.

*Keywords:* Conspiracy theories, anthroposophical corona conspiracies, polarization in the anthroposophical movement, friction between pedagogy and anthroposophy, subculture, counterculture.

## Introduction

According to the philosopher of religion Ansgar Martins, the coronavirus pandemic gave rise to “a new anthroposophical subculture” that partly “merged with contemporary conspiracy esotericism” (Martins, 2023, p. 73). It is well documented that corona conspiracies can be directly associated with neo-religious, esoteric and anthroposophical groups (Dyrendal & Hestad, 2021, Dyrendal & Tølleson, 2023, Amlinger & Nachtwey, 2022). The anthroposophically influenced conspiracy narratives largely coincide with other circulating corona conspiracies, where the former often incorporates additional dimensions of esoteric ideas from Rudolf Steiner. Consequently, the supposed forces behind these conspiracies include both earthly “underlying secret powers that control the world” and supersensual “cosmic energies and other spiritual phenomena [...]” that control world events (Schäfer & Frei, 2021, p. 403).<sup>1</sup> In the swarm of corona conspiracies, the super-conspiracy<sup>2</sup> that a malicious, powerful elite is behind the corona pandemic with a hidden plan to introduce a new world order and reduce the world population, is particularly extreme. Understandably, conspiracy narratives with such aggressive elements of anti-authoritarian extremism have raised alarm bells within the Norwegian Police Security Service (Bjørge & Braddock, 2022).

1. In this article I do not deal with the parts of Steiner's esotericism that were used in the corona conspiracies. Those interested are referred to my article “Anthroposophy and conspiracy thinking” in the journal *Samtiden* (August, 2023).

2. The term originates from the political scientist Michael Barkun.

Understanding the term *conspiracy theory* merits a chapter of its own. If used too liberally and frequently, it can easily become a synonym for any criticism of power that one dislikes. Labelling an opponent as a conspiracy theorist corrupts the term into “a general insult” and “a rhetorical tool that can be used in almost any context” (Dyrendal, 2003). However, the term *conspiracy theory* is distinct from *theory* as such. The latter refers to a system of scientifically based statements that, often after years of study, seek to explain certain facts or phenomena and their underlying laws. These theories can subsequently be corrected, falsified and further developed by others. A conspiracy theory, on the other hand, is characterized by the opposite: Its adherents maintain their beliefs even in the face of counter-evidence that should prompt reconsideration (Lamberty, 2020). Transitioning from situational critiques of power to using conspiracy theories as fundamental and recurring explanations is referred to in research as *conspiracy mentality*. Individuals tend to believe in several conspiracy theories, *even* when these are mutually contradictory (Stojanov & Halberstadt, 2019, p. 216 and Dyrendal & Hestad, 2021, p. 102,103). Maintaining such an underlying worldview often leads to an “us and them” attitude where “the course of history and society is [...] full of hidden signs, patterns and connections” and this mindset is then combined with a “state of semiotic arousal, that is a hyperactive search for such confirming signs and patterns” (Døving & Emberland, 2018, p. 83). When I use the term corona conspiracies below, it is in the aforementioned sense, i.e., conspiracy theories or stories related to the corona pandemic. The academic studies of conspiracy theories mentioned above effectively describe *corona conspiracies* in the anthroposophical movement. In this article, I delve into this phenomenon in more detail, examining both external and internal debates and the resulting polarization. The exchange of opinions is well documented, and I will demonstrate that the conspiracy narratives observed in Norway align with internationally established findings. I conclude the article with a discussion and reflection on my findings.

## Anthroposophical corona conspiracies

### *Vaccination as an attack on human spirituality*

Many of the anthroposophical corona conspiracies stem from statements made by Rudolf Steiner over a century ago. While Steiner cautioned against “fanatical vaccine resistance” and took a pragmatic attitude toward vaccines (Meyer & Stauffer, 2022), he also made strongly vaccine-critical and dystopian statements. Among other things, he claims that in the future, seeking the spiritual will be pathologized and that certain vaccines will prevent the development of spirituality. He stated that “children will be inoculated with a substance that makes them immune to the spiritual [...]” (Steiner, 1999, p. 237). On the website of the anthroposophically oriented *Paradigmeskifte Forlag* (Paradigm shift Publishing house)<sup>3</sup> there is an article translated from German and signed by the anthroposophical writer Kirsten Juel. She references Steiner’s quote and concludes that this “brutal statement from Rudolf Steiner has now become reality” (Juel, 12.9. 2021). The quote is then associated with the conspiracy narrative that 24,000 children in Australia were gathered in large sports facilities for forced vaccination. In reality, Australian health authorities had simply encouraged high school students to get vaccinated ahead of an exam, but the false narrative went viral and was disseminated to millions of people. Health authorities had to intervene to clarify that children were not required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 in Australia (Swenson & Fraser, 2021).

The next corona conspiracy communicated in the article was that the Pfizer vaccine contained graphene oxide, which “can cause blood clots and death”. Juel cited the Swiss online portal *Uncut-News* as a source, which is known for spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories (Volger, et al. 2021). Another source she cited was a study from the University of Almeria, Spain, without mentioning that it was not peer-reviewed and that the University of Almeria distanced itself from it (Swenson, 2021). The existence of graphene oxide in vaccines has been thoroughly refuted by researchers (Schwarcz, 2021) and by several independent organizations affiliated with the international fact-checking network IFCN.<sup>4</sup> In the article, Juel

3. Paradigmeskifte Forlag has been listed on Wikipedia’s so-called **Spam blacklist** since 2015. “Reason: Conspiracy theories and pseudoscience” (MediaWiki: Spam-blacklist, last edited, 2021).

4. See, for example, the website of the European Parliament, 8.3. 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-000303-ASW\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-000303-ASW_EN.html) and AP, 8.7. 2021.

attempted to reinforce the conspiracy theory about graphene oxide in the vaccines by referring to “a number of private videos shared on social media” and a study that purportedly showed that “vaccinated people had become magnetic”. She linked this to the well-known conspiracy trope that Bill Gates wants “to create a connection between humans and the internet”. This conspiracy myth has also been debunked (Goodman & Carmichael, 2020). The article on Paradigmeskifte Forlag’s website concluded with Juel urging “the so-called anthroposophical doctors [who] recommend the Corona vaccines as an important contribution to fighting the pandemic [to] wake up from their deep sleep” (Juel, 2021). It is worth noting the metaphor “wake up from their deep sleep”, which is a recurring expression among those prone to conspiracy thinking: You are part of a small minority that has awakened while the majority remains asleep. In Juel’s worldview, the anthroposophical doctors who recommend vaccines are asleep and are thus only *so-called* anthroposophical doctors.

The Swiss anthroposophical journal *Der Europäer* also echoed the above claiming that “vaccines have now been developed to split [humans] from the divine spirit [...] And one cannot start early enough. Therefore, vaccination of children and infants is a crime” (Fitts & Meyer, 2020, pp. 7,11).

### The corona crisis as a flop

Steiner’s anthroposophy presents a demanding and complex interpretation of the apocalypse, hinting at clear millenarianism, which some anthroposophically oriented conspiracy propagators have drawn upon (Martins, 2023). There is no room in this article for an elaboration that would do justice to Steiner’s extensive and complex apocalypticism, but highly simplified one could put it like this: Steiner’s apocalypticism describes a web of constructive and destructive spiritual beings who are actors in a cosmic battle drama affecting world history. According to Steiner, In the 20th and early 21st centuries, the struggle will intensify and anti-Christian, demonic forces will gain strength, acting as opponents to the *Christ impulse*. The so-called “opposing” or “resistance being” will manifest themselves in the aforementioned attack on human spirituality (on the human self), and in new forms of technology that will lead to a merging of the machine and the human (Barkved, 2023). Steiner argued that a “fusion of the human with the mechanical being lay in the meaning of the earth revolution”. However, he cautioned that this fusion should not be “staged by groups that exploit things only in a group-egotistical manner” (Steiner, 1992, p. 21). The latter statement (and others in the same vein) have been incorporated into corona conspiracies. For example, the anthroposophical journal *Der Europäer* states that “vaccination in combination with electro smog and 5G [is the] ultimate goal of the dark, global powers” (Fitts & Meyer, 2020, pp. 4, 6). In an article from the Norwegian anthroposophical journal *Libra*, the ‘dark powers’ are linked to very specific organizations and names:

Once the [corona] crisis is over, perhaps a year and a half after the measures were implemented, we will have gradually gotten used to the dictatorship, we will have been vaccinated, stopped paying with cash so that all purchases are registered, and Bill Gates may have succeeded in his intention to implant a microscopic surveillance chip incorporated into the vaccine (Thomassen, 2020, p. 57).

In another context, the same article’s author, Trude Malthe Thomassen, questions how the Norwegian Directorate of Health’s Bjørn Guldvog could predict in February 2020 that the virus could mutate and become dangerous and assume at such an early stage that “the risk of more coronavirus-type events will force a far better health preparedness in the coming decade than is the case today” (Guldvog, in Thomassen, 2020, p. 77). Thomassen contends that Covid-19 was merely a “harmless cold virus” and cannot be described as “a crisis”. She suggests that there must be something else behind it; namely “a self-appointed power elite” consisting of, among others, “the World Economic Forum and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation”. According to Thomassen, “the global power elite” including “the UN, the pharmaceutical industry [...], the World Bank, the Director General of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (sic!), the CIA [...], WHO, OECD [...]” had already “arranged an exercise around two imaginary pandemics” prior to “the various epidemics”. She also notes “activity in Davos/WEF [World Economic Forum]” (Thomassen, 2020, pp. 51-66). According to the article’s author, “the corona virus is just a flop [...] put in place to bring about an economic collapse”. Through the pandemic restrictions, “a small minority will gain an economic advantage

that will enslave the rest of the world's population". The future holds "the new world order" governed by a "global leadership" that "is invisible as a virus" (Thomassen, 2020, pp. 57, 58, 61).

### The corona crisis as a costume for demons

Thomassen did not explicitly reference Steiner's apocalyptic interpretations. However, Gottfried Straube Fjeldså, then editor of the *Paradigmeskifte Forlags* website and former Waldorf school teacher, did. According to him, there are demonic forces behind the desire to organize society as a "concentration of power in a few and private hands". Fjeldså claims that the head of the WEF, Klaus Schwab, is a tool of the demon Sorat<sup>5</sup> and promotes a "centralization fantasy" worse than that of Adolf Hitler. Schwab uses "the pandemic as a golden opportunity to realize this" (Fjeldså, 202, pp. 51, 52). Schwab's vision of "transferring all power to international corporations, billionaires [and] technocrats" makes "Hitler's leadership ambitions seem like child's play". Fjeldså suggests that while this comparison may seem unreasonable and grotesque, "Sorat chooses the camouflage available in the era in question" (Fjeldså, 2021, p. 52).

In another context, Fjeldså draws parallels between "the same euphoria" created by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels when he mobilized the country's people for "total war" in 1943 and "the blind euphoria we can sense today in the break rooms at work [...]". Just as the people's acceptance of Goebbels' vision led to a popular uprising "that made the masses willingly live more frugally [and] close 100,000 restaurants and clubs", so "[today] the overwhelming majority of the population momentarily accepts experimental genetic engineering [and] puts their lives in the hands of technocrats in white coats". It is clear from the text that Fjeldså identifies with a "we" that lives "surrounded by people who are paralyzed by fear". It is this anxiety that causes them to grasp at "any straw" and thus expose themselves to "genetic engineering experiments" (Fjeldså, in Skaftnesmo, 2022, pp. 253, 260). Fjeldså lets the reader understand that - like those who fought against Nazism and Hitler - being part of a smaller "we" comes at a price. According to Fjeldså, when the majority are paralyzed by fear and willingly allow themselves to be used as guinea pigs in the service of a demonic medicine, someone has to speak out, even if the prize they have to pay is "condescending comments and people avoiding you". And if speaking up means posting things on social media - which the authorities call conspiracy theories and "fake news", but which are actually "critical science" - can I endure "still meeting my snoring colleagues at recess at work the next morning? [...] Can I really bear to put myself through this?". So those who see through the evil feel bad, just as those who stood up to the Nazi Hitler once did. Back then it was "book fire", now it's censorship in the form of "media power". According to Fjeldså, it is painful and demanding to belong to a small minority that stands outside the seduced, sleeping mass. It is a high price to pay to stand up to a collective euphoria where "the masses [through fear] are to be controlled and made docile" to demonic forces and their henchmen (Fjeldså, 2022, p. 255).

### The 1938 situation

Fjeldså published the above claims as a guest writer in the book *Dragestrid - Kampen om mennesket*, (Dragon fight - The battle for man) by author and Waldorf school teacher Trond Skaftnesmo (Skaftnesmo, 2022). According to Skaftnesmo, Fjeldså's comparisons between the present and "Germany's dark past" may be perceived by many as "a breach of taboo". However, Skaftnesmo sees it differently: "If it happened once, it can happen again, albeit with different sets and costumes". He poses the question, "will we recognize the symptoms this time? Will we recognize the smell of Sorat before it hits us from the gas chambers?" (Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 262).

5. Sorat (from Hebrew: Sun-demon), a name Steiner uses for what in Revelation is referred to as the Antichrist or also the *Beast with two horns*, linked to the number 666.

With reference to a blog post from the controversial politician Wayne Allen Root<sup>6</sup>, Skaftnesmo aims to illustrate that today we find ourselves in a situation akin to 1938:

The lockdowns [during the corona pandemic] correspond to the Warsaw Ghetto. Jews could not work. Jews could not travel. Jewish businesses were labeled as 'non-essential' [...] Stars on their clothes [...] The vaccinated enter restaurants, bars, concerts, supermarkets, planes and trains. They keep their jobs. The rest of us are labeled as 'subhuman' for life. That's the star. It's 1938" (Root, in Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 264).

Skaftnesmo acknowledges that "the costumes, flags and facts" are not identical now as they were in 1938. Yet, "it can happen again. The only question is whether enough people will be able to recognize 1938 when we are there". That Skaftnesmo himself has recognized the 1938 situation is evident in the article series "The face of evil" published in *Libra*. Here, he claims that the bestial medical experiments carried out by Nazi doctors on humans, a central issue in the Nuremberg Trial, are still going on today, albeit in a different guise. "Medicine" is the demonic power that Sorat wields as a "weapon to break down the legal protection of the individual's integrity of his or her own body" (Skaftnesmo, 2021, p. 42). He adds:

At the end of this slippery slope, it may be as said in the revelation of John, that 'no one can buy or sell anything without having this mark, the name of the beast or the number corresponding to the name'. By then, the money-free society will have been introduced, and we will have reached the World Economic Forum's goal for 2030: You'll own nothing and you'll be happy! (Skaftnesmo, 2021, p. 42).

The final sentence from the above quote does not originate from the corona era, but from a WEF-meeting in 2016. According to Reuters (4.5. 2021), Denmark's former minister of Environment Ida Auken, the author of this statement, clarified that it is far from an expression of the WEF's goals, as Skaftnesmo claims. On the contrary, it is "not [an] expression of a utopia or a dream of the future, but [a] scenario that shows where we may be heading, for better or worse". Nevertheless, despite the claims of clarification, the seven-year-old statement, "You'll own nothing and you'll be happy!", has become a trope deeply embedded in corona conspiracies (Reuters Fact Check, 2021).

### **"Most of us have no sense of real knowledge."**

A final example of anthroposophically inspired corona conspiracies comes from Sven-Inge Johansen, a former Waldorf teacher, writer and politician for the far right-party, *The Alliance*. In his blog, he writes that the corona pandemic was orchestrated by the WHO "and the environment behind it" to "create fear and use the various nations' health authorities as speaking tube". This also includes "key players" such as "Bill Gates [and] Erna Solberg". They all have in common that "they had invested in vaccines [...] All over the world, we see the ugliest abuse of state power [...] and brutality". According to Johansen, the corona pandemic "had nothing to do with disease, but was a directed performance where the authorities did not shy away from killing their citizens" (Johansen, 2023). He further states that he "has been inspired by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy", which represents "real knowledge":

There is something secretive about real knowledge. Most of us float through life on a raft of propaganda and have no sense of real knowledge, but must acquire it perhaps through many painful conflicts, unfathomable resistance or even serious illness; the anthroposophical movement attracts many who begin their quest for knowledge as believers. But that is also perfectly normal and fine. Faith is trust and can be the most important building blocks (Johansen, 2023).

The aforementioned conspiracy narratives and the alternative view of knowledge described in the last quote can also be encountered in Central Europe, particularly in esoteric/anthroposophical contexts. One study explores the link between esotericism/anthroposophy and the Querdenker movement.<sup>7</sup> A significant

6. Wayne Allen Root has "a history of promoting conspiracy theories and circulating false information" (Vazquez, 2019). The New York State Attorney General, Letitia James, writes that through "spreading misleading claims about effectiveness of products in treating coronavirus" Roots shows an "exploitative behavior that not only misleads the public, but actually compromises our health and safety" (James, 2020).

7. The name of the corona protest movement in German-speaking countries



recurring theme is the conviction that “a secret group controls, or is trying to control, the political and social order” combined with the belief that those who have “woken up” will “uncover the truth”, expose and ideally overthrow the hidden power groups, often called the *deep state* or *shadow government* (Liekfett, et. al, 2023, p. 124). The study notes that esotericism, including anthroposophy, fuels the conspiracy narrative that the COVID vaccine was developed to implant microchips with the aim of controlling the population. Not only does anthroposophical conspiracism espouse anti-government extremism, but it also promotes an anti-scientific attitude:

Proponents [of esotericism and anthroposophy] ignore the majority of scientific evidence in favor of claims for the existence of powerful, invisible forces that cannot be detected by current scientific methods [...] Esotericism and anthroposophy [...] are related to conspiracy beliefs through science denial and belief in supernatural, hidden forces (Liekfett, et. Al, 2023, p. 124).

According to the study, this segment of corona conspiracy typically rejects established science, claiming instead “to possess a secret, higher [alternative] knowledge or enlightenment” (Liekfett, et. Al, 2023, p. 132).

## Debate and polarization

### *Call for distancing*

The examples provided of corona conspiracies do not represent the anthroposophical movement as a whole. Several individuals have distanced themselves from these notions, and anthroposophical medical associations and Waldorf school associations in various countries have issued statements supporting the corona vaccine and the measures implemented by the authorities.<sup>8</sup> In Norway, a heated debate was sparked by several reader posts from the brothers economist Bjart Holtsmark and historian Sven Holtsmark, both former Waldorf school students.<sup>9</sup> In *Haugesund Avis* (Haugesund Newspaper) the brothers claimed that Fjeldså, then co-owner of Paradigmeskifte Forlag (which publishes Skaftnesmo’s books), “produces and disseminates misinformation such as the claim that between 400,000 and 4 million died from the Covid-19 vaccines in the Western world” (Holtsmark & Holtsmark, 25.1.2022). In the newspaper *Klassekampen*, they also sharply criticized articles Trude Malte Thomassen had published in *Libra*, particularly highlighting the conspiracy stories alleging that Gates wants to “implant a microscopic surveillance chip incorporated into the vaccine”, that the corona measures have led to us no longer having a democracy in Norway, and that “the coronavirus is a flop [...] implemented to bring about an economic collapse” (Holtsmark & Holtsmark, 14.3. 2022). However, it was Skaftnesmo who faced the brunt of the brothers’ criticism. They accused him of contributing to the spread of “the most outrageous conspiracy theories, [...] including that the vaccines against COVID-19 lead to mass death, and [...] that the Norwegian authorities have known this all along” (Holtsmark & Holtsmark, 2022, p. 29). According to them, the consequence of such conspiracy narratives will lead to Skaftnesmo “through his chains of fallacies and lies contributing [...] to the fact that today there are people who actually believe that the vaccines against COVID-19 cause mass death” (Holtsmark & Holtsmark, 21.2. 2022). The Holtsmark brothers’ criticism was sharp, especially in their claim that Skaftnesmo spreads lies and in their concern that his “extensive spread of misinformation” would “flow into the classroom” (Holtsmark & Holtsmark, 19.1. 2022). However, they were in my understanding able to attack the content of Skaftnesmo’s writings without resorting to ad hominem attacks on his person.

8. This did not mean that one necessarily uncritically supported everything that came from the authorities, only that the criticism related to the matter itself without being inserted into total explanatory conspiracy narratives. For examples of announcements from anthroposophical institutions, see <https://www.damid.de/presse/pressmitteilungen/1011-impfen-solidarisch-entscheiden.html> and <https://www.waldorfschule.de/artikel/bund-der-freien-waldorfschulen-bekraeftigt-seinen-standpunkt-in-der-pandemie>

9. I did not take direct part in the debate initiated by the Holtsmark brothers, but wrote a longer article in *Samtiden* (August 2023). The article was generally perceived as an adequate and objective contribution to an important topic, also from many people in the anthroposophical movement. Nevertheless, there were a few verbal personal attacks and highly polemic reactions to the article. For obvious reasons, I will not deal with this in this article.

The brothers also criticized the anthroposophical journal *Libra*, for containing “increasingly frequent and more extreme elements of conspiratorial articles”. Finally, they urged the Waldorf School Association and the Anthroposophical Society in Norway to “publicly and unequivocally distance themselves from the ideas of the movement’s extreme vaccine opponents” (Holtmark & Holtmark, 21.2. 2022).

In response, the Anthroposophical Society stated that they “neither support nor promote conspiracy theories”, but “the individual must take responsibility for their own opinions”. It was emphasized that the consideration of “freedom of expression is strong. The Anthroposophical Society does not have and will not have a superior authority over our members” (Wirsching, 2022, p. 20). However, they did not issue the “public, unequivocal distance” demanded by the Holtmark brothers. Similarly, the Waldorf Association did not issue such a statement of distance. Instead, they stated that the Waldorf schools “have followed national and local guidelines during the pandemic” and the Waldorf School Association has “supported the schools in following up the authorities’ orders and recommendations”. Regarding the Holtmark brothers’ criticism of *Libra*, they clarified that the “anthroposophical journal *Libra* has nothing to do with Waldorf education” and regretted “that the opinions of individuals are once again being used as evidence for the opinions of a large group of people. This is unfortunately a trend that the Waldorf School Association has witnessed for many years [...]”. The Waldorf School Association assured that “there is no room to advocate radical and private views in one’s teaching work”, but:

The private opinions of individuals are not the school’s business. If such opinions become a nuisance to the school, it becomes a personnel matter. The Waldorf School Association is a cooperative body and has no authority over the school’s employees. [...]The Waldorf School Association naturally distances itself from all conspiracy theories and extreme ideas. Such attitudes do not enter the classroom (Alsos, 22.2. 2022).

## The friction between Waldorf pedagogy and anthroposophy

Additionally, besides polarization, a division within the anthroposophical community became evident in a reader post by Steingrímur Njálsson, teacher at the Oslo City Waldorf School. He began by thanking the Holtmark brothers for drawing attention to conspiracy theories “that must be countered” and said that he “completely agreed” that it was necessary to “confront the extreme vaccine opponents in our own ranks, [but] unfortunately [it] is easier said than done”:

The question is [...] where in the movement ‘the smelly dog is buried’.<sup>10</sup> In their article, Holtmark & Holtmark mix the Waldorf school movement and anthroposophical environments. For those of us who are part of the Waldorf movement, this does not necessarily make sense, but rather reminds us of one of the many myths that are still circulating about Waldorf schools - namely that everyone who works there stands by the metaphysical and partly occult worldview known as anthroposophy. The fact is that fewer and fewer Norwegian Waldorf school teachers are anthroposophists. I would say that genuine anthroposophists are in a dwindling minority in almost all Waldorf schools today, and in some schools, they are all retired (Njálsson, 2022, p. 22).

Markus Lindholm from the Rudolf Steiner University College argued that it is challenging to separate anthroposophy from Waldorf pedagogy. According to him, the response from the Norwegian Association of Waldorf Schools was an attempt “to erect a fence between anthroposophy and Waldorf education”. Lindholm claimed that such a fence cannot simply be erected, because “anthroposophical thought figures underlie much of everyday life in Waldorf schools [...] anthroposophical views are present in everything from history to biology”:

In the introduction [to the Waldorf School curriculum] it is made clear that anthroposophical ideas about children’s development in so-called seven-year periods, or the notion that the human being consists of a physical body, etheric body, astral body and self, are guiding pedagogy. Of course, this is not in itself disqualifying. Waldorf schools are excellent schools! But it is not easy to determine where anthroposophy ends and Waldorf pedagogy begins. Steiner’s anthroposophy can inspire - but it can also prepare the ground for conspiracy thinking (Lindholm, 1.3. 2022).

10. With the Norwegian expression “where is the dog buried”, one asks where the real cause lies.

In response to the Waldorf School Association's claim that the journal *Libra* has nothing to do with Waldorf pedagogy, Lindholm pointed out that the first thing "employees of the Waldorf School Association encounter in the morning when they arrive at their offices, which are located in the 'House of Anthroposophy'<sup>11</sup> in Oslo, is a large rack of the journal *Libra*". In conclusion, Lindholm pointed out that it was a "pity" that the Holtsmark brothers' criticism was met in such an "anxiety-ridden" manner, and that this can be explained by the fact that the Waldorf School Association's "network has no culture of critical analysis of its own standpoint and has generally regarded academic discourse with suspicion" (Lindholm, 1.3. 2022).

When it came to the criticism of *Libra*, the internal polarization in the anthroposophical movement came to light through two readers posts by anthroposophist and Supreme Court lawyer Cato Schiøtz. He marked a clear distance to Trond Skaftnesmo's articles in *Libra* and assured that he had written to both the Norwegian Association of Waldorf Schools and the Anthroposophical Society and "emphasized the need to [...] take distance from Skaftnesmo's views". Schiøtz had pointed out to the editors of *Libra* that "Skaftnesmo's articles were likely to damage *Libra*'s reputation and the position of anthroposophy in Norway". He had also raised the matter with the board of the publishing house Antropos, which publishes *Libra*, and pointed out that

they should consider expanding *Libra*'s editorial board with new members, so that individual members with strong controversial views do not have too much impact in promoting their personal views. I have tried to balance the consideration of Skaftnesmo's broad freedom of expression and the free editorial position of *Libra*'s editorial board with a clear distance to Skaftnesmo's views (Schiøtz, 6.3. 2022).<sup>12</sup>

## Fathers and sons

One might expect that writers who produce highly derogatory characterizations of living persons, comparing them to Hitler and regarding them as tools of demonic forces, would tolerate criticism directed at themselves. However, in the responses to the Holtsmark brothers' criticism, self-criticism of one's own point of view, which is a minimum requirement in other contexts, such as academic discourse, seems to be lacking. Fjeldså defended Skaftnesmo by comparing the Holtsmark brothers with their late father, Torger Holtsmark. According to Fjeldså, the latter appeared "thoroughly cultured and wise" and was a "philosopher, physicist, mathematician and anthroposophist of an unusually educated caliber [with a] serious striving for truthfulness and veracity. He was known for high ethical standards and, in addition, a generous and caring disposition!".

On the basis of these personal experiences, the sons' inveterate bullying, repeated misquotations, dishonest domination techniques, attempts at character assassination, and unwillingness to accept basic historical and scientific facts, which are allowed to flow out into the public domain under the guise of professorships, seem like a shocking contrast to the personality I have been allowed to get to know in their father, Torger Holtsmark (Fjeldså, 2022).

Skaftnesmo also employs the method of exalting the father and surrounding him with a bright halo of positive qualities to create an even stronger shadow image of his sons. He writes that he did not know Bjart and Sven Holtsmark "before this war began. But I knew of their father, who for several years was a central figure in the Anthroposophical Society". Skaftnesmo says that he had Torger Holtsmark as an examiner for an oral exam in his Master of Philosophy and "it went very well". Skaftnesmo remembers that the two of them "hit it off and had a long and fine dialog about Aristotle's causal categories". However, the "respectful dialogue" Skaftnesmo experienced with his father is not found in his sons; on the contrary, they "scold and stamp" him (Skaftnesmo, 2022, pp. 207, 208).

In a reader post in *Klassekampen*, Skaftnesmo claimed that the motive behind the Holtsmark brothers' criticism was "to weed out people like me from the anthroposophical movement, the Waldorf School and

11. When Lindholm wrote his readers post, the Waldorf School Association had offices in the same building as the Anthropos bookshop and the Oslo branch of the Anthroposophical Society. Today, they have offices in the same building as the Rudolf Steiner University College.

12. It should be noted that Schiøtz's proposal was accepted and that *Libra*'s editorial board was expanded by three members (including Schiøtz himself and me) and that two of the existing members, Trude Malthe Thomassen and Trond Skaftnesmo, chose to leave the editorial board.

in general from the public sphere”. He added that the space he had been given was so small that there “can be no debate to speak of. But that suits the brother Holtsmark well, since they have encouraged personal attacks, condemnation and labeling rather than a factual dialogue”. He further emphasized that the articles in *Libra* (written by him and Thomassen), which the brothers had called conspiratorial, “in normal language means that we keep a watchful eye on disturbing totalitarian tendencies in our time [...]” (Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 23).

### “Those who want to condemn conspiracy thinking must first condemn Rudolf Steiner”

Skaftnesmo, given too little space to participate in what he called an open debate, compensated by texts published in the anthroposophical journal *Cogito* and a separate chapter in his book, *Dragestrid* (Dragon fight) (2022). Here he criticized the way the Holtsmark brothers used the concept of conspiracy theory and added that people “from official anthroposophical circles also accept this use of words and adopt it in their own readers posts”. According to Skaftnesmo, “factually speaking [...] a conspiracy theory is like any other theory: It can be right or wrong. And only the facts can determine the difference”. What the Holtsmark brothers do is to use “a rhetorical trick” by defining conspiracy theories as “a type of falsehood” (Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 208). Moreover, he attributed a deliberate motive to the brothers for not mentioning his name in their initial critical articles in the *Haugesund newspaper*, as it deprived him of the opportunity to respond: “since my name is not mentioned, I have *no right of reply* in the newspaper.<sup>13</sup> It was a smart move” (Skaftnesmo, 2022, pp. 208, 209). Addressing Njálsson, who in his post “joins the call from the Holtsmarks that the Waldorf movement has a special duty to take ‘a showdown with the extreme vaccine opponents’”, Skaftnesmo writes:

If the work of driving out anthroposophy and its smelly dogs has really been such a success as Njálsson describes (a success for which the Rudolf Steiner University College and the Oslo City Waldorf School should be given much of the credit) - why shouldn't the old anthroposophists, who are dwindling in number from year to year anyway, just be allowed to die in peace? Why must they be absolutely condemned and ostracized, as the Holtsmarks demand? And why does Njálsson's nose itch like a stinking dog's corpse? What is it about these anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists and genuine anthroposophists that makes it so important to ostracize them - when they are about to die out anyway? I think we must have done something right, after all, when we arouse such reactions (Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 217).

Here it is worth noting how the impression of a split in the anthroposophical movement is reinforced by Skaftnesmo's use of the plural form: “...*we* must have done something right, after all, when *we* arouse such reactions”.

Skaftnesmo also responded to contributions from Schiøtz. Unlike the Association of Waldorf Schools and the Anthroposophical Society, who refrained from publicly distancing themselves from his ideas, Skaftnesmo pointed out that “Cato Schiøtz - anthroposophy's foremost defender in Norwegian public opinion - goes far in that direction”. He mentioned Schiøtz's efforts to persuade the Waldorf School Association and the Anthroposophical Society to distance themselves from his views, as well as warning *Libra's* editorial staff about the potential damage his articles could cause to the magazine's reputation and that of anthroposophy in Norway. According to Skaftnesmo, one does not get “much closer [...] to a condemnation without using that word” (Skaftnesmo, 2022, p. 84).

Skaftnesmo concluded by asserting that the Holtsmark brothers' misuse of the conspiracy theory concept makes both Rudolf Steiner, who claimed that “occult inspirations [...] work in history”, and the apostle Paul, who “knows that the rulers of the world are often inspired by the powers of darkness”, appear as conspiracy theorists:

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13. The articles were originally written without any anonymization of the name. It was *Haugesund newspaper* that demanded that Skaftnesmo's name be anonymized and made it a condition of publication. As a result, the Holtsmark brothers used the pronoun *hen* in the two articles. Incidentally, this is why another of Skaftnesmo's “defenders”, Sven-Inge Johansen, in his article characterized the Holtsmark brothers' language as “Woke” and “Pride”.

The brother Holtsmark has created a significant problem for the defenders of anthroposophy's public reputation. By submitting to the brothers Holtsmark's rhetorical misuse of the c-word, they are in danger of turning Rudolf Steiner himself into a "conspiracy theorist" in this malignant sense. If they want to distance themselves from all "conspiracy theorists", Steiner joins in the same train of thought. And not only Steiner, but also Paul the apostle. The damned and stinking dog corpses are in good company. [...] Those who want to eradicate and condemn 'conspiracy thinking' among anthroposophists must first condemn Rudolf Steiner. Then they must come to terms with our Christian spiritual heritage all the way back to St. Paul. They have a big job ahead of them (Skaftnesmo, 2022, pp. 222, 224).

### **“The emissaries of totalitarian society”**

Johansen's defense of Skaftnesmo was published on the website *Nyhetspeilet* (The News Mirror) with the subtitle "Fact Check since 2009 - A Magazine for Spiritual Science and Truth-Seeking," and partly on his own blog. On the latter, one can read that the Holtsmark brothers are characterized by "Woke and Pride ideals" and write in a "politically correct, foreign [gender-neutral] Woke language," laden with "political correctness." Since the historian Sven Holtsmark is also associated with the Institute for Defense Studies at the Norwegian Defense University College, the brothers' writings in the newspapers indicate that "the military was involved". The fact that Skaftnesmo had also published a book on forced vaccination (Skaftnesmo, 2020) 'probably struck a chord with the Norwegian Defense University College, because the authorities had just initiated [...] the major public vaccination campaign', and now Skaftnesmo had disrupted the 'state machinery' by 'warning against believing in vaccination'. In addition to insinuating that the Holtsmark brothers are attacking Skaftnesmo on behalf of the military and the state machinery, Johansen concludes the article with the following statement: The Holtsmark brothers and others who have been critical of Skaftnesmo's views<sup>14</sup> "worked to remove the individual's personal freedom and also the individual's personal responsibility. They acted as the emissaries of totalitarian society" (Johansen, 3.8. 2023).

### **When anthroposophy is caricatured by anthroposophists**

Another instance of division within the anthroposophical movement emerged in an article in *Libra* signed by the craftsman Tor Dancke. Here he claims that in the anthroposophical conspiracy segment there exists an "unhealthy and rigid culture of distrust [that] tends towards pure fanaticism [...]":

When you place everything you don't like - and everyone you don't like - as the very instruments and minions of the Devil [and when] opponents are singled out, identified and named, and then have 666 placed on their foreheads - then you are no longer polemicizing against them, but demonizing and degrading them in a vile way. Bill Gates is also a human being who breathes, feels and thinks like the rest of us. [...] When named persons and organizations, Soros, Gates, Schwab, Harari, Erna, Høie etc., as well as the UN, WHO, WEF [...] are more or less designated as the henchmen of the opposing powers, then one no longer talks *to them*, only *about them* (Dancke, 2023, p. 71).

In another context, Dancke considered resigning from the Anthroposophical Society due to the prevalence of conspiracy thinking within the Anthroposophical Society. Like the Holtsmark brothers, he urged the anthroposophical society to unequivocally distance itself from conspiracy thinking. This suggestion was dismissed by Fjeldså, who queried whether Dancke "imagines [...] a sect, a club with a pope or guru at the top, or some bitches who have the facts, a Dornach-approved parliament?"<sup>15</sup>

The polarization and division witnessed in Norway was also observed elsewhere, particularly in Germany. The prominent social philosopher and anthroposophist Karl-Martin Dietz actually did resign from the Anthroposophical Society in 2021. He did so because, in his view, the Anthroposophical Society in Germany did not clearly disassociate itself from statements of conspiracy theory within its own ranks (Dietz, 2021).

14. These include Cato Schiøtz and me.

15. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/tor.dancke> Dornach is the name of the village where the international anthroposophical center Goetheanum is located.



In a letter-form article, he wrote that “anthroposophy is being damaged by the fact that more and more anthroposophists are joining the Querdenker movement without clearly distancing themselves from the right-wing radical milieu, the Reichbürger movement, neo-Nazis and AfD”.

It is even the case that several anthroposophists appear as leading thinkers within the Querdenker movement and cite Steiner as the source of their ideas. [...] This time it is not opponents of anthroposophy, but supporters of anthroposophy who portray anthroposophy in a caricatured manner. Thus it [anthroposophy] has mutated into a package of rather dull notions that are “bought” by the public. And I understand anyone who perceives this anthroposophical caricature as dangerous nonsense. [...] Some try to appear as if they are waging a battle on behalf of the spiritual against the materialistic. But dogmatically distinguishing between “spiritual” and “materialistic” is irrelevant (and neither is Steiner’s position). To insinuatingly place people on one side or the other borders - in my view - on defamation (Dietz, 2021, pp. 72-75).

The existence of factions and divisions within the anthroposophical movement is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to Steiner’s time, persisted after his death, and continues to manifest in various forms today (Martins, 2023). The escalation of polarization, particularly fueled by corona conspiracies, warrants further discussion and reflection on its implications for the anthroposophical movement.

## Reflections

*To be stuck in the glue that was meant to connect us*

Although this article discusses anthroposophical corona conspiracies in the light of academic research in the field, the following reflections will also be influenced by my long association with anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy since the 1980s. While I aim to allow reflections and discussions to arise organically from the case itself, without being guided solely by personal impressions and positions, I acknowledge that an internal perspective will naturally differ from an external view detached from the anthroposophical movement. Personal experience in the form of “lived” knowledge can be a strength. However, the challenge lies in recognizing that any community, regardless of its diversity, inherently fosters collegiality, unity and friendship. While these are positive elements necessary in any community, there is also a tendency for ideas to stagnate. Then “the glue that connects us becomes the glue we are stuck in”.<sup>16</sup>

The friction between anthroposophically inspired activities, particularly Waldorf schools, and the anthroposophy from which they originated, dates back to the founding of the Waldorf school over a hundred years ago. Steiner was clear that “Waldorf schools should not be a life stance- school where we cram as many anthroposophical dogmas as possible into the children. We shall not teach anthroposophical dogmatics, anthroposophy is not a doctrinal content, but we strive for a practical handling of anthroposophy” (Steiner, 2008, p. 19). He cautioned against anthroposophy as “sectarian fanaticism”, but emphasized that human understanding, the foundation of pedagogy, is rooted in anthroposophy. He further stated:

It is all the stranger that many people are constantly trying to suppress anthroposophy while at the same time being more than eager to propagate the pedagogy that has grown out of anthroposophy. There is a German proverb that says: Wash my coat clean, but make sure it doesn’t get wet! [...] It would be better if you decided to speak openly and truthfully. When people ask: how can I become a good teacher, one should answer: by starting from anthroposophy, for through it, it is possible to acquire the necessary basis of knowledge (Steiner, 1978, pp. 9, 10).

This inherent contradiction between practice and ideology was explicitly stated in Njálsson’s stance in the debate. Here, the notion that a Waldorf educator is also an anthroposophist was described as a myth. Njálsson’s reader post aimed to reassure the reader that there are few anthroposophists left in the Waldorf schools, most of whom are retired. The response from the Waldorf School Association also implied a distinction between anthroposophy and pedagogy, asserting that *Libra* has no connection with Waldorf pedagogy. However, over the years, numerous issues of *Libra* have featured articles on Waldorf education or have been themed around

16. Adapted from Anne-Mette Stabel (lecture during the doctoral dissertation on the history of the Waldorf Schools in Norway, 2013).

the subject. Several of the most active writers and editorial board members have been Waldorf teachers. Skaftnesmo exemplifies this; he is a Waldorf teacher and likely one of the most prolific contributors to *Libra*, alongside Cato Schiøtz. His reaction to Njálsson's reader post reveals that he sees himself as part of a collective "we", i.e., one of the "genuine anthroposophists" targeted for "ostracism".

Lindholm's commentary can be interpreted as an attempt to strike a balance between completely rejecting anthroposophy and uncritically embracing it. He highlighted the central anthroposophical concepts and ideas integrated into Waldorf pedagogy and the challenge of distinguishing where anthroposophy ends, and Waldorf pedagogy begins.

In my view, the question revolves less around whether anthroposophy is present and more about which understanding of anthroposophy serves as the foundation. To put it bluntly: If one immerses oneself in Rudolf Steiner's extensive texts believing they contain eternal truths, anthroposophy can manifest as what Steiner himself described as "sectarian fanaticism," resembling a 'total-ideology'. In this scenario, anthroposophy may appeal to marginalized groups seeking absolute explanations but may hold less appeal in contemporary discourse, where individual judgment and critical thinking are paramount.

### **"Steiner's successors - subculture or counterculture?"**

The aforementioned quote originates from political scientist Helge Ole Bergesen. He delineates two inclinations within the anthroposophical movement: one tending towards introversion, solidifying into a sectarian *subculture*, and the other evolving into a *counterculture* open to societal change. An introverted subculture leads to the consolidation of anthroposophy as a result of "isolation" and "spiritual inbreeding". Conversely, if anthroposophy is actualized as a socially participatory counterculture, the intention to "carry a cultural impulse into the present" becomes clear. Thus "it communicates outwardly while renewing itself internally". If countercultures lose this aspect, they are "gradually reduced to sects for special interests" and lose the opportunity to be "leaven" for social change (Bergesen, 2000, pp. 51, 58).

In light of Bergesen's analysis, Lindholm's assertion regarding a general distrust of "academic discourse" in the Waldorf educational environment is noteworthy. Lindholm also contends that the same environment lacks a "culture of critical analysis of one's own standpoint". Although Lindholm's criticism in this particular area appears somewhat categorical, the point is essential. For any cultural movement striving to be an integral part of its time, interest and participation in academic discourse are indispensable. This becomes challenging, if not impossible, if one claims exclusive access to the truth or rests on old ideas and traditions. Autonomy, individualization and critical thinking, despite their potential challenges, is a signature of our time. A movement devoid of self-critical thinking is out of sync with the contemporary discourse.

In my opinion, the anthroposophical conspiracy mentality lacks the aforementioned signature. Rather, it manifests as tragic signs of a uniform and homogeneous, totalitarian and uncritical adoption of preconceived narratives. Furthermore, it embodies an extreme anti-authority ideology and culture of suspicion, which, as Dietz suggests, leads to anthroposophy being caricatured and mutating into a package of insipid notions. By portraying themselves as awake representatives of a deeper insight and alternative science inaccessible to the rest of humanity, proponents reinforce an "us and them" mentality that affects not only believers but anthroposophy and the anthroposophical movement as a whole.

Spreaders of conspiracy narratives often use the term *mainstream* to describe a uniform majority, contrasting it with their supposedly clearer insight into hidden forces at work. However, in my experience, the opposite is true; it is in the so-called mainstream that one finds diversity, a change of opinion, room for multiple perspectives, criticism and self-criticism, and a wide tolerance for different points of view. Within academic discourse, wonder and curiosity, critical engagement with one's own perspectives and openness to others are the basic forces that keep science moving forward and evolving. For those who were not 'hearing-damaged' by the noise of aggressive super-conspiracy theories during the corona crisis, there was plenty of objective and legitimate criticism and diversity of opinion to be found. Diversity of opinion is integral

to a democratic society. Even in the wake of the corona crisis, discussions about the justification of the lockdowns, for example, have been characterized by multiple perspectives and positions.

Believing that one, as opposed to the masses, have access to true, alternative knowledge is the opposite of diversity of opinion. Instead, it appears exceptionally uniform, with no room for correction or falsification, self-criticism or the development of ideas. Spreaders of conspiracy narratives believe they are more awake than the sleeping masses who allow themselves to be sedated by evil, demonic forces. In reality, they anesthetize themselves by escaping into constructed narratives offering simplified explanations. In this sense, conspiracy theories become a kind of “opium”, not for the majority, but for a small group convinced of their enlightenment. By juxtaposing the forces behind the “*plandemic*” and those behind the Holocaust, the so called ‘dragon fight’ gains legitimacy and morale is strengthened. Presumably, the sense of victimhood is also reinforced when, akin to Hitler’s opponents, one experiences pain and suffering: As Fjeldså’s victim rhetoric suggests, being frozen out at work, have to deal with snoring colleagues, receive unpleasant comments and are censored on Facebook when you post links from “critical science” further strengthen this feeling.

Aggressive counterattacks and victim rhetoric, in the form of claims of being bullied and persecuted, dominate the conspiracy segment. The criticism from the Holtmark brothers was sharp, however, instead of providing sharp and objective counter-criticism, they choose not only to attack the brothers personally, but portrayed their deceased father in panegyric terms to cast an even darker shadow over the sons’ perceived shortcomings. Surely such a response to criticism indicates a lack of substantial, factual arguments to counter the criticism. Believing that named individuals and organizations are executing a plan to exterminate large parts of the population surpassing the horrors of the Holocaust - driven by demonic inspiration - encapsulates one within a strange and sectarian world of imagination, perceived as outside of time and the world by others.

## Conclusion

In this article I have demonstrated, based on academic theory, that the broader conspiracy narratives during the corona pandemic were mirrored in anthroposophical corona conspiracies. Like other corona conspiracies, those found within the marginal anthroposophical environment was characterized by a chronic culture of suspicion. At the fringes of the anthroposophical dissemination of conspiracy narratives, one also encountered a clear anti-authority extremism with aggressive interpretations of individuals and organizations as instruments of demonically inspired plans to exterminate large parts of humanity. The anthroposophical corona conspiracies led to polarization and division within the anthroposophical movement and triggered discussions about the relationship between anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy.

One of Skaftnesmo’s points warrants extra attention: distancing oneself from conspiracy thinkers among anthroposophists necessitates distancing from Rudolf Steiner. For, “the ‘conspiratorial’ is a *logically necessary part* of any spiritual or religious worldview that assumes the existence of good and evil spiritual powers”. According to Skaftnesmo, not only Steiner’s anthroposophy, but “our Christian spiritual heritage rests on conspiratorial thought” (Skaftnesmo, 2022, pp. 222, 223). The idea Skaftnesmo launches here warrants further exploration - something I intend to pursue in a future article.

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# Influence of Wi-Fi Exposure on Cognitive and Artistic Performances as well as Social and Individual Behaviour on a Class of Pupils in Elementary School

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**ABSTRACT.** During the experiments it was investigated the effect of Wi-Fi exposure on a class of pupils in the second grade primary school (8-9 years old). To the external Wi-Fi background level from the neighborhood and the Wi-Fi network in the school, an additional router installed in the classroom was used. The exposure effects were studied on pupil's cognitive, artistic and creative abilities and also on their individual and social behavior through written tests, drawings and direct observations using qualitative and also quantitative methods. The examination took place on four dates, two dates with Wi-Fi exposure and two dates without Wi-Fi exposure. No significant effects were observed with the quantitative methods. There was only a trend towards fewer errors without exposure. The qualitative observation of behavior indicates an effect. Pupils in the control situation displayed a more relaxed behavior.

In the same setup with the identical class, the effect of a room harmonizer was tested independently a few months later. The situation was examined under Wi-Fi exposure with and without a room harmonizer. While the observation of cognitive performance and creative abilities showed no effect of Wi-Fi in our experimental design, there was a noticeable change in social behavior.

We strongly recommend further studies on the effects of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields on children, with particular emphasis on social behavior.

*Keywords:* radio frequency electromagnetic fields; cognitive performances, artistic and creative performances, social behavior, Wi-Fi.

## 1. Introduction

In the last decade, but especially in the pandemic and after pandemic period the number of Wi-Fi networks and devices using by default Wi-Fi signals (from laptops and printers to smart phones and smart watches)

increased with a high pace in work and educational environments. The education itself changed in its specific activities, being more orientated to use digital devices in virtual environment. Through them, the pupils and students in schools and universities are exposed to an increasing level of RF-EMF radiation. The overall effects on their abilities and health are still to be investigated and there is a scarcity of scientific studies made on this topic.

(Mortazavi et al. 2011) studied 469 students for the consequences of mobile phone use. There was a statistically significant correlation between call duration and the frequency of headaches, muscle aches, palpitations, fatigue, tinnitus, dizziness and sleep problems. Problems with attention, concentration and nervousness were also greater than expected among frequent users. The result of the study conducted by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute made on almost 700 young people in Switzerland: the high-frequency electromagnetic fields from mobile phones have a detrimental effect on the development of memory performance of certain brain regions, especially figurative memory (Foerster et al. 2018). The finding that non-ionising radiation opens the blood-brain barrier through oxidative stress and thus toxins enter the brain underpins the potential for damage (Belpomme et al. 2018). Studies on WLAN show a significant association with headaches and fatigue (Chiu et al. 2015; Redmayne et al. 2013).

(Papageorgiou et al. 2011) tested the responses of 15 men and 15 women (mean age ca. 24 years), using EEG to record the P300 waves. The P300 component is active during thought and memory processes. The subjects heard incomplete sentences via headphones and were instructed to complete the sentences with a sensible response. There were significant differences in the responses between exposed and non-exposed persons, but also between women and men.

While there were no differences between the genders in non-exposed subjects, the P300 amplitude significantly increased in men and significantly decreased in women when the Wi-Fi signals were activated (0.49 V / m).

Children are at greater risk of RF-EMF exposure compared to adults. Due to their physiology, children have a greater RF-EMF absorption compared to adults. Due to their smaller heads, RF radiation has to travel shorter distances to reach critical brain regions (Davis et al. 2023)

To the best of our knowledge, there is no study to date that has investigated the behavior of primary school children exposed to Wi-Fi. The study presented here tested various abilities of the children on two days with and two days without Wi-Fi exposure (study A). The hypothesis was that the children's behavior would change when exposed to Wi-Fi.

There are numerous products on the market that are supposed to have a harmonizing or balancing effect against electro-smog, including for use with smartphones, in cars or in rooms. Scientific publications on the effects of only a few products are available, e.g. (Henz et al. 2018; Henz 2022), here on the use on smartphones and in cars.

To the best of our current knowledge, there is also no scientific publication on whether a room harmonizer alters the effects of RF-EMF exposure on children. In a comparable experimental setup, the effect of a room harmonizer on the behavior of school children was measured. Under Wi-Fi exposure, the classroom received a room harmonizer on two study days and a placebo on two days (study B). The hypothesis was: with the room harmonizer under Wi-Fi exposure, the behavior of the children changed in the same direction as without Wi-Fi exposure.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Technical design

The location for the experiment was a classroom in Elementary School no. 16, situated in Oradea, Romania. The classroom was placed at the second floor (the highest) of the school building, corresponding to the average dimension of a regular classroom in Romanian schools, with around 50m<sup>2</sup> floor surface and 3m high.

There were Wi-Fi networks in the school and in the neighborhood and other equipment producing radiofrequency radiation in the 2.4 GHz band as smart phones, smart watches, laptops and Wi-Fi printers. To generate the signals corresponding to an additional Wi-Fi network in the classroom, it was sufficient to use a single wireless access point (a router) and a laptop connected to it. Traffic was forced through the network with the purpose of maximizing the radio-frequency level. Traffic generation is done by transmitting data quickly over the network at the maximum speed the network can provide, given the local conditions at a given time – e.g. by downloading a large file or using specialized software for traffic generation or network speed measurement. The additional equipment used during the experiments was a usual Wi-Fi router that is commonly encountered in school environment. No modifications of any kind have been made to this equipment, in order to comply with current standards.

In order to achieve a high level of traffic, a large file was downloaded over the network. The iperf software package was used for the traffic generation experiments (Gueant 2023; Dale et al 2024). The measured Wi-Fi exposure, in relation with the topology of the classroom is depicted in Figure 1.

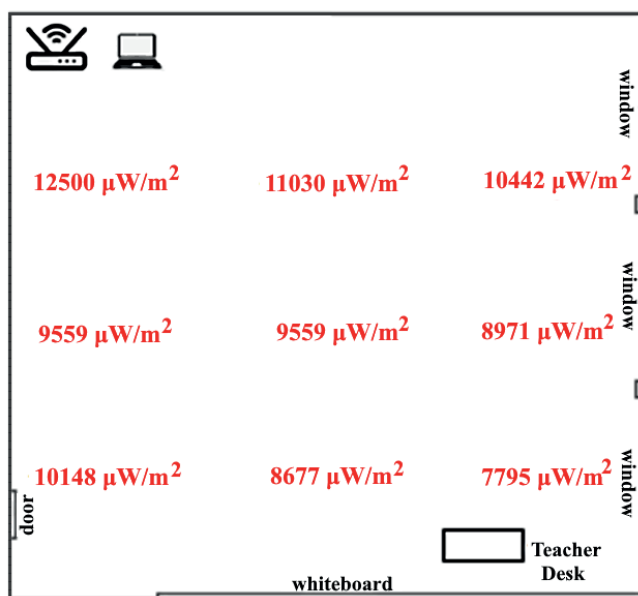


Figure 1: Classroom topology with measurements

Table 1. Power flux density measured during the phases of the experiment\*

	Power flux density values in $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$	Method	Percentage from ICNIRP limits**	Duty factor for Wi-Fi router transmission
OFF phase, just ex-ternal background	200	Peak hold	-	0%
	7	RMS	0.0000175 %	
OFF phase, back-ground Wi-Fi in the school***	2500	Peak hold		0 %
	15	RMS	0.0000375%	
ON phase, back-ground Wi-Fi in the school and router	12 500	Peak hold	-	100 %
	60	RMS	0.00015 %	

\* The measurements are considered at approx. 1 m from the Wi-Fi router used to generate electromagnetic field during the experiment (NW corner in the classroom). The other measurements are according to Figure 1.

\*\* The limit was considered as  $40\text{W}/\text{m}^2$  (Reference levels for local exposure, averaged over 6 min, to electromagnetic fields from 100 kHz to 300 GHz - unperturbed RMS values (Guidelines for Limiting Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields (100 kHz to 300 GHz) 2020)

\*\*\* This situation was not exactly met during the experiments, it is considered just for comparative analyze reasons, to emphasize the difference between the background Wi-Fi external to the school and the added Wi-Fi network and devices in the school and classroom (laptops, Wi-Fi printers, Smart Phones, Smart Watches etc.), as usual Wi-Fi exposure.

## 2.2 Experiments with pupil

### 2.2.1 Study A (Factor Wi-Fi)

It was of interest to develop an experimental design to determine potential effects of Wi-Fi - on the behavior on the one hand and cognitive and artistic abilities on the other hand -, of a class of children in primary school (8-9 years old).

The experiment was performed in 4 different days with usual activities, including tests for the pupils, as follows: 2 days with no Wi-Fi exposure and 2 days with Wi-Fi (2.45 GHz) exposure. Hence, in a regular classroom subjects were observed during usual class activities. The pupils were seating in the classroom in their usual places.

The pupils listened a short story (with animals involved as characters: wolf, bear, snake, fox) and they had to answer to specific questions related to the story, to form words etc. They are 5 items with one or several sub-points which try to explore their ability to memorize, to express, to relate or connect information. Also they were invited to draw what they consider about the story they listened. The children were aware the results of the test are not taken into account in their scholar assessment. The types of the subjects on the test were familiar to them.

The test duration was about 1 hour in all days. In the days with Wi-Fi the Wi-Fi was ON all the time. The router was installed with 1 hour before the test and was ON for 2 hours (1 hour before and 1 hour during the test). Wi-Fi radiation distribution (with router in the classroom) is represented in Figure 1. The measurements took place over 120 minutes. In the days with no Wi-Fi, one hour prior to the test the Wi-Fi network in the school was OFF, no other Wi-Fi sources were present neither in the classroom or in the school and the situation stayed like this for another 1 hour during the test (2 hours in total).

The following aspects were taken into consideration:

1. The change in the cognitive abilities (concentration, memory, focus on the task, mistakes). Grades were given (from 1 to 10) to quantify the answers on the written test.
2. The drawings were analyzed, if changes appear, from the color using, page filling, page layout, creativity, “tidiness” in relation with the story.
3. The behavior of the children was studied by the psychologist of the school and the teacher during the test and compared (changes between days with Wi-Fi and days without Wi-Fi and also compared with the regular behavior of the class).

The entire procedure was managed and supervised by the teacher and the school psychologist. The pupils were having their activities, having no information about the aim of the test or when the signals were ON or OFF. The maximum flux density on the subjects was approx. 12500  $\mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$  on the ON phase of the experiment and almost negligible during the OFF phases. A technical staff member was also present during the entire experiment in the classroom to ensure the experiment runs correctly and identical during each test.

The following main hypotheses were formulated:

1. They will be differences between the results on the written tests in the days with Wi-Fi exposure and the days with no exposure.
2. The Wi-Fi exposure will affect the artistic abilities and creativity of the pupils.
3. The absence of Wi-Fi exposure will affect the individual and social behavior of the pupils, increasing the human interactions and changing individual state of mind of the pupils.

The measurements were carried out in the first half of June 2021 with 21 subjects. The testing sessions were developed during daylight, between 11:00 and 12:00 a.m.

### 2.2.2 Study B (Factor room harmonizer)

The test duration was about 1 hour. The Wi-Fi was ON all the time. The router was installed with 1 hour before the test and was ON for 2 hours (1 hour before and 1 hour during the test). They were 2 days only with Wi-Fi ON and no real ReLux objects in the classroom (just placebo objects) and another 2 days with the Wi-Fi ON and 4 ReLux objects in the classroom (1 cube – Energie-Skulptur, 1 Aurum harmonizing panel and 2 electro-smog dedicated panels). The products were obtained from the company ReLux GmbH, 88699 Frickingen, Germany.

Wi-Fi radiation distribution (with router in the classroom) and the ReLux objects installed is represented in the figure 2.

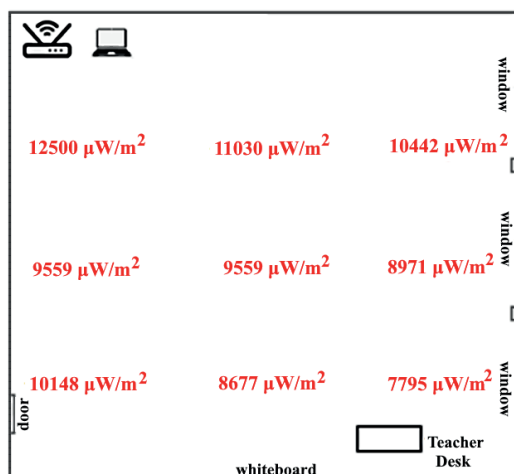


Figure 2: Classroom topology with measurements and ReLux objects



## 2.3 Participants

### 2.3.1 Study A: Factor Wi-Fi

A class of 24 pupils attended the experiment, all of them in 2nd grade primary school, 8-9 years old. One of the 24 is with Down syndrome and he didn't follow the usual tests, but he completed some special tasks under the surveillance of the psychologist.

21 of 23 were present to all 4 tests (accomplishing the written test and drawing). One of them is having also special needs, in a mild form, he was able to complete some of the tasks but the results were extreme (outlier). Hence, the results and statistics considered data from the remaining 20 participants, 12 boys and 8 girls.

The legal tutors of the participants in the experiment completed the consent form.

### 2.3.2 Study B: Factor room harmonizer

A class of 24 pupils attended the experiment, all of them in 3rd grade primary school (the same classroom and the same pupils as in June study A experiment). One of the 24 is with Down syndrome and he didn't follow the usual tests, but he completed some special tasks under the surveillance of the psychologist.

20 of 23 were present to all 4 tests (accomplishing the written test and drawing). Hence, the results and statistics considered data from the remaining 20 participants, 10 boys and 10 girls.

The legal tutors of the participants in the experiment completed the consent form.

## 2.4. Statistical analysis

To compare text evaluation data a repeated measures anova analysis was used. For the drawings ratings statistical analysis of the parameters was performed using a Cochran-Q-test for binary paired samples. All analysis were done with the program Jamovi. Statistical significance was assumed for  $p < 0.05$ .

## 3. Results

Three types of results are considered, according to the three aspects followed in the methodology: cognitive performances, artistic and creative performances, individual and social behavior.

### 3.1 Study A: Factor Wi-Fi

#### 3.1.1 Cognitive performances

For the cognitive performances of the pupils based on written test five exercises (items) were considered for the assessment in all 4 days and also the number of grammatical and spelling mistakes made by pupils. The items were identical and the questions asked were similar for all 4 tests.

Hence, the written test gathers the results on different specific criteria (memory, creativity, pure cognition). The written tests contain 3 exercises (items) testing the memory ability combined with cognitive tasks (exercise 1 ask the pupil to fill out the sentences with information from the story they just listened; exercise 2 ask for forming questions regarding the story; exercise 3 ask for numbering the episodes in the order that happened in the story), 1 exercise for creativity (challenging the pupils to imagine another ending for the story) and an exercise for pure cognitive abilities (asking to form words from specific vowels and consonants).

A repeated measures anova analysis was used to compare text evaluation data between On1, On2, Off1 and Off2 sessions. The results of the parameter Creativity criteria and Cognitive criteria do not show any significant differences (tabel 2). The analyses of the memory criteria show significant differences between session On1 and On2. The mean value of session On2 shows significantly higher values compared to Off1 and Off2. Session Off1 has significantly higher values compared to Off2.

The data analyses of the number of mistakes in the text evaluation show significant differences between session On1 compared to On2 and significantly higher mistake scores of On1 compared to Off1 and Off2. Session On2 has a significant higher error rate than Off1. On the two dates without Wi-Fi, the mean values show less errors than on the days with Wi-Fi.

Table 2: Ratings of text evaluation with and without Wi-Fi exposure. Mean ± 95 % confidence interval and the p-value of the pair-wise comparison.

<b>Memory criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		ON1	ON2	OFF1	OFF2
ON1	9.23 (8.81 - 9.65)	P-Value	--	<b>0.014</b>	0.888	0.06
ON2	9.9 (9.79 - 10.01)	P-Value		--	<b>0.013</b>	<b>0.001</b>
OFF1	9.2 (8.81 - 9.59)	P-Value			--	<b>0.027</b>
OFF2	8.63 (8.08 - 9.18)	P-Value				--

<b>Creativity criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		ON1	ON2	OFF1	OFF2
ON1	9.4 (8.34 - 10.5)	P-Value	--	0.673		
ON2	8.7 (7.31 - 10.1)	P-Value		--	0.673	0.649
OFF1	9.4 (8.34 - 10.5)	P-Value			--	
OFF2	9.8 (9.38 - 10.2)	P-Value				--

<b>Cognitive criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		ON1	ON2	OFF1	OFF2
ON1	8.65 (7.62 - 9.68)	P-Value	--	0.149	0.149	0.389
ON2	7.65 (6.28 - 9.02)	P-Value		--		
OFF1	7.35 (5.97 - 8.73)	P-Value			--	0.276
OFF2	7.95 (6.68 - 9.22)	P-Value				--

<b>Mistakes</b>	Mean (95% CI)		ON1	ON2	OFF1	OFF2
ON1	3.35 (2.02 - 4.68)	P-Value	--	<b>0.033</b>	<b>0.006</b>	<b>0.033</b>
ON2	2.1 (1.24 - 2.96)	P-Value		--	<b>0.033</b>	0.453
OFF1	1.4 (0.68 - 2.12)	P-Value			--	0.325
OFF2	1.8 (0.79 - 2.81)	P-Value				--

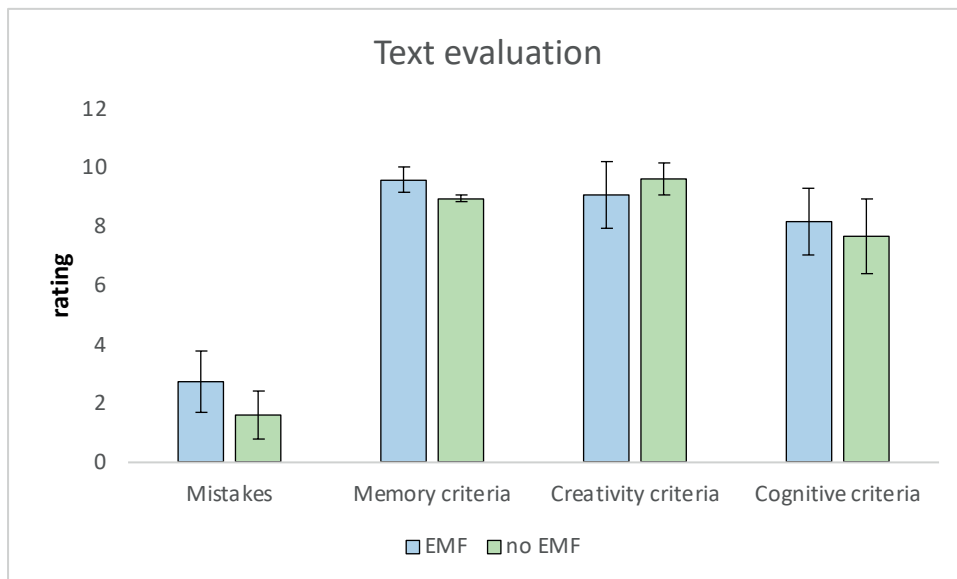


Figure 3: Rating of the parameters mistakes, memory criteria, creativity criteria, cognitive criteria.

As there are significant effects between the results of the days, the four days must be reported individually. Never-theless, the results of both dates are summarised in Figure 3 to show possible trends.

### 3.1.2. Artistic and creative performances

Looking overall and comparatively the drawings in days with Wi-Fi and days with no Wi-Fi at all, some differences were noticed by the psychologist and also by the art teacher: in the days with Wi-Fi the drawings are focused on details related to the content (cognitive level), limits and uncertainty (erased portions) and in the days with no Wi-Fi the pupils concentrated more on the characters and proportions, the drawings are more balanced, colorful, realistic, present time oriented, the page is filled more. What emerge from the drawings in the days with Wi-Fi is tension, competition with themselves, task orientation, restlessness, order, some aggressiveness and in the days with no Wi-Fi harmony, em-pathy, friendship, hope.

In order to quantify the differences in the drawings pupils made in the experiment, some aspects were taken into account: the layout of the drawing: portrait or landscape; the colors: mono-colored or more colors; the presence of the sun symbol in the drawings; page filling: all the page or just a part of it. Hence, the following bivalent items were used, identical in all 4 tests: it1 – portrait (1/0), it2 – landscape (1/0), it3 – colored/mono-colored (1/0), it4 – presence of the sun (1/0), it5 – completeness in filling the page (1/0). Table 3 shows the relative frequency of the parameters landscape, colored, sun-symbol present and drawing complete.

Table 3: Relative frequency of the drawing quality parameters.

Wi-Fi	landscape	Coloured	Sun-symbol existence	Drawing complete
On1	76.19%	61.90%	33.33%	85.71%
On2	76.19%	85.71%	23.81%	61.90%
OFF1	76.19%	76.19%	47.62%	85.71%
OFF2	76.19%	85.71%	52.38%	85.71%

The overall test (Cochran-Q-test) shows no significant differences between parameters **Portrait/Landscape**, **Drawing complete/incomplete with** and **without Wi-Fi**. There were some statistical trends for the parameters **coloured/mono-coloured** (total p-value = 0.09) and **sun symbol/no sun symbol** (total p-value 0.096)

Figure 4 summarizes the results of both days per factor to show possible trends. Three of the four parameters indicate advantages for the Wi-Fi option, but as reported above, not significant.

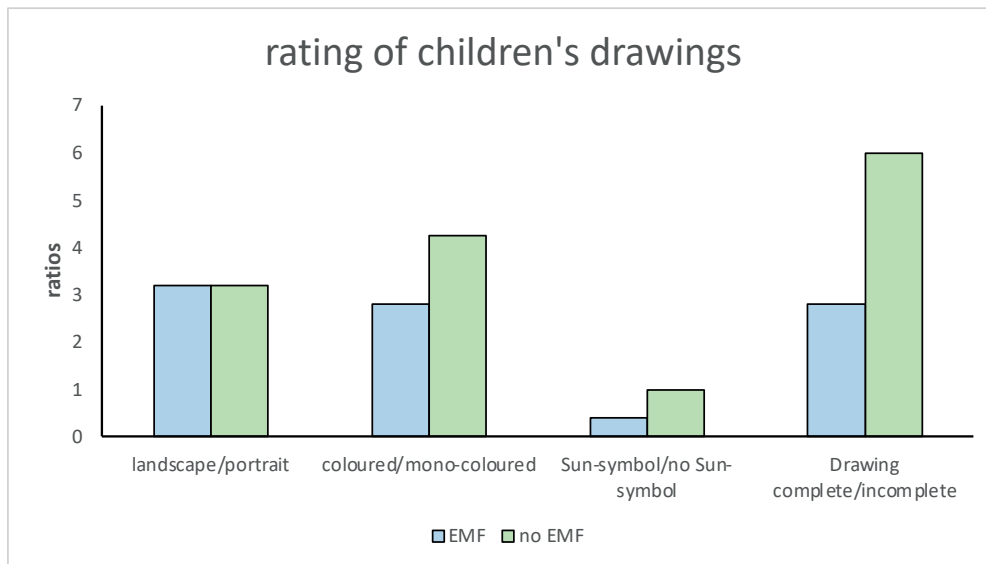


Figure 4: Rating of children's drawing: Ratio between the different parameters with and without EMF

### Individual Analysis – study case

A particular situation will be considered in the following: the drawings of the pupil situated in front of the router, in the NW corner of the classroom – the spot with the highest Wi-Fi radiation power (10.000 mW/m<sup>2</sup>). The drawings on all four days are presented in Figure 5.

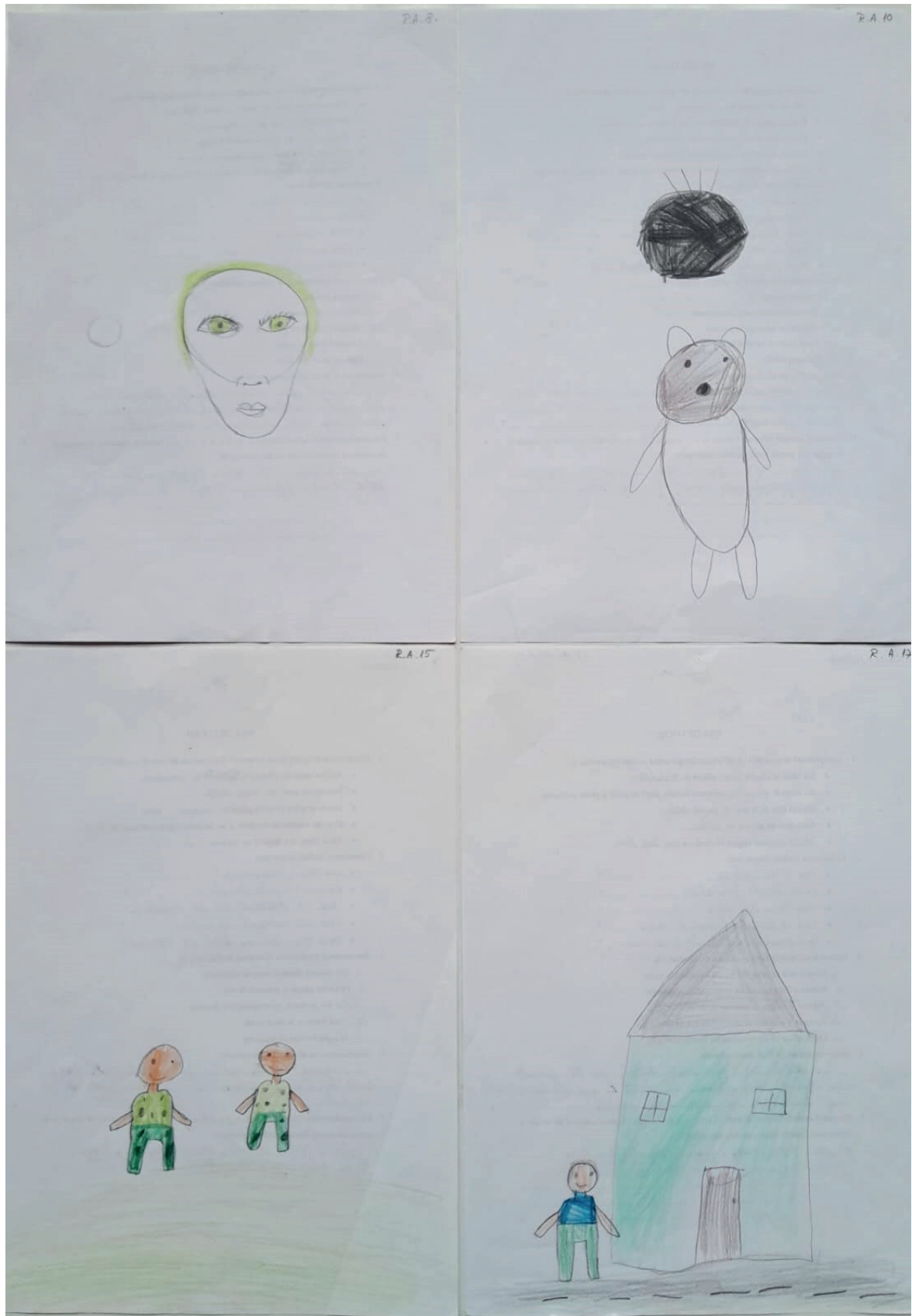


Figure 5: Drawings of the pupil situated in the spot with the highest Wi-Fi level (up: On1 and On2, down: Off1 and Off2).



### 3.1.3. Observation on the individual and social behavior of the pupils

Over the experiments, in all 4 days, during the tests but also previously and after, the behavior of the pupils was observed by the professor psychologist and the teacher. These observations are summarized in the followings.

Day 1 (On1): background Wi-Fi and a transmitting Wi-Fi router in the classroom.

External conditions: 260 C, nice weather, sun with no clouds.

The children are very focused on the task, they ask a lot of questions, they are restless and when they succeed to concentrate they are focused only on the tests. During the test the pupils make a lot of noise moving objects, moving their feet and dropping objects on the floor.

The kid with Down syndrome did his task (scissors cutout on a contour), not paying very much attention on the correctitude of the result.

Day 2 (On2: background Wi-Fi and a transmitting Wi-Fi router in the classroom

External conditions: 210 C, nice weather, sun with clouds.

The pupils are restless, agitated, uncertain about what they have to do. They find themselves reasons to walk in the front of the classroom to the garbage bin, to get water, or a tissue or to disinfect their hands. The children move compulsively their feet under the desk, they ask a lot of questions.

As in the previous day, the kid with Down syndrome had to perform eye-hand coordination tasks (scissors cutout on a contour). He was very focused on the task, wanting to work harder and harder. He was upset when comments were made by the psychologist about quality.

Day 3 (Off1): no W-Fi, neither in the classroom or in the school, only with the external background Wi-Fi exposure

External conditions: 170 C, cloudy with sun from time to time.

At the beginning of the test the children are quiet. For the first time, the noise in the street disturbed them and they asked to close the window. They look more relaxed, finished their written test quite early, some of them took their shoes off - gestures that suggest familiarity with space and the environment, uninhibited behavior, release from the con-straints imposed by school rules, all of which are manifested in a way without hostility. They are talking with the others, wanting to share experiences with snakes. They raise their hands when they want to ask a question or to speak.

The pupil with Down syndrome was quite joyful and after the experiment, he hugged the engineer from the technical team, a behavior quite special on his behalf.

Day 4 (Off2): no EMF. No Wi-Fi, neither in the classroom or in the school, only with the external background Wi-Fi exposure.

External conditions: 200 C, nice weather, sun with no clouds.

The pupils formulated just a few questions to the teacher, they look relaxed and they are quiet. The children's movements during the test were more natural, playful and jovial, reflecting the intention to interact with others. Pupils who finished completing the test did not get up from the bench to move, were no longer vocal, began to communicate with colleagues nearby, whispering, respecting the need for silence for others to complete the test. Some of them, after finishing the tests find themselves an occupation (reading, drawing). They talk about how was the test, showing their drawings.

The pupil with Down syndrome was more creative - he cut creatively, he discovered new utilities and possibilities to use scissors: for example he wanted to cut his hair, the curtain, he wanted to cut the string on the shirt of the psychologist sitting next to him, but at the slightest observation or explanation he slow down and reoriented himself to another activity.

### 3.2. Results of study B: Factor room harmonizer

#### 3.2.1 Cognitive performances

A repeated measures anova analysis was used to compare text evaluation data between Wi-Fi 1 (without Relux), Wi-Fi 2 (without Relux), Wi-Fi with Relux 1 and Wi-Fi with Relux 2 sessions. Only the analyses of the memory criteria show some significant differences between the dates, namely Wi-Fi with Relux 2 differs from Wi-Fi with Relux 1 and Wi-Fi 2 (without Relux).

Table 4: Ratings of text evaluation. With and without room harmonizer (Relux). Mean  $\pm$  95 % confidence interval and the p-value of the pair-wise comparison.

<b>Memory criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		WiFi no ReLux1	WiFi no ReLux2	WiFi with ReLux1	WiFi with ReLux2
	WiFi no ReLux1	8.67 (7.97 - 9.37)	P-Value	--	0.223	0.223
WiFi no ReLux2	9.47 (8.79 - 10.14)	P-Value		--	0.718	<b>0.038</b>
WiFi with ReLux1	9.37 (8.82 - 9.92)	P-Value			--	<b>0.015</b>
WiFi with ReLux2	8.37 (7.78 - 8.95)	P-Value				--

<b>Creativity criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		WiFi no ReLux1	WiFi no ReLux2	WiFi with ReLux1	WiFi with ReLux2
	WiFi no ReLux1	7.8 (6.17 - 9.43)	P-Value	--	0.107	0.881
WiFi no ReLux2	9.6 (8.95 - 10.25)	P-Value		--	0.216	0.617
WiFi with ReLux1	7.9 (6.09 - 9.71)	P-Value			--	0.778
WiFi with ReLux2	8.7 (7.17 - 10.23)	P-Value				--

<b>Cognitive criteria</b>	Mean (95% CI)		WiFi no ReLux1	WiFi no ReLux2	WiFi with ReLux1	WiFi with ReLux2
	WiFi no ReLux1	7.23 (6.12 - 8.33)	P-Value	--		
WiFi no ReLux2	7.1 (5.94 - 8.26)	P-Value		--		
WiFi with ReLux1	7.05 (5.92 - 8.18)	P-Value			--	
WiFi with ReLux2	6.67 (5.29 - 8.06)	P-Value				--

<b>Mistakes</b>	Mean (95% CI)		WiFi no ReLux1	WiFi no ReLux2	WiFi with ReLux1	WiFi with ReLux2
	WiFi no ReLux1	2.25 (1.35 - 3.15)	P-Value	--	0.977	
WiFi no ReLux2	2.8 (1.69 - 3.91)	P-Value		--	0.977	0.121
WiFi with ReLux1	2.25 (1.12 - 3.39)	P-Value			--	0.819
WiFi with ReLux2	1.6 (0.6 - 2.6)	P-Value				--

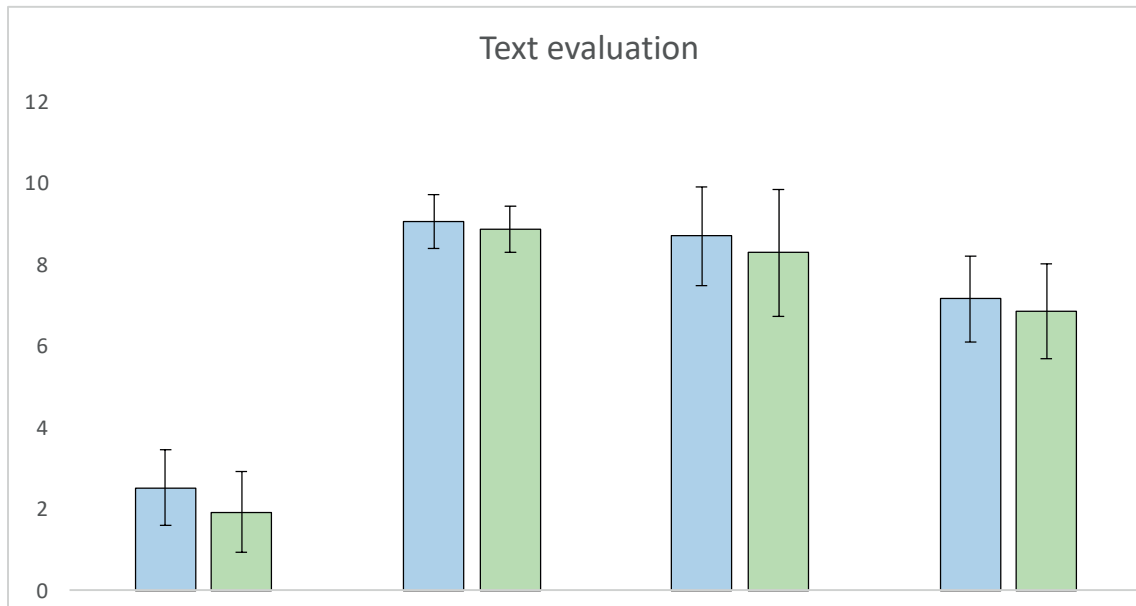


Figure 6: Rating of the parameters mistakes, memory criteria, creativity criteria, cognitive criteria.

### 3.2.2. Artistic and creative performances

Overall test (Cochran-Q-test) shows no significant differences between parameters Portrait/Landscape, Drawing complete/incomplete with and without WiFi. There were some statistical trends for the parameters sun symbol/no sun symbol (total p-value 0.069)

Table 5: Relative frequency of the drawing quality parameters.

	landscape	Coloured	Sun-symbol existence	Drawing complete
WiFi no ReLux 1	76.19%	71.43%	9.52%	71.43%
WiFi no ReLux 2	80.95%	80.95%	33.33%	76.19%
WiFi with ReLux 1	90.48%	95.24%	28.57%	85.71%
WiFi with ReLux 2	95.24%	80.95%	42.86%	90.48%

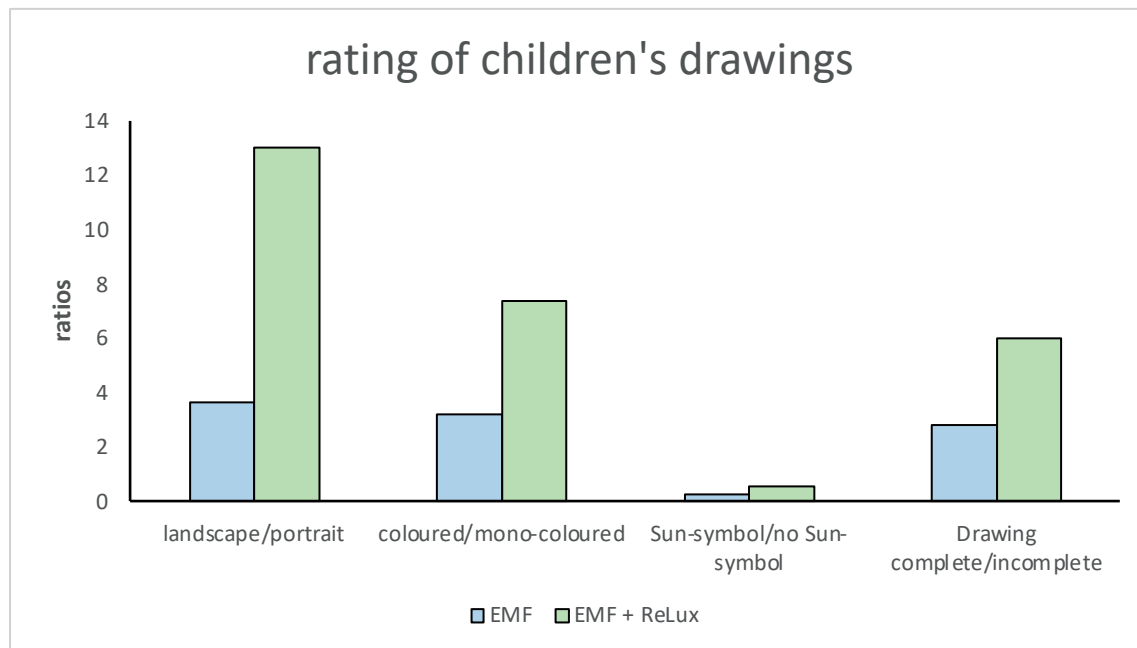


Figure 7: Rating of children's drawing: Ratio between the different parameters with and without room harmonizer

Figure 7 summarizes the results of both days of the variants with and without room harmonizer. Although the Cochran-Q-test shows no significant differences, the columns of all four parameters indicate a tendency towards better drawing quality with room harmonizer.

### 3.2.3. Observation on the individual and social behavior of the pupils

Day 1: Wi-Fi without real ReLux objects, just placebo panels

External conditions: 23°C, nice weather, sun with a few clouds

The children are very quiet, they are concentrated only on the tests. They do not interact with each other. After 20 minutes they started to ask questions to the teacher. Many of them are moving their feet compulsively and after 30 minutes they start to move on the chairs and to find something to do with their own stuff. They cannot wait to leave the classroom.

Day 2: Wi-Fi without real ReLux objects, just placebo panels

External conditions: 24°C, nice weather, sun with clouds

The children cannot decide to sit on their places, they find themselves something to do in front of the classroom: water, tissues etc. They move all the time on the chairs. Many of them are moving their feet compulsively. Some of them are speaking with themselves about the requirements of the test. They look tired and they often drop things on the floor. After 25 minutes the pupils become nervous, they started to move their objects on the bench and in the backpack. They are in a hurry to pack and leave the classroom. They cannot concentrate on what the teacher is saying. They are bringing their tests to the teacher, even if the teacher said to wait.

The pupil with Down syndrome is restless, he put a tissue on his head, he concentrated 10 minutes on the task (to find some symbols on a piece of paper) and then he started to eat and to organize his backpack.

Day 3: Wi-Fi with 4 ReLux objects: the cube, 1 Aurum harmonizing panel and 2 electro-smog panels

External conditions: 20°C, nice weather, sun with clouds

In the break prior to the test, the kids were playing all over the classroom, they let themselves to drop from the chairs on the floor, they laughed a lot.

The children are talkative, but when they receive the tests they get quiet. The atmosphere is more relaxed and they collaborate. After 20 minutes they start to ask and share with the others about the exercises or they are telling their opinion about this and that. They are not moving their feet compulsively anymore. They wait, after finishing the test, for the teacher to collect them. They are talking with the others or just do things in silence. They finish quite quickly the drawings and afterwards they are showing them one to the other and share funny opinions about them. They ask about the cube and “his friends”, the panels.

The pupil with Down syndrome gave a neck and back massage to one of the engineers present for the experiment during the break, after that he played with the other kids on the floor.

Day 4: Wi-Fi with 4 ReLux objects: the cube, 1 Aurum harmonizing panel and 2 electro-smog panels

External conditions: 16°C, nice weather, sun with clouds

The children gathered quite hard, then they received the tests and get quiet. When they finish, look around to see who else is in the same situation, they are paying attention to that. Some of them are talking with the others, some also play with the colleagues in front or back. The kids did not ask about the test. They are looking to the other kids drawings, having fun and trying to make their drawings funny. They started to dance with the hands when a phone was ringing outside. At some point the pupils start to talk about what they did in the previous days and about homeworks. They expressed the idea to make an exhibition with the drawings.

The pupil with Down syndrome collaborates very well with the psychologist. He needs to stay very close to her. He is also talking with one of the engineers present for the experiment and with the girls in front of him.

#### 4. Discussion

In sub-study A (factor Wi-Fi), the cognitive performance, creativity and social behavior of pupils with and without Wi-Fi in the classroom were measured.

The assessment on cognitive abilities was done by the class teacher, the evaluation on the drawings by the professor psychologist of the school and the art teacher and the observation on individual and social behavior by the professor psychologist and reinforced by an external consultant, with experience in special needs children and adults psychological clinical and educational practice. The 4 stories read by teacher were different every day in order to discourage the learning effect.

There were no significant effects on cognitive performance and creativity (ability to draw pictures), even though the mean values for the frequency of errors and the ability to draw pictures were more favorable in the control group. One interesting individual result is that the child sitting directly next to the router painted very differently with and without Wi-Fi exposure.

However, there were differences in social behavior: the class with Wi-Fi exposure behaved more restlessly. The children without Wi-Fi exposure were more relaxed and creative, initiating activities, paying attention to the colleagues, playing more in the breaks. They felt free to share and to communicate with the others. The pupil with Down syndrome was also more creative, more relaxed and willing to collaborate and he even has initiatives of his own involving new activities.



We are not aware of any studies on the behavior of children exposed to Wi-Fi. While there are some studies on changes in health and behavior of infants due to prenatal mobile phone use (Papadopoulou et al. 2017; Li et al. 2017), there are only a few studies on postnatal behavioral changes. (Foerster et al. 2018) and (Schoeni et al. 2015) negative effects of RF radiation and memory performance in adolescents.

We are also not aware of any scientific studies that directly measure the effects of room harmonizers on people's behavior. In our second sub-study, we tested the possible effects of a room harmonizer (from the company ReLux, Frickingen, Germany) under Wi-Fi exposure compared to a placebo under otherwise identical conditions as in our first sub-study. The results are comparable to those of the first sub-study: There are no significant effects on cognitive performance and creativity, but there are in social behavior. The control variant of sub-study A (no Wi-Fi) and the variant with room harmonizers of sub-study B show a similar pattern, namely a tendency towards fewer errors, more elaborate pictures and calmer behavior of the children.

In the days with the presence of ReLux objects in the classroom the children were more natural, relaxed and they felt free to express themselves and to play more in the classroom, creativity also was enhanced and they had new ideas about how to spend time together. They noticed the presence of the ReLux objects only in the day when the real ones were there and they considered them as 'friends that are working together'. Also the social interaction increased in the days when the ReLux objects were in the classroom. The pupil with Down syndrome reacted well to their presence also, becoming more active and open to the others.

Our study has a number of limitations, such as overly simple questions in the cognitive tests and strong day effects.

The subjects on the written tests were too easy for the pupil's level of knowledge and abilities. Hence, the results obtained on the tests were almost all at the top level (a lot of 10's), it was difficult or almost impossible to differentiate between the results in different days and the assessment less sharp. A more complicated test should be used in order to emphasize such differences.

Familiar tests were chosen instead of standard tests. All types of exercises considered in the test, including free drawing on a subject based on a story, were performed on other occasions during the semester, so the work tasks were not new to the pupils. Standard tests are offering maybe more accuracy in results assessment but on the other hand they can generate undesired pressure on the pupils.

The period chosen for the experiment should be longer – maybe the entire day – in order to study the effects on a deeper level, especially the lack of Wi-Fi exposure on longer periods of time could be interesting.

The switching sequence was intended to be: On1, Off1, On2, Off2, but from technical reasons we were obliged to reconsider it on the spot and to have On1, On2 followed by Off1, Off2 phases, because it was impossible to switch off the Wi-Fi in the school in the second day of the experiment.

The observed effects on social behavior should definitely be given more consideration in future studies on HF-EMF and children.

In light of the scientific literature on adverse health effects of RF-EMF, our results on behavioral changes should be considered in future studies on children and RF-EMF.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization: J.U.G. and S.D.; methodology: J.U.G., S.D., I.B., G.C.; software: R.R.; formal analysis: J.K.; investigation: S.D, R.R., S.P., I.B., G.C.; writing—original draft preparation: S.D., J.U.G. and R.R.; writing—review and editing: S.D. and J.U.G. All authors have read and agreed with the published version of the manuscript.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all legal tutors of subjects involved in the study. All legal tutors of the participants signed a written informed consent before the pupils took part voluntarily in the study. Each member of the implementation research team signed a confidentiality declaration regarding the participants' data.

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## **Viñetas Perceptivas – un método fenomenológico en la formación de educadores (Waldorf)**

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**RESUMEN.** Las viñetas perceptivas tienen su origen en un método fenomenológico-reflexivo que hace parte de la fenomenología y es implementado en la formación y la práctica de profesionales de la educación en entornos escolares y extracurriculares, así como expertos en pedagogía curativa. Este método tiene el objetivo de identificar las características significativas en los momentos y acontecimientos individuales, especialmente en el trabajo con niños, adolescentes y adultos. Esta metodología recién desarrollada comprende la percepción y la descripción fenomenológica, así como tres fases de reflexión. En el programa de licenciatura nos enfocamos en el trabajo fenomenológico y productivo y en los ejercicios correspondientes, mientras que en el programa de maestría profundizamos nuestras reflexiones con el objetivo de obtener información sobre nuestras propias actitudes y acciones, además de la comprensión y el diagnóstico individualizado. El artículo presenta los fundamentos teóricos, los métodos y las aplicaciones del trabajo con viñetas perceptivas.

### **Introducción**

“¡Qué mal me tratas a mí!”

Los niños de grado 3º han ocupado sus puestos en el salón y guardado casi todo su material escolar y sus pertenencias en sus mochilas. Una niña sigue jugando con un pequeño gato de papel hecho por ella misma. La profesora se pone delante de sus estudiantes, mira a todos los niños y espera a que todos estén listos para empezar el día juntos. Se da cuenta de que una niña sigue jugando con algo en las manos y se dirige hacia ella con expresión firme. “Cara, por favor, guarda eso”, le dice amablemente y con claridad. “No, el animal tiene que estar fuera”, responde Cara determinadamente. “¡Cara!”, la profesora llama a su estudiante con voz un poco más alta. “¡Qué mal me tratas a mí!”, contesta Cara, pone el gato de papel en su mochila, murmura algo y con espalda recta toma asiento. (VP 1; Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 115)

Esta viñeta perceptiva (VP) describe una escena escolar que probablemente se reproducirá innumerables veces de forma similar. Un momento sorprendente e imprevisible sobresale del desarrollo previsto de la clase. La alumna Cara está ocupada con su gato de papel, es decir, con algo distinto de lo que la maestra espera de ella. Esto da lugar a un breve diálogo en el que Cara se niega inicialmente a seguir la invitación de la profesora; sin embargo, posteriormente sigue sus instrucciones. Este tipo de acontecimientos alteran una rutina establecida o llaman la atención por un comportamiento sorprendente y pueden dar lugar a las viñetas perceptivas. Como “recreaciones” lingüísticas (Schwarz, 2020, p. 56), las VP documentan momentos que

tienen un impacto, que se vivencian directamente de forma significativa y cuyos matices de significado se exploran a través de la reflexión. Al igual que las viñetas, las anécdotas o las imágenes cognitivas, las viñetas perceptivas son breves textos narrativos que se utilizan como descripciones fenomenológicas en la formación de educadores y la investigación pedagógica (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 134-136). Nuestra definición es:

“Las viñetas perceptivas proceden de un método fenomenológico que incluye observaciones prácticas, descripciones, pasos reflexivos y aplicaciones profesionales-pedagógicas”. (ibid., p. 119; traducido al español)

Inspiradas por la investigación de viñetas y anécdotas realizado por la red VignA, desde el año 2019 desarrollamos viñetas perceptivas como método de observación, descripción y reflexión fenomenológica en el Instituto de Pedagogía Waldorf, Inclusión e Interculturalidad de la Universidad Alanus de Mannheim. El trabajo con viñetas, que en la red VignA se utiliza específicamente para la investigación “por parte del alumno” y la comprensión de los procesos de enseñanza (Agostini et al., 2018; Schratz et al., 2012), se entiende como la “exploración” en el sentido de la fenomenología de Husserl, a través de la cual las cosas llegan a ser conocidas no como lo que son, “sino como aparecen a los sentidos humanos y – al reconocer, percibir, captar, comprender – a la conciencia” (Peterlini, 2020, p. 122). Esta cualidad de observación y cognición fenomenológica también se aplica al trabajo con viñetas perceptivas. La narración de historias centradas en el cómo abre tanto lo externo percibido con los sentidos, como los procesos internos a través de los cuales un fenómeno puede ser sentido, imaginado y pensado, y en última instancia convertido en objeto de observación e interés de investigación.

Utilizamos el trabajo con viñetas perceptivas en los programas de licenciatura y maestría en pedagogía Waldorf y pedagogía curativa para poder visualizar momentos significativos en el trabajo educativo con niños, jóvenes o adultos. Se usa también en el trabajo diagnóstico, la reflexión actitudinal y en diversos proyectos de investigación. Como breves textos narrativos, las viñetas perceptivas pueden ser escritas en primera o tercera persona, es decir, desde el punto de vista del autor o en forma de observación. Lo decisivo es que expresen tanto los acontecimientos externos como los impulsos, sentimientos, ideas y pensamientos internos sin ser demasiado gráficas y que no haya suposiciones ni interpretaciones anticipadas. Los niveles de significado y la referencia a los conocimientos técnicos se analizan en un trabajo de reflexión posterior de varias fases, que – dependiendo de los intereses investigativos o laborales – no se categorizan, sino que se identifican las características y necesidades, dicho de otro modo, estas fases facilitan los diagnósticos y el desarrollo de actitudes y acciones pedagógicas. En las secciones siguientes se tratará la metodología de las viñetas perceptivas, su ubicación en la *fenomenología filosófica y pedagógica* (Cap. 2), su génesis a través del *asombro, la percepción y la observación de momentos pedagógicos* (Cap. 3 y 4) incluyendo los *ejercicios de percepción fenomenológica* (Cap. 5), *a través de un proceso de escritura creativa* (Cap. 6) y las *fases de reflexión* (Cap. 7), así como la *profesionalización y el desarrollo de la actitud pedagógica* (Cap. 8).

Somos conscientes de que este formato de texto sólo puede considerarse un método de formación e investigación utilizable a través de su conexión con la práctica pedagógica, en la que se percibe y observa a las personas, y a través de los métodos de percepción, observación y descripción fenomenológica. Con esta condición se puede crear por un lado una metodología que proporciona conocimientos sobre las personas observadas, y por otro, conocimiento sobre los educadores e investigadores que participan en la acción o la perciben de cerca. La reflexión, la interpretación y la evaluación forman parte del enfoque metodológico, o más bien son partes de él. Las viñetas perceptivas no tendrían otro significado que el de textos literarios si no estuvieran integradas en un proceso que busca conocimientos a través de situaciones individuales. Este procedimiento prepara el terreno para nuevos descubrimientos en los ámbitos de la antropología, la psicología del desarrollo, el diagnóstico o la “observación del niño” o la “conferencia del niño” (Wiehl, 2019, pp. 178-180; Barth, 2020, pp. 163-165), la actitud y el desarrollo de la acción pedagógica. Hay que justificar este proceso fenomenológico como base de una pedagogía orientada a las necesidades y el desarrollo del individuo.



## Posicionamiento en la fenomenología pedagógica

La fenomenología como método de investigación y cognición está adquiriendo cada vez más importancia en las ciencias de la educación, la filosofía y otras disciplinas. En particular, los métodos cognitivos de la fenomenología filosófica, su desarrollo inicial realizado por Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger y su desarrollo posterior por Aron Gurwitsch, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Paul Ricœur, László Tengely, Bernhard Waldenfels y otros fenomenólogos se han adaptado continuamente. Durante más de cien años científicos han estado actualizando e investigando constantemente dichos métodos con diversos enfoques de la investigación fenomenológica (Brinkmann, 2019; Alloa et al., 2023). Una amplia colección de textos fuente de la fenomenología pedagógica y numerosos estudios demuestran su relevancia para metodologías que no tratan de encontrar respuestas a una pregunta de investigación específica, pero en las que originalmente comienza la capacidad de maravillarse y comprometerse perceptivamente con lo que sucede en el mundo (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 86-88) como la “observación participante”, que tiene su origen en la etnografía (Brinkmann, 2015, p. 531). El asombro, la percepción abierta y la observación atenta - como en la “participación observacional” o la “experiencia participativa” (ibid, p. 531) o como en la filosofía de Platón y Aristóteles (Matuschek, 2017, pp. 17-19) - están al principio del reconocimiento y la percepción fenomenológica.

Por lo tanto, estas habilidades desempeñan un papel especial como enfoque abierto con todos los sentidos en el trabajo fenomenológico con viñetas perceptivas, en el sentido de que se practican explícitamente como formas elementales de acceder a momentos que llaman la atención dentro del campo de la actuación pedagógica o en otros contextos (Cap. 3).

La fenomenología como ciencia examina el proceso de percepción y cognición, así como la presencia física de la persona que percibe y entiende la subjetividad y los actos individuales de actos de conciencia como formas de acceder al mundo que nos rodea. Según la filósofa francesa Corine Pelluchon (2019), es crucial que el mundo vivo no se construya utilizando conceptos abstractos, sino que él mismo vuelva a ser una base original de la ciencia y se reduzca la separación entre sujeto y objeto. No se trata de adoptar una “perspectiva superior y resumida” como aproximación a la realidad, sino de elegir una “aproximación lateral”, “variar y cambiar la propia perspectiva y aprender de los demás” (ibid., p. 78).

“Así la fenomenología es un método que permite redescubrir los horizontes de significado y de situaciones oscurecidos o borrados por la actitud natural que busca objetivar dichos horizontes. Lo consigue sin salir del ámbito de la experiencia o de la vida de la conciencia, incluso cuando la heterogeneidad de otras formas de existencia enfatiza los límites de nuestra capacidad para conocerlas por completo”. (ibid.)

Esta capacidad de adoptar un enfoque lateral en el proceso de percepción fenomenológica desde diferentes perspectivas diferentes estando físicamente presente y experimentando lo que está sucediendo, constituye la condición fundamental para explorar y comprender una antropología y una psicología del desarrollo experimentadas en el mundo cotidiano, así como para una pedagogía orientada hacia la individualidad en el ser humano y el devenir humano.

Implica presenciar el otro y también poder experimentar sus expresiones, acciones y necesidades a través de la “coexistencia” corporal, que “resulta ser su propio modo de seres existiendo y encontrándose dentro del mundo. En la medida en que la existencia existe en absoluto, tiene la naturaleza del ser-juntos” (Heidegger, 2006, p. 125). En el “ser-con” o la “coexistencia”, es decir, en la presencia compartida, una contraparte y su alteridad sólo puede ser experimentada como tal sensorial-, emocional- y mentalmente. Porque al percatarnos del otro, se revela su rostro y emerge “todo el sentido” (Lévinas, 2013, pp. 220-221.). “El milagro del semblante viene de otra parte, de donde ha venido y a donde también se retirará” (ibid, p. 227). En el rostro del *Otro* - representante de lo dado en sí - el *Uno* intuye la razonabilidad.

En la percepción fenomenológica, lo que aparece a los sentidos se revela como “lo dado” (Marion, 2015, p. 44), que debe su expresión a acontecimientos, acciones y enunciados externos, pero que no se limita a ellos. Según Marion, “lo dado” significa que nos enfrentamos “con los fenómenos de las cosas en su primera originalidad, por así decirlo en su momento de nacimiento, donde se manifiestan incondicionalmente como ellos mismos y a partir de ellos mismos” (ibid., p. 29). A través de la percepción abierta, el asombro

inicial y la observación atenta de los fenómenos que llaman nuestra atención se lleva a cabo la coexperiencia emocional y mental en la cual el sujeto perceptor participa activamente. Pues “la percepción humana [...] no es una relación solitaria de un sujeto con su mundo. Siempre contiene la posible presencia y las posibles perspectivas de otros” (Fuchs, 2020, p. 160). En el sentido de Husserl (2016, p. 18), incluye - además de todos los fenómenos externos - sentimientos, ideas y pensamientos que surgen inmediatamente, es decir, los pensamientos, las experiencias internas activadas por la sensación y los recuerdos de experiencias anteriores. La relación corporal en todas las dimensiones vivenciales es uno de los prerequisites centrales del trabajo y la investigación fenomenológica, que requiere no sólo una actitud abierta, sino también la presencia física de la persona que observa. Sin esta presencia, un dado fenomenal inequívoco no sería perceptible; no llegaría a la conciencia, sino que permanecería en el ámbito de la suposición, imaginación o ficción. La presencia real del sujeto perceptor y observador en la situación pedagógica o en otra situación de la vida es una condición de la exploración fenomenológica del mundo que nos rodea.

### **El asombro como actitud abierta en el contexto educativo**

El asombro es “provocado por momentos que trascienden los límites de lo ordinario en dirección a lo inesperado [...]” (Gess, 2019, p. 15). La viñeta perceptiva presentada anteriormente (ver VP 1) fue escrita por la persona que observa y describe, capturando un momento de atención. No documenta el transcurso de la lección, sino una escena que parece una perturbación o irritación y al mismo tiempo se presenta como un elemento sorprendente que sobresale de lo habitual, previsto y esperado. Mientras la profesora quiere empezar la lección con todo su grupo y exige la atención y concentración de todos, la niña no se ajusta a lo esperado, sino que sigue jugando con su gato de papel. El suceso podría pasarse por alto, pero se convierte en el centro de atención de la profesora, cuyo rostro severo y el anuncio: “Cara, por favor, recógelo”, contribuyen a revelar el juego de la niña - que desde otra perspectiva puede ser insignificante para el grupo y el transcurso de la lección. El primer aumento de atención llega con la rápida respuesta de Cara: “No, el animal tiene que quedarse fuera”. La situación llega a un punto crítico cuando la profesora grita “Cara” como amonestación verbal y su estudiante contesta con las palabras “Qué mal me tratas a mí”. Queda evidente que este momento de atención puede ser considerado - según la actitud y la identificación con una u otra persona involucrada, la maestra o Cara - como una transgresión de los límites en sentido negativo o como una capacidad de reaccionar imaginativamente y asertividad por parte de la estudiante. El simple hecho de dejarse sorprender por esas pequeñas perturbaciones requiere la capacidad de maravillarse. Ser capaz de maravillarse significa poder dedicarse de forma abierta y devota a las demás personas, sus acciones y expresiones. En el asombro, lo inesperado puede desencadenar un sentimiento de admiración o incluso de estupor. El asombro se produce porque “Es un acto que no he iniciado, pero en el cual estoy presente, como si estuviera en medio de un despertar.” (Meyer-Drawe, 2011, p. 199). Sin embargo, el asombro en el contexto educativo es menos un asombro platónico en espera de una revelación desde el mundo ideal, sino que corresponde más bien al asombro aristotélico al comienzo de la búsqueda del conocimiento (Matuschek, 2017, pp. 19-21).

En el campo perceptivo de una persona observadora, lo que se da ante el asombro o estupor sobresale de un fondo u “horizonte” (Waldenfels, 2018, p. 68). El término fenomenológico “horizonte” contiene “todo lo demás que se experimenta cuando algo se experimenta como tal” (ibid.). Si algo inusual o sorprendente destaca del fondo más o menos específico, puede provocar curiosidad e interés. Al mismo tiempo, la atención se ve atrapada en el “doble juego de atraer la atención y prestar atención” (Breyer, 2011, p. 138): Quien “presta atención responde a algo que entra el horizonte de lo dado como un punto de atracción, como una pregunta o como una *acción* que pide una *reacción* [...], y rápidamente se ubica delante de una respuesta posible tanto temporal- como relacionalmente” (ibid., pp. 138-139). Por ejemplo, durante un paseo por la naturaleza, la mirada se desvía hacia un borde forestal, frente al cual se distingue una silueta en movimiento. Tras unos instantes de enfoque, la silueta, al principio borrosa, se define gradualmente gracias al resplandor de las hojas en lo alto de los árboles, y pronto, se distingue claramente a una persona en bicicleta con un perro corriendo tras ella. (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 34). La mirada fenomenológica deambula interrogante y escrutadora a lo largo del “horizonte” y finalmente se centra en lo llamativo. Una vez advertido como algo especial, se categoriza en la propia red de ideas y conceptos basados en experiencias anteriores de fenómenos

similares acompañado de preguntas, sentimientos, ideas y pensamientos. Mirar hacia fuera o darse cuenta de fenómenos externos y las sensaciones internas que los acompañan forman un “horizonte de percepción interno y [...] *externo*” (Breyer, 2011, p. 136).

En el trabajo con viñetas perceptivas, el asombro es una clave para acceder al mundo, para entrar en relación con otras personas y seres vivos, tomar conciencia de sus peculiaridades e idiosincrasias y para experimentar sus comportamientos y acciones. Los momentos especiales atraen la atención y el interés de una persona observadora, para cuya conciencia se presentan como algo “dado” y al mismo tiempo sobresalen de un fondo u “horizonte” general. Esta aparición de un fenómeno frente a otro se debe a la experiencia subjetiva, porque sólo un observador puede sentirse afectado, conmovido o curioso por un determinado acontecimiento; otra persona quizá no podría notarlo. Volverse hacia una cosa o persona con asombro queda a la decisión y sensibilidad del sujeto perceptor, que desea dedicarse a un hecho fenoménico a través del “ser con” (Heidegger, 2006, p. 118) debido a su presencia.

A partir del asombro fenoménico, hemos desarrollado el método de las viñetas perceptivas con todas las implicaciones que ello conlleva para “una reserva de libertad inimaginable” (Dufourmantelle, 2019, p. 29) y al mismo tiempo para la preservación de lo misterioso. No sabemos qué nos encontraremos, lo que nos afectará o lo que se nos revelará cuándo observamos una clase, a un solo niño o a otras personas. Sólo sospechamos que cada situación y cada persona pueden albergar algo sorprendente que inicialmente sigue siendo un misterio del que nos gustaría “apoderarnos” (Dufourmantelle, 2021, p. 27). Pero se nos escapa por dos razones: “En primer lugar, precisamente debido a su propia naturaleza y, en segundo lugar, porque es el núcleo inseparable del desarrollo de la persona, su impulso interior. Todo lo secreto es devenir. Lo que se oculta es secreto”. (ibid.) De acuerdo con el argumento de la filósofa francesa Anne Dufourmantelle, es importante - sobre todo en la fase del asombro y la realización de un momento conmovedor - preservar los secretos como lo otro (algo distinto y desconocido), y describir únicamente la apariencia como lo externo y observable.

## **Percibir y observar – dos modos de acceso básicos**

En la experiencia cotidiana, la percepción y la observación se funden perfectamente y, por tanto, casi no se diferencian entre sí. En su publicación (Heinzel & Prengel, 2002; Reh, 2012) escrita en el año 1966 sobre la observación del comportamiento en la formación y el trabajo de educadores, Carl Friedrich Graumann caracteriza la observación como una forma de percepción; la percepción siempre tiene lugar desde una determinada perspectiva y puede conducir a la observación como actitud de búsqueda selectiva (Graumann, 1966, pp. 86-87). En cuanto aparece algo inesperado durante la percepción - por ejemplo, al mirar sin intención el lindero de un bosque, algo inesperado aparece y vuelve a desaparecer - se produce la “perplejidad” y la “curiosidad”; esto transforma el comportamiento perceptivo en una búsqueda atenta y guiada por el interés, y finalmente en una observación científica y sistematizada que puede repetirse (ibid.). Así, la percepción y observación pueden distinguirse entre sí:

“El modo de percepción intencional y atento-selectivo, que presta atención a aspectos muy concretos en detrimento de la determinación de otros, lo denominamos observación. A diferencia de la percepción normal, el comportamiento de observación es más planificado, más selectivo, determinado por una actitud de búsqueda y centrado desde el principio en la posibilidad de evaluar lo observado”. (ibid., p. 86).

Si nos basamos en la interpretación de Sabine Reh (2012) de esta distinción elemental, se hace evidente, especialmente en el contexto pedagógico, que la percepción fenomenológica, que busca abstenerse de suposiciones y juicios, puede en efecto conducir directamente a una observación atenta y guiada por el interés, pero precisamente al abstenerse conscientemente de explicaciones e interpretaciones, produce impresiones y experiencias mucho más detalladas que una investigación impulsada por una pregunta de investigación como en la investigación etnográfica (Brinkmann, 2015, p. 531). Sin embargo, para que un momento inusual impacte al observador es fundamental que la percepción sea captada por la atención. Solo prestando atención el observador se focaliza en un acontecimiento y en la acción o el enunciado que lo provoca - como queda demostrado en la siguiente viñeta perceptiva:

### Una mosca

Estás sentado a mi lado y la profesora está explicando algo sobre fracciones. Una mosca vuela delante de ti mientras todos hacemos las cuentas juntos. Con cuidado y destreza sacas la funda de tus lentes. La abres lentamente, tus ojos siguen a la mosca todo el tiempo e intentas atraparla con el estuche. Y de una la atrapas. Inclinas la cabeza hacia la funda y la abres con cuidado. La mosca está posada en el paño de tus gafas, que abres cuidadosamente con los dedos, lo sacas con calma y lo colocas sobre la mesa. El animalito sigue sentado sobre él. Lo miras absorto y lo observas un rato mientras se aleja volando. Me pregunto qué pasa por tu cabeza. ¿No oyes el ruido que hay en la clase? Estás completamente inmerso en tu propio mundo. (VP 2; Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 142)

La conspicua o - según la perspectiva - discreta “situación se transforma en un momento especial a través del tipo de expresión lingüística y, por tanto, en un gesto que dirige la imaginación del lector al punto exacto de atención que desencadena el entusiasmo” (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 106). Sensaciones positivas o negativas en todos los matices acompañan a la co-percepción y la observación. El sentido y el significado resuenan en esta sensibilidad. Por lo tanto, en el trabajo fenomenológico, la cuestión de lo “esencial y necesario” (Gurwitsch, 1974, p. 193), es decir, el “horizonte” (Merleau-Ponty, 1966, p. 92) determina su significado.

“Así pues, es el horizonte el que garantiza la identidad del objeto en la investigación de la mirada [...]. En otras palabras: mirar un objeto es habitarse en él y desde él ver todas las demás cosas según sus lados vueltos hacia él [...]; así el objeto es visto en todos los momentos, tal como es desde todos los lados, y a través del mismo medio, la estructura del horizonte” (ibid., pp. 92-93).

Los fenómenos “acompañan referencias a lo [...] no dado” (Gurwitsch, 1974, p. 193), que se eleva de la “razón observadora” al nivel de las leyes y los conceptos, es decir, al nivel de las interpretaciones. “El pensamiento que interviene en la observación es, por así decirlo autorreflexivo y externamente reflexivo, ya que la persona que observa es capaz de reflexionar sobre su propio proceso cognitivo y sobre el objeto” (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 66).

## Ejercicios para la percepción fenomenológica

Para practicar y aprender una actitud abierta ante los acontecimientos en el área de acción educativo, es importante entrenarse en la percepción con todos los sentidos y en la observación focalizada. A diferencia del asombro, que siempre va acompañado de sentimientos y sensaciones, la percepción es un acercamiento abierto, empático y desprejuiciado a un acontecimiento con todos los sentidos. Las transiciones entre la percepción sensorial pura, en la que sólo se captan impresiones distintas (a través del oído, la vista, el tacto, etc.), y el asombro son fluidas. Pues el estado de percepción pura, que revela un mundo de lo dado, pero diferenciado entre sí, difícilmente puede mantenerse. En cada momento de entrega perceptiva surgen sentimientos, ideas y pensamientos que intervienen y dirigen la percepción hacia lo externo y lo interno al mismo tiempo. Poder distinguir entre las dimensiones del contenido perceptivo externo e interno deja claro que no hay sucesos externos que entren en la conciencia sin que se produzcan procesos internos, psicológicos y mentales. Todas las percepciones sensoriales van acompañadas de sensaciones que pueden registrarse así, pero que pueden desencadenar el momento de ser afectado. La sensación de afectación surge en la transición al asombro y la observación atenta ante un fenómeno; dirige la conciencia hacia acontecimientos como Cara y su profesor (VP 1) o la mosca atrapada con el estuche de las gafas (VP 2), que se destacan de lo ordinario y, por tanto, adquieren un significado especial para la percepción personal. La observación atenta cristaliza la escena, que luego se registra en la descripción fenomenológica. De este modo, la mirada se dirige desde el interior, a través de una relación emocional y mental con el acontecimiento y su significado percibido.

En la experiencia cotidiana, estos procesos suelen realizarse de forma inconsciente. Sin embargo, pueden experimentarse de forma diferenciada mediante ejercicios específicos, por ejemplo, del “entrenamiento práctico del pensamiento” de Rudolf Steiner (1909/2009; Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 71-73), y utilizarse

para la formación de la observación y descripción fenomenológica. Esta variedad de ejercicios incluye métodos que deben entenderse, por un lado, “como aproximación propedéutica a una metodología de investigación” (Wiehl & Barth, 2021, pp. 197-198), y por otro, como “entrenamiento de la metodología cognitiva pedagógica (Waldorf)” (ibid.; Wiehl, 2015, pp. 162-163). Esto implica practicar la observación fenomenológica y sin prejuicios, el recuerdo detallado y la comprensión fáctica e intuitiva y el pensamiento vivo y creativo (Steiner, 1909/2009, pp. 15-17; 1986, pp. 261-263). Si observas a una persona o un acontecimiento y luego intentas recordar todos los detalles de la apariencia externa, aunque lo visualices con mucha precisión, siempre habrá algunas lagunas en tu memoria e impresiones inexplicables. Para *la observación y la imaginación precisa* - que es un requisito previo para la posterior escritura fenomenológica - se observa el comportamiento de una persona lo más detenidamente posible, se imagina cómo será en el siguiente encuentro, se comprueba y se corrige en el siguiente encuentro (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 75-76). Según Steiner, la práctica repetida conduce a la “confianza en la necesidad interior de las cosas y los acontecimientos” y se puede tomar conciencia de las fuerzas del pensamiento en acción (ibid.). Este ejercicio fenomenológico se adapta a las posibilidades individuales. Mediante la práctica pueden desarrollarse las capacidades de percepción fenomenológica, observación atenta y reconocimiento sensible al juicio. La publicación sobre “Viñetas perceptivas” (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 71-73) y el “Manual de ejercicios” (Barth & Wiehl, 2023a, pp. 16-18) contienen más sugerencias de ejercicios.

## Escritura creativa y fenomenológica

Llevamos cuatro años desarrollando el método de las viñetas perceptivas como parte de la práctica pedagógica en el programa de licenciatura. Los estudiantes tienen la tarea de escribir viñetas perceptivas de forma regular, presentarla en el seminario acompañante y, a continuación, abordar cuestiones antropológicas y pedagógicas. Las viñetas perceptivas se crean espontáneamente o conscientemente en cuatro fases guiadas por el proceso de creatividad (Wallas, 1926/2014, pp. 38-40):

- 1) La fase de “preparación” incluye la percepción, el asombro y la observación atenta en el ámbito educativo;
- 2) la segunda fase de “incubación” u olvido suele producirse de forma natural a cierta distancia temporal de un acontecimiento;
- 3) en la tercera fase de “iluminación”, se produce el correspondiente destello de inspiración o idea cuando se vuelve a tomar conciencia del acontecimiento inicial, que “idealmente se experimenta como una imagen mental condensada del fenómeno percibido y de su significado”;
- 4) por último, el procesamiento o ‘verificación’ del fenómeno o la idea relacionada se lleva a cabo en una viñeta perceptiva fenomenológicamente descriptiva (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 126).

Este proceso de percepción, recuerdo, comprensión y procesamiento conduce a una recreación lingüística del fenómeno inicial, que, a través de la viñeta perceptiva, permanece disponible de manera sostenible para futuras consideraciones y reflexiones, como muestra el próximo ejemplo:



“¿Está correcto el resultado?”

Podrías pasarte el día haciendo cuentas si no tuvieras que rellenar estas hojas de ejercicios. Hoy hemos cambiado de método. Nos hemos sentado en medio del suelo. Cuando me he dedicado a los deberes, te has mostrado muy interesado y entusiasmado. Te pedí que eligieras la tarea y me la explicaras. Tú la elegiste y yo la escribí. “¿Cómo lo hago?” “¿Qué hago ahora?” “¿Cuál es el resultado?” “¿Está correcto el resultado?” Los dos formábamos un buen equipo.

Era la primera vez que ni te distraías, ni te levantabas, ni cambiabas de tema. Justo antes de llegar a la mitad de las tareas, tuviste que hacer una pausa a tu favor. No querías esperar hasta la mitad. Pero cuando regresaste, tenías un bocadillo en la mano y preguntaste si podíamos continuar sin discutir. Al final, chocamos nuestras manos y nos felicitamos. Ya no te suponía ningún problema copiar lo que habías trabajado. (VP 3; Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, p. 142)

Una viñeta perceptiva registra impresiones obtenidas desde un punto de vista subjetivo. Se trata de experimentar, no de interpretar o juzgar acciones y afirmaciones. A menudo se describen en primera persona - como la tarea de matemáticas (VP 3) - o desde una perspectiva observadora - como la escena con Cara (VP 1). Los textos breves son recreaciones lingüísticas de acontecimientos percibidos y experimentados en la práctica pedagógica o en otras situaciones de la vida. Waldenfels formula acertadamente: “Y dado que no podemos asumir que las cosas en sí mismas son lo que son de forma inequívoca y definitiva, el proceso de determinación contiene momentos de creación” (Waldenfels, 2018, p. 63). Las cosas o los fenómenos originalmente percibidos pueden ser contemplados y experimentados de nuevo mediante viñetas perceptivas. Leerlas y discutir las en el seminario suele llevarnos a percepciones sorprendentes. ¿Qué sucede con un niño que atrapa una mosca en lugar de resolver fracciones (VP 2), o que, a pesar de ello, logra concentrarse en resolver problemas matemáticos (VP 3)?

## Fases de reflexión para un diagnóstico de actitud y comprensión pedagógica

La reflexión, que puede servir como “fuente de conocimiento” para el futuro a través del “volver atrás” hacia lo que ya ha sucedido (Kuckuck, 2022, pp. 11-12), se considera de gran importancia para la profesionalización pedagógica. En las tres fases de la reflexión con viñetas perceptivas, la llamada espiral de reflexión (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 189-191), la atención se centra principalmente en la comprensión de una situación, una persona, su situación inicial, sus necesidades y su potencial, pero también en el desarrollo de actitudes profesionales y la orientación a la acción pedagógica. Los procesos de reflexión con los estudiantes de licenciatura requieren instrucción y un espacio protegido para poder expresarse personalmente, por un lado, y de forma criteriosa o en relación con temas especializados, por otro. En nuestros seminarios y cursos de formación, recomendamos el journaling, un método de escritura guiada desarrollado por Claus Otto Scharmer (2022), que respalda la práctica fenomenológica y las fases de reflexión. En el ‘Manual de Ejercicios’ (Barth & Wiehl, 2023a), se pueden encontrar sugerencias concretas de ejercicios para su implementación.

Las viñetas perceptivas existentes suscitan una primera reflexión espontánea por parte del autor o de otra persona. La *primera reflexión espontánea* revela el contenido de la viñeta perceptiva y nos vuelve conscientes de los pensamientos y sentimientos desencadenados por ella (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 189-191). Se facilita un intercambio entre estudiantes o investigadores para obtener diferentes puntos de vista que ayuden en la selección de textos especializados relacionados con temas antropológicos, psicológicos del desarrollo o educativos (terapéuticos). El siguiente ejemplo de la práctica pedagógica de un estudiante con un niño de nueve años describe una situación difícil que da lugar a muchas preguntas:

### Baño de octubre

Hace frío y ha empezado a llover. El Rin fluye a nuestro lado como una cinta verde plateada. Pequeñas piedras y conchas crujen bajo mis pies. “Así que”, digo, “ahora tenemos que volver a casa”. - “No”, grita Mira en voz alta. Está posada a unos pasos de la orilla y da vueltas en el agua con su palo. El agua no le llega ni a la mitad de sus botas de goma. “Sí”, le respondo, “la luz se está acabando y está llegando el frío. Vamos”. - “¡No siento nada de frío!”, responde ella, golpeando el agua con el palo tan fuerte que el agua chapotea. Se mojan los pantalones. La miro con seriedad. Me devuelve la mirada y dice en tono desafiante: “¡Si no, me ahogo en el Rin!”. - “Oh, no”, le respondo con tono firme, “seguro que no lo harás. Así que, ¡vamos!”. Me alejo unos pasos de la orilla. “¡Atrápame!” Ella está bailando dando grandes saltos, el agua fría le entra ahora por las botas desde arriba, sus pantalones y su chaqueta están completamente empapados. “No voy a hacerlo, de todas formas, serás mucho más rápida que yo”, le digo con firmeza mientras ella se acerca a mí y luego vuelve a escabullirse. Sigue lloviendo y el entorno se vuelve cada vez más gris. (VP 4; Wiehl & Barth, 2023, p. 76)

La primera reflexión espontánea tiene lugar en el journaling. A continuación, se determinan los temas que surgen del intercambio de reflexiones espontáneas, por ejemplo, las especificidades del desarrollo en los niños de nueve años, los comportamientos llamativos o desafiantes y la inseguridad de los adultos responsables. A continuación, podríamos leer algunos fragmentos de textos sobre “Los niños difíciles no existen” (Köhler, 2007), “Los años del alumno” (Largo & Beglinger, 2010), “Comportamiento desafiante” (Hejskov Elvén, 2017; Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al., 2020) o el enfoque de baja intensidad (McDonnell, 2010) con el objetivo de encontrar perspectivas que faciliten la comprensión del comportamiento de Mira (VP 4) en la segunda reflexión, basada en criterios. Por ejemplo, sabemos por el enfoque de la baja intensidad que las personas que se comportan de forma llamativa o disruptiva se comportarían de forma diferente si se les ofrecieran condiciones y formas adecuadas de tratarlas. Los conocimientos adquiridos de este modo se incorporan a la tercera reflexión, orientada a la actitud, y al diagnóstico comprensivo (Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 147-149 y pp. 206-208). La reflexión hecha por una estudiante tras varios meses de experiencia con viñetas perceptivas refleja estos procesos:

“De viñeta [perceptiva] a viñeta [perceptiva], me ha resultado cada vez más fácil entender el concepto de diario de viñetas [perceptivas] y no sólo ser más imaginativa en el proceso de escritura, sino también observar y reflexionar de una forma diferente sobre las experiencias adquiridas con mi niño del trabajo social. La principal diferencia entre las viñetas y las entradas de diario es que las viñetas [perceptivas] no reflejan resúmenes, sino que reflejan e ilustran pequeñas percepciones de experiencias instantáneas con el niño de una manera creativa e imaginativa. [...] El comportamiento del niño del trabajo social refleja el trabajo del educador. Al trabajar con el niño, este comportamiento se me hizo evidente muy rápidamente. Así que tuve que ser consciente y estar segura de mi actitud pedagógica y mi forma de trabajar”. (Wiehl & Barth, 2021, p. 207)

En muchos casos, el trabajo de reflexión suscita preguntas sobre el autodesarrollo y la profesionalización como docente. Hemos adaptado la variedad de los llamados “ejercicios subsidiarios”, que Rudolf Steiner (2022) desarrolló originalmente para la formación esotérica, especialmente para el desarrollo postural, después de que en cursos de formación y congresos científicos se nos plantearon consideraciones de como reconectar el trabajo fenomenológico y reflexivo con viñetas perceptivas a preocupaciones pedagógicas concretas y a la profesionalización (detallado en Barth & Wiehl, 2023b, pp. 163-165).

## Viñetas Perceptivas: Perspectivas para la profesionalización e investigación

El método de las viñetas perceptivas promueve una percepción abierta desde el inicio, sin estar restringida por preguntas guía, a través de la coexistencia personal. Esta experiencia conduce a una observación atenta y enfocada, así como a una reflexión diferenciada, lo que potencialmente puede dar lugar a investigaciones científicas. Lo ponemos a prueba constantemente a través de prácticas, tesis de licenciatura, de maestría y proyectos de investigación dirigidos por nosotras. Cada uno de los cuales se dedica a un área de acción

pedagógica por el medio de viñetas perceptivas, reflexionando sobre temas concretos y analizándolos para conocer mejor a las personas, sus necesidades y el apoyo que requieren. También observamos oportunidades para la aplicación científica de esta metodología fenomenológica en la investigación participativa con personas con discapacidad que poseen limitaciones en el lenguaje, pero que pueden comunicarse a través de otros medios. Nos centramos en los hallazgos basados en la percepción y la descripción fenomenológica, así como en la triple reflexión.

El encuentro auténtico y directo con un niño, adolescente u otra persona, permitiéndoles expresarse tal como son, crea un espacio propicio para cuestionar nuestras propias opiniones, (pre)juicios y valoraciones de los demás, así como oportunidades para configurar una pedagogía orientada al desarrollo y la inclusión. El método de las viñetas perceptivas abre cuatro puertas de reconocimiento para la consecución de la profesionalidad pedagógica: en primer lugar, en la *toma de conciencia* la atención se centra de un momento especial con una persona y la *descripción fenomenológica*; dependiendo de la intención del estudio pedagógico, el proceso de reflexión en tres fases se dirige hacia el *desarrollo de las actitudes pedagógicas y éticas* y el reajuste de las *formas de actuar y tratar*, o más específicamente hacia el reconocimiento del desarrollo y las necesidades de una persona en el sentido del *diagnóstico comprensivo*.

El método fenomenológico-reflexivo de las viñetas perceptivas fomenta la atención y el reconocimiento de las singularidades y particularidades de cada niño, adolescente y adulto; estas prácticas pueden inspirar el autodesarrollo, en consonancia con la idea de “aprendizaje como experiencia” (Meyer-Drawe, 2003), especialmente en la intervención pedagógica.

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## Den Kopf voll Verantwortung

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Der nachfolgende Text ist eine für die schriftliche Fassung überarbeitete Version eines Vortrags auf der Pflingsttagung 2023 „Idee Mensch – Sein und werden“ der Vereinigung der Waldorfkindergärten in Hannover.

Im 12. Vortrag der „Allgemeinen Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik“ (Steiner, 1992, S. 172 ff.) bearbeitet Rudolf Steiner zum wiederholten Male die Dreigliederung des Menschen in leiblicher Hinsicht. Der gesamte Vortragszyklus variiert bei näherer Betrachtung die Dreigliederungsidee immer wieder in verschiedenen Perspektiven: zunächst in seelischer Perspektive mit der Dreigliederung der menschlichen Seele nach Denken (Vorstellen), Fühlen und Wollen, im weiteren Verlauf in geistiger Perspektive mit der Differenzierung der Bewusstseinszustände Wachen, Träumen und Schlafen und zuletzt in leiblicher Perspektive mit der Differenzierung nach Nerven-Sinnes-System (Kopf), Rhythmischem System (Brust/Rumpf) und Stoffwechsel-Gliedmaßen-System. Im 12. Vortrag konfrontiert Steiner sein Auditorium mit einer das Denken sehr herausfordernden Verbindung des Kopfes mit dem Tierreich, der vermittelnden Mitte (Brust/Rumpf) mit dem Pflanzenreich und des Bewegungsapparates (Stoffwechsel/Gliedmaßen) mit dem Mineralreich.

Die hier vorliegende Auseinandersetzung fokussiert im Folgenden die Verbindung des Kopfes (Vorstellen/Denken) mit dem Tierreich (ebd., S. 172-175). Mit den beiden anderen Zuordnungen, die hier nicht weiter behandelt werden, ist stark vereinfacht ausgesprochen, dass der Mensch sich dem drohenden Krankwerden durch Bakterien, Viren, Pilze usw. durch eine gesunde Atmung und eine rhythmische Lebensgestaltung entgegenstellt (ebd., S. 175 ff.) und dass der Mensch das Verhärten und Mineralisch-Werden durch Bewegung und Stoffwechselaktivität aufhält (ebd., S. 180 ff.).

Hier wird nun das erste Motiv des Vortrags von Steiner aufgegriffen. Die Verbindung des Kopfes mit dem Tierreich wird von ihm so charakterisiert, dass die Gedankenformen in unserem Kopf etwas zu tun haben mit den Tierformen in der außer uns liegenden Tierwelt. Dies klingt bei erster Betrachtung sehr abenteuerlich. Steiner spricht dann im weiteren Verlauf sogar noch davon, dass wir uns tatsächlich in Tierformen verwandeln würden, wenn wir nicht den übrigen menschlichen Körper, also unser menschliches Brust-Rumpf-System und unsere menschlichen Gliedmaßen, hätten. Diesem voraussetzungsvollen und unserem Denken kaum zugänglichen Gedanken können wir aber versuchen uns anzunähern und es für die pädagogische Praxis fruchtbar zu machen.

Was dabei hier im Folgenden versucht wird, ist nicht eine textnahe Interpretation des ersten Drittels des 12. Vortrags der Allgemeinen Menschenkunde, sondern ein Umspielen dieses Motivs. Es werden unsere Denkformen in den Blick genommen – in der Hoffnung, dass es pädagogisch nützt. Nützte es pädagogisch nichts, wäre es irrelevant, da es ja heißt „Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik“ und nicht als Grundlage für das intellektuelle Ping-Pong-Spielen. Die Anthropologie Steiners, sein Entwurf

einer Lehre vom Menschen, in seinen Worten die „Menschenkunde“, interessiert hier also insofern sie eine *pädagogische* Anthropologie ist, also eine *pädagogisch relevante* Menschenkunde.

Dabei ist grundsätzlich vorzuschicken, dass im hier vertretenen Verständnis anthroposophische Ideen oder Konzepte niemals andere wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse ersetzen, sondern einen weitenden Horizont aufzeigen wollen. Es geht also in keiner Weise darum, eine „eigentliche“ Wirklichkeit zu zimmern, sondern einen interessanten Blickwinkel bzw. Verstehensrahmen im Sinne einer Heuristik aufzuzeigen, der von Steiner angeregt worden ist.

Nach diesen Vorbemerkungen soll nun der Titel der Auseinandersetzung betrachtet werden: *Den Kopf voll Verantwortung*. Zur Verständigung sei einleitend Folgendes zur begrifflichen Klärung erwähnt:

Der *Kopfst* dasjenige, wo sich die Eindrücke und Erfahrungen ansammeln, wo sich die Erlebnisse stauen, wo Eindrücke synthetisch zusammenkommen. Hier wird nicht handelnd, mit Bewegung oder mit Wärme, in die Welt eingegriffen, sondern hier bündeln sich Nerven, hier findet Vernetzung statt. Hier befindet sich das Gehirn in Ruhe und Kühle, leiblich stark abgeschlossen durch die Schädeldecke. Im Kopf emanzipieren wir uns sehr stark von der Schwerkraft, und hier ist die leibliche Grundlage für alles Nachdenken zu finden. Ohne Reizweiterleitung sinnlicher Erlebnisse über die Nerven, ohne Vernetzung im Gehirn usw. könnten wir keine Vorstellungen hochholen, kein Gedächtnis ausbilden und nicht Denken. Zugleich ist aber auch festzuhalten, dass der Kopf (oder das Gehirn) nicht denken kann, sondern dass wir das als Personen selbst tun, unter Zuhilfenahme des Kopfes. Auch die Beine bewegen sich abgesehen von Reflexen nicht allein, sondern wir selbst veranlassen diese Bewegung. Insofern kann formuliert werden: Der Kopf ist die leibliche Grundlage für Vorstellen und Denken.

*Voll* heißt, dass der Kopf nicht leer ist. So weit so trivial. Aber es sei an dieser Stelle die Vergegenwärtigung erlaubt, dass wir voll sind mit Erfahrungen, voll mit Idealen, voll mit Motiven, aber auch voll mit Prägungen, voll mit angewöhnten Mustern. Wir sind stark geprägt, umgangssprachlich: voll geprägt. Aber uns ist überdies eben auch ziemlich vieles möglich als Mensch, wir können unsere Fülle an Erfahrungen reflexiv betrachten. Das heißt: Wir sind auch voll mit Möglichkeiten.

*Verantwortung* wird sehr schön im Duden definiert: „[mit einer bestimmten Aufgabe, einer bestimmten Stellung verbundene] Verpflichtung, dafür zu sorgen, dass (innerhalb eines bestimmten Rahmens) alles einen möglichst guten Verlauf nimmt, das jeweils Notwendige und Richtige getan wird und möglichst kein Schaden entsteht“ (Duden, 2024, o. S.).

Mit der Formulierung „den Kopf voll Verantwortung“ kann also in einer ersten möglichen Lesart ausgesagt sein: Der Raum, wo sich Erfahrungen bündeln (Kopf), wo unsere Erlebnisse sich bündeln und stauen und sich in Kühle vernetzen, ist nicht leer in Bezug auf eine Verantwortung gegenüber den Kindern. Wir sind voll davon zu versuchen, dass alles einen möglichst guten Verlauf nimmt. Wir sind voll davon zu versuchen, dass das jeweils Notwendige und Richtige getan wird. Und wir sind voll davon zu versuchen, dass möglichst kein Schaden entsteht.

Unser Kopf ist sogar manchmal so voll mit Verantwortung, dass es in pädagogischer Perspektive mitunter ratsam ist, extra nicht darüber nachzudenken, weil es zu viel ist. Wir müssen gerade raus aus dem Kopf und der immer wieder vorgestellten Verantwortung, um ihr gerecht zu werden, weil wir sonst vor lauter Ehrfurcht vor der Aufgabe nicht mehr handeln könnten. Wenn wir uns in jedem einzelnen Moment der Verantwortung bewusst sind, wie wir Vorbilder für sämtliche Bewegungen und Handgriffe, für einen heiteren Weltzugang, für eine angemessene Sprache, für redliche Gedanken, für jede einzelne Kleinigkeit im weiteren Lebensverlauf des Kindes sind, dann kommen wir im Alltag nicht zurecht. Wir würden zusammenbrechen unter der Last der vorgestellten Verantwortung. Wir müssen uns zwar immer wieder herausstellen aus der Praxis und sie reflektieren, müssen besser werden und uns unserer Verantwortung bewusst werden. Dieses Voll-Sein mit Verantwortung müssen wir aber auch wieder loslassen können. Sonst sind wir ganz gestaut im eigenen Kopf, gefangen von der Vorstellung der Verantwortung, und gar nicht im gegenwärtigen Bezug zu den Kindern.

Wenn wir also diese Ebene genau betrachten, so können wir sagen: Der Tatsache, dass unser Kopf voll Verantwortung für die Kinder ist, müssen wir mit einer gewissen Leichtigkeit begegnen. Wenn wir ein Bild aus dem Tierreich bemühen wollen, so müssten wir sagen, die Gedankenform – nicht der Inhalt unserer Vorstellung, sondern die Art und Weise, wie wir mit der Vorstellung der Verantwortung gedanklich umgehen – ist die eines Vogels. Wir müssen mit Leichtigkeit über die Vorstellung von der Verantwortung hinwegfliegen können, ohne die Verantwortung zu negieren oder abzulehnen. Wir müssen Sie von oben in einer leichten Luftigkeit anschauen. Wir kommen in jedem Falle nicht zurecht, wenn wir wie eine Kuh immer wieder die Vorstellung der Verantwortung wiederkauen. Wir kommen pädagogisch nicht zurecht, wenn wir immer gemütlich auf der Vorstellung der großen Verantwortung herumstehen oder herumliegen und uns nicht von der Fülle der satten Verantwortung innerlich leicht lossagen können.

Indem dies so formuliert wird, gehen wir bereits unbemerkt auf die nächste Lesart des Satzes über: *Den Kopf voll Verantwortung*. Es geht im Zusammenhang mit dem 12. Vortrag der Allgemeinen Menschenkunde nämlich vor allem darum, den Kopf voller Verantwortung zu tragen und nicht einfach so auch einen Kopf zu haben, sondern sich verantwortlich für seinen Kopf zu fühlen; sich verantwortlich zu fühlen was darin – oder vielmehr: durch ihn – gedacht wird.

Dieses Motiv der Verantwortungsübernahme für die eigenen Denkformen soll nun aus dem Grunde weiter vertieft werden, weil sowohl jede pädagogische Erfahrung aber auch das Wissen um das mimetische Vermögen von Kindern, sich in die Umgebung ganz einzuschwingen, uns zeigen, dass Kinder immer wieder sehen, was wir denken, wie wir denken, und uns darauf ansprechen. Eine weitere pädagogische Erfahrung – vor allem im Kindergarten – ist die Tatsache, dass man im Gruppengeschehen mitunter sein eigenes Innenleben im Außen gespiegelt sieht. Die Art, wie wir innerlich unsere Gedanken aneinanderreihen, können wir manchmal als Bewegung im Raum wiederentdecken. So kann es vorkommen, dass die Kindergruppe sich so sprunghaft wie Grashüpfer bewegt, weil wir trotz äußerer Ruhe innerlich unfokussiert sind. Und so kann es auch vorkommen, dass die Kindergruppe träge und niedergeschlagen wirkt, obwohl die äußere vordergründig vorbildgebende Bewegung im Raum ideal zu sein scheint.

Für die eingehende Erörterung unserer Verantwortung für unsere Denkformen soll nun zunächst ein Exkurs zu Ausführungen des zeitgenössischen Philosophen Markus Gabriel dienen, bevor sie in der Folge an Steiner und die Waldorfpädagogik angebunden werden. Es wird hier exemplarisch auf Gabriel verwiesen, weil er sich als ein Vertreter des sogenannten Neuen Realismus (Gabriel, 2014) verkürzt gesagt dafür ausspricht, Gedanken, Vorstellungen, Gefühle, Motive, Intentionen, Primzahlen, Mut und Entschlossenheit nicht als Einbildungen neuronaler Prozesse sondern als Realitäten aufzufassen, die da sind. Dies ist ein interessanter philosophischer Standpunkt, weil er gegenwärtig umstritten ist (vgl. Fuchs, 2020; Gabriel, 2014). Dieser Standpunkt ist jedoch anschlussfähig zu Positionen von Goethe und Steiner.

Gabriel hat kürzlich eine Monografie vorgelegt, die den irritierenden Titel trägt „Der Mensch als Tier“ (Gabriel, 2022). Versöhnlicher Untertitel: „Warum wir trotzdem nicht in die Natur passen“. Es wird an dieser Stelle darauf eingegangen, weil dort zunächst allgemein die Stellung und die Verantwortung des Menschen zu den ihn umgebenden Naturreichen angesprochen ist, und weil dort im Besonderen auch das Verhältnis der Vorstellungen zum Tierreich angesprochen wird.

Gabriel wendet sich in „Der Mensch als Tier“ zunächst dem Problem der sogenannten Naturreiche zu. Für an Steiner und an anthroposophische Konzepte gewöhnte Leser:innen eine große, wenn auch erfrischende Herausforderung. Er ist nicht zufrieden mit: Steine, Pflanzen, Tiere, Menschen. Er entwickelt folgenden Gedanken: Lebensformen sind so verschieden, dass es ihm zu Folge eine viel zu starke Vereinfachung ist, von *den* Tieren oder *den* Pflanzen zu sprechen. Es gäbe so viele verschiedene Arten, die so unterschiedlich lebten, dass wir erkennen müssten, wie sehr doch die Vorstellung *Tier* in naiver Art und Weise nur einen kleinen Ausschnitt sich bewegenden Lebens meint. Die Millionen von unterschiedlichen Arten von Einzellern, Flechten, Bakterien und Viren bildeten ein so großes Geflecht des Lebens, aus dem dann *Kuh*, *Ente* oder *Ameise* nur so schön herausragen als für uns leicht verstehbare typische Vertreterinnen. Wer sich eingehend mit Biologie beschäftigte, so Gabriel, müsste anerkennen, wie wenig kategorisierbar das Leben in seiner Vielfalt ist (ebd., S. 50 ff.). Und er geht noch einen Schritt weiter: Tiere als Tiere zu

bezeichnen und sie als Tiere dadurch zu klassifizieren und zu kategorisieren, zeige das Dominanzverhalten des Menschen. Der Mensch bezeichnete sich als irgendwie mit Tieren verwandt, um dann festzustellen, dass seine Vernunftbegabung über die als Tiere klassifizierten anderen Lebewesen hinausrage. Dies bedeutet im logischen Umkehrschluss: Den Tieren fehlt etwas. Gabriel sieht in dieser Selbstzuschreibung des Menschen als *Tier+* einen relevanten Grund für unsere Ausbeutung der Natur und einen wichtigen Ausgangspunkt für unser moralisch verwerfliches Handeln gegenüber anderen Lebewesen.

Gleichwohl besteht Gabriel aber auch darauf, dass Menschen nicht in gerader Linie aus dem sogenannten Tierreich abstammen, sondern eine besondere Lebensform unter ganz vielen besonderen Lebensformen ist. Er betont also die Singularität jeder einzelnen Gattung.

In diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich heraus, dass die anderen Tiere aus Sicht des Menschen traditionell zu einer Art Biomasse oder einem großen undifferenzierten Tierklumpen verschmelzen. Es ist letztlich Unsinn, die Formen des Lebendigen in Menschen einerseits und Tiere andererseits zu unterscheiden. Wohlgermerkt ist es ebenso unsinnig, den Menschen sozusagen selbstverständlich in ein sogenanntes Tierreich einzureihen. Es gibt zwar eine bis heute niemandem in ihrer Gänze bekannte Vielfalt zellulärer Muster und elementarer Lebensformen, von denen unser Planet nur so wimmelt, aber kein Tierreich, das aus baumartig gegliederten Abstammungslinien besteht – eine letztlich antike Vorstellungsweise, die wir bis heute jedoch nicht gänzlich abgelegt haben. (ebd., S. 68 f.).

Und zu dieser singulären Stellung des Menschen formuliert Gabriel: „Menschen [sind] diejenigen geistigen Lebewesen, die ihr Leben im Licht einer Vorstellung dessen führen, wer wir sind und wer wir sein wollen.“ (ebd., S. 204).

Gabriel zeigt also, dass Menschen nicht Tiere wie andere Tiere sind, sondern zeigt auf, wie divers das Leben ist, wie sehr Menschen als geistige Wesen in der Lage sind, sich dem Leben gegenüberzustellen, und wie groß dadurch unsere Verantwortung ist. Er scheut sich in diesem Zusammenhang auch nicht, die große philosophische Frage nach dem Sinn des Lebens zu stellen, die er verblüffend einfach beantwortet: Der Sinn des Lebens ist es, das Gute zu tun. Was gut ist und was nicht, sei keine Interpretationssache, es sei nur nicht immer einfach, einen Sachverhalt gedanklich klar zu durchdringen. Da wir Menschen aber geistige Lebewesen sind, die ihr Leben im Lichte einer Vorstellung von uns selbst führen können, sind wir dazu in der Lage.

Und dann kommt bei Gabriel noch die philosophische Überraschung: Weil wir Menschen die anderen Lebewesen nicht so gut kennen, wie uns selbst, und weil „eben der Gedanke des Tierseins eine falsche Abstraktion und Projektion“ (ebd., S. 69) von uns ist, darf folgende paradox klingende anthropologische These gewagt werden: „Der Mensch ist das einzige uns bekannte Tier.“ (ebda.). Dies ist letztlich so abenteuerlich und schwer zugänglich wie Steiner. Und es folgt die zweite philosophische Überraschung: Weil das Leben nun so vielgestaltig, so divers ist, sich nicht gut kategorisieren lässt, es keine einfachen Abstammungslinien gibt, und der Mensch nicht einfach aus der Tierreihe kommt mit einem PLUS an Vernunft, formuliert Markus Gabriel:

Anstatt der Vorstellung unser Menschsein sei im Tierreich zu verorten, möchte ich die umgekehrte Auffassung vertreten, dass nämlich das Tierreich in uns, in unserer biologischen Struktur, unseren Gedanken und Selbstbildern zu entdecken sei. (ebd., S. 70).

Diese Passage ist direkt anschlussfähig an den 12. Vortrag der Allgemeinen Menschenkunde. Steiner entfaltet hier vor uns das folgende Bild (Steiner, 1992, S. 172-175):

Eigentlich will der Kopf ständig etwas anderes aus uns machen, als dasjenige, was wir sind. Wenn wir nur mitfliegen würden, mit dem, was wir mithilfe des Kopfes denken, wenn wir einfach so nur mitgehen würden mit den Formen, die unser Gedankenleben annimmt, so würden wir bald ein Wolf, bald ein Lamm und bald ein schmarotzender Wurm, ein Parasit sein. Unsere Gedankenformen seien also das eine Mal so gnadenlos und geschickt das schwächere Argument jagend wie ein Wolf im Rudel, das andere Mal so gründlich eine Sache immer wieder und wieder friedfertig wiederkäuend und verdauend wie ein junges Schaf und wieder ein anderes Mal so eigennützig und unsozial in ein bestehendes System sich einschleusend wie ein parasitärer Wurm.

Steiner spricht so über die Gedankenform, nicht über den Inhalt unserer Vorstellungen. Was uns daran hindert, an diese Gedankenform anschließend uns tatsächlich in die Richtung einer Tierart zu verwandeln, ist Steiner zufolge der übrige Leib. Wir haben einen spezifisch menschlichen Leib, mit einem spezifisch menschlichen Brust-Rumpf-System und einem spezifisch menschlichen Bewegungssystem, das uns daran hindert, einseitig zu werden, obwohl wir vom Kopf ausgehend dazu neigen. Darauf wird noch zurückzukommen sein.

In einer mehr philosophischen und weniger anthroposophischen Argumentationsfigur kann formuliert werden: Gerade weil wir Menschen sind, also im Sinne Gabriels: geistige Lebewesen, die ein Leben im Lichte einer Vorstellung von sich selbst führen, gehen wir nicht in unserer Möglichkeit zum Raubtiermäßigen auf, gehen wir nicht in unserer Möglichkeit ein frommes Lamm zu sein auf, werden wir nicht ganz überfliegender Vogel, werden wir nicht ganz stolzer Schwan, werden wir nicht ganz grabender Maulwurf, sondern stellen wir uns uns selbst gegenüber.

Wir sind nicht einfach auf eine natürliche Art und Weise so, wie wir sind, sondern wir fragen uns, wie wir sein wollen. Wir haben als geistige Wesen, die ein Leben im Lichte einer Vorstellung davon führen, wer wir sind und wer wir sein wollen, die einzigartige Freiheit und damit auch die Verantwortung, eine Entscheidung zu treffen, wie wir leben wollen, welche Fähigkeiten wir uns erwerben, welche körperliche Entwicklung wir nehmen, welche Formen unser Zusammenleben annimmt, usw. Die Freiheit, dies zu tun, liegt nun laut Steiner daran, dass wir nicht festgelegt sind in unserem Körper, sondern die Möglichkeit haben, uns immer wieder von unserer Naturseite zu emanzipieren. Wir Menschen können uns eine Vorstellung davon machen, was es bedeutet, eine Kuh zu sein. Wir beobachten sie, tragen unsere Erfahrungen zusammen und erweitern mit jedem neuen sinnlichen Erlebnis unser Bild vom Kuhsein. Wir stellen uns der Kuh gegenüber, wir denken über unsere Erfahrungen nach, und bilden in uns selbst den Begriff der Kuh. Das ist dann nicht die volle Wirklichkeit dessen, was eine Kuh alles ausmacht, aber wir nähern uns durch Wahrnehmen und Denken schrittweise an. Wir gehen aber nicht auf in dieser Vorstellung und werden das, was wir denken, sondern wir stellen uns nur davor, d. h. wir leben nur in dem Bild.

Die Kuh selbst, so jedenfalls Steiners Argumentation auf dieses Beispiel angewendet, lebt nicht in einem Bild davon, was es heißt eine Kuh zu sein, um sich dann in Freiheit unter Abwägung aller zur Verfügung stehenden Argumente für eine besonders kuhige Lebensform zu entscheiden. Der Körper eines Tieres ist so festgelegt auf eine bestimmte Begabung und Spezialisierung, dass es davon nicht abstrahieren kann. Es kann sich nicht lösen von seiner Naturseite und sich in selbst errungener Freiheit Eigenschaften hinzuentwickeln. Ein Pferd wird nicht pferdiger und eine Meise nicht meisiger, je nachdem wie viel Zeit sie so zum Nachsinnen bekommen. Menschen hingegen können immer humaner werden, können noch solidarischer werden, noch altruistischer werden, vererbte Verhaltensweisen ablegen, Entschlossenheit oder Zurückhaltung üben usw.

Den herausfordernden Bezug zur Leiblichkeit stellt Steiner auch an anderer Stelle her (vgl. Steiner, 1962, S. 162 ff.). Er formuliert, die Leiblichkeit des Menschen sei offen, nicht festgelegt, elastisch, während Tiere (Markus Gabriel würde sagen: die anderen Tiere) so festgelegt auf die Welt kommen, dass sie nach wenigen Stunden die artgemäße Fortbewegung vollziehen können und das gattungsmäßig Spezifische insgesamt sehr schnell ausgebildet haben. Tiere sind also in ihrem Instinkt sehr festgelegt und vorgeprägt, während Menschen alles mühsam lernen müssen und dadurch eine besonders lange Kindheit und Jugend mit ihren vielen erfahrungsreichen Metamorphosen durchleben dürfen und müssen.

Ein einziges Beispiel reicht aus, um dies zu illustrieren: Was eine Spinne können muss, um ihren Faden herzustellen, ihre Netze zu weben und in ihrer Spinnenart mit ihren acht Beinen zu laufen, muss sie sich nicht in Kindheit und Jugend, in Schule und Ausbildung erwerben. Sie ist ganz festgelegt auf dieses Sein. Sie hat auch nicht die Möglichkeit dazu, sich noch einmal beruflich umzuorientieren oder vielleicht neue Webtechniken zu entwickeln. Aber das, was sie kann, kann sie besser als jedes andere Tier und besser als es Menschen je könnten. Wir können für jede Tierart solche Besonderheiten finden, die sie jeweils einzigartig machen, und die auch nur diese eine Tierart in dieser Perfektion beherrscht.

In wieder einem anderen Vortrag, den wir hier zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses zwischen Gedankenform



und Tierreich hinzuziehen können, formuliert Steiner den Unterschied zwischen Mensch und Tier folgendermaßen:

Die Sicherheit des Instinktes, welche die Tiere haben, die beruht gerade darauf, daß das Tier von vornherein mit solchen abstrakten Begriffen lebt, die wir uns erst bilden müssen. Worin wir uns von dem Tier unterscheiden, das ist, daß sich unsere Sinne emanzipieren und freier werden im Gebrauch nach der Außenwelt zu, und daß wir auch in unsere Sinne den Willen hineingießen können, den das Tier nicht hineingießen kann. Aber das, was wir Menschen nicht haben, sondern uns erst erwerben müssen, die abstrakten Begriffe, die hat gerade das Tier, so sonderbar es einem erscheinen mag. Gewiß, es hat jedes Tier nur ein bestimmtes Gebiet, aber auf diesem Gebiete hat das Tier solche abstrakten Begriffe, so sonderbar es einem erscheinen mag. [...] Wir glauben, weil wir Menschen die Fähigkeit entwickeln müssen, abstrakte Begriffe zu bilden, so unterscheiden wir uns durch die abstrakten Begriffe vom Tiere, das diese Fähigkeit nicht besitzt. Aber das Tier braucht diese Fähigkeit gar nicht, weil es die abstrakten Begriffe von vornherein hat. (Steiner, 1982, S. 19 f.).

Dies bedeutet: Ein Vogel muss nicht Thermodynamik studieren, um fliegen zu können, Menschen schon. Ein Hase muss keine Ernährungsberatung machen, um zu lernen, was gesund für ihn ist, Menschen schon. Und ein Biber muss keinen Extra-Kurs in Statik belegen, um zu wissen, wie er Bäume fällen muss. Menschen schon.

Tiere sind den Ausführungen Steiners folgend also ganz im Begriff drin, sind an einer Stelle instinktiv maximal intelligent und kompetent, viel intelligenter und kompetenter als Menschen es je sein können, können sich aber nie daraus erheben, sondern sind ganz und gar festgelegt. So gesehen wäre jedes Tier jeweils ein ganz und gar inkorporierter Begriff.

Zur pädagogischen Bedeutung des Themas sei nun abschließend Folgendes formuliert: Sowohl in Waldorfpädagogik und Anthroposophie als auch im allgemeinpädagogischen Diskurs gilt als gesichert, dass Menschen über das Einschwingen in die Umgebung lernen. Je kleiner die Kinder sind, desto weniger wird das mimetische Mitgehen von gedanklichen Reflexionen begleitet. Lernen kann in früher Kindheit als eine Explorationsbewegung beschrieben werden, als ein implizites Lernen in lebensweltlichen Bezügen (Fuchs, 2017, S. 225-228). Es ist also eine nicht reflektierte Anverwandlung der umgebenden Welt und der Möglichkeiten des eigenen Körpers. So wie die Umgebung sich bewegt, spricht und denkt, so bewegt, spricht und denkt ein kleines Kind. Dieser Vorgang wird in der Waldorfpädagogik vereinfachend Nachahmung genannt. In Pädagogik und Erziehungswissenschaft, in der Psychologie und in Lerntheorien wird dieser Vorgang auch Lernen am Modell, Imitationslernen, mimetisches Lernen oder Resonanzlernen genannt (Ahnert, 2014; Wiehl, 2020). Von Steiner kommt nun die Aufforderung an uns Erwachsene, nicht nur auf dasjenige zu schauen, was wir sichtbar vor den Augen der Kinder tun, sondern auch auf dasjenige, was in der Art und Weise des Handelns, des Fühlens, des Denkens, mitempfunden werden kann. Dies ist nicht weit hergeholt, weil es sich mit unseren Alltagserfahrungen deckt, dass wir Menschen in der Lage sind, Zwischentöne zu hören, Unehrlichkeiten zu bemerken, eine Atmosphäre zu spüren usw., und dass es mitunter Momente gibt, wo uns kleine Kinder auf Gedankeninhalte oder Gedankenformen ansprechen.

Bei Steiner ist das in „Die Erziehung des Kindes vom Gesichtspunkte der Geisteswissenschaft“ drastisch formuliert:

Es gibt zwei Zauberworte, welche angeben, wie das Kind in ein Verhältnis zu seiner Umgebung tritt. Diese sind: Nachahmung und Vorbild. Der griechische Philosoph Aristoteles hat den Menschen das nachahmendste der Tiere genannt; für kein Lebensalter gilt dieser Ausspruch mehr als für das kindliche bis zum Zahnwechsel. Was in der physischen Umgebung vorgeht, das ahmt das Kind nach, und im Nachahmen gießen sich seine physischen Organe in die Formen, die ihnen dann bleiben. Man muss die physische Umgebung nur in dem denkbar weitesten Sinne nehmen. Zu ihr gehört nicht etwa nur, was materiell um das Kind herum vorgeht, sondern alles, was sich in des Kindes Umgebung abspielt, was von seinen Sinnen wahrgenommen werden kann, was vom physischen Raum aus auf seine Geisteskräfte wirken kann. Dazu gehören auch alle moralischen oder unmoralischen, alle gescheiten und törichten Handlungen, die es sehen kann. (Steiner, 1987, S. 324).

Nach einer Beschäftigung mit dem 12. Vortrag der Allgemeinen Menschenkunde kann dies für pädagogische Fachkräfte neu interpretiert bedeuten: Ich sollte achtgeben, dass ich nicht wie ein Insekt von Blüte zu Blüte immer so interessiert von Thema zu Thema springe, weil ich den Kindern über die Nachahmung dann



Unstetigkeit vermittele, die sich bis in die Physis manifestieren kann. Und ich sollte achtgeben, dass ich nicht verbindungslos wie ein Raubvogel über allen Bergen und Tälern des Lebens hinwegfliege, ab und zu gierig zuschnappe und dann wieder elegant über alles hinwegsegele, weil ich über die Nachahmung dann eine mangelnde Verbindung mit der Erde vermittele, die sich bis in die Physis manifestieren kann. Ich sollte ebenso achtgeben, dass ich nicht so wiederkäuend und schlecht vom Fleck sich bewegend wie eine Kuh werde, dass ich nicht so dickhäutig wie ein Elefant bin, nicht so nervig wie eine summende Mücke und nicht so aggressiv wie eine Raubkatze. Kurzum: Ich sollte Einseitigkeiten versuchen zu harmonisieren.

Denn dasjenige, wovon der Kopf des Kindes voll ist, die Eindrücke, die es hat, alles was sich hier staut und bündelt und sich miteinander vernetzt, bildet den kindlichen Körper, beeinflusst seine Gesundheits- und Krankheitsanlage, beeinflusst seine innere Sprunghaftigkeit, Trägheit oder Gleichgültigkeit, seine Aggressivität oder seine Konzentration.

Was das Kind an uns sieht, welche Gedankenformen wir in der Umgebung der Kinder entwickeln, prägt über die Nachahmung seinen Leib: Diese Verantwortung müssen wir vor uns haben, wenn uns wieder einmal etwas egal ist, wenn wir uns wieder einmal unnötig aufregen, oder wenn wir an den eigenen Vorteil denken.

Es sei nochmals an Markus Gabriel erinnert: Menschen sind geistige Lebewesen, die ihr Leben im Lichte einer Vorstellung von sich selbst führen können. Diese Freiheit bedeutet eine Verantwortung. Es ist unsere Verantwortung, welche Formen unser Denken annimmt, weil wir damit die Umgebung des sich nachahmend einschwingenden Kindes zimmern. Wir müssen also unseren Kopf voller Verantwortung tragen. Es gehört gerade zur Natur des Menschen, dass er sich über seine Natur erheben kann. Wenn ich viel vogeliges in mir habe, so kann ich meine Einseitigkeit harmonisieren, wenn ich viel löwiges in mir habe, so kann ich meine Einseitigkeit überwinden, und wenn ich mir angewöhnt habe, stoisch wie ein Wiederkäufer zu leben, so kann ich das überwinden, weil ich in der Lage bin, ein Leben im Licht einer Vorstellung von mir selbst zu führen. Kinder jedenfalls, so sagt die pädagogische Erfahrung, schwingen ein in meine Denkformen und in meine angewöhnten Reaktionsmuster. Wenn ich also die Kinder zu größtmöglicher Freiheit erziehen möchte, dann sollte ich selbst nicht zu einseitig werden. Ich darf mir also immer wieder sagen, dass es zu meiner Natur gehört, mich über meine eigene Natur erheben zu können. Das nennt man die kulturelle Natur des Menschen (vgl. Schäfer, 2019).

Wenn Kinder Menschen in ihrer Umgebung haben, die nicht festgelegt sind, sondern die sich die Begriffe in der Welt handelnd, fühlend und denkend erwerben, die sich Vorstellungen machen, die ihre Vorstellungen wieder revidieren, die noch nicht alles wissen und können, sondern die üben wollen und sich erweitern wollen, dann leben Kinder in einer Umgebung, die offen ist und Freiheit ermöglicht. Und so abgedroschen es auch klingen mag: das Menschsein lernt der Mensch nur am Menschen.

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## **Anthroposophy, Bildung and Steiner/Waldorf education part II (Reincarnation and karma)**

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In the first essay (Tyson 2023), I was concerned with the connection between anthroposophy, Bildung and Steiner pedagogy.<sup>1</sup> I tried to explore how anthroposophy can be a valuable part of Steiner education when it is understood as an impulse of Bildung and that this means anthroposophy needs to be a source of transformation and new relationships. Understood solely as a doctrine about world evolution, the nature of the human being, etcetera, I argued that anthroposophy is not particularly helpful, at least not in pedagogical contexts.

In this essay I will approach the same subject from a narrative and exemplifying perspective rather than from the mostly discursive one presented in the previous text. The example I have chosen concerns the anthroposophical concepts of reincarnation and karma. They are central concepts in Steiner's oeuvre and have been heavily criticized as part of that superstructure of Steiner education that makes it fatalistic and static (eg. Ullrich 1986). If they are or not is an empirical question. Anecdotally, I know of at least two cases where teachers have used the concepts explicitly to defend not intervening in situations where (1) a teacher was clearly not handling their class and the children were beginning to show the effects (2) children were allowed to play games during recess in ways that were harmful to some. In both cases teachers referred to karma saying that it was the karma of the students to deal with this class teacher or, in case they got hurt, that this was part of their karma. This line of argument, it seems to me, is no different than if a medical doctor were to argue that illness is the result of karma and therefore one shouldn't intervene. Such reasoning amounts to a spiritual version of social Darwinism.

One might well argue that these are non-representational outliers. But I would counter that these concepts are comparatively fragile and that even just a few examples of irresponsible and judgmental ways of engaging with them cause extensive harm to them (if one can speak of "harming" a concept which I believe is warranted). Be that as it may, my argument here is not concerned with developing a balanced conclusion regarding the issue. But perhaps the following can be of use to someone else who is.

### **The concepts of reincarnation and karma**

Let me, for the sake of clarity, begin here with a basic definition of these concepts. With reincarnation I mean the idea that we live repeated lives. How often, why one is borne in a specific place, etcetera, are questions I will not go into. These are, at least to me, not questions of great relevance to pedagogy and the issue I aim

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the term Steiner education or Steiner pedagogy throughout for what is also known as Waldorf education. I understand this to encompass any educational initiative based more or less in Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy.

to discuss is not if reincarnation and karma are generally interesting ideas but rather what, if any, value they might have for education. Or, even less broadly, what value they have for my own educational actions.

Karma, I think, means two things, one of which, it seems to me, is often overlooked. Karma denotes occurrences in one's life that happen because of actions in a previous life. This amounts to a variation on the idea of destiny or fate where certain experiences are preordained. But karma also includes actions engaged in, and experiences had, in this life without them being rooted in the past. This means they are new, completely undetermined, actions that then reverberate into future lives. This second aspect of karma is, as far as I am concerned, the more interesting one in educational contexts. Because education is less about determining a person's inheritance (be it biological, social or spiritual) and much more about hope. Hope that we can create something together for the future that, in its richest versions, is something wholly new, something without any precedent. This, I think, is the role of imagination in education and society more generally. Imagination liberates us to act, not out of habit, socialization, or karmic necessity but more and more out of freedom.

Having said this, I can move on to the main argument. Reincarnation and karma are among the core concepts of anthroposophy and there are, of course, plenty of ways in which to approach them. Generally speaking, I have found that these kinds of spiritual concepts with major consequences for how we view life are problematic to speak about only in an abstract way without connecting explicitly to the personal, to one's biographical process of formation or *Bildung*. For this reason, I will now move away from a discursive discussion and into a narrative one based on my own experience. This limits me in that I can only really consider what reincarnation and karma mean in my own teaching practice. My guess is that this meaning is quite diverse among those of us who practice Steiner education around the globe, and it would perhaps be valuable if more of us were to speak of these things out of personal experience, however limited. I will return to this issue in the conclusion.

## **An experiential account of reincarnation and karma**

My practice teaching bookbinding has included work of a supportive kind in the bookbinding workshop at the school. There, I have received students from the fifth grade upwards with various difficulties. These can range from issues with motivation in school to very serious psychological and psychosocial problems. Some students spend a few weeks in the workshop between 10-12 each day and then they return to regular classes rejuvenated by working more with their hands. Others have spent the better part of each day for more than a year in the bookbindery as they work their way back to participation (to be clear, at the school more than one workshop offers this so that students are also able to choose the material they are most interested in working with).

I guess that most of us who work with supportive or special education do it because of a strong desire to support those students in school who for one reason or other have an unusually difficult time. And also, that this is far from always successful. In general, I tend to emphasize unusually positive examples in my research (eg. Tyson 2019). Both for ethical reasons (talking about someone's failures can be insensitive and requires special care), and practical ones (practical knowledge is more often codified in stories of unusual success than ones about unresolved problems). This one is an exception.

I had a young man in the bookbinding workshop during his twelfth and last year in upper secondary school. He had a long history by then of substance abuse and other issues where the school (and other institutions in society) really had done their utmost to support him (at least that was my experience at the time). He didn't do much in school but at least he enjoyed being in the workshop and spent a lot of time there with me. During the months that he was there, I never experienced anything but a person eager to help, interested in learning, and willing to engage in practical work. Among other things we made a really beautiful and well-crafted full leather binding together with a gold embossment of his own design on the cover. To my knowledge this was one of the few, perhaps the only, things he finished during his whole time in our high school (grades 10-12). But no matter how well we worked together and how much he enjoyed being in the workshop I noticed that the destructive circumstances outside of it that engaged him, were

stronger than what I and my colleagues and others involved could measure up to. And this although I used all the energy at my disposal, everything that my imagination at the time could conceive of, in order to ensure that he felt seen and could develop a sense of meaning in the world that was more powerful than the need to use drugs.

He decided to leave school before the year ended, I don't think I ever saw him again, if so, it was just in passing and about two years later news reached me that he had passed away from an overdose. I remember being at the funeral and the book we had made together stood there leaning on the casket and the young woman who had been one of his closest friends said some words about how much this book had meant to him.

Now out of this "failure" something gradually emerged that I can only describe as a strong sense, or rather subtle experience, that we will see each other again, beginning in a shared life between death and the next birth and then together again in an upcoming life. It is this experience of the "reality" of reincarnation that I will try to describe below. I write "reality" in quotes because it is a concept that is easily connected to others such as "facts" and "absolute truth". It is not my purpose to rhetorically force the reader to either accept or reject what in the end is not meant as a truth-statement. I use the word in order to signify that from this point onwards in my life (and not before) the idea of reincarnation ceased to be a rather plausible thought about how things work. "Reality" denotes a peculiar experience in which thoughts become imbued with life, with a kind of energy that also changes what thinking can be.<sup>2</sup>

From a biographical perspective then, the idea of reincarnation has gained experiential content through these painful and tragic experiences I had as a teacher. Even now, more than ten years later, I can only describe this experience (and it is truly difficult to bring these experiences into words) as follows. It is as if the memory of the object we worked on together, the book I helped him bind, its image, becomes transparent and opens into a realization that the important part wasn't the object we created but our shared actions, our movements in the room, the warmth and the interest that was brought into the materials we organized as the book. And every time I return to this memory, bring the book and the young man and our shared actions before my mind, the same "thoughts thinking themselves in me rather than me thinking them" are immediately there with a clarity that is only rivalled by their delicateness or fragility (as if a being spoke them to me and that being hosts their truthfulness far more than I ever could and it is so much just a whisper because I am not able to open my listening more and thus even the slightest perturbation seemingly could cause them to flee).<sup>3</sup> These thoughts, or rather this immediate fullness of a whole sequence of thoughts as in an image but only if there were imageless images, present me with a promise that I interpret to mean (because the words I use here are of necessity my interpretation or translation of something that is wordless): one day when it is time for me to leave this life we will see each other again and the work that we shared that year in the workshop will bring us together on the other side of the threshold, like a beacon that shines because it is a sculpture entirely of warmth, and it will be the seed in that "realm" of a far greater work that we have agreed to do together.<sup>4</sup>

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2. At this point a discussion could unfold regarding anthroposophy as spiritual science and what this means in relation to the various ways in which the spiritual can be experienced. I am describing something that is not, for example, an imagination in Steiner's sense of the word. And how, to what degree and in what manner, this could be called science is quite unclear. But I will leave those discussions for another time.

3. A skeptical reader might conclude that this sounds a lot like hallucinations, but the experience is not like hearing voices (or so I presume, having never heard another's voice in my mind). There is no quality of forcedness, no persuasion in the sense that someone else is trying to convince one. There is no overwhelming presence of another being in one's own. The quality of experiencing the presence of another being is there (somewhat akin to touching something in the darkness, like a warmth sensation if it could be tactile), but no different than being together with a friend. As a process, the experience has a quality of freedom in that I have to initiate or co-initiate it or it doesn't happen. As a result, the experience also has a quality of freedom in that it evokes love and a commitment to what one is called to but never forced into.

4. A critical reader could well object that my knowledge of the concepts of reincarnation and karma has caused me to interpret certain experiences in accordance with those concepts, perhaps even to have the experiences at all. Especially given the nature of them as arising in my thinking, am I not just describing wishful thoughts? There is something to this objection. However, I have had at least one spiritual experience before having read anything of Steiner's. My background isn't particularly religious either so there was, at the time, little in the way of wishful thinking or interpretive bias. It was rather that the experience approached and only later have I been able to enrich it conceptually, something that has added infinite depth to it. In the case presented here I would say that having the concepts before the experience were a condition for an awareness of it to develop. They, in a way, sensitize one's perception for the "supersensible". The above mentioned "thoughts thinking themselves..." is a way of trying to describe the difference one can

Through this experience the “thoughts thinking themselves...” also invite me to understand the relationships I participate in throughout life as the result of a great gathering before birth. We were there, although I cannot remember it more than as an even fainter whisper than the above description, and we made agreements together, promises full of hope, in which we decided to, for lack of a better term, contribute to the utmost to each other’s flourishing.<sup>5</sup>

These promises or agreements then fell asleep in our limbs (don’t ask me why except I think, in the sense that it is my belief or my hypothesis, that this is why it is so important to work together, that our limbs are why we need the earth as a space to be in) and some of them are strong, just like some agreements in life are. And these we will almost certainly at least attempt together. Some are more like the hope one has even in the face of great obstacles, and they might only be realized in fragments or perhaps not at all. Common to all is a deep sense of freedom, the agreements are not the result of someone enforcing a debt but rather the result of an immense longing to give each other gifts, a longing, however, that is easy to forget. Perhaps unsurprisingly this has caused me to think differently about karma and what it means.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, none of the agreements involve harm to another. The harm we do each other is not unlocked by this perception, I have nothing to say about it. Evil remains a mystery to it, but I have found it productive never to assume that the suffering someone endures is the result of that person’s failings in past lives.

### Some concluding thoughts

I will not argue with a judgment that finds this essay terribly obscure, sectarian in character, or lacking in fidelity to Steiner’s ideas. The narrative presented belongs to one of my most intimate and formative experiences of Bildung and at least for my own part it has also caused me to be careful in dismissing the experiences of others no matter how outlandish (not to be confused with their interpretations, one of the most difficult things with this kind of experience is separating perception or what one should call it from interpretation, and there is a whole discussion to be had about the degree to which, in these contexts, interpretation is perception).

Regardless of how much we might agree or disagree about the truth-value of the narrative I have given above, my main point isn’t about that, but rather the degree to which it has been a source in me for stronger

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experience, with this kind of spiritual encounter, between thinking and speculating about various questions and forming hypotheses about them on the one hand and on the other this immediate awareness of something thought-like but also somewhat alien because it is clear: “I am not thinking here, but rather becoming aware of this other ‘thinking’ in me”. Perhaps if I hadn’t had the earlier experience in which the conceptual understanding of it was not already, as it were a window to look through, I would have more doubts about living with concepts without any immediate foundation in personal experience.

5. A critical reader could well object that my knowledge of the concepts of reincarnation and karma has caused me to interpret certain experiences in accordance with those concepts, perhaps even to have the experiences at all. Especially given the nature of them as arising in my thinking, am I not just describing wishful thoughts? There is something to this objection. However, I have had at least one spiritual experience before having read anything of Steiner’s. My background isn’t particularly religious either so there was, at the time, little in the way of wishful thinking or interpretive bias. It was rather that the experience approached and only later have I been able to enrich it conceptually, something that has added infinite depth to it. In the case presented here I would say that having the concepts before the experience were a condition for an awareness of it to develop. They, in a way, sensitize one’s perception for the “supersensible”. The above mentioned “thoughts thinking themselves...” is a way of trying to describe the difference one can experience, with this kind of spiritual encounter, between thinking and speculating about various questions and forming hypotheses about them on the one hand and on the other this immediate awareness of something thought-like but also somewhat alien because it is clear: “I am not thinking here, but rather becoming aware of this other ‘thinking’ in me”. Perhaps if I hadn’t had the earlier experience in which the conceptual understanding of it was not already, as it were a window to look through, I would have more doubts about living with concepts without any immediate foundation in personal experience.

6. There are many areas where the above narrative could be discussed in relation to what Steiner (and of course also others) say on the matter. I have refrained from this here because it is also important to present the experiences as such. I would like to bracket exegesis, the critical discussion of the meaning of a text, for the moment. Not least on account of the values attached to certain concepts and words, in the case of anthroposophy not least words such as imagination, inspiration, intuition, Michael, Christ-impulse, etcetera. For some these words can be helpful as an orientation and contextualization but for others they might just as easily obscure understanding. Perhaps these experiences are also deemed to be in contradiction to what Steiner had to say on the matter. I find the question interesting but somewhat unimportant. I have written this narrative down not with the purpose of transmitting a new teaching about reincarnation and karma and therefore not primarily as a narrative to be compared with others with the aim of assessing its relative truth. It is written in order to exemplify how concepts central to anthroposophy can be enriching in the life of an individual teacher. They could just as well be meaningless or (although I really hope not) even destructive in the life of another.



engagement, deeper enthusiasm, more faith, patience, and open mindedness as a teacher. Of course, it is difficult to evaluate oneself here and I will not pretend to say for sure that it has been such a source, only that it has contributed to an intense desire to develop all these things. If I have failed or not can perhaps only be decided in any real sense at the time of my passing. It has also been a source of trust in life, something that perhaps mostly reflects a personal struggle to comprehend suffering and “failure”, in this sense I wouldn't be surprised if an argument could be made that many spiritual experiences are answers to larger themes in a life.

I can express this in a different way. Reincarnation and karma are concepts and experiences that enrich my moral imagination because they help me to see situations in a wider or more dynamic perspective. If they didn't do this, if they were only there as some kind of theory or as experiences of past lives full of exciting images but lacking in any kind of moral energy or flavor, then I really don't know what their point would be. And this is part of what I meant above in saying that the idea of reincarnation has become a reality - it has become a source of moral energy or taken on a moral flavor.

To the degree that the concepts of reincarnation and karma enrich the moral imagination it seems to me that they have a meaningful role in education, at least for the individual teacher. But if they are used as an excuse to explain one's laxity or lack of interest in the face of suffering, if they are used to judge and dismiss someone, then they are no better than racist concepts of biological determinism. In a way they are worse because they hide behind a mask of spirituality. This is, to be sure, a strong rhetorical statement and it is not difficult to untangle two lines of argument from this text. One presenting an experience regarding reincarnation and karma and one presenting an argument about what these concepts signify in education. These two arguments might be viewed as rather unrelated and almost forced together. But my point has been twofold:

First, that we can share our experiences regarding reincarnation and karma as Steiner educators and I think this would be valuable, and hopefully the narrative presented is at least somewhat convincing in this respect.

Second, that these concepts are vulnerable to abstract generalizations and can lead to the development of a fatalistic attitude. Here I think it less meaningful to write essays about why this is not constructive, I think exploring narratives of experience is a much more direct way of engaging with this. We need to talk about what these concepts mean in our lives. Why else insist on their importance? If they are only always directed outwards, to students, colleagues, etcetera, as a way of interpreting their situations, then we need to be able to tell convincing narratives of how this has directly enriched our educational action.

What is at stake, I believe, is a certain ownership of the meaning of anthroposophy for Steiner education. At the moment, this is a largely abstract conversation (or perhaps heated discussion) where those who claim that anthroposophy is, when it is all said and done, just an ideological underpinning that can and should be discarded have a point. This, together with even just a few examples of how anthroposophical ideas have been treated ideologically (and I think using the idea of karma to justify a judgmental and inactive attitude is a clear enough example of this), makes it difficult to argue otherwise.

To prevent a possible misunderstanding here, it's not that every Steiner educator suddenly should have to be able to account for various spiritual experiences or else the value of anthroposophy is null. Even if the number of teachers who could and would be willing to speak about this were small, it is more about opening a conversational space, of saying that this is welcomed as part of what makes Steiner education particular.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, what I am actually trying to ask, is if we need to be more open with the way the spiritual manifests in our lives, because this would allow it to increase its presence going forward. Perhaps anthroposophy could become central to Steiner education through this in a way it has not really been asked to be yet.

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7. I would like to reiterate that inviting these narratives has its own risks. Sensationalism is one. To protect against this these narratives need to explain how the process contributed to one's educational practice. If they are about the past entanglements they need to include a discussion about how they enriched the present and the potential future. It is also about the language and the form of the experiences. Perhaps it was more of a dream for example. All these things need to be considered further but my aim here is to begin the conversation not to cover every aspect of it

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