

# Values in Steiner Education

What do our Children need to live by?

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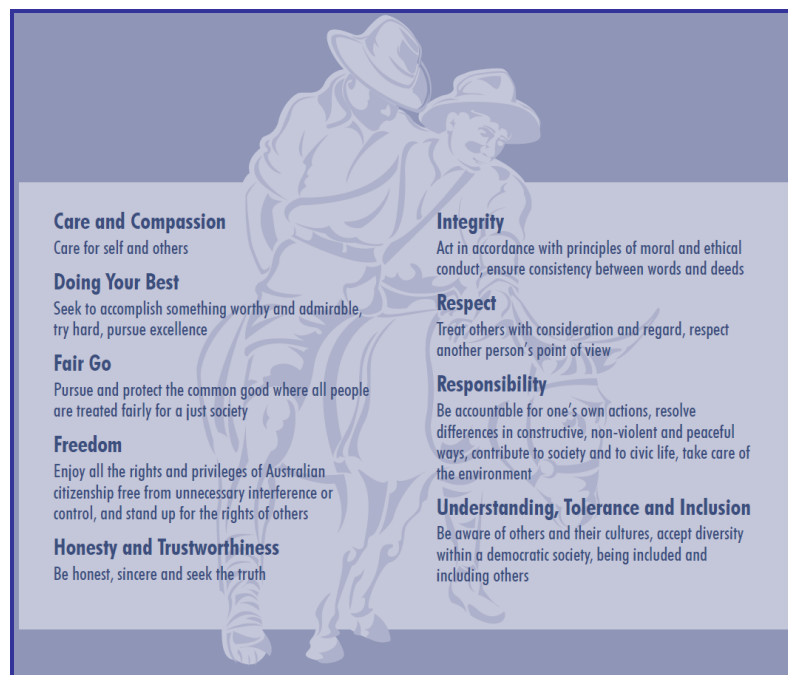
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# Values in Steiner Education

## *What do our children need to live by?*

At present there is a lot of talk about Values. This has been promoted especially by the Federal Liberal Government, but in times of uncertainty such issues can become quite genuine community concerns. I want to consider values, in order to ask ourselves what they serve. I also want to consider to what extent are values implicit in our Waldorf curriculum, and whether they can — or should — be made more explicit.

Let's first consider the nine Values Statements publicised by the Federal Government, which are required to be prominently displayed as a poster in every Australian school (our funding is tied to compliance regarding this, which raises rather interesting issues in relation to the fourth value listed below — that of 'freedom' from 'unnecessary interference or control'!)



In general, I think we can readily admit these are commendable values. However, I want to assert three points regarding this approach to the inculcation — maybe it feels like the imposition — of values:

Values cannot be imposed

It is not possible to change someone else's values

Values must serve a higher vision — they are insufficient in themselves.

I think each of these points is self-evident. Values mediate between a shared Vision and agreed Aims. Without that originating vision, we don't know where we're heading for — it's

a guiding star. Our values must serve that vision. They are the conduits — the channels for conduct — that lead all motivation due to that inspiring vision through into our aims. We agree to common values when we ‘see the light’ — and we are willing to even modify our own values in aligning ourselves to that vision. But just consider for a moment how you feel when told you ‘should’ accept certain values — you want to rebel, to ‘dig your toes in’. I imagine that you experience a feeling of fierce independence that resists all impositions.

Without values we can’t find a true connection between vision and aims — so they are very important. On their own, they become just puffs of air. On the other hand, without them, we can end up with the injunction that ‘the end justifies the means’ (as stated by Machiavelli in his excellent sixteenth century handbook for power-obsessed politicians, ‘The Prince’). The end justifies the means. We have a goal, we have a vision, and it doesn’t matter how we get there, we will go there regardless. Is this familiar? Yes...? It’s a real concern, isn’t it?

At the moment, what I don’t hear much in Australia is an articulation of a clear vision for the nation — certainly not from our current politicians. We have these values being articulated, and through this poster also being imposed on schools, but they are not in service to a shared vision; and that seems to be the condition of our politics at the moment.

Before looking towards your school, let’s first summarise the relationship between these terms (*diagram drawn on board*):

Vision	Why will we do it?	(crystallised through Thinking)
Values	How will we do it?	(engaged through Feeling)
Aims	What will we do?	(motivated through Willing)

Now, in this particular school, once upon a time a group of pioneering parents must have asked themselves: Why have a Steiner school? Why try to do all this? And the answer will have been something like: for our children, for humanity, for our own fulfillment within the community. That’s the vision. Vision is like a bright, shining star. And that vision’s called — in this instance — Steiner Education. The Steiner schools were born out of the First World War as an answer to what was happening, an answer to the failure of culture at that time — not because they had a vision of everything continuing as it had done, just remaining the same, but because they had a vision of a different way of *being* as human beings. That’s what we have as our ‘star’ — that’s the *why* of it.

Then these people had to consider *what* they would do — their aims. And in this active doing, the values would become evident. For they are a *practice*. For instance, if we want we can trample across everyone who gets in the path of our vision — that’s one way of doing it, and that’s a particular value being demonstrated as a behaviour. And if we really want to circle around and manipulate people into going the way we want them to go, we might still get to our goal, but we will also be demonstrating certain values.

So how will we *be*? How will we act, how will we conduct ourselves, how will we go the journey together? That is what our values are about — the *how* — they are the guiding principles by which we live. So, first we have our vision of Steiner Education, out of the world of thinking and of the spiritual purity of thinking at its best. Essentially the spirit is

abroad in the world and it wants to work; and so whenever you have a vision it is full of that clarity, full of that crystalline purity of however far-seeing you wish to be, and the goals of Steiner education are enormously far-seeing in terms of that vision. Then, we formulate our values — or we simply manifest them as habits of being — out of the world of feeling and of sensitive and insensitive awareness of the whole field in which we exist, of humanity.

This is not unique to Steiner education. We can consider many enterprises, and when we look at the structure of their business we find their values, clearly and articulately stated in the most human terms you can imagine. More importantly, to some degree at least, they are being lived. Values are not just something done and put on the shelf, and then it's said of them, 'Good, we've done our values and our vision — let's just get on with making money'. *How* things will be done — that underlies their decisions as they are fulfilling their aims.

Taken together, the Vision, Values and Aims are usually gathered into a vision statement. For instance, here is your school's Mission Statement:

*West Coast Steiner School is committed to providing Waldorf education which nurtures each child in such a way that he or she develops into a young person with a balanced capacity for thinking, feeling and doing. We aim for the children at our school to develop self-confidence and inner resources so that they can take their place in the community as creative, self-directed and responsible people.*

Vision articulated. Values articulated. Aims articulated. And quite succinctly. It encompasses your vision, your values and your aims rather well. I think as your school develops, another principle will become evident — *challenge*. We nurture *and* challenge — and in the space between, we *accompany* the child. One school however has it down to one line: 'Through Steiner Education, human beings can become free and responsible.'

The trick though is in doing it. And the necessary skill we all need is in living with other people who are not doing it quite the way we would like them to be doing it, yet together to still find what we share in common. Because the difficulty about values, of course, is that we might share the same values, but my hold on them is a little different from your hold on them, so we can easily start doing a bit of wrestling around these so-called *shared* values.

Now, values find their way into practice through policies and procedures. When we write the policies for the school — HR policies, code of conduct, all the policies we have about how the school will work — these policies are the embodiment of our values. They guide, they have conduits called procedures which allow the processes to find their way through the obstacles. But these can only be effective if the values are held in common and are not just rigid principles 'on the shelf', or used as weapons to expose weaknesses in others. If we don't have them as an agreed set of 'commons' amongst ourselves, then they don't change anything. There has to be some kind of agreed intent.

Let's make this more concrete by considering one of the core values posited by the Federal Government: 'Care and Compassion'. Many Steiner Schools articulate this value. How do we know when a person is being caring and compassionate? Is it when they tell us they

are being caring and compassionate? 'We must have experienced it,' someone is saying. Yes, we all have. You might have even done it. Let's explore it...

When a person is 'doing' care and compassion we certainly know it, but what does it *look* like? 'Well, we just know it,' someone says. But because we live in a world that demands accountability and so on, we understand the things called indicators. What are the indicators that enable you to see that caring and compassion has occurred? What do you experience when someone is being caring and compassionate? What kind of things do people think, say and do when they are being caring and compassionate? You might have a real life example. So what are the indicators whereby we can say this is happening?

'They reach out.' Yes, but there are also superficial kinds of reaching out, for even advertisers reach out, and politicians reach out... But for many others, it's a real selfless concern. We're talking about both the deed and the motive here, aren't we? Yes? People can be kind and compassionate either for all the wrong reasons or else for their own reasons but the person experiencing it still benefits by the kindness. There's some kind of distinction to be made here. 'There is a wish to bestow a benefit through care and compassion.' And there are various kinds of gifts whereby you really want to be seen being caring and compassionate, which I don't experience as a free gift. 'Conspicuous compassion'... Is this actual care and compassion? This may seem a digression but I'd like to put a set of signposts on the board:

Thinking	is undermined by Doubt
Feeling	is undermined by Hatred
Willing	is undermined by Fear

Here we can acknowledge some real forces which are our enemy. Doubt fails us in our life of thinking, whenever we succumb to being told what to think. At the other pole of our being, Fear so cripples us so that we can't do anything. In our feeling life Hatred can be as subtle as a little cynicism — though we don't like talking about this in Steiner schools as it seems so negative. Doubt we can speak of, and even Fear we can speak of — but Hatred...? We really don't like to think about it...

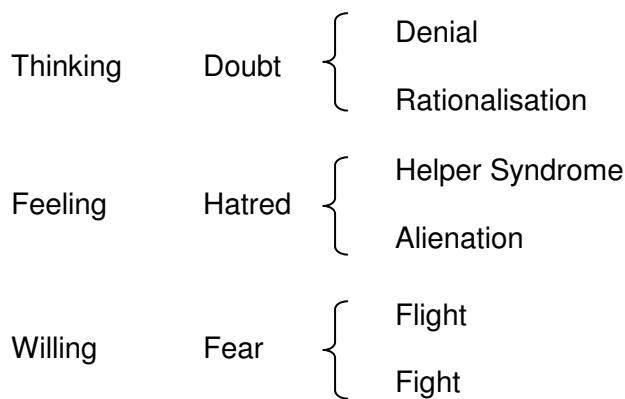
Anna Freud and others have identified some defence mechanisms, which I can relate to these 'onslaughts'. I have found that there are two reactive directions to go: for instance, in Doubt, towards *denial*, to refuse to even think about it; or towards *rationalisation*, to pigeon-hole it so that you eventually feel you have it sorted out (you believe), and can explain it away. These are two reactions to Doubt. Neither, I believe, is entirely satisfactory.

One way to cope with anxiety in our feeling life is to succumb to the *helper syndrome*. Be helpful: then we feel wanted. Being helpful, and so anxiously searching for acceptance... A lot of good can appear to come from it, and we may keep getting benefits from a helper, but it can become pathological. So this here (helper syndrome) is about reaching out, in apparent 'care and compassion,' but it's a reaching out because of personal need, desperation, not out of genuine free recognition of the need of the other — that selfless quality we were referring to before. Nevertheless it can be helpful at times to have somebody who is susceptible to helper syndrome in the school or any community, and actually they *are* very helpful in the pioneering years of the school. Later on, when it doesn't become objectified and is therefore

hard to critique, you want them to do something else — to just go and get a job, maybe... In the school's beginning an enormous amount of volunteer help is needed, and then a little later it becomes ever more difficult dealing with the needy helper, and at that point it is quite hard — isn't it? — to be caring and compassionate towards them.

And the opposite is *alienation*. Recently there have been reports about young Japanese men — *otaku-zoku* — who no longer come out of their rooms. They have alienated themselves so much. Many live only in a 'virtual reality'. Their parents leave meals outside their door and they do their ablutions when everyone else is asleep. They have achieved complete isolation. We have people succumbing to total isolation and alienation on a very large scale in many cultures, and we have disturbing statistics in Australia of our teenagers in that regard too.

Then, we can choose *flight* or *fight* in the face of fear. These are possibly the most obvious defence mechanisms, easily recognisable in many situations. I think all these happen in our Steiner schools too. So we can develop our chart a little further:



'It's possible to flip between those, isn't it? That's what often happens in crisis — you go back and forth between one and the other...' Yes, you are absolutely right. These are instinctive reactions — and wholly understandable as they manifest in someone... We can feel quite compassionate towards anyone reacting like that. But what I want to look at now are other choices, at responses that can come out of a tender, balanced awareness of new possibilities presented by crisis. For Albert Einstein said, 'In the midst of difficulty lies opportunity'.

Experiencing care and compassion has to do with true feeling, undisturbed by Doubt or Fear — that somewhere between those polarities of the helper and the alien, someone is seeing me, witnessing. Just being there, being attentive, listening, observing...

One of the more profound experiences I had of care and compassion was during my first year of teaching. I had come to the place that all first year teachers seem to come to, relatively soon actually... It's called despair. It's also accompanied by exhaustion and a huge sense of failure. I think every parent knows these feelings too. The children had gone out to play and I was sitting at my desk, head in hands... The Class 2 teacher came in, put his hand on my shoulder, gave me a cup of tea and said, 'I think you need this, the bell is ringing again in a minute'. That was wonderful. No sentimentality, just witnessing. I hadn't said a word — he just reached out, put aside a little of his time and gave me just that little bit of nourishment and some warmth, and also reminded me that there was a job to be done. Giving support,

and noting the challenge. And somehow I got there. So I think that quality of attentiveness is actually hearing the despair. Witnessing. That's the real power of empathy.

The word compassion means 'to suffer with'. We feel compassion when we experience with the other person what they experience. What is Caring and Compassion? It's about gesture, mood, intent, feeling. It's quite hard to define — that's the interesting thing about values, it's very hard to make clear, hard, concrete definitions about them. But you sure know it when it's happening and you experience it, don't you.

My question here is: Can it be taught? If it can be taught, how? If it is taught through a poster, does that work? We have found that we have to 'live into' a value in order to find its validity. We have to do something with each phrase, each value, just as we have done with the phrase 'Care and Compassion'. But is that what we should do with the children — to explore it as we have explored it here? And if so, when? And if not, what? How shall we education care and compassion as developmental values?

When we study *King Lear* in Class 12, for instance, we can look at the relationship between Cordelia and her father. This might be the time to talk about these things. We can ask: What is actually happening between them? What is each one experiencing? What are they going through in the relationship with one another? At every stage of their relationship, what is happening? What values are implicit / explicit in their interactions? But you can't do that in the Kindergarten, or in Class 1. So when might you begin examining that? If it is not a real experience, how do you develop it, train it, teach it, get it in there?

With little children, you set an example. You have to *live* a value. If you merely utter a value and you don't live it then you're a hypocrite. We know that little children learn through imitation. Watching and doing, an extraordinary quality that young children have. Actually it continues through life. When we see anything, something in us becomes a little bit of that thing. I think it's in *Huckleberry Finn*, where his father says, 'You've been with so-and-so'. Huck asks him, 'How can you tell?' and his father answers, 'You're walking like him'.

You know how we will fall into step with someone we like being with. If you have an affinity with something, you actually become it, just a little bit. Rudolf Steiner went so far to say, 'If you see a donkey, something in you wants to become a donkey.' A little child, you can see it happening, actually acts that out, they just do it. Becoming a donkey. They can act out a computer game as easily as a donkey. So imitation is a powerful force, and we have an obligation to provide experiences worthy of imitation. This is the beginning of developing values.

**W**ith that I will introduce a specific set of ancient Greek principles which as values are at the core of our education:

Truth  
Beauty  
Goodness

This last one, *Goodness*, is what in kindergarten we undertake so very seriously. The teacher conscientiously does wholesome things and the children just do it with her. They can't help but do it, because of that imitative faculty. But if you do unwholesome things, they can't help but do those also. Our example is paramount. If we are nasty, they will enact that nastiness also. If we are bullies then we are setting the ground for them to be bullies. John Howard says bullying begins in the school ground. Julie Bishop has said to the States, 'You can decide what you like about education but if you don't do what I want I will withhold the funding.' And she has said this repeatedly; such behaviour fits every definition of bullying that Dr Ken Rigby (who is one of Australia's leading authorities on the subject) has made. Bullying starts at the top. In many respects we are a bullying nation (though we may be a little better than some other bullying nations).

'Are our values revealed as much in what we don't do, as in what we *do* do? So that it is the undone, not only the done, that counts?' That's a very good point. Omission. I'm sure you're right. For example: if we don't sweep the floor we are also demonstrating a value. Do we pick up a piece of paper in the corridor, or do we walk past it? I've known teachers who will not bend down to pick up rubbish but will tell children to do so. If we want to set an example, we cannot walk past rubbish — we have to participate in cleaning.

I've also been a kindergarten teacher who didn't sweep my floor one day, and at 2 am I sat bolt upright, my conscience yanking me to attention, lifting me by the collar, pulling a jacket over my pajamas... I drove across to the kindergarten and swept the floor and went home and slept really well for several hours. It's called *conscientiousness*. And conscientiousness is about *doing the good*. Now we cannot be perfect but we need to have aspirations. Always striving to set a good example. The challenge is to just be 'good enough' — we don't have to be perfect, that's a few aeons away yet... We need to work patiently with this — anything less is just not good enough. And we certainly can't go around blaming others.

Now, I just want to return to your Mission Statement, to a comment I made earlier tonight. It is absolutely true of a primary school to *nurture* children, but I also think we need to *challenge* them. When we just have a primary school (to Class 6), we think of love, sweetness, light, support, nurture, fantasy, dreaming, etc. But there is another gesture. So here is our support and our nurture, and there is another one here that is saying 'wake up!' [*demonstrating these two gestures with each hand – the supportive, encompassing one; and the confronting, challenging one.*] With a little child there is really not so much of that gesture of challenge — though it is there with regard to safety, where you might shout out, 'Don't do that!' if a child is playing around with an electrical plug, for instance. The little child needs lots of support. But by Year 12 there has got to be quite a lot of challenge — though even then, still they will need your support.

And somewhere in the middle you get these two (nurture and challenge) in a bit of balance. Somewhere in Class 7 is a good time, for instance, to start to teach the children how to waltz, which is a fine balancing act between support and challenge [*showing how the two gestures previously demonstrated become dancing gestures*]. It's a time for balance between support and challenge in the curriculum too — between doing it for them, and requiring them to do it. So when you come to re-cast your Mission Statement some time, maybe that can be taken into account, because even with the littlest children there are some wake-up calls.

'Does leading by example ever stop as children get older?' No, there is no way out of it. We can never say that when our children get to such-and-such a stage we can stop. Teenagers are very severe critics of our values. When they fight with us, they are just trying to push us off to get some perspective, to see how much of us they will continue to embody. It's a really necessary thing for them to do. Rebellion. They need to get some distance, to feel themselves independent, to sense 'Who am I, what am I, what do I actually believe in?' So they will be provoking us, while looking all the time: 'Who am I going to be now, what am I going to be, what am I going to adopt?' It's a really important phase. And they are deeply concerned with the question of *Truth* at this age. Are you true? This word 'true' is used wonderfully, for instance, in carpentry. When you're working a piece of timber, you might plane it to get a 'true' edge. You sharpen your plane and your chisel to keep it 'true'. So being true is not just about thinking, it's about being upright. The word 'trust' has the same etymological origins.

Goodness is uprightness. Being true is uprightness. Goodness is especially the territory of the preschooler, although of course the challenge to do what is good continues throughout life. Truth is the territory of adolescence. (Oh yeah, I hear you say... Well, it *is* a kind of work-in-progress!) An adolescent *is* deeply concerned with truth — it's just that at first their version of truth seems a bit different from ours. Teenagers know that something is true because it's what *THEY* are saying, *NOW*. *It's true because they are saying it*. This is a kind of provisional absolute truth, a sand-marker in the sand — but gradually they are gauging the territory, considering what to settle for...

And all the time, they are considering us. Are we genuine, authentic? Are we living by our values? Do we *live* them? It's not just the curriculum, it's our methodology, it's the way we do things, the way we walk into the classroom, the way we start talking... Steiner made a comment to teachers: Leave your personal life outside the door. It's a demanding expectation but that is what is required. Sometimes that doesn't happen. I knew one high school teacher whom the children despised because she too often used her personal life as an excuse for being an unprepared — and thus not good enough — teacher.

This is not at all a requirement to be devoid of personality. It's just an obligation not to stalk centre-stage with your own issues. As that teacher who made me a cup of tea in Class 1 said on another occasion when I discussed a difficult child, 'Who does this child need you to become for their development?' I think this is about being true. Straight-edged. Trustworthy.

Now, the *Beautiful* — this seems to be everywhere in Steiner education! It's in everything between the goodness-world of the little child and the truth-world of the adolescent. And it's in these years of primary schooling that so much that is essential in Steiner education shines out. And because values — the *how will I be?* of everything — are connected with the inner world of Feeling, we find them implicit / explicit in every lesson, in every approach. This stage is pre-eminently about the cultivation of Imagination, just as the kindergarten is about Imitation. We enrich and empower the Imagination. How shall we approach values here?

Consider the example of Aesop's Fables in Class 2. When you read Aesop's Fables the way they are written, there is the story and then there is a moral at the end of it. This is not imaginative — there's no room for self-reflection to develop when it is so explicit. The way Rudolf Steiner asked us to do it was to talk about a life situation, a real situation that we

might know or have experienced at some time, or something we can create as a real life circumstance, and then say, 'Now, here is a story...' Then we give them the story and we do not moralise, we do not draw out the values, we just lay it out there for them as *story*. Food for their souls. Food for the incipient conscience. They are intelligent, and they need to work it out for themselves. Remember I said you cannot impose values — this is what I mean. Moralising is not the right approach. It tends to make them submissive to some other value system that is not ours. Guilt is so medieval, I think we shouldn't bother with it any more. Instead — we set out to characterise something, then allow them to have a story which they can picture in their minds...

Consider the issue of stealing. In the kindergarten where they are a-moral, not un-moral or immoral, they simply 'treasure' something and so you ask them, 'When you've finished loving it and caring for it, can you bring it back so someone else can care for it?' They have not stolen it, they are just caring for it. Even in Class 1 there is still a vestige of that mood, so when there is something disappearing regularly from the classroom you follow it up with stories about stealing. There are a couple of great Grimm's stories about stealing, and you just tell the story, you don't bore in on the child with 'I mean you!' — not even in the back of your mind. You are giving them the gift of the story. And in the middle of the class, the child may burst out with 'I didn't mean to do it!' (I've experienced this.) It is an eruption straight out of their primal goodness. You don't then pounce and say, 'Ah, I thought so, I'll see you after school.' You'll probably just leave it, or you may need to have a conversation with the parents around the issue and try not to have them going up the wall about it. With an older child you might have a little conversation with him or her. But try to hold it as the most beautiful confessional moment you have ever witnessed — it is likely the child won't ever do it again after that spontaneous outburst.

The imaginative power of story is immense in those first years. It is the best way for dealing with any behaviour at all. You have to intervene and stop the stuff that is going on, but for the transformations of the motives, the tendencies and the habits, and for the development of values, it is best to give them the nourishment of stories and allow them to reflect... So some part of them is able to say (not intellectually at all) to themselves: this is how it is, this is what goodness is, and this is what beauty in the soul is — to be caring and compassionate, that's what a beautiful soul looks like and indeed is.

To be caring and compassionate indeed is to be beautiful in the soul. That really is the heart of Steiner education — the whole curriculum, the whole event, the whole transaction, in the playing-out of a culture, the transforming events that happen in the classroom... And they happen amazingly often in my experience. When I listen to teachers, everyone can roll out story after story of such transformations...

Occasionally you will tell stories and the child is not transformed, so then you might have to have a tougher story. There was one little girl in a Class 3, very early in Class 3, who was still quite young, and she bit. In fact she bit quite hard, and she bit anybody quite hard and now here she is going on nine and still biting...! Her teacher had tried all kinds of gentle stories and they hadn't worked. So he finally told this story of a little puppy dog that a family got for Christmas. It was just such fun playing with that little puppy dog! It was quite clear from the size of its paws that it wasn't going to remain a little puppy dog, but it was tremendous

fun... They rolled around together and it would nip, but it was very playful, so there was nothing wrong with that at all. As time went by however the puppy dog started to fulfill the prophecy of its paws and it started to get quite large and it started to develop jaws and its jaws were quite strong and the puppy dog still bit but now it started to hurt. And so as the weeks went by the children no longer liked to play with the puppy dog as no one had taught it how not to bite. And so it kept doing it, until at last it got chained up out the back of the garage in its kennel. They fed it of course, but in Christchurch in winter it can snow, and so it's quite easy to rush in from the car after school or after work to get inside and get warm. Well, every now and then they'd hear the dog howling and someone would say, 'Throw the dog a bone, will you?' And they did, but more and more often they no longer noticed the dog howling; it became ambient noise, noise in the background of the household, noise in the background of the winter storms. Then one day it was really quiet and after it had been quiet for some days, someone went out to see how the dog was. It was dead.

That girl never bit again. That's extreme 'story medicine'! The story has this immense power and that is really what you work with as a class teacher. This quality of social imagination — you obviously have it in the story curriculum, but you also have 'values education' during your first arithmetic lesson. You have a cake and you're going to share it for a birthday — you begin to cut it, and the children are all sitting watching and you have a little phlegmatic boy there and he says, 'Oh, it's getting smaller.' Two is smaller than one! The whole cake was huge but you are dividing it up and it's starting to get smaller and smaller and smaller... And then he brightens up after a while and says, 'But there will be a piece for everyone'.

That is a moral story; that is social ethics with a piece of cake. It is different, you can see, from normal mathematics when you start with addition, and you take one, and take another one, and you gather more and more. It feeds our basic acquisitive, impulsive instincts to start out with addition. So start with division. Every child intuitively understands division and fractions at a young age (just ask them to cut up a cake and share it out and then keep the last piece for themselves! They know exactly what division is about). That is actually part of a values education, but you don't tell them that, you let them experience it. And going from the whole to the parts, as we do with all our school work, is the basis for our whole social and environmental ecology — *to start with the whole*.

I asked my Class 1 children, what was the biggest number. One of them said 'divinity' and another one said 'affinity' — these are great answers, and they were trying to say, of course, 'infinity'... But actually the biggest number in fact is ONE. Take everything and you have a 'universe'. *Uni*-verse (uni = one). Any more verses and you have 'bi-verses' and 'diverses'. The children get enormous satisfaction realising these things: about the whole class, many children; the whole school, many teachers; the whole world, many people... And you're teaching out of *their* unitary consciousness, not ramming our adult consciousness down their throats, but working out of the intuitive concept that the entire life sphere of the world is one (and that ultimately the flutter of a butterfly's wings in Rio de Janeiro can affect the weather in Japan — a modern wholistic picture). What you are working with is the principle that everything is connected to everything else. That is the primordial world of every religion and it is the primordial world of every young child. It's all about being soaked through with values, which are heaven's values, and world values, the values of every culture since time began.

You proceed eventually, of course, to the pain of separation in Class 3, and then you have to practice other kinds of values. That is implicit in the stories you tell at that time. Stories of struggle: the fact that you have to have food, shelter and clothing after you've left Paradise. So — values about family, values about community. The way that Moses takes his people towards the Promised Land, a place heaped full of values. He is bound to a vision — and the values he pronounces serve that vision, and shape that aim. We all are looking for a Promised Land in that regard, as in the story of the Jewish people — it is a good story for every human being. We all have been disinherited and dispossessed in one way or another by the forces of the world. We are all looking for something else. Everyone who has come to Australia is somebody who has left somewhere else looking for a better life. So many folks who came to Australia, including the Aboriginals themselves tens of thousands of years ago, came seeking something else. They came to Australia looking for a new life. It is a country that has those values invested to it: a new chance, new opportunities, new possibilities, and we have all been glad to get here, but the strange thing is that we now want to stop everyone else coming. So then we invert our values and become untrue to the very impulses that created the Australian culture, wanting to exclude others. There are the recent examples of xenophobia... These kinds of thoughts could be pursued in the High School, but their seeds are in all those stories of exile and homecoming that children hear from Class 3 onward. Stories about courage, tragedy and comedy, leading on into history...

In Natural Science subjects we use exactly the same kinds of pictures, out of the way we work, beginning with little nature stories and simple observation, which allow the children to perceive nature, allow them to live in harmony with the passing seasons... The way they experience a flowering plant can be undertaken for the whole year in Class 5. We are working all the time with a kind of devotion to the given world, to learn to see it and realise that it is loveable (and not only that it is loveable, that it needs to be loved). The world needs us to be its steward.

Now, in High School something different happens — though it is about values too. I've already alluded to that aspect of *Truth* we find so engaging...! You might have noticed that teenagers can have different reactions. They work out of something else. They work out of sympathy and antipathy. *Eurythmy* *sux* — *Hip Hop rulz*. On one level it is just likes and dislikes and adolescents are just full of it, as they swing back and forth between them. But in the Rudolf Steiner school, by 'sympathy' and 'antipathy' we mean more than 'likes' and 'dislikes'. Everything that engages us, everything that you could call 'reaching out', is a sympathetic gesture, not only on an emotional level but exactly like that violin string here vibrating in relation to that one there — that is a sympathetic gesture, we call it 'vibrating in sympathy'. Becoming that donkey. So whenever I go out towards you it is a sympathetic gesture. If I go out towards you too much, at some point you are going to tighten up, you want me to push off, to move back, and you will start to resist. Antipathy is the result. If I invade your space, wishing to overwhelm you with my warmth, my reality, you will resist — 'chill' is the endearing teenage phrase for it. It's an interesting way of looking at things. For instance, if you are too drawn out into the world, you can lose yourself — and if you are too withdrawn, self-preoccupied, you lose your connection with the world.

Teenagers understand this psychology brilliantly and use it all the time. If you try to get too keen about what you're teaching (I've even heard a teacher say to Year 9 students, 'Now,

children, this is really significant'), then the kids will say, 'Whatever, chill, get over it'. On the other hand, if we are too laid back and too casual, they start to be bored, so we've got to exercise them across this ground, this whole territory. We can't just give them nutshell definitions. They need a 'work-out in the soul-gym'. So in Class 9 Geology I might say to them, 'Let's look at this tectonic plate theory, which was developed especially by American scientists in the 1960's'. And we study it, and become convinced by it. But during this time America and Russia were not talking to each other, and over in Russia they were looking at exactly the same phenomena and developing an entirely different theory to explain it. The Cold War was absolute. So the Russians had some wonderful suggestions about diapirism, about the welling-up of the earth's crust, salt-domes, and so forth — wonderful geological thoughts and ideas. And over here the Americans also have their wonderful ideas... The American ideas were essentially mechanical because America is a materialistic country, while over in Russia the ideas were essentially mystical, even though it was a communist country, because that is how Russians are, they just can't help being mystical. So I would present this to the Class 9 students and ask, 'So which one is true?' Some of course just said 'Whatever', while others said, 'But you're a teacher, you should know'. But some took hold. And I would exploit that, emphasising the fascinating dichotomy of it all.

In the High School you never want to create solutions. You want to create situations. You will never set up a science experiment such as I experienced during my schooling that was titled, 'To prove that such-and-such is so'... Because if you do that, it is already known, and why would a 15-year-old want to find out what some old man already knows. That is *so* boring. But if you title the experiment 'To see what happens when you mix this and this and this' — an experiment headed up in terms of an investigation — and then it goes BOOM! How exciting is that? And then you say, 'So can you repeat those conditions?' And it goes BOOM! 'Hey, maybe there is a law about it', and they start to want to figure it out. So in Class 9 you do risk an explosion or two. Because this is what their hormones are doing inside them. So you also try to do very smelly things — because after all they *are* 15 — so you mix chemicals, see what happens when you mix such and such... And ammonia floats around the room, or rotten-egg gas rolls through the room and they will make the most crude comments, but then they get intrigued about what it is all about and want to know what is the difference between this and that. So they are discerning, and learning to judge. Not in the sense of making judgments that are actually 'This is true and this is false', but learning to evaluate the mysterious nature of the world. That is of value to them, not in the sense that we are actually telling what the values are, even at that age, we are letting them explore the mysteries of the world with intense interest. Interest is a value, it is an activity... It is love. When you are intrigued, engaged in something, you are actually active in love. There's warmth. They are reaching out into the world and it is really warm and interesting. When that is working well — you can't guarantee that it is going to be like that every day, because they are teenagers after all — they are going to have wonderful experiences.

Then you can pass into Class 10, when it is best to make cosmetics in chemistry because they are narcissistic, and one day you might ask, just casually, 'Do we have thoughts, or do we think?' Most will look at you as if to say 'Weird!' But one or two will really struggle with that idea. It is actually a question for Class 12 because they study philosophy in Class 12. You see, to *have* a thought you don't do much, you are essentially passive and then 'plop' — you have a thought. That's how politicians can manipulate us, and advertisers too — to make us have

thoughts but not to think. ‘Plop’ — there’s a thought, telling you to be alert but not alarmed, but maybe make sure you’ve got all your alarms on... People try to put these thoughts into our minds. Buy such and such, vote for so and so, have these thoughts but don’t think. But to *think*, to really turn the searchlight of thinking on to an issue and sort it out, that’s what our young people will have to do in their future — to fight for the *truth*, to fight against the powers of *doubt*. And they will have to struggle to reinstate *beauty* as a supreme value, to assert its value against the *ugliness* and *cynicism* (*hatred*) of a ‘too cool’ age. And they will also have to enact *goodness*, daring to do the good in the face of abject *fear*.

I think ultimately what we are seeking with our children are the highest qualities of all: that they shall live in *wonder* — openness of the mind, an openness in the sensing of the mystery of the world. It is not easily explained. But a boy in my Class 8 who was later to become a delinquent, at the age of 14 could look at the human skeleton and say, ‘There must be a God — because nobody could make something so beautiful without already having seen it.’ Perhaps there is hope, when such things can be said — not only said, but deeply felt.

And there are adolescents who decline to be off their faces, and who nevertheless attend the parties and repeatedly rescue their peers. These ones live out of *compassion*, openness of the heart, an unconditional love that can transform situations. They are touched by the example of Gertrude Kolmar, the young Jewish poet who, before she died in Auschwitz, could say of her guards in the work camp, ‘They too are prisoners, and must be loved.’

And there are those who will take on the challenges, out of an openness of the will — open towards action, concerned about hunger and the false promise of GM crops, concerned about climate change, concerned about waste products — knowing that they will never cease... Their *consciences* will not let them cease.

And so we find there are antidotes for Doubt, Hatred and Fear. They are the soul powers of Wonder, Compassion, and Conscience. That’s what I think Steiner education is all about. With a bit of good fortune these children will get there. Knowing them, I am hopeful for the future. My experience of many, many graduates of Steiner education is that they are fresh and free. They know that anything is as easy as deciding to do it, though that can be hard. For we also have those children who are damaged and whom we can’t help sufficiently on the journey, and these children have hard destinies. I am astonished by the experiences they have — they come back to the school a few years later, and often they are all right. As I said to one particular boy when he was in *big* trouble, ‘You have to decide that sooner or later you’ve got to decide.’ He looked at me then like, ‘Weird’. But when he was studying law at university a few years later he came hurrying over to me in the car park at the local mall and cried out, ‘John, you were right. It really was as simple as deciding I had to decide. The next day I decided. I’m doing it, it’s easy. The hard thing was actually to get over all that crap and doubt and fear I had in me’. I looked at him then, so fresh and so free. He radiated the values I have come to revere:

In the face of Doubt, to find Truth, and the illumination of Wonder;  
In the face of Hatred, to find Beauty, and the warmth of Compassion;  
In the face of Fear, to find Goodness, and the power of Conscience.