

Transforming Criticisms of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education

- Evolution, Race and the Quest for
Global Ethics**

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Centre for Philosophy and Anthroposophy

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(1) INTRODUCTION TO THE CRITICISMS AND THE PROBLEM OF RACISM

Contemporary Context

For friends and supporters of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education, Rudolf Steiner is one of the most enlightened thinkers of the last one hundred years or more. As the founder of Anthroposophy, Waldorf Education, Anthroposophical Medicine, Biodynamic Farming, etc, he is known to them for promoting moral principles and social values that could help heal the divisions of society. In his early philosophical works he is renowned for his innovative views on the sciences and moral life. Scientifically, he is known to have argued for a new interpretation and extension of the natural sciences (inorganic, organic) to include a science of the spiritual (including culture and art) (Steiner 1886/1978). In moral theory (ethics) he is considered to have developed a set of principles that transcend tradition and group based morality to be grounded on the ethical power of the individual (Steiner 1894/1963). He is also known for his advocacy of: finding the positive in all beings and experiences; being openminded to the views of others irrespective of background or life situation; finding inner peace in difficult circumstances; and developing the strength of will for the fulfilment of right deeds (Steiner 1972). He is also well known for social ideals such as liberty, equality and community for all human beings (Steiner 1919/72); and for his conviction that the World is evolving towards a universal development of wisdom and love based on the freedom of every individual (1909/63). In the field of education, his ideas have become a global phenomenon with around one thousand schools world-wide. These are perceived by many as promoting a healthy understanding of human learning and which aim to cultivate (on the levels of knowledge, feeling and action) empathy and understanding for and between all the peoples of the World (Steiner 1919/69). Steiner / Waldorf schools are not only globally present, but within them there are teachers and students from all ethnic, racial, and spiritual backgrounds who are enthused by such ideas and practices. In this sense, the global support for Anthroposophy and Waldorf education has many representatives of all the peoples of the World. ***It is my view that the root of this world support for Anthroposophy and Waldorf education lies in Steiner's commitment to a rich form of global ethics. This is what this book attempts to show.***

To the vast majority of such friends and supporters of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education, the proposition that Steiner was a “mystic barmpot”, or a practitioner of pseudoscience, and held racist and fascist beliefs would appear strange to say the least. To them, mysticism, racism and fascism are at the opposite end of the cognitive and ethical spectrum to Steiner, Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education: take every one of the above cognitive, moral and social principles, each and every part of his evolutionary views and concepts of education and, for these friends and supporters, you would find the exact opposites in mysticism, racism and fascism. For them, Steiner, Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education have no connection, no links, or bridges, no philosophical similarity, sympathy or practical outcomes in common with mysticism, racism or fascism. Nevertheless, the critics of Steiner continue to assert the connections.

So the most natural question that someone may ask at this point is: why bother with such assertions? Why not just ignore them? Steiner’s own view in relation to opponents of Anthroposophy was twofold: “It is natural for one who wishes to be a quiet member to say, for example, ‘I cannot concern myself with the statements of opponents about the society’. But this is changed the moment he goes outside the sphere of silent participation. Then at once it becomes his duty to pay attention to the opponents and to defend all that is worthy of defence in Anthroposophy and the Anthroposophical Society... we can only be referring to those members who wish to be active... Only so shall we achieve our purpose, and the Society will be equal to the promise which it holds out to all its members – and thereby to the World at large” (Steiner 1924/63, p. 22/3). Steiner’s message is clear: if you wish be a silent member you do not need to concern yourself with the opponents. But if you wish to be active in the name of Anthroposophy (and by extension all the daughter movements) then you need to defend it where it is worthy of defence.

But Anthroposophy covers all the fields of knowledge mentioned above, so ***the primary aim of this book is to address the racism assertion***. The question of mysticism plays a part in this, but is not the primary aim here. This book is one attempt to defend Anthroposophy and Waldorf education. In my view, the assertion of racism is false; from my perspective this assertion presents, in its philosophical roots,

the complete **counter-image** of what Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education really are; it is the **real image** of Anthroposophy as a truly **ethical philosophy** that is worthy of defence. This not only has national significance it has a global dimension due to the World outreach of Anthroposophy and its daughter movements such as Waldorf Education.

The racist allegation is not new. In Europe and in America the accusation of racism against Rudolf Steiner has been present for over a decade. In Britain, however, it is a more recent phenomenon and over the last few years there have been claims that Steiner held a racist doctrine and that this has practical consequences for Waldorf Education. For example, a BBC South West program (November 2012) shows that the racist claim is still alive despite many arguments against it (Hindes & Nordwall 2012). The BBC interviewer, Samantha Smith, described Steiner as holding a racist view of evolution and reincarnation, using British Humanist Association member, and anti-faith school campaigner, Richy Thompson to back up an attempt to discredit Steiner and Anthroposophy. At one prominent point in the program a question was put to the principal of the Frome Steiner Academy, Trevor Mephram, when he was asked to the effect: “do you believe in reincarnation and do you put Anthroposophy at the centre of your teaching”? By the time the question was put, Smith had lead the audience to believe, by structuring the programme in a very specific way, that by answering ‘yes’, or even ‘I am open-minded to it’ could only mean one thing: that this was saying yes, or being open-minded, to racism. Of course Mephram did not mean this, but the way the programme was structured, the viewer is not likely to have thought otherwise. But this **media structuring** was based on the pre-conceived notion, or assumption, that Steiner and his Anthroposophy is racist. The discussion was placed within the context of this assumption; it was not in any sense an assumption free conversation.

Other more positive media coverage has also received critical attention by opponents of Anthroposophy who make allegations about all of the initiatives inspired by Steiner’s thought. In reference to a television program by Julia Bradbury on BBC’s ‘Countryfile’, Nick Nakorn wrote, on the 11th February 2013, to the BBC: “I recently watched Julia Bradbury’s piece on Biodynamics and was astonished that she did not mention the racist nature of the Anthroposophical doctrine that underpins all ‘Steiner’

organisations including Biodynamics, Steiner-Waldorf Schools, Camphill Communities, Triodos Bank, the Steiner Christians Community and many other Anthroposophical businesses and enterprises... Institutional racism within other organisations such as The Metropolitan Police or the Football Association is bad enough but at least they admit to it and have policies to stamp it out; there is also much public interest and exposure by journalists. But, unlike Steiner organisations, most corporate bodies do not have racism written into their guiding philosophies – that is what makes the Anthroposophical world view so disgusting” (Nakorn 2013, February). The information he uses to make this judgment is from the American academic Dr Peter Staudenmaier. As we will see, it is a common phenomenon for the critics to base their views on this source. Nakorn does not discuss the reliability of the information he uses, he merely assumes that Staudenmaier’s interpretation is correct. On the grounds of a frequent use of this source, the critics make cognitive and moral judgements of Steiner and Anthroposophy.

In the last few years, such programs were preceded by growing criticisms of Waldorf / Steiner education and its philosophical base, Anthroposophy. In May 2012, members of the British Humanists Association (BHA) signed a letter to the newspaper the “*Observer*” which said: “not enough attention has been paid to what we believe to be two equally grave threats to science education, namely Maharishi and Steiner schools... Steiner education is based on an esoteric/occultist movement called Anthroposophy, founded by Austrian mystic Rudolf Steiner... Anthroposophy, or spiritual science, is centered on beliefs in karma, reincarnation and advancing children’s connection to the spirit world... We believe that the new rules on teaching pseudoscience mean that no more Steiner or Maharishi [Academy] schools should open”. The article is signed and endorsed by BHA members Pavan Dhaliwal, Head of Public Affairs, British Humanist Association; Edzard Ernst, Professor of Complementary Medicine, University of Exeter; David Colquhoun, Professor of Pharmacology, University College London; Simon Singh, science writer; Melanie Byng, Waldorf Critic; Richard Byng, medical academic. The article is still, to this day, on the BHA website and is a part of their campaign against supposed “faith schools” lead by BHA co-worker Richy Thompson. In this context, the term “Anthroposophy” is associated with terms like pseudoscience and mysticism. In other words, for them Anthroposophy is not really a science and therefore untrue or untestable. Clearly, if

this were the case any education based on this would be considered, by them, to be questionable and should not be funded by the government.

Prior to the Observer article, in the Autumn of 2010, co-signatory to the BHA article, and ex-Waldorf parent, Melanie Byng published three articles on Professor David Colquhoun's web site "dcscience.net". The articles were called: "The true nature of Steiner (Waldorf) education, Mystical barmpttery at taxpayers' expense, Part 1"; "The Steiner Waldorf cult uses bait and switch to get state funding. Part 2"; "Steiner Waldorf Schools Part 3: The problem of racism". Each of these articles is a particular type of criticism of Steiner Education and Anthroposophy that is obvious from their titles. Most of the evidence she adduces is, again, from the work of Peter Staudenmaier.

Earlier, critic Mike Collins, founder of the website "UK Anthroposophy", said his primary aim was "raising awareness and having the Anthroposophy movement clarify its position regarding Steiner's incontestable racism" (Collins 2009, CHASE – the obituary) (CHASE stands for his previous website "Challenging Anthroposophy and Steiner Education"). This follows on from his earlier work which extensively mapped all the anthroposophical institutions in the UK including their economic, political and cultural connections (Collins 2007). Collins claimed that: "the CHASE blog has received 4000 visitors... These were mostly from people having negative experiences as a result of their involvement with an Anthroposophical application of one sort or another. Often confused, bewildered, shocked or even just downright angry, all of these people have managed to find some sort of balance again and if CHASE served any useful purpose at all, it certainly helped a few people in distress... CHASE can claim a few modest achievements. For example, an NHS hospital removed info materials relating to Anthroposophical medicine from its website when it was pointed out that Anthroposophical medicine is unscientific, unproven and therefore unsound" (Collins 2009). This "pseudoscience" assertion is often connected by the critics to the racism issue.

Other criticisms have appeared more recently on the blog sites of local newspapers, such as the Exeter Express and Echo (28 February 2013), in response to the opening of the Exeter Steiner Academy. The author, Andy Hannan, Labour County

Council candidate for Priory & St Leonard's, Exeter, opposed the Academy on the grounds that the school was based on the teachings of Steiner who "was a mystic who thought that he had direct clairvoyant access to cosmic knowledge. He developed an esoteric belief system based on karma, reincarnation, astrology, homeopathy and gnomes... He also believed in a racial hierarchy of spiritual development". Hannan's message is clear: he does not think the tax payer should pay for an education based on what he considers to be mysticism and racism.

In Germany, similar issues have been raised to the extent that an official German body the "Federal Department for Media Harmful to Young Persons" made the statement that: "Aus der "Entscheidung Nr. 5506 vom 6.9.2007" der Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien zu [the **BPjM**] "Geisteswissenschaftliche Menschenkunde" von Rudolf Steiner, vertrieben vom Rudolf Steiner Verlag, Dornach/Schweiz, Zitat Seite 6f.: Der Inhalt des Buches ist nach Ansicht des 12er-Gremiums in Teilen als zum Rassenhass anreizend bzw. als Rassen diskriminierend anzusehen". The last part of which can be translated as saying that parts of Steiner's text can be seen as promoting racial hatred, for example as racial discrimination. It is acknowledged by the BPjM though that, overall, Steiner held no racist theory. But critics, such as Helmut Zander in Germany and Peter Staudenmaier in America, assert that racist doctrines are **central** to Steiner's **theory** of racial evolution rather than being isolated statements.

There have of course been different types of responses to the racism assertion by supporters of Anthroposophy and Steiner education. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship made the following statement: "Steiner Education is opposed to all forms of discrimination against any person or group of people on the grounds of race, gender, faith, disability, age and sexual orientation and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and reflecting the diversity of the children, staff and parents served by Steiner schools... Although Steiner's ideas are based on a profound respect for the equality, individuality and shared humanity of all people, regardless of race or ethnic origin, his works do contain a number of statements on race that are inappropriate in a modern context. They do not inform the education in any way: they influence neither content nor methodology" (SWSF website, Statement on Racism). The approach follows the same pattern as that taken by the "Dutch Commission

(2000)” into racism in Steiner Schools in Holland where they stated that “the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) contains neither racial doctrine nor statements made for the purpose of insulting persons or groups of people because of their race, and which could therefore be called racist. In the opinion of the Commission, the collected works of Rudolf Steiner do contain a number of statements that, by today's standards, are of a discriminatory nature or could be experienced as discriminatory” (Available online). As we will see shortly, critics, such as Byng (2010), dismiss these kinds of statements as mere public relations work. But what they fail to notice is that these statements are necessary from cultural and legal perspectives in order to clearly express what proponents of Steiner Education are convinced of. At the same time, what seems to me to be needed is, in addition, an in-depth investigation into whether or not the racist accusation has any validity at all. As I will argue, I do not think that it does.

The response by anthroposophists in the German language has been just as insightful as it is diverse. In the so-called “*Frankfurt Memorandum*”, a large number of leading anthroposophists came to the conclusion that: “There is no racism in Steiner as defined by historical research, no systematically espoused “theory of race”, and no ideology of a “clash of races”. In particular, it does not exist as a theory or instructions on how to act for modern and contemporary humanity. There are, however, in Steiner's works individual discriminating and some few racist remarks which must unequivocally be classed as historically obsolete. They can be explained historically in that Steiner took part in a discourse on questions of evolution, some of it tinged with racism, at a time of colonialism and Eurocentrism” (Brüll & Heisterkamp 2008, p. 14). In other words, the position represented here is that Steiner did make some racist remarks but that they are isolated statements and not central to his evolutionary theory. The first problem is that some of the quotes that they refer to as “racist” are of peoples long extinct prior to recorded history. So the question is: ***can a statement be classified as racist if the “race” referred to no longer exists and that it anyway does not meet any classification of any race of the current age?*** This is the question of the ***context*** and how this affects the meaning of a word or a statement. I will look at the question of context in chapters 2 & 3.

There is a second and deeper problem however, namely the **centrality** of an idea or statement. Critics of Steiner reject the notion that the quotes referred to are isolated statements; for them they are not peripheral to his theory of evolution but **central**. Staudenmaier, for example has argued that: “Steiner’s racial and ethnic teachings are **central** to anthroposophical conceptions of cosmic progress, individual spiritual advancement” (Staudenmaier 2012)(my emphasis). So the question is: **how to determine what is and what is not central to a person’s views, especially when the meaning of the word “race” depends on the evolutionary time period**. I will consider this in chapter 3.

A more evaluative approach to the critics is taken by American anthroposophist Daniel Hindes and Swedish anthroposophist Sune Nordwall (Defending Steiner; Waldorf Answers; available online). For over ten years, they have “critiqued the critics”. A particularly extensive work is Daniel Hindes’ (2010) “Anthroposophy and Ecofascism: A paragraph by paragraph Commentary on Peter Staudenmaier's Anthroposophy and Ecofascism” (See Waldorf Answers web site). In Germany, Leist, Bader and Ravagli (2002) have taken a historical approach in their “*Racial Ideals Lead Mankind into Decadence*” ANTHROPOSOLOGY AND ANTI-SEMITISM: Was Rudolf Steiner an Anti-Semite?; Bader’s and Ravagli’s (2012) “Anthroposophie und der Rassismusvorwurf“ (Anthroposophy and the Racism accusation); and Ravagli in his “Was ist Rassismus?” (2007) (What is Racism?) investigates the question within German thought. These counter arguments to the critics have been valuable, extensive and thorough and are well worth reading by supporters of Anthroposophy.

The problem is that critics of Steiner reject these approaches as they claim that they do not directly address the **core philosophy reflected in the particular quotes** that they, the critics, are referring to; accusing proponents of Anthroposophy of “issuing blank statements” or “choosing more cosy quotes to paint a nicer picture”. What they seem to be looking for is an analysis of particular quotes from Steiner and reasons given as to why they are not racist (assuming that this is possible, which they don’t think it is). Byng (2010), referring to the SWSF disclaimer on racism, stated: “the disclaimer’s tone betrays the movement’s haughty antipathy to external analysis – and frankly it’s simply untrue. There are a very large number of Steiner’s pronouncements which could not only be interpreted as racist, they are racist....

What makes a particular text racist is its **content**, what it actually says about race... This is extraordinarily mendacious, and only sustainable if no one else – specifically no politician – reads any Steiner. The ‘discriminatory effect’ is **reflected in the actions and decisions of teachers in the classroom**” (my emphasis). **This raises an interesting research question: how do you know that an individual statement is integral to a core theory?** An individual statement could, in principle, not be connected to the core theory at all. So the follow up question is: what **is** the core theory? I shall address this in chapter 3 and attempt to correlate the contentious quotes to this in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The point about Byng’s assertion is the issue about the **core philosophy** and its possible reflection in practice. The view that it is the **central theory** or philosophy that is the main issue here (not the “racist agenda”) is also supported by Swedish critic and blogger Alicia Hamberg (blog name “Zooey”): “there is no ‘racist’ agenda to Waldorf/Steiner schools. However, they’re founded on Anthroposophy. You can’t get rid of the Anthroposophy. What is worrying is not so much that Anthroposophy contains racist beliefs but the fact that anthroposophical and Waldorf/Steiner organizations fail utterly in dealing with their own history and the **contents of the philosophy** they subscribe to. I agree there’s no racist ‘agenda’, I know that there have been a number of anthroposophically flavoured incidents of racism in Waldorf / Steiner schools... This is something the Waldorf/Steiner movement must handle, and they must do so seriously. It’s not about PR. As long as they think it is about securing good PR, they’re heading in the wrong direction” (Zooey in Unity 2010)(my emphasis). The problem with this, however, is: what **is** the content of Steiner’s ideas about “race”? Is this content that Byng and Hamberg refer to merely the fact that the **word** “race” appears in Steiner’s writings, an assumption that seems to be implicit in much of the critic’s approach, or is it in the underlying **ideas**? It is the question as to how race and racism are interpreted and conceptualised that is the main issue here. I shall return to this question in chapters 2 & 3.

Whilst I don’t accept the critic’s assessment of Anthroposophy and of their evaluation of the supporters of Anthroposophy, there is the need for further research into the **content** of Steiner’s ideas. This might help clarify some of the misunderstandings such as the following. Staudenmaier has stated: “If anthroposophists want to face up

to the racist components in their ideological legacy, they need to analyze and understand what Steiner taught about race, not pre-emptorily denounce it, and they need to figure out how to revise the overall conceptual structure of Anthroposophy” (Staudenmaier in Byng 2010). ***What is needed is an investigation into: 1) specific quotes and 2) their role in the overarching ideas of Anthroposophy.*** For the critics, to give other quotes and a description of his other views is not sufficient, Steiner could, they would claim, be contradicting himself. The counter critics would no doubt challenge this, quite rightly in my view, but still the assertion does not go away. I think that the defenders of Anthroposophy are largely right in their assessment of the racism assertion, but that there needs to be more research into the specific quotes that are contentious as well as into Steiner’s general theory. ***This leads to a need for a re-contextualisation of Steiner’s ideas.***

A quite different side to the problem is that the critics assume that if someone defends Steiner’s views that they are supporting racism. Referring to a document co-authored by Detlef Hardorp and Lorenzo Ravagli “Overcoming Racism through Anthroposophy”, Staudenmaier claims that there are anthroposophists: “who have very vocally and quite explicitly defended a range of Steiner’s racist arguments. This remains the mainstream position for both the Waldorf movement and the broader anthroposophist movement today” (Staudenmaier in Byng 2010). A similar position is held by Nakorn as expressed in a complaint to the BBC about their report on the new Exeter Steiner Academy: “Any reporter with any knowledge of education would know about the controversy and it can only be assumed that a): the reporter has no knowledge of education and should not have been given the assignment to report on Exeter Steiner School or, b): the reporter does know about the controversy but is in favour of racism and mysticism” (Nakorn 6 2013, July). The assumption here, however, is that there is no other option and that the critic’s view cannot be questioned. This is particularly the case for part b), where the hidden message is that: if you do not agree with what I say then you must be a racist and a mystic too. Such a stance is to place the critic in an assumed un-falsifiable position; a stance which Popper (1998) would have called pseudoscience. I agree that it is important to research Steiner’s ideas about race, but it must not be presumed that disagreeing with the critics implies any defence of a supposed racism: ***the proposition should be open to refutation or confirmation. Disagreeing with the critics does not***

constitute any form of defence of racism: it means that the racism claim against Steiner is considered to be false.

Moreover, what the critics do not seem to understand is that one of the main reasons for their convictions is due to a lack of a ***philosophical*** justification of what racism is. This is observable in the fact that there is an absence of a ***definition*** of racism in their arguments against which Steiner's texts can be judged. This is a point also made by Ravagli (2007) in relation to the critics in the German language. The approach that I will take will be a philosophical one in an attempt to provide such a definition. This will be discussed in chapter 2.

It also needs to be mentioned that most critics in the English speaking world, including the authors from the BHA and Samantha Smith derive most of their views, directly or indirectly, from the work of American academic Peter Staudenmaier (2000/8, 2008, 2010). For over a decade now, beginning with his article "Anthroposophy and Ecofascism"; and culminating in his PhD thesis "Between Occultism and Fascism: Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race and Nation in Germany and Italy, 1900-1945", Staudenmaier has argued that Steiner held racist views and that these were ***central*** to his ideas on evolution; that is they were not peripheral or isolated statements. Staudenmaier is often seen by other critics as giving academic substance to their own convictions, without doing any original research into primary sources themselves. ***The majority of the critics' assertions against Steiner and Anthroposophy are repetitions of the ideas of Peter Staudenmaier.*** This means that most criticisms of Steiner and Anthroposophy, in the English speaking world, stand or fall with the ideas of Peter Staudenmaier.

Internal and External Views of History

Staudenmaier has made frequent references to the importance of understanding Steiner's ideas in a historical context. He often asserts that anthroposophists do not really understand Steiner due to this. In the last paragraph of his "*The Art of Avoiding History*" he claims: "I would be pleased if my research provided an opportunity for Waldorf admirers to ponder this contentious history and take its lessons seriously. What is worrisome about the Waldorf movement's continued failure to address Anthroposophy's racial legacy is not that Waldorf schools in the twenty-first century

will start churning out little Hitler youths; what is worrisome is that Waldorf advocates and sympathizers may unknowingly help prepare the ideological groundwork for another unforeseen shift in the broader cultural terrain, in which notions of racial and ethnic superiority and inferiority could once again take on a spiritual significance that lends itself all too easily to practical implementation in a changed social and political context. For this reason among others, I strongly encourage those involved in Waldorf endeavors to take another look at the history of their movement and the doctrines at its core” (Staudenmaier 2009a). The connection that Staudenmaier makes is between what he considers to be Steiner’s **central theory** (see above) and the activities of other anthroposophists of the time and later. He also forges an alleged link between Steiner’s theory and Nazi doctrines, drawing on Wolfgang Treher he asserts: “Concentration camps, slave labor and the murder of Jews constitute a praxis whose key is perhaps to be found in the ‘theories’ of Rudolf Steiner” and that “The affinities with Nazi discourse are unmistakable” (Staudenmaier 2000/8). In essence, Staudenmaier attempts to understand Steiner’s views through the historical context in which he lived. In historical research there are two basic interpretations of this. The first is the idea that an author’s views are **influenced** by their social environment. Such an approach would need to demonstrate how these views are shaped but not necessarily derived from or identical to those in the social context. The second approach is to show essential identity or complete derivation of ideas from the historical environment. It is the latter of these approaches that seems to be present in Staudenmaier’s writings. If Staudenmaier is to show the validity of his argument this means that, for him, he has to show the **identity** or **derivability** of the **meaning** of Steiner’s ideas from his contemporaries both inside and outside the anthroposophical movement.

In taking this stance, Staudenmaier does not understand Steiner’s ideas for themselves because he is implicitly committed to the **external view of history**. In the philosophy of history, particularly that of the history of science, there are two basic approaches to how history is to be researched and understood. The first kind is the so-called **internal view of history** (Koyré 1968) the second type, as stated, is the **external view of history** (Kuhn 1970). The first of these is the notion that, say, an individual’s or a community’s ideas are to be researched and understood through that person or community themselves and not through the social context in which they

lived. The second view argues that an individual's ideas **are** understandable through their social context. Both of these approaches have their strengths and weaknesses as **ways of understanding**. But they can only be justified **after a research procedure** that is open to both possibilities. That means that, in order to justify either as valid end results of understanding, the research procedure must critically investigate the **intrinsic** ideas of an individual and then do the same with the ideas present in the surrounding contexts. Once this is done, a comparison can be made and a justified set of conclusions come to: then and only then can the research procedure be open and fair concerning the results of understanding.

In this sense, Staudenmaier's research procedure concerning Steiner's own ideas is fundamentally faulty. His assumed position is that of the external history view of Steiner's ideas. In the vast majority of cases, Staudenmaier does not make a deep exploration of Steiner's **intrinsic** ideas; rather he largely **assumes** that the meaning of them is essentially identical to the context of Steiner's day. In most cases, what Staudenmaier interprets in Steiner are projections of his own philosophical framework derived from his understanding of the word "race" in the context of contemporary academic thought. The only problem is that, as I will show, Steiner did not use the word in the same sense as contemporary academia. Ironically, Staudenmaier's approach is not genuinely historical because he is projecting concepts derived from the present onto the past. Due to this, his research procedure cannot justify his understanding of Steiner.

What Staudenmaier fails to take note of is the implicit **reductio ad absurdum** in the extreme version of the external view of history. If it is argued that the ideas of a historical figure are identical to the ideas in his historical context, this actually means other people. So where did they get them from, from **their** historical context? This would go on **ad infinitum**. The consequence of this would be that all ideas have always existed in history and no new ideas are possible. If this really were the case, then the historian would have nothing to explain as the whole of the history of ideas would be identical. There would be no history to explain. I doubt that many historians would take this position. The counter side to this is that if it is accepted that new ideas **are** possible in history, that an author can originate unique ideas, then why make the **assumption** that Steiner's ideas are essentially identical to those from his

historical context? Staudenmaier makes little attempt to research Steiner's ideas **for themselves**, he appears to be satisfied with the assumption that the meaning of Steiner's ideas is to be found in his historical context or that it is that same as today. An example of the latter of these is the assumption that the meaning of the word "race" is the same in Steiner as in sociological thought. This is why the "philosophical" needs to complement the historical. To understand an author, Steiner for example, there needs to be an in-depth exploration of his ideas **for themselves** before a comparison can be made with those present in his social context. This is what this book tries to do.

Relevance and Preview

So why does it matter? Many of Steiner's views are concerned with the distant past, with peoples and civilisations long gone. So why not consign such ideas to mere history? The difficulty lies in the fact that Steiner's ideas are also about the future and it is the conviction of most, if not all, supporters of Anthroposophy that they could lead to a positive ethical future for all peoples. The designation of the term "racist" runs the risk of alienating Steiner, and the anthroposophical movement generally, from making such a positive contribution. This is not just meant in the sense of a negative impact on anthroposophical initiatives and institutions, but also on the potential assimilation of Steiner's ideas by the rest of society. It is my conviction that, for example, Steiner's views on social evolution through the principles of freedom, equality and community are essential keys to the healthy relationships between all the peoples of the globalised society we live in. ***In the following, I will evaluate the critics' main contention that Steiner's central theory is racist. It is the question of CENTRAL THEORY that is the main focus here. I will attempt to show that Steiner's central theory contains a view of evolution that promotes POSITIVE GLOBAL ETHICS between all the peoples of the World.***

I will also consider the relationship between **theory** and individual **statements** in Steiner's texts on evolution and race. The distinction is important because, if a statement is considered to be a part of a central theory, then this can only be proven if the central theory is known and the statements justifiably located there. As I will show in chapter 2, this holistic approach to meaning has a strong philosophical foundation. Without an understanding of Steiner's central theory the "racist" assertion

is untestable. A person may make some isolated comment that appears to modern sensitivities as “racist”, but the question is: how do you know if this is an expression of a **central** theory? I shall address the theory question in chapters 2 and 3, and then attempt to locate Steiner’s statements in chapters 4, 5, and 6. I argue that Steiner’s central theory is not a racist theory but promotes a **positive ethical theory** for the evolution of all human beings. As an aside, the question here is not about proving Steiner’s views about reality are true but it is about the consistency of his ideas with positive global ethics. As I will try to show throughout the text, this will need careful clarification of what on the surface seem very problematic statements. ***What I think that I have shown though is that putting Steiner’s ideas in their proper contexts, including his central evolutionary theory, is that he held no racist theories or views. Even individual statements, once placed under the umbrella of theory, on a number of levels, are found not to be racist.***

In chapter 2, I will discuss the essential criteria for what may count as a racist or a non-racist view. I will show that at least seven factors are necessary to justify the assertion of racism; and that the critics of Steiner provide none. So their claims have no philosophical foundation. Moreover, I will show that even if such criteria were applied to Steiner, his views are the opposite of racism in every case.

In chapter 3, I will provide a holistic overview of Steiner’s ideas on evolution. I will show that “race”, as meant by the critics, is not central to his theory and plays only a minor role. More importantly, that his concepts of “race” bear little resemblance to current notions found in sociology. There are at least four meanings to Steiner’s concept of “race”: 1) human ancestors which no longer exist and which resemble descriptions of the common ancestors of all living creatures provided by natural science; 2) cultures or civilisations; 3) biological race; 4) ethical / moral community. I will show that none of these meanings have racist components or implications. The critics pay little heed to **Steiner’s** understanding of the key terms; they are content with their own understanding of what race is as well as their own meaning of “racism”.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6, I will critically evaluate the critic’s assertions and the quotes from Steiner that they consider to be racist. I will show that the dislocating of the

Steiner quotes from their proper time contexts leads to a serious misunderstanding of what he meant by them. This is seen in the way that his ideas are torn away from their evolutionary time context to give a deeply misleading picture. I will re-connect his ideas with the time contexts of the evolutionary past, present and future of his meaning of the term “race”. I will show that these are not identical to how the word is defined today. Hence the racism assertion fails.

In chapter 7, I will show that central to Steiner’s theory of evolution is the idea of self or inner development. I will argue that the most basic of his ideas in this field are that of moral development, in particular those of “selflessness” or “altruism”. In the practice of this any form of racism can be overcome through inner consciousness and the active acquisition of positive virtues such as compassion for all beings.

In chapter 8, I will look at Steiner’s social ideals. I will show that the critics’ attempt to identify him with the opposite of his real ideals has failed. Staudenmaier in particular tried to identify Steiner’s views with those of fascism (which includes racist elements); the precise opposite of what he was really committed to, namely: freedom, equality and brotherhood (universal love).

In chapter 9, I will show how Steiner extended these social and moral ideals to the international community. Staudenmaier, drawing on the BPjM statement, asserted that Steiner’s ideas lead to racial hatred. In opposition to this, I will show that Steiner’s social ideals promote global understanding and love between all the races, nations and peoples of the Earth.

In chapter 10, I will show, in seed form, how these social ideals can be promoted in “An Education for Human Values”. Contrary to what the critics think, Steiner’s ideas on education support many of the same humanist values that they do, with the exception of its materialist assumption. Steiner could be argued to support a spiritual interpretation of humanism.

(2) THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY AND THE DEFINING CRITERIA

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the criteria for a theory or definition of a racist view in contrast with those of a non-racist view. These criteria will act as the research lenses for the coming chapters. It is the most difficult chapter of the whole book, so I hope the reader will bear with me; for it provides the essential framework for the following. Without such criteria the meaning of the terms “racist” and “racism” cannot be understood and their application becomes hopelessly vague and indefinite. Once these criteria are determined, it becomes clear that Steiner did not hold a racist view: ***Steiner’s central ideas contain a positive ethical relationship between all peoples.***

Within contemporary research, the definition of racism is widely contested, but there are a few basic parameters that most authors converge on whilst emphasising some parts more than others. Racism can be expressed in two fundamental propositions:

Proposition 1:

- a) The supposed inequality of the human races with hierarchical classification and superiority.
- b) The inequality of associated cultures and civilisations.

Potentially conjoined with:

Proposition 2:

A “Principle of Harm” such as an implied or explicitly stated proposal of physical harms, harms to rights, cultures and social forms. Another example of this is domination of other races including prejudicial judgements and preferential treatment.

Proposition 1 is what philosophers call an ***ontological statement*** as all its elements are about what potentially exists; Proposition 2 is a ***moral judgement*** as it is about real consequences. Not all authors agree that all of the elements are necessary and sufficient for the definition of racism, nor even if an ontological statement ***must*** be

joined with a moral judgement if a theory is to be counted as racist. In my discussion below, I will show further background assumptions of these basic elements. These include: whether or not racism can be a theory or if it has to be a doctrine or ideology; if the contextual meaning of the word “race” affects the ascription of the term “racism”; if racism *necessarily* includes a “principle of harm”; if racism is universal and cannot allow for exceptions such as individuals; if racism must deny universal humanity; if racism needs to assert absolute superiority of one race over others; and if racism necessarily must reject the freedom of the individual in favour of some kind of outer determinism. In figure 2.1, I have indicated seven possible criteria:

Fig 2.1

Non – Racist View	Racist View
1) Theory	1) Doctrine / Dogma / Ideology
2) Contextual Meaning	2) De-Contextual Meaning
3) Principle of Benefit	3) Principle of Harm
4) Inclusive and Individualist	4) Universalist of Race
5) Affirms Universal Humanity	5) Negates Universal Humanity
6) Relativist	6) Absolutist
7) Self-Determined individualism	7) Outer Determinism

(2.1) Theory vs Doctrine

The first problem to address is the difference between *theory and doctrine* as applied to the racism issue. This is important because critics of Steiner claim that he held racist doctrines; i.e. racist ideas that he (and supporters of Anthroposophy)

considers to be irrefutable by evidence and are not subject to being tested by the normal methods of science and scholarship. A theory on the other hand is testable. So what were Steiner's views; were they theories or doctrines? To answer this we need a clear distinction between them. It is frequent practice in the philosophy of science to define a theory as a concept or set of concepts that are subject to falsifiability or testability (Popper 1998). A theory could in light of this be corroborated or refuted by evidence. A doctrine, dogma, or ideology, may be conceived as the opposite of this in that a set of concepts are accepted irrespective of evidence; or even that a "world conception" is blind to or ignores evidence. A dogma or doctrine or ideology can be defined as a belief held without question and with undefended certainty (Blackburn 2005); it is a set of concepts that cannot be tested.

This is important to the question of racism because, as I will show below, a racist view is a dogma, an adherence to a view irrespective, or in denial, of evidence, whilst a non-racist view is where its supporters would be willing to change their minds should the evidence not support it as is argued by Appiah (2002). In respect of the question of **theory** it could be that it is considered to be true or statistically accurate, or the opposite, false or statistically inaccurate. If the individuals who hold the theory were willing to change their minds, should the evidence not support it, this is not racist. This is why racism **has** to be a doctrine or dogma as it **cannot afford to be open to its basic assumptions about the nature of races changing or that they are potentially false: as it then has no reality ground for preferential treatment and thus fails both propositions 1 and 2 above. In that sense, a view rightfully designated as "theory" fails to meet any criterion for the definition of racism accepted by the majority of scholars.** What is most important here, then, is the **frame of mind** of the holder of a view. A view becomes a theory if its holder accepts the idea that it should be open to testability; it becomes a dogma if the holder rejects this. For example, a true racist (as a holder of a racist dogma) would not even be open to the notion that their idea about race could be wrong, even in principle. They would have no genuine theory of knowledge (epistemology); rather they would have a blind faith in their ideas and would not accept any form of refutation by the evidence, or even be open to a refutation. A racist view is a doctrine, or ideology, that is not considered by its proponents to be subject to falsification. As I will show, this was not Steiner's position.

But before I discuss this in more detail, there is another point here that needs to be clarified. The above describes the type of frame of mind needed so that a view may be interpreted either as a theory or a doctrine; that the holder accepts it as either falsifiable or un-falsifiable respectively. The other side of this, however, is whether or not a view actually *is* either falsifiable or un-falsifiable. Someone may accept the notion that a view *should* be testable, but it may not actually *be* testable. It is the main argument of this book that Steiner thought that his views *should* be and *are* testable. This raises many theoretical and empirical questions as to how a view is interpreted and could be tested. Both terms “empirical” and “testable” are contested by philosophers due to the radical difference between the conjectural approach of Popper (1998) and the paradigm approach of Kuhn (1970). The Popperian sees the testability of a proposition as being independent of the frame of mind of its holder; the Kuhnian position regards testability as being determined by the paradigm, the theory, or the world view, i.e. the frame of mind, of the holder. This frame of mind can also mean two things; the first being specific theoretical frameworks (examples might be classical or relativist physics); the second is a general attitude of the *person* towards *any* kind of theory.

It also needs to be mentioned that most philosophers have converged on the view that testability occurs *within* theory frameworks and is not independent of them. This means that the empiricist view that testability can only occur through sense perception has been succeeded by a view in which testability is embedded in theory. This impacts on the racism question because critics of Steiner reject his theory framework on the implicit assumption that his notion of testability goes beyond sense perception, for example when Steiner writes about “spiritual perception”. The problem for them, however, is that a great deal of modern science also contains theoretical objects which are not accessible through direct sense perception, such as electrons, sub-atomic particles, the big bang, the end of the universe, etc. Even in economic science there is the theory of the “*invisible hand*”, an assumed reality that goes beyond sense perception. These are objects and processes that science accepts as existing due to a *theory framework*, they are *inferred* but not directly observed. Not only that, but what is not “observable” at one stage in the history of science may become so at a later stage. The ancient Greeks proposed the idea of the atom over

two thousand years ago; but it is in only in the last one hundred years or so that there has been some observable evidence to support it (even though it is not absolute proof). From this, it is arguable that what is “testable” may change over time. This is important as Steiner does not just accept inferred realities, for him testability is not only through sense perception, but also through soul and spirit perception. In the case of each of these forms of perception, for Steiner knowledge arose only when joined with the corresponding concept. Whatever one thinks of his ideas, this union of perception and concept meets the basic conditions of the commonly accepted view of knowledge called the “**correspondence theory of truth**” (Blackburn 2005, p. 81). He expressed one way of looking at this in his early works: “The only way to grasp reality is the **empirical method** with **idealistic results**” (Steiner 1988, p. 92)(my emphasis) and “The act of knowledge is the synthesis of perception and concept” (Steiner 1894/63, p. 109). Furthermore, as I will show in chapter 3, Steiner attempted to integrate his ideas with those of the empirical science in relationship to evolution, but also added soul and spiritual perspectives. In this sense, Steiner’s idea of “testable” is embedded in his theory of body, soul and spirit.

Without going into a lengthy discussion, then, about the pros and cons of differing positions about testability, the best approach for our purposes is to focus primarily on the general attitude of whether or not an author, i.e. Steiner, is **open to the possibility** of being falsified **or** verified **in principle**. Not only that but, as I will show, Steiner considered his ideas as testable through the methods of ordinary scholarship and science. In other words, not only was Steiner open to the possibility of his ideas being testable, they **are** testable through normal methods as well as his own.

Critics of Steiner, however, question this and assert that his views are untestable doctrines. The following quote from Staudenmaier is a case in point concerning the difference between theory and doctrine. It refers to the centrality of Steiner’s views and at the same time uses the words “doctrines”, “teachings” and “theory” in connection with them. This distinction between them is important as they can be used as the deciding criteria between a racist and non-racist view:

Steiner's work, in reality, contains both a variety of racial doctrines and a range of racist teachings. Some of Steiner's racial doctrines are racist, and

some are not. Many of Steiner's statements about race are built around the contrast between higher and lower racial forms... But that is precisely what Steiner's evolutionary theory so often does not do: the dimension of race is not expressly excluded, it is expressly included by Steiner himself, in numerous cases, and is indeed made central to Steiner's evolutionary narrative as a whole. (Staudenmaier 2012, p. 12)

The following quote also suggests that Staudenmaier believes that Steiner was against the usual methods regarding the evaluation of a theory. In other words, his position is that he thought Steiner's views are doctrines (or ideologies). In reference to how Steiner obtained his ideas about racial evolution through "spiritual science", Staudenmaier claimed that:

He [Steiner] insisted that such "occult experience" as he called it, was not subject to the usual criteria of reason, logic, or scientific inquiry. Modern Anthroposophy is thus founded on unverifiable belief in Steiner's teachings. (Staudenmaier, 2000/8)

In this, Staudenmaier is attempting to paint Steiner as holding a doctrine not a theory, the reference to "unverifiable belief" makes this clear. The statement about the "usual criteria of reason, logic, or scientific inquiry" is a further effort to alienate Steiner from the most important achievements of the Enlightenment and thereby isolate him from the cornerstones of modern science and society.

The first thing to say about this is that *if* Steiner's views are "**theories**" they would be open to both refutation and verification (although philosophers and scientists today prefer the idea of corroboration as verification is too absolute). These theories may turn out to be false. A theory is a claim about what is, or was the case; it is a view about a possible reality (**an ontological claim**) without any **value or moral judgment** being **necessarily** involved. This means that the way to judge such theory statements is whether or not they are **true or false; or corroborated or falsified; statistically accurate or inaccurate** (Popper 1998).

The importance of the difference between theories and ideologies (dogmas) in relation to racism has been made clear by the Ghanaian sociologist Appiah (2002):

We call such views “racism”... indicating that what we have in mind is not simply a theory but an ideology. It would be odd to call someone... a “racist”... if that person gave up these beliefs quite easily in the face of appropriate **evidence**. (Appiah 2002, p. 392)

The designation of “doctrine” is important to Staudenmaier because, if it were true, it would be one step towards proving that Steiner held a racist view. But, as I will show, it is my view that Steiner’s views should be considered as theories and that he proposed them as such. So how do we know that Steiner was advocating a theory rather than a doctrine? Surprisingly, in one of the books which Staudenmaier has researched is Steiner’s “*Cosmic Memory*”, Steiner writes:

In order to avoid possible misunderstanding, it should be said that spiritual perception is not infallible. This perception can also err, see in an inexact, oblique, wrong manner. No man is free from error in this field, no matter how high he stands. (Steiner 1904/59, p. 40)

This is taken from one of the books that Staudenmaier claims is an essentially racist **doctrine**. But it is obvious from this quote that Steiner regards it as a **theory**; this is due to the presence of fallibility in his implicit theory of knowledge. He also expects the reader to treat it in that way and that such a theory could be potentially **false** or **true**. The proper designation of Steiner’s views on race therefore is as a theory and not a doctrine. Staudenmaier continues to claim that these are doctrines when as a matter of fact Steiner’s view is a **theory** which may be subject to falsification. This principle of falsification is one accepted by many as the defining characteristic of a **scientific theory** (see Popper 1998).

There is another aspect to this and that is Steiner’s reference to “spiritual perception”. Critics find this a problem in itself as it would seem to imply that no one else could do this and therefore the question of authority arises. To many, this “spiritual perception” would suggest or imply something fanciful or even be interpreted as “pseudoscience” or as “mystic barmpottery” (Byng 2010). Hence the critics believe that supporters of Anthroposophy treat Steiner as a guru; and that Anthroposophy is centred entirely on his authority. But this all depends on what is meant by “spiritual perception”. For Steiner there are many forms of “spiritual perception” not all of which imply “clairvoyance”. One of these is pure thinking: “Pure thinking is itself already a

supersensible [spiritual] activity... Hence a certain school of spiritual-scientific research regards **pure thinking** as the soundest kind of first step in any spiritual-scientific training” (Steiner 1909/69, p. 107). For Steiner then pure thinking is a form of “spiritual perception” (or spiritual cognition), not “mysticism” or even “barmpottery”. Indeed, for Steiner, pure thinking is the **soundest** first step. Not only that, Steiner argued that through this kind of “pure thinking” (as for instance with logic) someone “with good reasoning faculty” may be “able to correct” supersensible research (Steiner 1909/69, p. 106). So instead of being against “usual criteria of reason, logic, or scientific inquiry” as Staudenmaier claims, Steiner was actually for it, especially in relation to his own research. Hence, no guru or authority is needed concerning anything, including that of his race concepts.

There is a further aspect to this question of authority. This authoritarianism is something that Staudenmaier claims about Steiner and no doubt leads him to see Steiner’s views as a doctrine rather than a theory. But Steiner said the exact opposite:

I beg of you not to accept as an article of faith whatever I have said... not to accept my statements as authoritative. I beseech you to abjure the principle of authority, for that principle would be deleterious to our Movement... Take the most recent achievements of natural science... take the results of historical and religious research... The more you test them, the more you find them confirmed from this source. You must accept nothing on authority.... I should like to impress on you, therefore, that it is not anthroposophical to accept a statement on the authority of this or that person; but it is truly anthroposophical to let oneself be stimulated by Spiritual Science and to verify what is communicated by life itself.

(Steiner 1910/70, p. 182/3)

It is interesting that the source of this quote is Steiner’s “*Mission of the Folk Souls*”, another one of the texts where, according to the critics, he is supposed to have expressed “racist” doctrines. But clearly, Steiner wanted the audience **not** to accept his authority and to test things themselves. He also advocated that the participants tested the ideas through modern science, historical and religious research. In other words, he wanted people to test his ideas through **methods accessible to everyone**

and not from so-called “clairvoyant perception”. That is, he was committed to the autonomy of every individual even in respect of research, not authority. This is further evidence that Steiner viewed his ideas as testable **theories** not doctrines and that it is truly anthroposophical to treat them as such. For Steiner, a doctrine based on authority would not be anthroposophical, only autonomous individual testability would be. Contrary to what Staudenmaier claims, Steiner actually did believe in the “usual criteria of reason, logic, or scientific inquiry”, but he also extended them to include the world of the spirit as well as the world of the senses.

(2.2) The Context of Theory

The context of words, statements and theories has long been accepted by philosophers of science as having fundamental significance; that the meaning of individual terms and statements can only be understood in the context of an overarching **theory** (Kuhn 1970, Feyerabend 1988). Likewise, a theory itself is also thought by many to take on meaning from another theory of greater scope. Quine (2009) argued that the meaning of words is “holistic” in that our experience takes on meaning from the “totality” (whole) of our so-called knowledge. For him, the “reductionist” approach to meaning (that meaning is derivable from the smallest component, i.e. the word) is not tenable. An example of this might be the scientific term “mass”. For classical Newtonian physics, the term “mass” referred to an **absolute** property of an object. In Einstein’s theory, however, it referred to a **relative** property: its value changed according to the speed of the object. The meaning of the term “mass” then derives from the total (whole) theory, not from the isolated word itself.

The context of theory plays a different role in this research than the other criteria outlined in Fig 2.1. Its job is to establish what is **meant** by a term or statement or even a theory. ***If the meaning is not determined then, in line with the above section, any proposition cannot be tested, corroborated or falsified.*** If any one of these terms or statements is “de-contextualised” any concepts connected with them will be prejudiced by the reader’s presuppositions. The effect of this will be to attribute to the author meanings that were not intended. Such meanings would be projections of the reader’s own views rather than the inherent ones of the writer. If

then the word “race” is used without consideration of the context of the inherent meaning of the author, this will inevitably lead to misunderstandings: **context is everything**. The fact that the critics of Steiner ignore the context of theory, or simply think that it is irrelevant, means that their assertions are untestable and are, in fact, unscientific, i.e., pseudoscience (Popper 1998).

In relation to the word “race”, this means that the term needs to be understood in the context of Steiner’s overarching theories. As I will show below, Steiner’s use of the word “race” had a different set of contexts which cannot be assumed to be the same either with each other or with the contemporary sociological use of the word. This is particularly the case in relation to the **time contexts** to which Steiner was referring. For Steiner, the word “race” took on different meanings according to the evolutionary time period that he was speaking of: for him, the word “race” had, *inter alia*, past, present and future time contexts. The context of a word cannot be simply ignored: it has to be researched and the **meaning** of terms determined according to it.

This is different from the issue concerned with the time context in which Steiner was living; rather it is about those time contexts to which his theory is referring, not to Steiner’s life period. The problem is that Staudenmaier does not consider the significance of Steiner’s own theories, assuming a “word level” meaning and then falsely locates Steiner’s ideas in the context of Nazi thought. The first of these is an example of what I call **“false definition”**. The second of these I shall call **“false context”** or **“false location”**. In the case of the critics, the “false definition” is more implicit than explicit. It is more of a hidden or un-reflected assumption. This shows itself in the fact that the critics assume that because the word “race” appears in Steiner’s writings that, *inter alia*, this means the same as in current sociological thought. This is a “false definition” when applied to Steiner because, as I will show in detail in chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, he uses the word in quite a different way. In the case of “false context”, what the critics also do is embed Steiner in the context of racist, Nazi or Fascist thought; this is a context that is wholly alien to his world view.

It is also important to realise that individual words and statements only have meaning in the context of a **theory type**. In some places, there are quotes taken by the critics to imply Steiner’s racism without its proper theory context. An example of this is when a quote is taken from a book whose theory type is that of ethics or of inner

development but is used as a “proof” of supposed racism. But this fragmented approach to quotation makes the whole thing appear quite random and by doing this anything could be made to mean almost anything. Furthermore, in order to establish Steiner’s meaning of terms, the context has to be Steiner’s theory, not that of other authors. The reason is that we are trying to establish the status of **Steiner’s** theory, not that of others. For instance, from the mere fact that the word Karma is used, it must not be assumed that Steiner meant the same thing as in other world views. The meaning of his concept of Karma was distinctive to him and does not mean the “just deserts principle” as it does with other authors. Steiner’s theory of Karma is about reconciliation, not punishment. If, however, one argues, as the critics do, for a “false location” of contextual meaning of theories and statements (such as locating Steiner in Nazi and Fascist thought), then this would contribute to a deep misunderstanding of Steiner.

In the course of this book, I will show that Steiner’s meaning of the word “race” is incomparable in most cases with the sociological meaning of the word. In chapter 3, I will show that in the first stage of his evolutionary theory where the term is relevant, he used the word “race” to designate a concept of ancient species comparable to the natural science concept. In the second stage, he used the word “race” to describe what is really civilisation. In the third stage, he used the word to mean “moral community”. None of these are identical to the biological / sociological meaning of the word “race”. It is only in a small number of cases where Steiner used the word “race” in the same sense as we do today and even then there is no racism involved. ***It is due to this diversity of meanings that the racism assertion fails.***

(2.3) Racist Doctrines have a “Principle of Harm” Component

Historically, the term “racism” is morally loaded. Seen in the context of history, it is associated with slavery, laws banning interracial marriage (anti-miscegenation laws), apartheid, segregation, denial of education rights, inequality, negative eugenics and genocide (Bobo & Fox 2003, Marks 2013, Smedley & Smedley 2005, Vaught & Castagno 2008, Yudell 2013). Such a history forms the contemporary consciousness of what term racism means. Racism is not a term that can be viewed neutrally; it contains a moral component, more specifically a negative one. Anyone labelled as

holding a racist view would not be seen neutrally but in terms of many moral negatives.

The question to ask here is: does a racist theory have to contain a “moral component”? When it is said that a theory contains a moral component it does not mean that the theory is moral, rather that it has moral consequences or significance. This means that if a theory has a moral component it would have consequences that are **either beneficial or harmful**. One could phrase this in terms of whether or not a theory contains a “**principle of benefit**” versus a “**principle of harm**”. It is my position that a non-racist theory contains a “**principle of benefit (or benevolence)**”; on the other hand a racist theory contains a “**principle of harm**”.

The problem here is whether or not the definition of racism has to **necessarily** include a **moral component** or if it can be neutral concerning morality. In the case of the racism assertion against Steiner’s theories this asks the question if racist theory **needs** to include a **principle of harm** in order to **be** a racist theory. In one place, Staudenmaier thinks this is not the case:

I think that isn't a helpful way to think about racism. There are a lot of sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, political scientists, historians, and other scholars who study racism. For such scholars, the term 'racism' is a **descriptive** category that refers to specific beliefs about race, not an insult or a reproach or a pejorative label or an attack term or a **moral condemnation**. From the point of view of historians who study the development of racial thought, to argue that a particular historical figure held racist views is not really an accusation, as many anthroposophists believe; it is simply an analysis, a conclusion based on evidence, a comparative classification of various ideas about race. Recognizing this usage of the term 'racism' can help facilitate a meaningful discussion about Steiner's racial teachings.

(Staudenmaier 2010, Sat Nov 20, Waldorf-Critics Messages)(My emphasis)

There are two basic questions here. Firstly, it may well be that some historians use the term “racism” in a descriptive way, without “condemnation”. But this is hardly the point, the question is: **should** they, not the bare fact that they do. For example, some historians and sociologists define racism just in terms of a kind of superiority principle or just in respect of inequality (Benoist 2013, Marks 2013). The problem is that their conception of racism leads to a labelling of historical persons on the basis of a one-dimensional definition. Suppose their definition is not philosophically sufficient, it would mean that historical figures would be classed as racist when they are not racist by a rich definition. It would also lead to a situation whereby benevolent persons could not be distinguished from malevolent ones. For example, Staudenmaier does not see the need to distinguish racism from benevolent paternalism:

Many forms of racist belief are not intentionally sinister, but are instead embedded in high-minded, benevolent, and compassionate orientations toward the world. It is this type of racist thought... and many forms of paternalist racial ideology that may find a welcome home in some Waldorf Schools and other anthroposophical contexts, where it can perpetrate its ideas about race under the banner of spiritual growth and wisdom.

(Staudenmaier in Byng 2010)

The problem for Staudenmaier is this: does he really think that there is no difference between “benevolent paternalism” and racism? If he answers no, that they share the common ideology of a “principle of superiority”, then there would be no way to distinguish their completely opposite practical outcomes (implied or actual), which there obviously is; for the former there is a benevolent outcome, for the latter it is a malevolent one. If he answers yes, then what **is** this difference? It must simply be the difference in **moral judgement**. For benevolent paternalism, all peoples are morally worthy. In other words, such a view contains a “principle of benefit”. Racism, in contrast, must contain a “principle of harm”. As I will show, this is a necessary component to a definition of racism and without it cannot be a racist theory: **racist theory necessarily includes a “principle of harm” in addition to a “principle of superiority”**. Benevolent Paternalism, on the other hand, I would suggest, contains a “principle of superiority” and a “principle of benefit”. I will also show below that

Steiner's views contain a principle of benefit, but not a principle of absolute superiority.

Furthermore, if it were true that the term 'racism' is merely a "descriptive" term and that there is no difference from "paternalism", then there would be no need for Staudenmaier to contrast it with words like 'progressive, tolerant, enlightened' as in his quote below:

Why does Anthroposophy, despite its patently **racist** elements and its compromised past, continue to enjoy a reputation as progressive, tolerant, enlightened and ecological?.. Nevertheless, it is an unfortunate fact that the record of anthroposophist collaboration with a specifically "environmentalist" strain of fascism continues into the twenty-first century.

(Staudenmaier 2000/8, p. 1)(My emphasis)

Clearly, posing this question in this way implies that the term "racist" has an opposite meaning to words like "progressive", "tolerant" and "enlightened". The term "racist" cannot include these positive terms; nor can it include other positive moral terms like empathy, universal community, freedom and the like, all of which are promoted in Steiner's views, as I will show. A definition of racism cannot be merely descriptive as its very nature implies a negation of positive ideas like these. In fact, the definition of "racist" or "racism" needs to be conceived in relation to **negative** moral consequences, it must contain a "principle of harm" if it is to **be** a racist theory.

Furthermore, why make an association between Steiner's views and those of Fascism and Nazism if there is no condemnatory character to them:

Anthroposophy is thus structured around a hierarchy of biological and psychological as well as "spiritual" capacities and characteristics, all of them correlated to race. The affinities with Nazi discourse are unmistakable. (Staudenmaier 2000/8)

Clearly, Staudenmaier does believe that there is a morally negative aspect to the identification of racism; otherwise he would have no reason to make this connection.

The second point is that it is not true that academics in general use the terms “racism” or “racist” in a ‘descriptive’ way as will be seen in the quotes in the following. The term ‘racism’ has a definite moral condemnatory character to it whether it is used inside or outside the academic community. This has also been stated by sociologists Miles and Small:

In the light of what is now widely known to have been done in the name of racism in earlier historical periods ... the ideology of racism is widely discredited. As a result, the concept of racism has taken on a very negative connotation and the accusation that someone is a racist is extremely condemnatory. Thus, explicit references to an alleged ‘racial inferiority of the Other are rare in the formal, public arena and, when they are made, they attract widespread media attention and censure.

(Miles & Small 1999, p. 143)

They are not alone in this conviction:

Racism is not regarded as just another ideological outlook like liberalism, conservatism and so forth: instead it is regarded as a manifestation of profound moral inadequacy. As a result it has become a term of abuse. Since racism is understood as intrinsically evil, charges of racism can be deployed as an unchallengeable moralistic sledgehammer.

(Ballard 2002, p.2)

The first difficulty arises from the fact that racism is a *Schimpfwort* [German: *Schimpfwort* means an abuse or swear word]: a term with pejorative connotations, whose very use inevitably tends to be more *instrumental* than descriptive. (Benoist 2013, p.11)

Racism is an ideological construct that assigns a certain race and/or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes, as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the ‘superior’ race exercises domination and control over others. (UNESCO 2003, p. 11)

So it would seem that there *is* a negative or pejorative element to the term “racism” and that there is a moral or value component to the definition of racism. In the first three quotes, this is explicit, in the last it is clearly implied as it would mean that the term “racist” would be someone who wishes to exert power and domination over others of a different race. For Ballard at least “racism is understood as intrinsically evil”.

In one place, Staudenmaier’s quotes again suggest that the term “racist” does not necessarily imply *harm*. But is this really possible? Such a definition would be too vague as then there would be no distinction between Nazism and those Christian missionaries who genuinely wished to help other races.

The fact that Steiner on other occasions downplayed or denied the importance of race does not change such statements about racial-spiritual evolution and its cosmic function. Historically speaking, all sorts of social initiatives have been undergirded by racist ideologies. Pointing out this fact does not, in itself, discredit these initiatives. Not a few opponents of slavery, colonialism, and imperial exploitation were themselves beholden to a range of racist ideologies. Coming to terms with the complex history of racial thought means acknowledging this fact. (Staudenmaier 2012, p. 12)

But the following quote from him seems to imply the opposite:

As defined by historical research, there are both racist and non-racist elements in Steiner’s work. Steiner elaborated a complex theory of race as part of his conception of cosmic evolution and spiritual progress. He posited a *clash of races* as part of this evolutionary narrative. All of these elements are part of Anthroposophy as Steiner taught it, regardless of whether they appeal or do not appeal to particular anthroposophists today.

(Staudenmaier 2012, p. 13)(My emphasis)

Without overstepping the bounds of scholarly discretion, then, it may be appropriate to observe that unless thoroughly revised or rescinded, the racial doctrines promulgated by Steiner and his followers will remain

incompatible with Anthroposophy's self-image as bearer of spiritual **wisdom and cosmopolitan tolerance**.

(Staudenmaier 2012, p. 16)(My emphasis)

So in complete contradiction to his earlier view, it would seem that Staudenmaier implicitly assumes here that the definition of racism **does** include a moral judgement and must include therefore an implied “principle of harm”.

The presence of a “principle of harm” in the definition of racism can be seen in the Vice-President of the British Humanist Association Simon Blackburn’s definition of racism in his “Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy”:

Racism: the inability or refusal to recognise the rights, needs, dignity, or value of people of particular races or geographical locations. More widely, the devaluation of various traits of character or intelligence as typical of particular peoples.... (Blackburn 2005, p. 306)

This definition extends the “principle of harm” to include harms to rights, needs, dignity and value; it is not just about physical harms. As we will see in the coming chapters, there are no harms, no “principle of harm”, of any kind in Steiner’s views; rather they contain a “principle of benefit”.

Also renowned sociologist Professor Anthony Giddens has stated: “**Racism** is a form of **prejudice** and/or **discrimination** based on physical differences” (Giddens *et al*, 2011, p. 8). So a racist theory must necessarily include some kind of “principle of harm” of one kind or another. This is not just physical harm; it could also be an implied harm to “rights, needs, dignity” or to “devaluation”. A theory or statement that only **described** some supposed superiority by itself cannot count as racist because there is no **explicit statement** of **proposed** harm in it. Due to the highly contentious nature of the use of the word ‘racism’, I think, therefore, that it should be reserved for a very specific theory or statement, namely, when **harm** is **necessarily stated**, intended or implied by a theory. This means that the term ‘racist’ is not just about an ontological statement that claims ‘superiority’, but a theory that leads to harm. In this sense, racism **necessarily** includes a “principle of harm”.

From this, I would define racism as partly involving an “ethical” prejudice, the mere showing of a supposed ontological difference between races in a person’s views is not sufficient. If for example we say that a group of human beings is more “developed” than another from a certain perspective, this is a question of **truth** or **falsehood**; it is not an ethical question at this point. This only becomes an ethical question when a moral preference is shown and a “principle of harm” is present. The crucial issue is that of biasing or showing preferential treatment. If a person merely points out something supposedly higher or lower, that in itself does not prove racism.

In contrast to a racist view, Steiner advocated a **“principle of benefit”** and not a “principle of harm” in connection with race relationships: “we may be sure that in our inmost being we shall receive the countless blessings of all races as we are incarnated in different races at different times” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 82). What he meant by the latter part of this quote I shall address later in chapters 3 & 4, but for now it can be seen that Steiner was speaking of benefit not harm.

In the coming chapters, I will use the presence or absence of a “principle of harm” as a way of assessing Steiner’s views on race. I will show that this is not present in his theories and that: **a “principle of benefit (or benevolence)” (in different forms) for all races is central to his theory of “racial” evolution.**

(2.4) Racist Doctrine is Universalist of Race

As I will explain in more detail in (2.7), one of the main problems with attributing the term “racist” to an author, or to elements of their views, is that it is dependent on a fundamentally **biological** understanding of race. James (2011) has identified five characteristics of the concept of race which underpins racism: 1) a biological foundation; 2) unique group identity; 3) inheritance; 4) geographic origin and 5) physical phenotypes (observable features such as skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, and bone structure, and perhaps also behavioural phenotypes). These may be unified in a general aspect of the definition of racism: **universalism of race**. Or, in other terms, racism employs a kind of “groupism” and involves **typologising or stereotyping**. It has to be said, however, that stereotyping by itself does not necessarily lead to racism. If one were to classify the different races **and that is only**

what one did this leads to nothing unless a proposed negative action (due to a principle of harm) is conjoined to it and if the stereotype is claimed to be exclusively true of a race and nothing else. It further needs the assertion that one stereotype or type is superior to another in an absolute, not relative, sense (see below in 2.6). The way to judge a stereotype is whether it is true or false, or statistically accurate or not, etc; on its own it has no moral implications and so cannot be racist.

This stereotyping can, however, lead to negative consequences if joined with a moral judgement and the denial of individuality. As the renowned biologist Ernst Mayr stated: “Typological thinking is never enlightening in the study of life, but it has been most vicious and deleterious in the consideration of human races” (Mayr, 1998, p. 244). Firstly, it isn’t the classifying of races into types that is a problem by itself; it is when individuality is denied because of it. The concept of the type is about what binds individuals into a specific kind of group; it does not respect what an individual is for itself and can also lead to promoting one group over another **if and only if**, as argued in (2.3), combined with a moral judgement in the form of a “principle of harm”.

Another aspect to the question of human typologising is that there can be no exceptions and no allowance for individualism in a view such as racism. A racist is someone who would characterise, and be prejudiced against, every individual member of a particular race as being of a particular **type**, with **no exception**. For a racist all members of a particular race are the same, racism cannot allow for any individual of that race to be different. In fact the very definition of racism, as it is dependent on the concept of race, is completely oblivious to the notion of the individual.

Academics have acknowledged that at the basis of racism is the concept of race. Without a concept of race, which specifies a type or a group, there can be no racism:

Use of the idea of ‘race’ usually indicates a belief in the existence of **naturally** occurring **groups**, each exhibiting real and imagined biological and mental attributes and characteristics which are regarded as **fixed**.

(Miles & Small 1999, p. 137)(My emphasis)

Due to the use of typologising, the individual plays no role in any concept of race or racism. So showing that an author held **only** a typological view about races would be necessary, but not sufficient, to prove racism. Were such an author to hold an individualist position, however, it would refute the accusation. But as I will show, Steiner saw “Ethical Individualism” as the cornerstone of his theories and the foundation for all human evolution (Steiner 1963). I shall turn to the question of **fixed** natural groups below.

Moreover, one of the consequences of the concept of typologising is that races would have to be clearly identified, at least in principle. What this means is that if an accusation of racism is to be corroborated, the person making the claim would need to demonstrate the identity (**type**) of the “races” spoken of. If the physical phenotypes of any of the current races are not identical with the ones spoken of in Steiner’s writings, this then cannot be connected with the racism issue: **a disjunction between the phenotypes disproves the racism assertion**. The problem is that critics of Steiner seem to be contented with the fact that he used the word “race” or “sub-race” in his views. They make no effort to identify the kind of “races” he was speaking of, nor those described by modern scholarship, not even the general concept of the biological phenotype. As I will show in chapters 3 and 4, many of the physical phenotypes that Steiner speaks of are from a very ancient past and have no resemblance to current human races. The physical phenotypes he describes are as a matter of fact of “human ancestors” in a much earlier stage of evolution, in many cases millions of years ago and are now extinct. As I will show, this lack of identity between these ancient “races” and current ones demonstrates that Steiner held no racist views.

The other side of this is that the current sociological concepts of race and racism have strong time boundaries implicit them; they are bounded by the present conception. When sociologists speak of races, they mean as they are now within relatively recent history. **The definition of racism then is bounded by a time period: it has no relevance to very distant periods of time. As I will show, this “boundedness by the present”, this “presentism”, of the race concept, makes the racism assertion against Steiner fail.** I doubt that a person who thinks that humans are more developed than jelly fish would be accused of holding a racist view.

But as I will show in chapter 3, Steiner used the word “race” to refer to ancient human ancestors as “like jelly fish” in one evolutionary time period and as “like reptiles” and as “fish-bird-animals” in other time periods. His views are commensurate with many of the descriptions of modern science of the phylogenetic tree. Steiner’s conception of “race” should not then be confused with the “presentism” of the sociologist’s race concept and which is implicit in the critic’s arguments.

Also, for Steiner, the concept of race was only **one** part of what it meant to be human. To speak of humanity he employed other ideas such as nation and individual: “The evolution of races is interrupted to make way for the evolution of nations... The nation occupies an intermediate position between the race and the individual” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 80/1). The typologising aspect of the definition of racism is not inclusive of the notions of nation and individual. Today a nation can have many races within it so a definition of nation is greater in its content than that of race. The concept of the individual is also counter to any kind of typologising or universalising that is present in racism; it is entirely about the unique individual, not about common attributes. As Steiner saw all human beings as composed of all three elements of individual, nation and race, it does not seem right to call him a racist as this sees human beings as defined only by their type as is the case with a genuine racist view.

(2.5) Racist Doctrines negate Universal Humanity

It follows also from the above that racism cannot allow for any kind of **universal humanity**. Racism is about sub-groups of humanity, not humanity **as a whole**. If for example, a theory claimed that all races, irrespective of differences, had some **essential** element in common, some universal human characteristic, or set of characteristics, then the differences between races would have a non-essential, contingent, nature. Consequently, a person who holds a theory that recognises the “**essentially human**” in all peoples cannot be interpreted as a racist.

But this is exactly what Steiner claimed: “We must understand therefore the task that lies before us if we wish to raise ourselves to the level of the **all-human**... if we wish to participate in the spiritual evolution of mankind... implies acting in accordance with

the evolution of **all** mankind” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 80) and “then we realise that the all-embracing sphere of the ‘human’ is not expressed in its entirety through any individual man, or through the members of any one race, but only through the *whole* of mankind” (Steiner 1920, paragraph 21). Steiner saw the level of the “all-human” as something that mankind as a whole should be striving towards; it wasn’t something that individual races necessarily had at the moment but something that could bring the different races together, an “essentially human” attribute that transcends the narrowness of the race concept.

(2.6) Racist Doctrines are Absolute not Relative: the problem of Superiority

A question that may arise is whether or not a theory can be counted as racist if the supposed **superiority** is **relative** rather than **absolute**.

[Racism] refers to the ideology that the world is divided into a number of separate ‘races’... who are endowed with different physical and mental attributes, that ‘race’ **determines** culture and that Europeans are **superior** both mentally and culturally. (Miles & Small 1999, p. 137)(My emphasis)

The first aspect of this is the consideration of races as **wholes**. In this context, the reference to the term ‘superior’ means that there is an asymmetry in the characterisation of the different races that leads, ultimately, to preferential treatment of one race and a loss of rights and other social “benefits” for others. Likewise, the ascription of ‘racist’ to an author’s views requires evidence that his theory of race includes an absolute claim of superiority rather than a relative one. Suppose a theory contained a claim that race X is superior to race Y on account of some attribute A (say technological ability); but the reverse is the case on account of attribute B (say altruism). That is, in such argument, race X would be superior to race Y **relative** to A (technological ability); but race Y would be superior to race X **relative** to B (altruism). This, I think, is something that a racist theory cannot have as the universality of a racist theory is that race A is simply superior to race B **as such, i.e. as a whole**. There is simply no way, for example, to determine an absolute superiority between technological ability and altruism. A racist theory **has** to make an absolute claim otherwise it is not about the race as a whole and cannot therefore make a claim of preferential treatment for a race as a totality. Racism and relativity do

not go together as there is no way to establish superiority in any **absolute** sense. As I will show below, the critic's arguments are based entirely on the assumption that Steiner's view, that some races are better at some things than others, is a form of racism. But this relativity of abilities does not square with a coherent definition: **racism can only be absolute**. As seen from the Blackburn quote, racism is "the inability or refusal to recognise the rights, needs, dignity, or value of people of particular races or geographical locations" and is therefore absolute. A theory that **does** recognise the value of particular races cannot in this sense be seen as racist.

Some might think that this relativism of capacities can still be part of the concept of racism, as Ballard has argued: "Arguments about the relative capabilities of different 'racial' groups have had, and continue to have, powerful social consequences" (Ballard 2002, p. 3). The example he suggests is where certain educational rights in one area are denied because the supposed particular abilities of one race lie in another area. The difficulty with this notion is that it is not genuine relativism. Relativism does not imply an **absence** of capacity. Due to this, it cannot be a part of a racist theory which would deny educational rights. In fact, all forms of education work on the basis of an increase in levels of capacity and knowledge so is more compatible with relativism anyway.

Also, relativism accepts the **equal** value of all things: there is no **absolute** measure to judge that one kind of capacity is better than another (Blackburn 2005, p. 314/5; Rachels 1993, p. 15). The problem is that the capacities require a hierarchical structuring for them to be parts of the definition of racism. In the example given above, genuine relativism would not be able to argue that technological capacity is "better" than altruism. The move towards hierarchical structuring is a move towards an **absolute** determination of the relative capabilities as it tries to establish the notion that the special capabilities of one race are better, i.e. higher up a hierarchy, than the special capabilities of another race. My argument is that if the framework is relativist, this cannot be a part of the definition of racism.

This means that to demonstrate racism in an author's views, an asymmetry has to be shown as well as an absolute hierarchical structuring. Should, however, a symmetry be present, such as the presentation of positive and negative aspects of **all** races, or

that “superiority” is relative not absolute, then this is not racism. Steiner, however, sees the positives and negatives in all races; there is symmetry in his views: “When we contemplate the destiny of our integral Self, we may be sure that we shall share not only the positive but also the negative aspects of all races and peoples” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 82). His theory of the evolution of the “races” is relativist and so not part of a racist view.

(2.7) Racist Doctrines are for Outer Determinism and against Individual Agency

One of the main problems with Staudenmaier’s analysis of Steiner is the hidden assumption of outer determinism: “This optimistic nod toward racial evolution as a path of spiritual education was somewhat undermined by the equally firm emphasis on the **determining** power of race within each incarnation... In Steiner’s depiction, the **ineluctable** nature of racial destiny is a source of neither pride nor denigration; it is a fundamental aspect of the cosmic plan” (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 11)(my emphasis). What I will show in this section is that Steiner held no conviction of the **determining** power of **race**, nor of its **ineluctable** nature. Steiner was convinced of the primacy of the agency and freedom of the individual.

There are four basic types of determinism: biological, spiritual, social and individual. The first two of these could be components of a racist theory whilst the latter two cannot. That racism may be based on biological determinism can partly be understood by comparing it with its opposite “social determinism”. If “race” were socially determined then it could be changed through the social environment, such as education. If this were the case, then a real racist could have no claim to absolute superiority as the so-called difference would be merely relative to social conditions. From this, it can be seen that social determinism is not compatible with racism.

Historically, spiritual determinism has manifested as religious determinism (but spiritual determinism is not necessarily religious). As Marks (2013, p. 2/3) pointed out, religious determinism was used in an attempt to justify slavery. This showed itself in the “*monogenism*” versus “*polygenism*” debate concerning human origins. Monogenism argued that there was one act of creation by God and that humans have diversified since then; conversely, polygenism claimed that there had been many acts of creation. It was the latter of these that was usually used to support

oppression as the non-white races were deemed to be “pre-Adamites” and therefore inferior. Both of these positions are, however, forms of “spiritual determinism” as you are what you are through God’s creation. The difference being that polygenism “held to a strictly creationist view of human origins in which people **are as they always have been**. This view was used to support the oppression of presumably inferior peoples” (Marks 2013, p. 3)(my emphasis). Both positions are incompatible with the idea of individual agency.

More importantly, that there is **individual agency (self-determinism)** in all human beings that can transcend any kind of race element would be rejected by racism. A real racist view would have to refute this and find an absolute reason for supposed superiority. This would most likely be attempted through biological determinism as spiritual determinism is not a widely held position today. Also, even spiritual determinism may be seen from the perspective of biological determinism as it interprets the biology of the different races as acts of God; for this view, God is the **ultimate** but biology is the **proximate** cause of human nature: in other words spiritual determinism is seen through the lens of biological determinism. Biological determinism is the idea that human beings are **totally** determined by their biology. As Smedley and Smedley (2005, p. 16) have argued “Racialized science seeks to explain human population differences in health, intelligence, education, and wealth as the consequence of **immutable, biologically** based differences between “racial” groups” (my emphasis). Sometimes this is phrased as genetic determinism. What this means is that, for this view, the human being has no agency over and above the agency of their biological or genetic constitution. For this position, there can be no mind, soul or spirit that have agency that can transcend the biotic state.

Racism therefore implies biological determinism. As shown above in the Miles and Small (1999) quote, racism considers the various racial characteristics to be determined by the **biological** and to be **fixed**. These are the main identifying principles of biological determinism. In relation to this, Staudenmaier thinks that Steiner’s views are contradictory in that he is supposed to hold racist views but believes in human freedom, in the “individualistic ethic”:

The same is true of the [Frankfurt] memorandum's repeated plea that potentially racist elements in Anthroposophy would "contradict Steiner's own individualistic ethic." This is beside the point; there is nothing unusual about the various strands in a given author's works contradicting one another. (Staudenmaier 2012, p. 12)

What this fails to notice is that Steiner's views of human nature are part of a whole system and are nothing to do with "contradictory strands". For Steiner, humans are holistic and multilayered beings part of which is biological conditioning another part being individual spiritual agency based on freedom: "If freedom is to be living reality in human action... it must be completely independent of man's physical and etheric [living] organisation. There can be no freedom except through the 'I', and the astral [soul] body must be able to vibrate in harmony with the free activity of the 'I', so that it may be able to transmit it to the physical and etheric bodies (Steiner 1924/5, p. 91). He sees human beings as living across a continuum of agencies, one end of which consists in physical and biological conditioning and at the other end is psychological and spiritual freedom. For Steiner, these layers of humanity are not totally closed to each other but can interact. This is a view compatible with Popper's (1977) *interactionism*. Such a view, however, is not possible for racist view as it covertly assumes the concept of physics that the "physical world" is causally. Staudenmaier would appear not to understand Steiner's multilayered views of human nature and hence sees them as "contradictory".

A further problem for Staudenmaier is that racism is founded on the conviction that the biology of certain races *causally* determines (it is fixed and without exception) the cultures, societies and *individuals* of those races as *totalities*. Racism sees societies, cultures, levels of consciousness and intelligence as derivatives of biological causation. A racist view therefore cannot recognise the spiritual freedom of individuals. Miles and Small writing of the scope of racism state that:

Racism is a form of ideological signification... which... attributes the collectivity [race] with other negatively evaluated (biological and/or cultural) characteristics. Racism therefore, attributes meaning to the human body,

either somatically or genetically, in order to construct the Other which reproduces itself through historical time and space.

(Miles and Small 1999, p. 145)

The concept of racism expressed here is inextricable from biological (or genetic) determinism, that biology ultimately **determines** the mind and culture **exhaustively**. For racism, there can be no freedom of the **individual**, as it assumes that the only possible kind or causation derives from the bio/physical world. But as I will show later, Steiner did not hold this view; he was convinced that the human “I” (as the spiritual core of free individuality) has a form of agency (causation) distinct from, and sometimes contrary to, biological and social agencies. Racism on the other hand cannot have this as it conceives the physical / biological world as causally closed, so any theory which held any type of “individual agency thesis” could not be racist. An “individual agency thesis” is completely contradictory to, or incompatible with, racism. If Steiner’s theory on race can be shown to contain an “individual agency thesis” then this cannot be racist.

But Steiner was not a biological determinist; he thought that the human being has layers to it which transcend the biological and physical. In his book “*The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*” he writes of the bodily organisation:

For this [soul-body] organisation has no effect on thinking; rather it withdraws when the activity of thinking takes place; it suspends its own activity, it makes room, and in the space that has become free, thinking appears. The spiritual substance that **acts** in thinking has a twofold task: first it presses back the human organisation in its activity, and next, it steps into the place of it... the real “I” exists within the being of thinking.

(Steiner 1894/ 1964, p. 163/4)

Later in the same text, he links this to the role of the generic (species) in human life from the perspectives of biological and social determinism:

The view that it is inherent in man to develop a free individuality seems to be contradicted by two facts: that he exists as a member within a natural

totality (race, tribe, nation, family, male or female sex) [biological determinism] and that he is active within a totality (state, church, etc) [social determinism]... But man makes himself free from what is generic. For the generic qualities of the human race, when rightly experienced by the individual do not restrict his freedom, and should not to be made to restrict it by artificial means... It is impossible to understand a human being completely if one's judgement is based on the concept of the species... But every human being gradually frees a greater or lesser part of himself from the animal-like life of the species [biological determinism], as well as from the commands of human authorities ruling over him [social determinism]. (Steiner 1894/1963, pp. 250-254)

Steiner is not arguing that biological and social determinism are not active in human life but that in so far as they are they are not individual, they are both generic. For him, both of these generic (species-like) agents are present in human existence, however they are partial: the individual "I" can free itself, in degrees, from both forms of causation and activate its own.

This is a position that he held throughout his writings, which can be seen from the last text he ever wrote "*Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*", especially the chapter "*Michael's Mission in the Cosmic Age of Human Freedom*":

There can be no freedom except through the "I"... for man to realise the impulse of freedom, he must be able to hold at a distance certain influences of Nature which affect his being from the Cosmos.

(Steiner 1924/5, pp. 91/2)

He also saw the human being as now living at a stage of evolution in which its own individual spiritual freedom had emerged from the "Divine-Spiritual":

For me to gain my freedom the Divine-Spiritual Being of primeval times had to lead me into regions where it could not remain with me.

(Steiner 1924/5, p. 93)

Steiner rejected the idea that human life is totally determined from the outside, from biological / nature forces, outer social forces and outer spiritual forces; in other words he argued against biological determinism, social determinism and outer spiritual determinism; he was for individualised spiritual freedom, i.e. individual (self) determinism. One can see from this that Steiner's views on human freedom consist in holding nature forces and social forces at a distance on the one hand and on the other living in a region where the Divine-Spiritual could not remain; a space where "Divine-Spiritual" determinism had retreated so that individual spiritual freedom could evolve. The problem for racism is that neither for a biological determinist nor for a spiritual determinist is this "spiritual freedom" possible **even in theory**. The reason is that, for these views, only the physical / biological or the outer spiritual have agency. So as a racist theory is committed to outer determinism, because, for these views, race is totally determined either by biological causation (including an emergent socio-cultural component) or outer spiritual causation; they would reject Steiner's idea that humans have, i.e., there even exists, an **individual** "spiritual substance", an "I", let alone that it also has its own agency. But as can be seen from these quotes, Steiner is convinced that the individualised human "I" is a spiritual reality that can be a form of **agency** (causation) that can act on the soul / bodily organisation and realise thinking. For Steiner the "I" or "spiritual substance" is a form of causation that "presses back" the bodily organisation and puts itself in its place. This is not possible for racism as it means that human beings can transcend whatever racial conditioning they have (assuming that it exists) and assert individual and universal humanity through **individualised** spiritual causation. From this perspective alone, it would seem impossible that one could argue that Steiner's views are racist.

Steiner's Positive Global Ethics opposes Racism

I have characterised Steiner's view as a non-racist theory. But this does not actually say what it really is: it is a **Positive Global Ethics which stands in opposition to Racism on every count**. So what is a global ethics as distinct from a personal one? Widdows (2011) has outlined the structure of global ethics as distinct from an individual one. The central strands of this are: moral theory for global ethics, political theory for global ethics, rights theory for global ethics and a section on poverty which I will interpret as economic theory for global ethics. Singer (2004) has similar categories in his discussion of the ethics of globalisation. In the coming chapters, a

particular thread throughout the text is the way Steiner built up his own version of global ethics starting from the level of individual moral theory, extending this to the social (cultural, political and economic) and culminating in international or global ethics.

The starting point for Steiner's global ethics is his book the "*Philosophy of Freedom (Spiritual Activity)*". Here he develops the idea of ethics on an individual level. A key concept in this is his idea of Ethical Individualism:

He could do something even higher: if in a particular case he were not to proceed from one single definite aim of morality, but were to recognize a certain value in all principles of morality. (Steiner 1894/63, p. 173)

To let this content come to expression is the highest moral driving force and also the highest motive for the one who has recognized that ultimately all other moral principles unite in this content. This standpoint can be called *ethical individualism*. (Steiner 1894/63, p. 175)

The first point in Steiner's consideration of ethics here is that of the distinction between a moral driving force and a moral motive. For Steiner the moral motive is an idea or a principle of which there are a number. These range from individual motives for action to more communal ones such as the "greatest welfare of humanity" and the "progress of culture" (Steiner 1894/63, p. 172). Also as discussed in the last section, this involves the capacity to free oneself from biological determinism (race, tribe, nation, family, male or female sex) and social determinism (state, church, etc). For him, the critical point is that it is the individual who decides which is the relevant moral motive for the particular circumstance. The most important moral driving force, as we will see shortly, for Steiner is **love**. Ethical individualism consists in the unity of an individual's moral motive (from the individual to the communal) and the moral driving force of love. He summarises this in his concept of what is good:

My action will be "good" if my intuition, immersed in love, exists in the right way within the relationship between things; this can be experienced intuitively; the action will be "bad" if this is not the case.

(Steiner 1894/63, p. 177)

For Steiner, what is good is not just about having the right idea (intuition) it is also about the role a positive emotion such as love has in the moral life: without it there is no driving force for carrying out an action. The question of what is good is also determined by the “right way” and the relationship between things. So the concept of “good”, for Steiner, is also about what exists outside of the individual’s moral motive and moral driving force: it is about what is right for outer reality too. This includes the relationship to other people:

To *live* in love of the action and to *let live*, having understanding for the other person's will, is the fundamental principle of *free human beings*. They know no other “*ought*” than that with which their will is intuitively in accord; how they shall *will* in a particular instance, their power of ideation will tell them. (Steiner 1894/63, p. 181)

What is “good” in this example, for Steiner, is recognising the freedom or liberty of every other person. It is this principle of **mutual** liberty of all individual human beings that is the foundation of the social life: it is essentially the principle of **tolerance**. This extends beyond the mere concept to include the love of tolerance. Hardly the kinds of ideas one would find in a racist theory which, as we have seen, is rooted in biological group notions, denies individuality, is not tolerant of other races, and, as was indicated in the BPjM statement, grounded in the negative emotion of hatred.

Steiner goes beyond this individual ethics and develops his idea of the social life. One of the earliest texts on this front is his (1905/58) “*Spiritual Science (Anthroposophy) and the Social Question*”. Here he formulates what he calls the fundamental social law (or the main social law):

The well-being of a total community of human beings working together becomes greater the less the individual demands the products of his achievements for himself... All the conditions within a total community of people which contradict this law must sooner or later produce misery and distress somewhere... How can the law be carried out in real life? It is clear that it says nothing less than this: ***The smaller the egotism is; the***

greater the human well-being. Thus in putting the law into practice, our concern is with people who extricate themselves from the path of egotism.

(Steiner 1905/58, paragraphs 36/38) (My bold)

For Steiner then the most fundamental principle through which to found a healthy society is the opposite of egoism, namely altruism. As I will show in many places through this book, this is a central idea in all of Steiner's writings including that about the evolution of the so-called "races". As I will show, Steiner argued that Nationalism is a form of extended egoism. This is due to the principle that we identify ourselves with "persons like ourselves". By extension, racism is based on the notion that individuals identify themselves with others like them. Preferential treatment is then given to others "like themselves". Structurally, this has a similar form to egoism in that individual egoism is where preferential treatment is given to oneself. A view of global ethics which stands for altruism would be in complete opposition to the extended form of egoism found in racism.

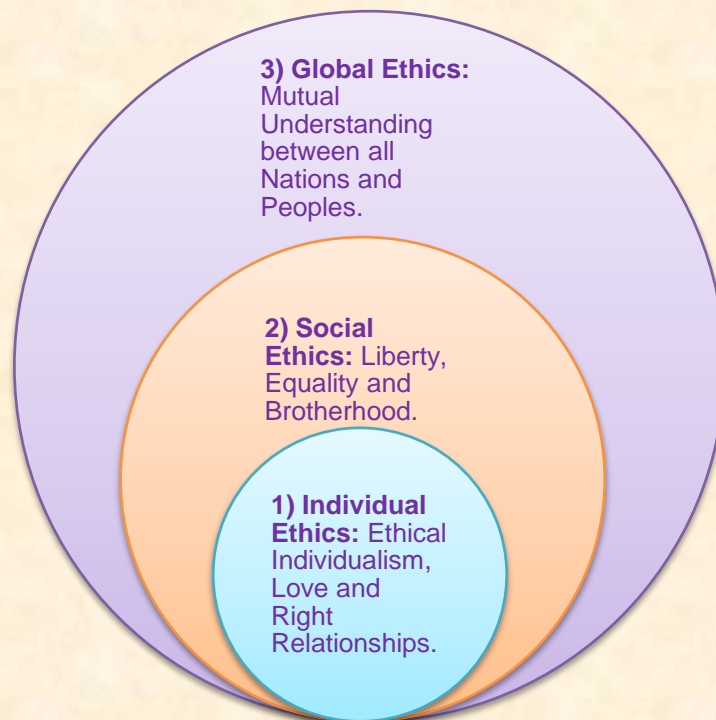
Steiner's views on the social level of ethics go beyond this though to include the principles of **liberty** in the cultural sphere (science, art, religion and education); **equality** in the political / rights / democratic sphere and **brotherhood** in the economic sphere (Steiner 1919/ 77, pp. 81/2). Steiner conceives of these as being valid for **all** individuals. One has to add: irrespective of "race, tribe, nation, family, male or female sex" and "state, church, etc". No racist theory could acknowledge the liberty and equality, let alone brotherhood, of all individuals and peoples unconditionally.

The step to the global level Steiner discusses in the chapter called "*National and International life in the Threefold Social Organism*" in his book "*The Social Future*" (1919/72). There he considers the process through which healthy global relationships can arise. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 9, but for now the primary concepts which Steiner evaluates here are those of egoism and love. The first of these he finds the valid place for; but he argues that it can lead to conflict when extended too far into the relationships between nations and peoples. Love on the other hand he conceives as enabling a spiritual / cultural understanding of all the peoples of the Earth. For him, it is only through this that the "right relationships" can

be found for a healthy and peaceful World. Only when this understanding is present can, for him, the legal statutes between nations be established and then the economic relations between them brought into being. Rather than the current process whereby economic relations are often the first to be established (frequently to the detriment of the cultures and legal systems of countries); for Steiner, it is **first** the empathetic understanding of the other peoples of the Earth; **second** the law; **third** the economy; that is the **process** through which good global relations can arise: “one nation will really be able to develop an understanding of other nations and peoples over the whole earth” (Steiner 1919/72, p. 141).

Figure 2.2 below gives a snapshot of the three levels considered and, using the indications of Widdows (2011) and Singer (2004), this can be conceived as representing Steiner’s “**Global Ethics**”. These levels are parts of an ethical theory strand which run throughout Steiner’s views on evolution, especially in chapters 3 and 6, where his idea of moral community is discussed; and also in chapters 7, 8 and 9, where his concepts of inner development; social values and internationalism are considered in light of his creation of global ethics:

Fig 2.2



It is arguable that each of these levels of Steiner's global ethics stands in opposition to any form of racism. As we have seen here and will see throughout the following text, the fact that Steiner advocated ethical individualism, based on love and right relationships, is not something that a racist theory could have within it. The same could be said of Steiner's views on liberty, equality and brotherhood for all in the social life. The fact that Steiner recommended understanding and love between the nations and peoples of the World shows a truly global ethics that is not within the remit of a racist philosophy. Steiner's positive Global Ethics and Racism are in reality opposites.

Summary

So what is a racist or a racist theory? Clearly, a racist is someone who holds a racist view. This is a view:

- 1) That is held dogmatically irrespective of evidence;
- 2) That essentially there is only a biological meaning to the term "race";
- 3) That includes a "principle of harm"; including hate of the Other;
- 4) Which asserts that race is a universal property that necessarily denies individuality;
- 5) That negates universal humanity;
- 6) Which claims the absolute superiority of one race over all others;
- 7) Which claims that human beings are determined exclusively by their biology and denies the self-determinism of the individual.

As I will show in more detail, Rudolf Steiner held none of these ideas; in fact he was convinced of the opposite, that his views aimed at a positive global ethics, they:

- 1) Are theories that depend on evidence;
- 2) Include a diversity of the meanings of the term "race";
- 3) Include a "principle of benefit (benevolence)"; including love of the Other;
- 4) Assert the primacy of human individuality;
- 5) Affirm a universal humanity that joins all races in unity;
- 6) Where no "race" has absolute superiority over others; that all races have positive qualities which they all could learn from each other;
- 7) Where the individual is self-determining and through which any type of group membership could be transcended.

(3) THE MEANING OF “RACE” IN THE CONTEXT OF EVOLUTION

In accordance with the discussion of: (2.2) **Context of Theory**, the first context of meaning for consideration is that of Steiner’s general theory of evolution. It is only in light of this context that **his** meaning of the word “race” can be derived and hence any assertions of “racism” judged against the criteria discussed. Contrarily, any divergence away from this context will inevitably lead to misunderstandings. It is this context that may be seen as the **Whole** from within which the **Parts** of the later chapters can be judged.

A crucial question that arises in the critic’s assessment of Steiner’s views on evolution is: how **central** is his concept of “race” in this. Their answer is that it is absolutely central. Staudenmaier has claimed: “Steiner’s racial and ethnic teachings are central to anthroposophical conceptions of cosmic progress, individual spiritual advancement... Above all, race and ethnicity form a pivotal part of Anthroposophy’s narrative of cosmic evolution, which is in turn an essential component of anthroposophical doctrine” (Staudenmaier 2012). The main aim of this chapter is to evaluate this assertion of the **centrality** of race in Steiner’s thought.

As I will show, Staudenmaier misunderstands Steiner’s views because:

1) Steiner’s own meaning of the word “race” is **diverse** and bears little relation to current understanding; that Staudenmaier implicitly assumes a biological meaning of this term; and

(2) In all cases, biological “race” plays only a **minor role** and is not central to Steiner’s view. For Steiner what is central to Earth evolution is its **Purpose or Aim** namely that: wisdom and love are re-born through the **free individuality** of **all** human beings.

One of the difficulties with understanding Steiner’s views on “race” is that they are embedded in **his** theory of evolution. What this means for this discussion is that Steiner’s use of the term “race” acquires a **different meaning according to the evolutionary stage** he is referring to and is incommensurate with the current

sociological meaning. This in turn has its own problems in that it involves a set of terms with which most people today would be unfamiliar. This embeddedness of his terminology in his own theory of evolution can be problematic for those approaching his ideas for the first time, such as Waldorf critics or new parents to Waldorf schools. One of the questions here then is how to make some steps to get beyond the terminology to find what the **underlying concepts** are, whether or not they are comparable to other thinkers and if these suggest any kind of racism. In this section, I will attempt to contextualise Steiner's terminology within his own theories as well as with other modern scientific and spiritual views. This will include an indication of the meaning and role the concept of "race" has in Steiner's theory of evolution. ***I will show that, for him, "race" has a diversity of meanings and is just one stepping stone in the evolutionary process; and that his view describes a general trend towards individuality and unity of all humanity irrespective of race.***

In the following, I will attempt to explore Steiner's theory of evolution through drawing together his ideas on the "human ancestor" and in connection to his concept of "race". One way of understanding **meaning** of Steiner's views on evolution is to see them as expressions of his twofold interests: his **spiritual** interests, in his earlier years this found expression through the **terminology** of the Theosophical Movement; and his **scientific** interests. In terms of the former of these Steiner saw an opportunity to express his own spiritual interests under the umbrella of the Theosophical Society, but using the **ideas** of his own research. He wrote of this in his autobiography "*The Story of my Life*": "I could speak only about that which I vitally experienced within me as spiritual knowledge... In truth, I could speak of nothing else. For very little of the literature issued by the Theosophical Society was known to me... There was now no longer any reason why I should not bring forward this spiritual knowledge in my own way before the theosophical public, which was at first the only audience that entered without restriction into a knowledge of the spirit. I subscribed to no sectarian dogmatics" (Steiner 1928, chapter XXX). The terminology of the ideas that he presented had a long lineage within the Theosophical Society, but the ideas themselves were his own. So in connection with the racism issue, this means that whilst Steiner used the term "race", as an attempt to connect onto the Theosophical Society, because of his spiritual interests and it being the "only audience without restriction", it must not, however, be assumed to **mean** the same for him. Steiner

joined onto what, for him, was not connected to any kind of institutionalised religious “dogmatics”; he wanted to express his ideas freely and without constraint. At the time, he saw his only option for this as being within the Theosophical Society. Moreover, he also distinguished himself from the approach of the Theosophical Society in that he wanted that such “a Movement must link on to Plato, to Goethe, and so forth... a complete rejection of everything in the nature of mediumship and atavism” (Steiner 1915, p. 47/8). It was through ideas such as these that he differentiated himself from the mainstream Theosophical Society and yet made a connection. What Steiner really wanted was to develop a form of spirituality within the largely Western stream. As I have shown elsewhere (Rose 2007b), this places Steiner in the historical strand of thinkers who developed the dominant world conception for over two thousand years: the theory of “The Great Chain of Being” (Lovejoy 1936/64). This included thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Dionysius, Aquinas, Leibniz, Schiller and Goethe. This locates Steiner within a stream of researchers who interpreted the world as consisting of spiritual, soul and physical perspectives. Steiner had his own interpretation of this “Great Chain of Being” and incorporated human freedom into it. This helps explain that the **terminology** he used is associated with the Theosophical Society, but not the background **ideas** which are connected with the Western spiritual tradition from his own individual perspective. The consequence of this is that to understand Steiner’s views on “race”, one must turn to **his** ideas, not those of the Theosophical Society nor those of the Nazi elements which drew on them. In light of this, Steiner’s conception of “race” needs to be understood through his interpretation of body, soul and spirit.

The other side of Steiner’s interests was that of natural science: “The real evolution of the organic from primeval times to the present stood out before my imagination for the first time after the composition of [my book the] *Conceptions of the World and of Life...* During the writing of this book I had before my eyes only the natural-scientific view which had been derived from the Darwinian mode of thought. But this I considered only as a succession of sensible facts present in nature. Within this succession of facts there were active for me spiritual impulses, as these hovered before Goethe in his idea of metamorphosis... Thus the natural-scientific evolutionary succession, as represented by Haeckel, never constituted for me

something wherein mechanical or merely organic laws controlled, but as something wherein the spirit led the living being from the simple through the complex up to man. I saw in Darwinism a mode of thinking which is on the way to that of Goethe, but which remains behind this... Indeed, I so conceived the second volume of this book that a point of departure for a deepening knowledge of the world mystery might be found in a ***spiritualized form of Darwinism and Haeckelism viewed in the light of Goethe's world-conception***" (Steiner 1928, chapter XXX)(my emphasis). Steiner accepted the **facts** of natural science, of Darwinism, but wanted to extend them and include spiritual and soul perspectives. For him, the succession of facts was not sufficient; it was the metamorphosis from one stage of being to another that was crucial. It was, for Steiner, the spiritual impulses that brought about the metamorphosis between the succession of facts present in Nature that was most important. In this sense, Steiner could be seen attempting to join natural science with spiritual science through the intermediary of Goethe's idea of metamorphosis.

In relation to this, Steiner's **meaning** of the term "race" then takes on a "Darwinian" colouring seen from a Goethean and spiritual point of view. For Steiner, as I will show, biological race is one moment in the evolution or metamorphosis of the human being. This does not show itself in any kind of social Darwinism, but in the use of concepts akin to **generation** and **adaptation** which eventually leads to species formation. When Steiner spoke of "race", he frequently did not mean the term as sociologists do; in many cases it simply meant ancient species. In all cases except one, these ancient species are now extinct. For Steiner, there is now only one human species of which we are all members irrespective of biological race.

In many ways, Steiner's ideas could be seen as an attempt to bridge the two realms of science and spirituality. This duality of interests shows itself in the **meaning** expressed in the words that he used and their underlying concepts. Much of this meaning has, consequently, characteristics of natural science and spiritual science. This shows itself in the terms he uses in his descriptions of evolution: on the natural science side there are some descriptions of physical forms (including biological phenotypes) and from the spiritual science perspective there are descriptions of states of consciousness, such as thinking, imagination, will, memory, etc; there are also explanations in terms of objective Spiritual Powers. This cannot be ignored in

attempting to understand what he meant by the term “race”. I will describe Steiner’s ideas of evolution in connection with “race” in four stages: 1) Cosmic Evolution; 2) Earth Evolution and Ancient Species; 3) Evolution of Civilisations; 4) Evolution of Moral Community.

Cosmic Evolution

The question of “race” does not arise in relationship to Steiner’s views on “cosmological evolution”. But his ideas on this are important to consider in any attempt to understand how he conceptualised the evolution of human nature including that of “race”. Seeing his ideas in the light of his cosmology helps to locate how he saw biological “race” as only one “moment” in an evolutionary process as part of becoming something else, namely an “Ethical Individual” (Steiner 1963).

Steiner described evolution as consisting in a series of “phases” or “planetary embodiments”; he called these “Saturn, Sun, Moon, Earth, Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan” (Steiner 1909/63). To the modern mind the reference to some of the planets may seem curious, giving the impression that Steiner thought that people used to live on the other planets as they are today (with the exception of Vulcan). But this is not what he spoke of nor did he even dwell much on the use of the terms. He described how these “planets” are really “phases of evolution” of the Earth and that the terms represented a sequence of different kinds of reality in evolution. In truth, Steiner described a sequence of the evolution of the **phases of matter**: warmth (Saturn); Light and Gas (Sun); Liquid (Moon); and Earth (solid). For Steiner, these “planetary embodiments” **are** the sequence of the phases of matter on a cosmic scale. The names that he used are mere expressions for these phases, but it is the concepts that **define** them. Left by itself, and, for the moment, just as a theory of the **physical** aspect of reality, this is hardly problematic and is compatible with modern cosmology which describes the evolution of the whole of physical reality from a radiant energy state through a gaseous state to liquid and solid states due to the decreasing temperature of the Universe (Hawking 1992, Guth 1998, Zeilik 1992). For modern science, due to the law of conservation of matter / energy, everything that exists today is a transformation of the original energy / matter state of the universe, human beings included. On this basic level, Steiner’s “phases of evolution” coincide with

those of modern cosmology. The physical aspect of the “human ancestor”, for Steiner, goes back to this earliest of times.

What is different in Steiner’s view is that, and in keeping with *spiritual* thinking, rather than just natural science, each of the phases also has a **state of consciousness** connected with it. As far as the human being is concerned: these were: “trance-like” consciousness; “sleep” consciousness; “Dream-Image” consciousness and “wake/self” consciousness for the first four stages of evolution respectively. These coincided with the evolution of the different levels of the whole world on the one hand and of the human being on the other. The evolutionary sequence is: physical; life (etheric) body; soul (astral) and “I” (Spirit/Ego) (not in the Freudian sense).

Here lies one of the problems in understanding Steiner: his theory traces the human being back to ancient times where no human as we understand them today could possibly have existed, either physically or spiritually. Using Goethe’s idea of metamorphosis, for Steiner, the seeds of a plant **are** the plant at an earlier stage of development. Even though a mature plant looks almost nothing like its seed, the latter is still a part of its being and becoming. For Steiner, the “human being” at the beginning of its evolution was a being only of warmth and of deep “trance-like” consciousness; today they are beings of a particular configuration of physical, life, soul and “I/spirit”.

In this “cosmic ancestry”, lies one of the difficulties in understanding Steiner. When he wrote of human beings he didn’t always mean how they are configured now. Going back into distant time, for Steiner, humanity has had a vast array of forms and constitutions some of which are near identical to states of matter described by physics. Whilst this may seem strange, it is not incompatible with modern science. Supposing that the law of conservation of matter / energy is correct, then everything that exists today, including human beings, is a transformation of the original matter / energy present at the so-called “big bang”. Seen in the light of modern physics, the real original “human ancestor” was a being of radiant energy. This “human ancestor” is transformed in evolutionary time to: a being of light; a being of chemical substance; a mineral / liquid being; a being of simple life and eventually a being of complex life. It

is important to understand Steiner from this perspective too because when he later talks about “race” he is frequently referring to forms of human existence which are nothing like what we mean by the term today.

Whole Earth Evolution: the Meaning of Ancient Species

It is in relation to “Earth evolution” where Steiner begins to use the words “race” or “sub-race”. The meaning of these is conditioned by his understanding of “spiritual science” and the natural sciences of his day. It is the combination of these two elements that lead to something new in his interpretation of evolution and hence in his conceptualisation of “race”. This interpretation has little to do with the current sociological meaning of the term.

On the level of general scientific principles, Steiner’s stance concerning what geologists said about the evolution of the earth is unambiguous: “As I have already pointed out, we find original man in the strata of the earth, exhibiting a very animal-like body — not indeed like any present animal but nevertheless animal-like, and this must have developed gradually to its present state of perfection. There is no question, therefore, of spiritual science as pursued here at the Goetheanum coming to loggerheads with natural science, for it simply accepts the truths of natural science” (Steiner 1924, chapter 8). But for Steiner, spiritual and soul perspectives were also needed to understand evolution: “We must rather have a clear knowledge that man is a being who bears within him body, soul, and spirit, with each of these three parts undergoing its own particular evolution. Naturally, if people have no thought of spirit, they can’t speak of the evolution of spirit. But once we acknowledge that a human being consists of body, soul, and spirit, we can go on to ask how the body evolves, how the soul evolves, and how the spirit evolves. When we speak of the human body we will have to say: Man’s body has gradually been perfected from lower stages. We must also say that the evidence we have for this provides us with living proof”(Steiner 1924, chapter 8). Hence his approach is an attempt to integrate a natural science understanding of the evolution of the human body with that of a spiritual science view of soul and spirit; i.e. of the evolution of consciousness. All these perspectives play into the way he conceptualised “race” and which is completely different from that of contemporary interpretations. As I will show, this means the racism accusation has no substance due to its complete dependency on

biological reductionism (the view that every aspect of the human being can be caused and explained by biology, including the mind and society).

Steiner accepted many of the results and ideas provided by the sciences of his day. This included the “common ancestor”, i.e. the “tree of life” (phylogenetic tree) concepts and the evolution from the simple to the complex used by the biological and geological sciences (Mayr 1998; Ruse 1981; Steiner, 1911). In modern science the “tree of life” idea is the notion that all life is part of a continuum with branching points where new species emerge due, largely, to geographic isolation and adaptation. At these branching points, it is thought that species have a “common ancestor”. Humans and apes are consequently considered to have a common ancestor that was neither one nor the other, but from which both evolved. Going further back in time, this line joins up with the common ancestor of dogs, horses and kangaroos; and in an even more distant time these join up with the common ancestors of reptiles, moths and neurospora (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008). Even in modern science we all have strange ancestors that at one point were something like humans but also “like” kangaroos and reptiles, but were yet not one of them. Ultimately, going back in time, all species, animals and plants, merge into the one common ancestor, usually thought to be a single celled organism. It is from this single celled organism that all life is considered to have evolved; from which complex life forms, such as humans, have emerged. It is an evolutionary process from the simple to the complex, from the less “perfect” to the more “perfect”.

Steiner accepted this evolutionary process, but provided his own interpretation: “And looking backward from those beings which from our human point of view we call perfect today, we come to ever less and less perfect forms of life on the earth with a mixture, at times, of grotesque forms as, for instance, the various Saurian types such as Ichthyosaurus, Plesiosaurus, Dinosaurus, Archaeopteryx. We then find creatures without any vertebrate skeleton, and so, with clairvoyant vision, we do indeed come to a tellurian epoch in which we cannot find such beings as are now living on our earth. We must admit, therefore; that drawing from its own sources, spiritual-scientific research also reveals this gradual advance in degrees of perfection” (Steiner 1911). His interpretation, however, in keeping within the Western spiritual stream, was from a spiritual science perspective which sees such an evolution as being from spiritual,

soul and life types of causation rather than only physical: “No longer do we trace life back to the lifeless, but we trace the lifeless back to processes of segregation from the living, and we regard the living as a state emanating from the sphere of the spirit and of the soul” (Steiner 1911, paragraph 18). He accepted the succession of life forms described by the sciences, but not the causal process.

This has consequences for the race question for two basic reasons. Firstly, Steiner formulates “race” in terms of entities biologically close to the succession of life forms described by science. These are entities which science describes as extinct species not races. Hence, Steiner’s “races” are really more like science’s **ancient** “species”, **which are extinct**. So, as I will show, the racism accusation fails. Secondly, Steiner’s argument for spiritual, soul and life causation distinguishes him from the biological determinism of racism (chapter 2). It has to be noted, though, that when Steiner describes the “human ancestor” it cannot be assumed to be identical in all respects to the “common ancestors” described by science. However, the descriptive terms have sufficient similarity to refute the notion that these ideas could provide any substance to the racism assertion.

For Steiner, the “Earth” phase of evolution, in which we now are, also has stages of evolution. In his *Cosmic Memory*, he named these stages or epochs with what might seem even more strange terminology: “Polaris, Hyperborea, Lemuria, Atlantis and “Post-Atlantean” (Steiner 1904/59). However, in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*, he correlated these with the time periods explicated by the sciences of his day: “When you go on to the primeval forms, to the original mountains, you have the polar period [Polaris]. The Palaeozoic corresponds to the Hyperborean, but you may not take the individual animal forms pedantically. Then you have the Mesozoic, which generally corresponds to Lemuria. And then the first and second levels of mammals, or the Cenozoic, that is, the Atlantean age.” (Steiner 1919-22, p. 50); and further that “The Ice Age is the Atlantean catastrophe. The Early, Middle and Late Ice Ages are nothing more than what occurred in Europe while Atlantis sank. That all occurred at the same time, that is, in the seventh or eighth millennium” (Steiner 1919-22, p. 25).

Some of these terms in themselves may be a cause of mirth for the critics and hence act as a barrier to taking his ideas of evolution and race seriously at all. Take the

case of Atlantis and Lemuria. No one knows for certain if they existed and there is little evidence to support it, at least how they are conceived by the popular media. But if we accept Steiner's notion introduced in chapter 2, that his views should be tested out through scientific evidence, we might make some steps towards a little scientific support for his views. Steiner described Atlantis as existing in the middle of what is now the Atlantic Ocean; Lemuria is stated as existing before that, somewhere in the Indian Ocean. Now the scientific theory of plate tectonics suggests that originally all the continents were joined together in one massive continent called "Pangaea". In the long process of it breaking up there existed, in different time periods, large land masses in those places we now call the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Much land was destroyed and much created in what was occasionally a very violent process. In this, that land which became North America drifted away from Africa, moving over the part of the Earth which would now correspond to the middle of the Atlantic. Similarly, the land that eventually became India drifted away from southern Africa, over the "Indian Ocean", to eventually collide with the Eurasian plate and created the Himalayas over a long period of time. No one knows if this is what Steiner meant when he spoke of Atlantis and Lemuria, but it cannot be ruled out either. The main point of this being that the use of such unusual terms should not by themselves rule out their potential scientific status, nor act as a disregard for his interpretation of "race". As we will see below, it is in the context of his ideas of these supposedly long lost continents that he describes his ideas of the ancient human races.

From the perspective of general principles, the primary thing about these evolutionary epochs, for Steiner, is that they represent an evolution of the spirit and soul and not just of physical / biological being. The general process is a kind of "condensation" from an initial "fiery" (warmth) stage, through the "gaseous" and "watery" (liquid) down to the solid (earth) stage (Steiner 1909/63, p. 164); it was a process conditioned largely by the World's decreasing temperature (Steiner 1904/59, p. 113/4)(A concept quite in keeping with the laws of thermal physics). This process occurs also for the human body as well as a gradual evolution of the human soul and "I" (spirit) from out of the World Soul and World Spirit (Steiner 1909/63, p. 170). The first two of these stages, Polaris and Hyperborea, were heat and gas phases within which the primitive "human beings" existed in similar states (i.e. as beings of heat

and gas but not liquid or solid); and saw the evolution of outer perceptual consciousness and earthly desire (Steiner 1904/59, pp. 111-123). This “human ancestor” was a very general type of being that underwent a transformation of its physical reality from the heat and gaseous states together with an evolution of consciousness, of soul and spirit.

From a soul perspective, at this time, the “human ancestor” Steiner also described as a “kind of soul tree” which only later diversified and could produce “innumerable single souls” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 115). For the Lemurian epoch Steiner describes the Earth as “condensing” down to the level of a very thick fluid and the development of the inner soul qualities of “will, of the faculty of imagination” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 73). As for Atlantis, this is where the Earth and humanity attained the solid state and human beings acquired memory, personality and thought (Steiner 1904/59, pp. 38-58). Thus, for Steiner, the soul of the “human ancestor” began as a kind of single soul from out of which a multiplicity of souls evolved and which also gradually evolved to a more solid form, although not so much as today.

It needs also stating that Steiner argued that in reality no races existed, as we understand them today, in the pre-Lemurian stages (Polaris and Hyperborea). **For him, biological race emerged later and was only one part of this total process when solid materiality appeared.** Writing of these earlier stages of human beings he stated: “The human bodies were like wraiths, like shadows. Distributed as they were over the whole Earth, they came under different kinds of Earthly influence at different parts of the Earth’s surface. While the body images, being in accordance with the soul of man that had quickened them, were heretofore **essentially alike over the whole Earth, diversity began to appear** among human forms. Thus the way was prepared for what **afterwards** showed itself in diversity of **race**” (Steiner 1909/63, p. 170)(My bold). This is how he conceptualised the “pre-conditions” for “race” rather than race itself. For Steiner conceived “race” as a particular kind of “condensation” in which human forms **began** to diversify due to the influence of the geographical “Earth” forces (an idea, by the way, not incompatible with the Darwinian notions of natural selection and adaptation). In this very early form of existence, for Steiner, “race” was nothing like what “race” came to be later. This human “shadow”, lacked real substance, it was “fine and delicate” (Steiner 1909/63, p. 170). For him,

these predecessors of “race” were not like the races of today; they had only just begun to diversify and were only a small step away from being identical over the whole “Earth”. The word “race”, for Steiner, in this phase of evolution largely means “general humanity”.

The first stage of Earth evolution for Steiner is Polaris. Steiner described the “human ancestor during a certain part of Polaris as being composed of a denser kind of “etheric material” (the so-called life-force) and was shaped into “millions of shell-like forms” (Steiner 1906/70, p. 88) and that “The forms possessed no individuality... Seven kinds of forms could be distinguished by their ground-notes. These seven groups constituted the first human Root-race”(Steiner 1906/70, p. 89). The point here is that this “human ancestor” bears no resemblance to human races today, it is not even human by today’s reasoning; it has no individuality, more like a member of a species, a kind of rarefied form of what geologists might call an ammonite, but whose species was determined by a ground note, a type of musical sound. It seems to me very unclear how such a conception could, even in principle, be the foundation of any kind of racism. As argued in (2.4), a disjunction between the identities of the physical phenotypes, or types, disproves the racism assertion.

The second stage, Hyperborea, is just as divergent from the world of today as is the identity of “race” as Steiner thought it. Again, for him, the World was in a very rarefied form with no solid substance, but a little denser than Polaris. Here the “germinal human forms... could now see their environment” (Steiner 1906/70, p. 89). In other words, it was here that the “human ancestor” first developed eyes. This “second Root-race” had single sex reproduction (hermaphroditic) who, like the concurrent animals and plants, resembled jelly-fish and sea-plants (Steiner 1906/70, p. 91). So, in other words, this human ancestor (“race”) was a hermaphrodite jelly-fish with eyes. It hardly needs saying that this could not in any way support an accusation of racism.

It is with the third stage of evolution, Lemuria, where Steiner first begins to speak of the “third human root race” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 71). But in what sense did he mean the word “race”? For much of this period, Steiner describes the “human ancestor” as being a “soft malleable mass” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 100 & p. 87) and during which there was only one sex capable of self-propagating (Steiner 1904/59, pp 87-99). In

later periods, there was a division of the sexes, but the physical environment, to which the human body was conditioned, was very different from that of today. This included much higher temperatures, widespread volcanic activity and the consequent effects on the states of matter and to which the “human body” was adapted. Furthermore, only palm type trees, amphibians, birds and lower mammals existed and all of a gigantic size; most of “humanity” was not much more than “animal”; in fact, he argued that humans resembled “lower mammals” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 76). In other words, this “human ancestor” was not even like our closest mammalian relative the ape. Steiner described this “human ancestor” as: “The human form at this time was something like fish-bird-animal” and that “he breathed through tubular gills... and in order to propel himself as he floated and swam he had a swim-bladder, rather like that of some present day fish” (Steiner 1906, p. 92). So, again, this Root-race has nothing resembling a race of today, it is more like a description of an ancient species from which all later humans evolved.

For Steiner, there was, however, a smaller group of human beings that were more “advanced”, but this was due to their **soul** powers of “will” and “imagination” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 75), not their biological phenotype. As a matter of fact, Steiner described this group as being an “externally more nobly formed race” due to it being “an expression of his **inner soul** life” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 83)(my emphasis). Such conception of “race” is totally different from that of today: as shown in chapter 2, racism is entirely dependent on biological determinism and the primacy of biological phenotypes. For Steiner, it is the inner **soul** life that is the cause here, not the **biology**. No “downward causation” from soul to body is possible for racism due to its dependency on biological determinism. Furthermore, the biological phenotypes are secondary here; it is the soul powers of “will and imagination” that are primary. There is no sense in which this constitutes any kind of racism by today’s conception.

For much of the fourth period, the Atlantean, Steiner describes the human being as being different from the present day one in “external appearance and spiritual faculties” (Steiner 1904/59, p. 42) and that the “physical nature of the Atlantean was quite different from that of contemporary man” (p. 46). For Steiner, the physical form of the human being at this time was conditioned by the soul life: “In times, the size, form and plasticity of man’s physical body were still largely determined by qualities of

soul (Steiner 1909/69, p. 199). As shown in chapter 2, this “downward causation” from soul to body is impossible for a racist view of the World.

Furthermore, Steiner’s description of the physical characteristics of humanity has very little in it with which to identify any kind of current “race”. He argued that it was only “In the course of millions of years that they had changed, and had acquired a form which resembled the form of man today” (Steiner, 1906/70, p. 95) and that during the time of Atlantis: “Human beings could have had only soft cartilage, like sharks. Also they could not have breathed through lungs as we do today. At that time they had to have a kind of swimming bladder and a kind of gills, so that the human being who lived then was in his external form half man and half fish... So we go back to an age when there was neither the present human form, nor the present elephants, nor rhinoceroses, nor lions, nor cows, nor oxen, nor bulls, nor kangaroos — none of these were yet there. On the other hand we can say there were fish-like creatures-not like present-day fish, but already man-like — beings half man, half fish, that one could — after all — call man. There were all these. But there were still none of the animal forms of today... Then the earth gradually changed into the form it has today... The more imperfect of these fish-men became kangaroos, those a little more advanced became deer and cattle, and the most perfect became apes or men... So we must say that the ape descended from man, not that man descended from the ape... the old Atlanteans had very high foreheads in their watery heads. Then, as I said, when the water disappeared, low foreheads appeared at first, and then they gradually grew out again into high foreheads. It was just in a transitional age that men looked like the Neanderthal man” (Steiner, 1924, chapter 4). It is quite clear from this description that there is no similarity to that of human races today. The Atlantean “fish-men” cannot be identified with the human phenotypes of the contemporary World. Steiner is speaking of a time prior to recorded history where the “human” Atlanteans had more descriptive similarities to creatures, the “common ancestors”, present in ancient geological periods. The only connection here to the current evolutionary period is the Neanderthal, from whom modern humanity is not actually descended.

But the vast majority of Steiner’s descriptions are to do with how *mental* abilities evolved. He describes how the Atlanteans developed memory which, over a period of

seven “sub-races”, evolved into logical thinking and self-consciousness: “A logical combinative intellect and self-consciousness emerged only with the fifth sub-race” (Steiner 1909/69, p. 96). Thus here on Atlantis, for Steiner, the concept of race, or sub-race, is primarily **defined in terms of mental capacities**, not biological phenotypes. This is crucial because, if racism is defined in terms of biological phenotypes (see chapter 2), then it makes no sense to apply this to Steiner.

Moreover, when Steiner does talk of Atlantean races, he thinks only one of them has survived: “Physically speaking, post-Atlantean humanity evolved from forebears whose bodily figure had become firm enough not to give way to the soul-forces which had grown contrary to their nature” all the other “races” had died out (Steiner 1909/63, p. 199). In other words, Steiner thought all of humanity since that time has developed from **one** Atlantean “race”. Quite a number of the critic’s quotes are derived from Steiner’s writings of Atlantis, so how could they possibly be valid in supporting the racism accusation when Steiner thinks that we all come from one “race” and that its nature was totally different from how race is defined today?

On a general level, in his “*Menscheitsentwicklung and Christus-Erkenntnis*”, Steiner encapsulates his view on the tree of life and the history of the “human ancestor”:

Relatively late in the Atlantean time, that species branched off which later formed itself into today’s apes. Earlier in the Atlantean time certain higher mammals branched off as did certain lower mammals in the oldest of Atlanteans times. The physical human being at that time was at the evolutionary level of a mammal; but the mammals remained at this level whilst the human being developed further. In still earlier times the human being stood at the evolutionary level of a reptile. The body was completely different from today’s reptiles; but the reptile had formed itself in its bodily development and has fallen into decadence. The human being developed its inner members; the reptile, in contrast, remained behind. It is a brother of humanity that has remained behind. Still earlier, the bird species branched off; and even further back the human being was on the level that is preserved in contemporary fish species. On the Earth at that time there was nothing present higher than complicated forms of fish. In more primal

times, the human being stood at the level of an invertebrate animal. In the oldest of times, the single cell branched off... that represents a brother of humanity. When we look at this evolutionary sequence of human genealogy, it agrees precisely with the one in Haeckel's... Without further consideration, we can accept Haeckel's genealogy. The only difference is that Haeckel thought that animals arose first and that humans evolved from them. But we see the human being already in the Archetypal or Primal Form; and the animal world we see as a branching, as a speciation of humanity. In reality, the human being is the First Born of the Earth; this developed itself in a direct line and left other beings behind in various stages. (Steiner 1907, p. 248/9)(My translation)

What is clear from this is that the human being, according to Steiner, has undergone an evolutionary process in close affinity with other living creatures. The so-called "races" are sufficiently identical to the species on the tree of life outlined by Haeckel and, in fact, from a phenotype perspective, little different from those ancient species of modern science today. Steiner describes the human ancestor as, going backwards in time, having close affinities to: apes; higher mammals, lower mammals [Atlantis / Cenozoic period]; reptiles, birds, fish [Lemuria / Mesozoic period]; invertebrates [Hyperboria / Paleozoic period], and single cells [Polaris / Proterozoic period?]. That Steiner differs concerning "humans" existing first does not alter this, he was speaking here of the "Archetypal Form" of humanity, not as humans are today. This ancient humanity, for Steiner, was of a more rare **substance** than the other beings around, but the essential **forms** were so similar that he referred to them as "brothers of humanity". For him, this archetypal (Urform) humanity pre-existed the other beings but in such a fine substance that no fossils could be left. The other beings "condensed" into solid matter first from out of this Primal Form (as a kind of process of speciation) and thereby arose the succession of life forms recognised by science as the "phylogenetic tree"(Steiner 1911). Therefore Steiner accepted this sequence of life forms, as representing this "condensation" of species, but with an additional spiritual interpretation. The most important fact for this context, however, is that he viewed the "human ancestor" as having those phenotypical properties closely associated with the ancient **species** of science, which he refers to as "brothers of humanity"(i.e. having close kinship in biological properties). That he

sometimes referred to these ancient species as “races” is a mere matter of **terminology** and has nothing to do with the underlying **ideas**. In no sense does this support any accusation of racism.

It has to be noted that many of the criticisms directed at Steiner are drawn from his literature which speaks only of the “human ancestor”, or ancient humans, and occasionally ancient “races” which have no comparison, or identity, with those of today. It follows that all determinations of “races” of this evolutionary period have no connection to those of existing races today. That is not to say that, in Steiner’s view, there is no continuity at all between the human beings of those times and today, but just as a leaf develops from a seed, it is neither identical to it nor defined by it: later humanity has **evolved** from the earlier but is not identical to it. Consequently, the racism assertion fails for all references to ancient humanity in the time periods of Atlantis and before.

Evolution, Meaning and the Case for Civilisations

The next question is what did Steiner mean when he used the word “race” for those periods of history after Atlantis? There is some ambiguity in this as there is no doubt that he did use the word “race” for these periods as can be seen from this quote from his “*Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*” (1906b): “We differentiate five members of humanity or races. Whether or not this word is used with justification may be left open to question. The first race is the old Indo-Aryan... it had a culture... the Indian culture” (Steiner 1906b, lecture 6). Later in the text he continued to use the word “race” but discussed cultures. In this, Steiner was conscious that he was using the word “race” in a non-specialised way and was using it as a synonym for culture; for him the justification of this is “open to question”. As I will show below, it was the concept of culture, or civilisation, that was the main idea here not the biology of race. For him, all historical periods after Atlantis are best understood in terms of cultures or civilisations even though the word “race” is occasionally used. It is the concept of culture, or civilisation, which is the **central concept** for his views on evolution for the “post-Atlantean” periods.

But, before I discuss Steiner's ideas about the so-called Post-Atlantean periods, I need to consider a particular problem concerned with the way history is analysed. A difficulty arises when critics of Steiner fail to take into account the **dimensions** of what counts as "civilisation". The problems arise from the fact that on some occasions Steiner uses the word "race" to refer to civilisation, a concept not at all identical with the sociological meaning of the term "race" (Steiner 1907). Critics seem to either ignore, or be oblivious to, this and project their own meaning onto the word. From this, the critics use the fact that Steiner spoke of the "growth, evolution and decay" of "races" (really civilisations); that some are more "advanced" or "behind" as a problem in itself. In this they perceive a claim of superiority due to an "asymmetry" in Steiner's appraisal of "races" (that really are civilisations) which they assume implies racism.

The hidden assumption of this is a form of historical relativism: that no one civilisation is more "developed" than another. For such a way of thinking there is no real progress, only change. The problem is that the assuming of any one philosophy of the history of civilisations cannot in itself be deemed to be racist, or more generally "supremacist"; there are many authors who use "progressive" thinking as the tools of their trade. For many, the uses of ideas like "growth, evolution, decay, progress, etc., are just means of interpretation of how civilisations come to be, stabilise, and cease to be. It is the normal practice of many historians (Diamond 2005; Grayling 2007; Huntington 2002; Marr 2012). Not only that, but they do so from many perspectives, where one civilisation may be considered to be more "advanced" from one perspective but not from another. Braudel (1993, pp. 9-23) has outlined four of these perspectives: civilisations as *geographical areas*, as *societies*, as *economies* and as *ways of thought*. From these different perspectives, it is possible to interpret one civilisation as more advanced economically but less advanced socially. From these dimensions one civilisation may be **relatively** superior to another but not **absolutely** (see chapter 2). This is important in understanding Steiner for the basic reason that he sometimes describes a particular "race" (civilisation) as being more "advanced" than another in one way, but less advanced in a different way; thus there is no asymmetry and no absolute superiority principle in Steiner's views (see chapters 2 & 4).

Steiner's view concerning the shift from the Atlantean epoch to the current one (called the Post-Atlantean epoch) is unequivocal. Whilst he accepted that "races" still existed to some degree, the primary evolutionary drive is a movement from a consideration of "race" to that of **civilisation**:

If we go back beyond the Atlantean catastrophe, we see how human races were prepared. In the ancient Atlantean age, human beings were grouped according to external bodily characteristics even more so than in our time. The races we distinguish today are merely **vestiges** of these significant differences between human beings in ancient Atlantis. The concept of race is only fully applicable to Atlantis. Because we are dealing with the real evolution of humanity, **we have therefore never used this concept of race in its original meaning**. Thus, we do not speak of an Indian race, a Persian race, and so on, because it is no longer true or proper to do so. Instead, we speak of an Indian, a Persian, and other periods of **civilization**. And it would make no sense at all to say that in our time a sixth "race" is being prepared. Though **remnants** of ancient Atlantean differences, of ancient Atlantean group-soulness, still exist and the division into races is still in effect, what is being prepared for the sixth epoch is precisely the stripping away of race.

(Steiner 1909a, chapter 1)(My emphasis)

This position was reinforced in Steiner's "*Mission of the Folk Souls*", a text most frequently cited as having racist elements: "One cannot speak of idea of race in the true sense of the term before the Lemurian Epoch, for only then did man incarnate on Earth. Before that time he lived in the spiritual environment of the Earth. He then incarnated and racial characteristics were inherited from the beginning of the Atlantean epoch up to our post-Atlantean epoch. We shall learn later how, in our time, national characteristics prepare in their turn the break-down of racial characteristics and begin to eradicate them... Races are born and will sometime in the future cease to exist... we must realise that when our fifth post-Atlantean epoch is superseded by the sixth and seventh, race as such will have ceased to exist" (Steiner 1910/70, pp. 73/4). As we have seen in the previous section, the ancient human species are not identical to ourselves, but from this one can see that Steiner

conceived of some elements of evolutionary inheritance since those times. So for Steiner, what we today consider to be “races” are mere vestiges or remnants of what earlier were much more significant differences. Not only that, but even these remnants of “race” would gradually merge over the current and the next two evolutionary epochs. Then question then is how?

The next step in Steiner’s views on evolution is that of the “Post-Atlantean” sub-epochs or civilisations. Steiner only occasionally discusses biological “race” here but focuses on the concept of civilisations or cultures. Furthermore, he argues: “During the great migration, everything that came into existence in Atlantis had been **mingled**, jumbled together. It follows that in the post-Atlantean epoch one should no longer speak of races but of civilisations, cultures” (Steiner 1909/78, p. 99)(my emphasis). Clearly, for Steiner, this “mingling together” of the “races” means that the primary concept for understanding this epoch of history is that of civilisations. These are the sequence of civilisations since the post-glacial age began, about nine or ten thousand years ago (Steiner 1923/91, p. 138). He called **all** of these civilisations the “Aryan” and this is not to be confused with the Nazi interpretation of the word or with the term “European”. The “Post-Atlantean” also has “phases”, or sub-epochs, or cultures, which Steiner refers to as “Ancient Indian, Ancient Persian, Ancient Egyptian; Roman/Greek and the “fifth Post-Atlantean” (European) civilisations followed by two others. The first four of these are not really contentious from a historical perspective and form a large part of standard history books (Stephenson 2002; Roberts 2004). What matters for Steiner, however, is the description of these civilisations as “states of consciousness”, or “cultural ages”, the description of the biological phenotypes of the “race” rarely occurs in the writings about these periods. He described these sub-epochs as being primarily concerned with the evolution of a particular form of consciousness: Ancient India – “spiritual consciousness”; Ancient Persia – “spiritual and earthly consciousness”; Babylonian / Egyptian – “earthly and heavenly consciousness”; Greek / Roman – idea consciousness and earthly consciousness and the European – earthly consciousness”. The so-called “European” (fifth sub-race or “cultural age”) may seem curious unless one understands what he means by this: “The mission of this fifth sub-race is to study not only the laws which slumber within mankind, but those which permeate the whole world and then to imprint them on the external world. The result is that humanity has

become more material, indeed materialistic... We shall be succeeded by another “race” which will retrace the path to the spirit” (Steiner 1906/70, p. 102). It would appear that he was talking about the **type of consciousness** that lies behind the evolutionary significance of the scientific and industrial revolution which has had a world-wide outreach but is acknowledged by many historians as having a European origin. Clearly, for Steiner, the path back to the spirit will be taken by another “race” (civilisation) than the European (whose **state of consciousness** is defined in terms of matter). His argument is that from a “technological perspective” the “European” centred civilisation is more “advanced” (but this is now world-wide), but from a “spiritual perspective” (Braudel’s “ways of thought”) it is not, it has become “materialistic”. There is no asymmetry here in Steiner’s views on “civilisations” and no “racism” or “Euro-centrism” (I shall return to this in chapter 4).

The “mingling” and “cessation” of “races” referred to above Steiner’s envisages as happening on spiritual/soul and physical levels in the present and the next two cultural epochs. On the spiritual/soul levels he saw individual nations as having particular gifts or abilities in the fifth cultural period: France, the intellectual soul; Spain and Italy, the sentient soul; Britain, the spiritual/consciousness soul; the German peoples, the “I”. The next succeeding cultural period, the sixth, he saw developing in western Asia: “the Spirit Self into the Spiritual Soul, is being prepared by the peoples of Western Asia and their outposts in Eastern Europe, the Slavonic peoples” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 162). On the physical level, he argued that miscegenation (racial mixing) is positive for evolution. The following quotes are not just about the past but also the future: “miscegenation and contact between different peoples have played significant role at certain periods. Now not only the mixture of peoples and their interrelationships which lead to the introduction of foreign blood, but also the psychic and spiritual development of the Folk Spirits have played a decisive part” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 171). This position was first stated in his “*Occult Significance of Blood*”: “Exogamy inoculates man with new blood, and this **breaking-down of the tribal principle**, this mixing of blood, which **sooner or later** takes place among **all peoples**, signifies the birth of the external understanding, the birth of the intellect... But this mingling of blood which comes about through exogamy is also that which at the same time obliterates the clairvoyance of earlier days, **in order that humanity may evolve to a higher stage of development**” (Steiner 1906b,

paragraph 72)(my emphasis). So for Steiner, races as we understand them today will have ceased to be by the end of the seventh cultural epoch (in about six to seven thousand years time by his way of calculation) through a threefold process of unification:

This is how Steiner foresaw the possible and gradual cessation of the races over the present and the next two cultural epochs: through miscegenation on the physical/bodily level, and through a bringing together of the spiritual/soul powers into a higher unity.

As I will discuss in the next section, Steiner saw this process not one of conflict but cooperation between the “races”: “to bring an end to the divisions of mankind...to call upon them to work in harmonious cooperation” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 185). I hardly think that a racist theory would suggest a unification of the spiritual/soul abilities of the different peoples of the Earth, let alone the possible physical mixing of them through miscegenation.

The Meaning of Spiritual / Moral Community

In terms of the future, Steiner’s use of the term “race” took on a specific meaning according to his theory of evolution. So what is Steiner’s view of the future? As I will show in chapter 6, Steiner, in his “*Apocalypse of St John*”, envisaged a new kind of community which he sometimes referred to as a “race”, but is not to be confused with biological race. He described it as being derived from “every tribe and every nation” based on the moral principles of “progress, freedom and love” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 140). This is a concept of a ***spiritual / moral community*** that is inclusive of all races and is formed through the agency of ***ethical individuals*** (Steiner 1963, p. 175):

That is why it is absolutely essential to understand that our anthroposophical movement is a spiritual one. It looks to the spirit and overcomes the effects of physical differences through the force of being a spiritual movement... Humanity is becoming evermore individual, and this has further implications for human individuality. It is important that this individuality develop in the right way... In light of this, we can describe this anthroposophical movement as leading a person to grasp correctly what is

called the “**I**” [**the individual spirit**], the innermost member of the human being... What is entering humanity through the anthroposophical movement concerns every human being **regardless of race or nationality**. This movement speaks only to the new humanity, the new human being — not to an abstract concept “human being,” but to every individual... Full understanding between individuals is hardly possible today, except when what is to be communicated comes from the **centre** of one individual's being and speaks to and is understood rightly by the **centre** of another. (Steiner 1909a) (My emphasis).

So rather than the agency of “race” being central to Steiner, it is the agency of individuals, “I”s, that is **central** to human development and to the forming of **moral communities** through concepts like progress, freedom and love. As shown in chapter 2, for Steiner this can only occur through the agency of each individual “I” and is the polar opposite to Staudenmaier’s assertion of the “**determining** power of race within each incarnation... In Steiner’s depiction, the **ineluctable** nature of racial destiny is a source of neither pride nor denigration; it is a fundamental aspect of the cosmic plan” (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 11)(my emphasis). For Steiner, nothing in human life is ineluctable or caused by the determining power of race, all humans are free agents capable of forming and determining moral communities. For him, it is not the membership of a biological race which determines our future, but our free individual creativity and choice. He made this clear in his early work “*The Philosophy of Freedom (Spirituality)*” and it never changed throughout his life. His commitment to ethical individualism in the forming of communities is absolutely central to every part of his thought: “To *live* in love of the action and to *let live*, having understanding of the other person’s will, is the fundamental principle of *free human beings*... The free man does not demand agreement from his fellow men, but he expects it because it lies in human nature” (Steiner 1963, p. 181). These are not ideas that can be present in any kind of racist theory, but are derived from a view of the World where individuals matter, not their membership of a particular race.

Moreover, this “I”, as he showed in his “*Mission of the Folk Souls*”, was important for Steiner in that he also made distinctions between the progressive evolution of “**rac**es” to **nations** to **civilisations** and to **individuals** (Steiner 1910/70, p. 80/1).

Steiner only speaks of biological races on a few occasions; they are neither central to his evolutionary thought nor to Anthroposophy. Clearly, for Steiner, the human community of the future is meant to be more than just about biology, it is about communities of human beings forming under moral or spiritual principles. For him, in the long term, all the peoples of the Earth could find peaceful unity derived from these moral values and realised by individuals.

Steiner's hope for the future was to promote tolerance and peaceful cooperation between all the races, peoples and nations of the Earth and he encouraged supporters of Anthroposophy to live their lives accordingly:

What alone accords with Anthroposophical teaching is that we should unselfishly dedicate the best that is in us, our sympathy and compassion, to the well-being of all mankind... and live, not for ourselves but for all men, then that is true anthroposophical tolerance... Spiritual Science, as we shall realise more and more clearly, will bring an end to the divisions of mankind. Therefore now is the right moment to learn to know the Folk Souls, because the province of Spiritual Science is not to promote antagonism between them, but to call upon them to work in harmonious cooperation... The more we practice this, the better anthroposophists we are. (Steiner 1910/70, p. 185)

This was written at the conclusion of the lecture cycle "*The Mission of the Folk Souls*", where critics claim Steiner expressed racist views. As can be seen, nothing could have been further from his position. The cycle was held four years before the outbreak of the First World War. His ideas of "sympathy and compassion" and "harmonious cooperation" stand in complete opposition to the then emerging conflict between the "races", peoples and nations of the World.

Conclusions: Evolutionary Time Contexts of the Meaning of the Word 'Race'

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide the evolutionary context for the chapters to come. The aim of the following three chapters is to make a critical evaluation of the critics' assertions and the Steiner quotes that they refer to. I will attempt to integrate these "parts" into the whole that is Steiner's theory of evolution

as presented here in chapter 3 and in line with the criteria in chapter 2. It is only then that the real meaning of Steiner's statements can be understood.

As discussed in this and previous chapters, it must not be assumed that the term "race" has the same meaning for Steiner. For him, the term "race" only occasionally referred to race as defined today; it also meant, *inter alia*, ancient "races", which are more like the species of natural science, which no longer exist. This is due to the fact that, for him, the evolutionary process changes over time. He also spoke of how the evolution of ancient "races" gives way to that of nations (civilisations) and then to the evolution of the individual (Steiner 1910/70, p. 81). Free individuals from all "biological races" can then, for Steiner, form "moral communities" that transcend any kind of race (Steiner 1908/77, p. 140). This process from "race" to nation to individual is crucial in the debate because, to understand Steiner's views on evolution, the question of **time context of meaning** cannot be ignored. This has **past, present** and **future** perspectives.

It is due to the fact that the critics do not recognise these distinctions in the meaning of the word "race" that a good number of the criticisms have arisen. For Steiner, "race" has a diversity of meanings which, in most cases so far examined, are not connected with the current sociological meaning. His ideas include both natural science and spiritual science perspectives. Any identification of his views with the biological determinism that is at the root of racism is bound to be misleading.

Moreover, for him, all interpretations of "race" are only one aspect, even one moment, one stage, in an overarching evolutionary process:

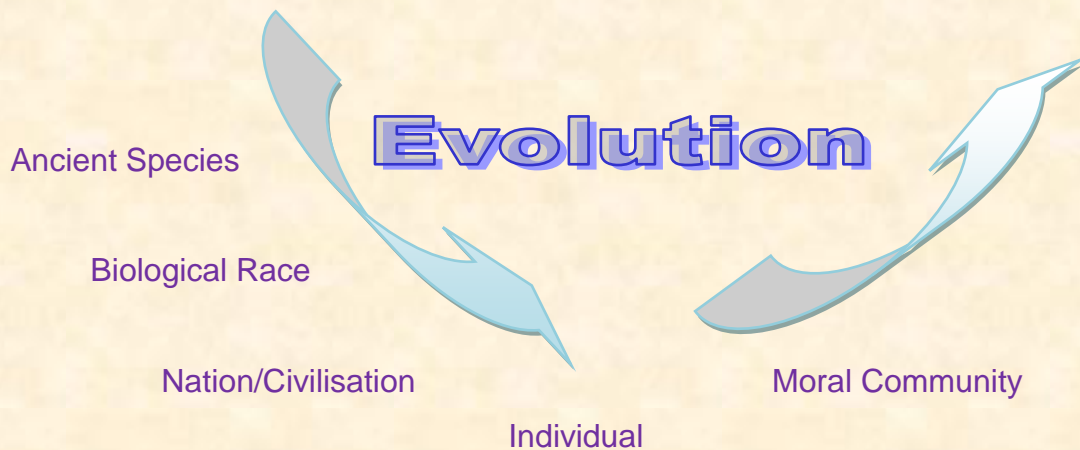
Steiner's views need to be seen against a backdrop of an evolutionary process that begins with an evolution of a general physical reality, proceeds through life reality, soul reality and spirit "I" reality. None of this is race-specific. This evolution continues through the levels of the ancient species of the "human ancestor", civilisation, nation, individual and then moral community: it is an evolutionary process from the general to the special which has

layers and levels. THE CENTRAL ELEMENT IS ITS ULTIMATE AIM OF A MORAL COMMUNITY BASED ON ETHICAL INDIVIDUALISM.

These ideas can be expressed in the following way:

Fig 3.1

General Physical Reality



So what place then does biological race have in Steiner's view of evolution:

Contrary to what Staudenmaier claims, for Steiner, biological race is to be transcended; it is neither the central point of his theory of evolution nor of Anthroposophy; it is one evolutionary stage in the evolutionary metamorphosis of humanity. What is central to evolution, for Steiner, is its moral purpose that, for each individual "I", "Love is the outcome of Wisdom re-born in the "I" of man".

(Steiner 1909 / 63, p. 312)

This is a point he also made in his *"Mission of the Folk Souls"*: "The deeds of the "I" in man signify simply the creation of an active centre in his nature... Now that is a very general definition of our Earth mission... Thus our planet is the planet of Love... the innermost being of man becomes the substance of Love and this is what one may call the really creative, the inwardly creative element in earth existence... This is the whole mission of the Earth" (Steiner 1910/70, p. 93-5). It is curious that this point was made here, in a book frequently quoted as being racist. Nothing could be further from

the truth, for Steiner, the whole Earth mission, the Earth's **Purpose**, is determined by the evolution of creativity and love being bound up with the individual and not race. For him, race is a stepping stone towards individuality. He speaks of this in relationship to the evolution of love in his "*Apocalypse of St John*": "The more a man becomes individual, the more he can become a bearer of love. Where blood ties link men together they love because they are led by the blood to what they should love. When man is granted individuality, when he tends and nurtures the divine spark within him, then the impulses of love, the waves of love, must pass from man to man in freedom of the heart. And thus with this new impulse man has enriched the old bond of love that is bound up to the blood tie. Love passes over gradually to spiritual love which flows from soul to soul and which ultimately encompasses all humanity in a common bond of brother-love" (Steiner 1908/77, p. 23/4). For Steiner, love has evolved through blood-based love (such as in race) towards that of the spiritual love between every individual and then all of humanity. For him, this is the future he envisaged for all.

In the following, the reader will need to bear in mind that Steiner's quotes given by the critics are embedded in the false contexts that they provide. I shall try to re-locate the quotes presented by Staudenmaier and others in their proper **time contexts**. By doing this I will show that Steiner's views on "race" meant something quite different from what the critics claim. So when the word "race" appears in a text, this could for Steiner mean at least one of the following four ideas:

- 1) Ancient extinct species;
- 2) Civilisation (or nation);
- 3) Biological race;
- 4) Moral community based on Ethical Individualism.

The reader needs to keep in mind that the word "race" could mean any one of these in Steiner's works, none of which lend any support to the assertion of racism.

(4) THE MEANING OF “RACE” IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANCIENT PAST

In this chapter, I will analyse those quotes which the critics of Steiner refer to as “racist”. I will place these in the context of Steiner’s views on evolution outlined in chapter 3 and evaluate them according to the criteria discussed in chapter 2. In this chapter, I will show that Steiner’s use of the term “race” takes its meaning from the context of the *ancient past* and *not* from the *current* sociological meaning of the word. The critics do not notice the distinction between quotes that are about the ancient past and those which are about the relative present, so the racism assertion fails. I will also demonstrate that in terms of the criteria for a genuine racist theory none of them fit Steiner’s views.

From chapter 2, we saw that for a theory to be classified as racist there needed to be an absolute form of “superiority principle” contained within it. Now a particular form of racism is that of “white” or “European” supremacism which views and acts on the basis that the so-called “white race” is superior to other races. *For this view, the “white race” is the culmination of history. Contrarily, if a theory claimed that a particular “race” would be succeeded by another race this evidences a non-racist, non supremacist, theory.* Implied in “white supremacism” also is not only a “superiority principle” but also a “principle of harm”. In other words, that the theory, in order to *be* racist, has to contain implications for possible *actions* that lead to “harms”. These can be of a physical nature, but also harms to human rights and freedoms (Blackburn 2005). We also considered in chapter 2 the “*time boundedness*” of the term “racism”. I concluded that if the term is to lead to a meaningful discussion, then it only makes sense that it only refers to how it is conceptualised today in terms of current and existing races. This leads to some severe problems of attributing racism to an author when in reality they were talking about ancient extinct “races” and to whom no actual harms can be applied.

In the following, I will show that critics, especially Peter Staudenmaier, try to re-configure Steiner’s meaning of the term “race” by locating it in a false context. By surrounding quotes from Steiner by statements derived from Nazi thought, Staudenmaier ascribes a false meaning. As I pointed out earlier in chapter 2, the meaning of a word depends on the theory context in which it is located. So, for

example, when the words race and racism are used they are bounded by the type of time context to which they are referring. When people see these words today their meaning is often conditioned by the cultural context of the present. An example of this is when Staudenmaier claims that Steiner was a racist. This is very dependent on whether or not the meaning of the current use of the word “race” is the same as that of Steiner’s. One of Staudenmaier’s chief sources for this claim is Steiner’s book ‘*Cosmic Memory*’, which, as we have seen, has no descriptions of history which post-date Atlantis, that is; it is about the **ancient past** more than nine or ten thousand years ago. Staudenmaier states:

The particulars of this racial theory are so extraordinary, even bizarre, that it is difficult for non-anthroposophists to take it seriously, but it is important to understand the pernicious and lasting effects the doctrine has had on anthroposophists and those they’ve influenced. Steiner asserted that “root races” follow one another in chronological succession over epochs lasting hundreds of thousands of years, and each root race is further divided into “sub-races” which are also arranged hierarchically. By chance, as it were, the root race which happened to be paramount at the time Steiner made these momentous discoveries was the Aryan race, a term which anthroposophists use to this day... Above all, Anthroposophy’s conception of spiritual development is inextricable from its evolutionary narrative of racial decline and racial advance: a select few enlightened members evolve into a new “race” while their spiritually inferior neighbors degenerate. Anthroposophy is thus structured around a hierarchy of biological and psychological as well as “spiritual” capacities and characteristics, all of them correlated to race. The affinities with Nazi discourse are unmistakable. (Staudenmaier 2000/8)

In end note 10 to this article, Staudenmaier states:

Wolfgang Treher makes a compelling case that Steiner’s racial theories, especially the repeated scheme of a small minority evolving further while a large mass declines, bear striking similarities even in detail to Hitler’s own theories. He concludes: “Concentration camps, slave labor and the murder

of Jews constitute a praxis whose key is perhaps to be found in the 'theories' of Rudolf Steiner". (Staudenmaier 2000/8)

In the first quote, Staudenmaier's assumption is that the word "race" in Steiner's "*Cosmic Memory*" means the same as what we might mean by it today. He also implicitly assumes that Steiner meant the same by "race" as did the Nazi's. In doing so, Staudenmaier tears the real meaning of the word from its proper theory context, namely, the evolutionary time context to which Steiner was referring. For the second quote, clearly, Staudenmaier is in agreement with Treher and that he sees the meaning of Steiner's views on race as being the same as in Nazi theory and thus giving the theoretical underpinning for the worst atrocities of the 20th Century. But by connecting Steiner's ideas with Nazi discourse this is not only an example of **de-contextualisation** but also of **false re-contextualisation**. As I argued in chapter 2, to understand Steiner you need the context of *his* own theories, not that of another source. Failure to notice this leads to the **reductio ad absurdum** implicit in the extreme version of the external view of history as outlined in chapter 2, an interpretation to which Staudenmaier is covertly inclined. Without the context of Steiner's own theory of evolution and the meaning of "race" within it, means that arguments against him are full of conclusions that do not follow from the real meaning of the premises.

Staudenmaier ignores Steiner's own caveats about the use of the word "race". This is curious as the following quote is taken from the book "*Cosmic Memory*" where he claims that Steiner held racist views. The problem is that Steiner was conscious of the fact that he used the word "race" and so was very cautious about the use of the words. Speaking of the ancient 'race' the Lemurians, Steiner writes:

Again, the designation "race" is not an especially fortunate one. For in a real sense, the **human ancestors at that time cannot be compared with what today one designates as "race"**... our present appellations can only serve as makeshifts, and really lose all meaning in relation to those **remote epochs**. Actually, one can only begin to speak of "races" in connection with the development attained in about the second third of the third principle condition identified above (the Lemurian). Only then is

formed what today one calls “races”. This “racial character” is retained in the period of Atlantean development, and further into our time of the fifth principle condition. But already at the end of our fifth era, the word “race” will lose all sense. In the future, mankind will be divided into parts which it will be impossible to designate as “races”. In this respect, ordinary theosophical literature has caused much confusion.

(Steiner 1904/59, p. 221/2)(My emphasis)

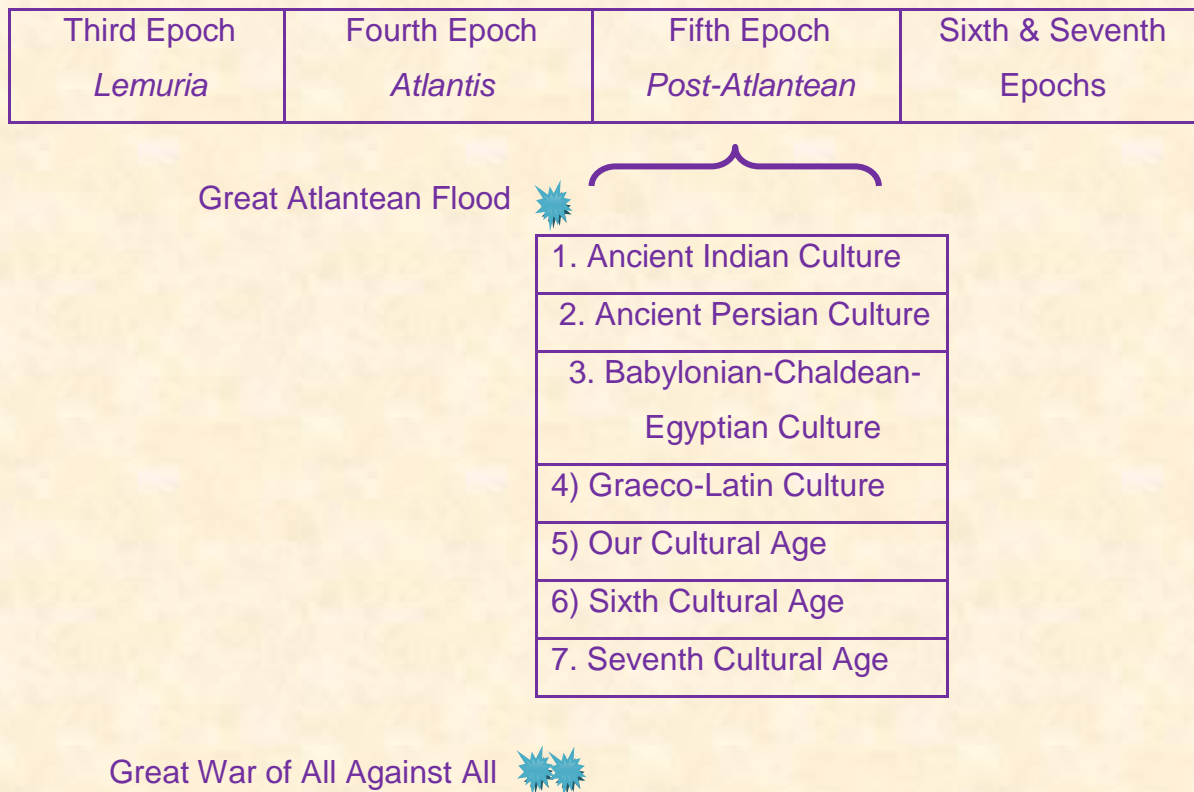
In many places, Staudenmaier simplistically thinks that just because Steiner used the word “race” and that he spoke of the evolution of races that Steiner was a racist. But this is trivial, all that one can deduce from this particular text is that Steiner was convinced about the evolution of one “race” to the other over long time periods (e.g. Lemurian to Atlantean to Aryan, **not** from black to white) and that this has nothing to do with the races as we know them today, as I argued in chapter 3.

As we have seen, one of the difficulties in understanding Steiner’s ideas about racial evolution is that in many cases the meaning of the term “race” is determined by his concept of the **ancient past**. This may be a source of confusion to those whose understanding is conditioned by a theory derived from the **present**. This is a phenomenon well known to historians from another perspective and is concerned with the problem of how to understand the past when we are theoretically bounded by the present: **the present may obscure our understanding of the past (presentism)**(see chapter 2). For example, the following quote is from a list of supposed racist statements from Steiner which appears on Professor David Colquhoun’s web site “dcscience.net”; the mere existence of the word “race” is presented as if the word is unambiguous and synonymous with the current sociological meaning of the term. In this context, what this means is that Staudenmaier seems to implicitly assume that his understanding of race, derived from the relative present, is the same as Steiner’s. If he doesn’t think this, and that he really thinks that Steiner’s concept of race is **incommensurable** (Kuhn 1970) with his own, then there would be no need to give the following quote as if it were a genuine example of Steiner’s supposed racism:

We are within the great Root Race of humanity that has peopled the earth since the land on which we now live rose up out of the inundations of the ocean. Ever since the Atlantean Race began slowly to disappear, the great Aryan Race has been the dominant one on earth. If we contemplate ourselves, we here in Europe are thus the fifth Sub-Race of the great Aryan Root Race. (Steiner 1905/2013, lecture 16)

This is from Steiner's "*The Temple Legend*", lecture 16. If one considers Steiner's book, this view does not represent any kind of racism or Aryan supremacism in the way that the critics understand it. For Steiner, the term Aryan is a vastly more inclusive concept than the popular version: "White, blond haired, blue eyed, European". So what does Steiner mean by the term "Aryan" and the "Aryan" "Sub-Races"? In the paragraph after this Steiner says: "The first Sub-Race lived in the distant past in Ancient India. And the present-day Indians are descendants of that first Sub-Race, whose spiritual life is still extant in the ancient Indian Vedas... Then came the second, third and fourth Sub-Races. The fourth Sub-Race adopted Christianity. Then, halfway through the Middle Ages, we see that the fifth Sub-Race formed itself, to which we and the neighbouring nations belong" (Steiner 1905/2013, lecture 16). So in this quote, Steiner is saying that the ancient Indian sub-race is the first Aryan sub-race. There are six more "Aryan" sub-races, of which the so-called European is only the fifth. If we recall from chapter 3, for Steiner these are really civilisations or cultures and not races as we might define them today. This interpretation can be supported by the figure Steiner presents in his "*The Apocalypse of St John*" (Steiner 1908/77, p. 57) which I reproduce with some minor modifications:

Fig 4.1



In the interpretation of term “Aryan”, Staudenmaier completely misunderstands Steiner. If one thinks about the term “Aryan” in a naive way, it conjures up the thought “blond hair, blue eyes” with central Europeans being the supposed dominant “race”. But Steiner’s text does not actually say this. For Steiner, the term “Aryan” refers to **all** the supposed “sub-races” (which in reality are civilisations or cultures and not races) that followed the Atlantean period, since about nine or ten thousand years ago. This includes the Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Greece / Rome and, of course, the “European” and two further succeeding “races” (really civilisations) (Steiner 1909a)(see also chapter 3). The expression “Great War of All Against All” refers to a time in the distant future, around seven thousand years by Steiner’s way of calculation, where he spoke of a kind of potential conflict based on egoism rather than the military type of conflict that we usually associate with war (Steiner 1908/77, p. 136). I shall discuss this in chapter 6. For now, however, fig 4.1 does not fit any concept of racism that is present today nor white / European supremacism. If we recall from chapter 2, racism is predicated upon the notion of a supposed diversity of biological phenotypes and that one of these is considered to be superior to the others. But what kind of racism would be inclusive of such a wide spectrum of “racial”

groups as described by Steiner? The concept of extreme racism at least requires the supposed absolute superiority of **one** race over **all** others. As I argued in chapter 2, the definition of racism is dependent on the presumed asymmetry between one race and all others; this leads to the concept of superiority required to define racism. As can be seen, this does not apply to Steiner's view of the "Aryan" race which includes a very wide spectrum of peoples. Not only that, but a European supremacist would certainly not consider the notion that their civilisation could be succeeded

Despite this, one of the critics of Steiner's views on race still claims that he is a "white supremacist". Melanie Byng (2010) (blog name Thetis Mercurio) published an article on Professor David Colquhoun's web site, "dcscience.net", on the issue of racism in Steiner Waldorf Schools Part 3: The problem of racism December 16th, 2010). These are two parts of Steiner's lecture that she and other critics find offensive:

The whites are actually the ones who develop the human essence within themselves. Therefore, they are dependent [only] on themselves. When they emigrate, they are affected by the peculiarities of the other areas somewhat, but they stand on a basis other than race itself, they are more than just a people. They certainly are something more. You see, gentlemen, the things I have just described, these are things that occur inside the human body. The soul and spirit are more or less independent of the body. **Therefore, the Europeans, because they have the highest claim to soul and spirit, they have the most soul and mind.** The European can tolerate conditions on different continents better than other races can. (Steiner 1923, paragraph 23)(my emphasis)

And so it is really quite interesting: On one side you have the black race, which is the most earthly. When it migrates to the west, it dies out. We also have the yellow race, which is midway between earth and the cosmos. When it migrates to the east, it becomes brown, attaches itself too much to the cosmos, and it dies out. **The white race is the future, it is the most spirit-building race. When whites migrated** to India, they trained the inner, poetic, artistic, spiritual culture of India. If it now migrates

to the west, it will develop a spirituality that does not take so much of the inner man, but sees the outer world in its spirituality.

(Steiner 1923, paragraph 37)(my emphasis)

These are key quotes, because, as I will show later in chapter 6, they are central to Staudenmaier's thesis that Steiner's view of evolution sees the regression of all none-white races and the progression of the white race alone (a hypothesis I will refute in chapter 6 and show that Steiner's view of evolution is the progression of all races to form a moral community). These quotes are originally from "*Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde - Über das Wesen des Christentums*" (Steiner 1923, pp. 62-67). It may not seem very surprising that critics consider these to be the views of a supposed "white supremacist". If these quotes really were about the races as they are today, they could certainly be interpreted as an expression of racism and white supremacy. There is just one major problem: **these quotes refer to ancient "races" which no longer exist.**

The first problem is that of translation. The third sentence of the first paragraph states, in the original: "Wenn sie auswandern, so nehmen sie die Eigentümlichkeiten der anderen Gegenden etwas an, doch sie gehen, nicht als Rasse, sondern mehr als einzelne Menschen, zugrunde" (Steiner 1923, p. 62). I would translate this as "When they migrate, they are affected by the peculiarities of the other areas somewhat, however they go fundamentally, **not as a race, but more as single humans**" (my emphasis). It must be strongly noted here that Steiner was very careful to identify this as a question of single humans, i.e. individuals, not as one of race. The translation is just wrong, it completely leaves out the expression "single humans". This is critical because the critics make this into a race issue, not one of individuality, a point which serves to partially undermine their whole position.

Another problem is that this particular text is entitled "*Colour and the Human Races*"(1923). This means that it is not primarily to do with Steiner's **central theory** of evolution. To make sense of it the context of Steiner's theory of evolution is required as discussed in chapter 3. The lecture itself is probably one of the poorest transcripts that I have come across (many of Steiner's texts were notes taken by a member of the audience and not corrected by him). The time contexts are

consistently intermingled leaving the reader finding it difficult to know if Steiner was referring to the past, present or future. In the case of the first quote, however, it may be possible to discern this from the paragraph that follows it: “Therefore, it happened that the whites, starting from up north, once made a major migration down to India. A stream of white people came down into the area where usually people are yellow. Therefore, a mix of Caucasian and Mongolian came about: the Indians” (Steiner 1923). We came across this idea before in chapter 3. Steiner was speaking here of a **transitional period** between Atlantis (the Cenozoic period) and the foundation of the ancient Indian civilisation. As quoted in chapter 3, Steiner argued that: “During the great migration, everything that came into existence in Atlantis had been mingled, jumbled together. It follows that in the post-Atlantean epoch one should no longer speak of races but of civilisations, cultures” (Steiner 1909/78, p. 99). It would seem from this, that the above “white people” of whom Steiner was speaking are not those of today but some ancient group which existed **prior** to the ancient Indian civilisation, by Steiner’s reckoning this was before about nine or ten thousand years ago. The second quote becomes understandable in the light of this. When he says there “When whites migrated to India” he means in the ancient past just before the ancient Indian civilisation. As I argued in chapter 2, It seems to me, therefore, that if the term “white supremacist” is to be used it can only be valid if we are referring to “races” as they are defined in terms of the present, not in terms “races” of the ancient past. As I argued there **“The definition of racism then is bounded by a time period: it has no relevance to very distant periods of time. As I will show, this “boundedness by the present”, this “presentism”, of the race concept, makes the racism assertion against Steiner fail.”** (See 2.4). Steiner was no “white supremacist” here as he was speaking of the ancient past in an attempt to understand human colour. The “white race” he was speaking of here existed, according to Steiner, nine or ten thousand years ago and **ceased to be** in the creation of the ancient Indian “race” (really civilisation) when “everything that came into existence in Atlantis had been mingled, jumbled together”.

Furthermore, of course one can reject Steiner’s views on how the variety of human colours came about, but one needs to be clear what kind of an argument this is: it is an **ontological** argument (i.e. an argument about what exists) about human colour, not about human value. This may be true or false, but it contains no moral judgement

and no “principle of harm” (chapter 2). As we saw in chapter 2, racism is *necessarily* defined in terms of at least two components: an ontological judgement (which also has to include a superiority principle) and a negative moral judgement (in terms of a principle of harm). If the latter of these is not present in an author’s views then they cannot be identified as racist. In addition, Steiner’s does not make an argument about the superiority of races as defined today.

These quotes are particularly problematic for Staudenmaier because, as we will see in chapter 7, they are the main source of evidence for his allegation that Steiner saw the future as “white”: “He [Steiner] associated normality and spiritual progress with whiteness, while portraying non-white skin as a mark of racial regression and atavistic influences” (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 19). I will return to this later, but for now it can be seen that Steiner was referring to an ancient extinct race and not to present races or future ones.

Another quote from Steiner’s “*Cosmic Memory*” (1904/59) which Staudenmaier takes exception to is the following. It involves the notion that races undergo stages of “growth, maturity and “decay”. This is asserted to give evidence of Steiner’s supposed racism:

The ancestors of the Atlanteans lived in a region which has disappeared, the main part of which lay south of contemporary Asia. In theosophical writings they are called the Lemurians. After they had passed through various stages of development the greatest part of them declined. These became stunted men, whose descendants still inhabit certain parts of the earth today as so-called savage tribes. Only a small part of Lemurian humanity was capable of further development. From this part the Atlanteans were formed. Later, something similar again took place. The greatest part of the Atlantean population declined, and from a small portion are descended the so-called Aryans who comprise present-day civilized humanity. According to the nomenclature of the science of the spirit, the Lemurians, Atlanteans and Aryans are root races of mankind. If one imagines that two such root races preceded the Lemurians and that two will succeed the Aryans in the future, one obtains a total of seven. One always arises from another in the manner just indicated with respect to the

Lemurians, Atlanteans, and Aryans. Each root race has physical and mental characteristics which are quite different from those of the preceding one. While, for example, the Atlanteans especially developed memory and everything connected with it, at the present time it is the task of the Aryans to develop the faculty of thought and all that belongs to it. In each root race various stages must also be gone through. There are always seven of these. In the beginning of a period identified with a root race, its principal characteristics are in a youthful condition; slowly they attain maturity and finally enter a decline. The population of a root race is thereby divided into seven sub-races. But one must not imagine that one sub-race immediately disappears when a new one develops. Each one may maintain itself for a long time while others are developing beside it. Thus there are always populations which show different stages of development living beside each other on earth. (Steiner 1904/59, pp. 48/9)

What has to be born in mind with this quote is that Steiner is referring to the succession from the third **epoch** through to the fifth to the sixth and seventh epochs. This is not to be confused with the shifts through to the sixth and seventh **cultures**. Figure 4.1 makes this distinction clear: the epochs are much larger time periods than the cultures. When Steiner refers to the “Aryan” he means the fifth epoch which includes all the cultures indicated in the lower part of Figure 4.1. It also has to be kept in mind that when Steiner refers to “present day” civilised humanity this means all the **cultures** up to the present.

My reasoning here is partly the same as before: the racial concept here is primarily the one concerning bygone ages, the Lemurian, Atlantean and of ancient human ancestors that no longer exist and which were completely different phenotypes anyway, as I argued in chapter 3. The “Aryan” (meaning all sub-epochs since the Indian) I have also argued to be very inclusive and primarily about civilisations or cultures and not races (chapter 3). Also, the general principle Steiner is proposing here is that **all** civilisations undergo “youthful... mature... decline” stages, that would also include the supposedly “Aryan” stage. This position is not that of a “white supremacist”, nor that of a racist: for Steiner **all** “races” (i.e. civilisations) “decay”, including the so-called “Aryan”, there is no prejudice or asymmetry in his argument.

Also, as shown in chapter 3 in the discussion about civilisations, the use of ideas like “youthful... mature... decline” are part of normal historical analysis in order to understand the processes civilisations go through, this has nothing to do with racism.

Saying that, it has to be a question as to the use of the terms “stunted” and “so-called savage tribes”. To modern sensitivities the term “stunted” may well be inappropriate. But we do not know what he really meant by this. What can be said is that it does not play a role in his central theory of “racial” evolution; he could just as well not have said it and the theory would still have been the same. It is also possible that he simply meant “small” as in the case of some so-called pygmy tribes. As for the term “savage”, Steiner prefaced that with the term “so-called”, which is known to all to mean “is open to question”. That is, Steiner is not saying this about his own convictions; he is not saying that they are “savage”, but that other people call them so.

The following quote is from Steiner’s *“The Apocalypse of St. John”* and is supposed, by Staudenmaier, to give evidence of Steiner’s racist attitude towards the Chinese:

It was in the fifth stage when this emigration began; so that the specially chosen population of Atlantis which lies at the foundation of our culture is taken from the fifth Atlantean race, for in Atlantis we may speak of races. A sixth and a seventh followed. These were, so to speak, the lukewarm races. They also survived the great flood but there was no living sprouting force in them. They were related to the fifth Atlantean civilization somewhat as the bark which is lignified and hardened is related to the sappy stem. These two races which followed the actual root –race were incapable of developing, they were overripe, so to speak. You may still see stragglers of these old overripe races to-day, especially among the Chinese. This Chinese people is characterized by the fact that it has not identified itself with what was manifested in the fifth race, the root-race. It was when the etheric body entered into the physical body that man received the first germs which enabled him to say "I". They had passed over that period; they had, however, thereby developed the high civilization which is known to-day but which was not capable of

development. The fifth Atlantean race sent its people everywhere, and they founded new civilizations, civilizations capable of growing and becoming more perfect. Indeed, this all developed from the ancient Indian civilization to our own. The sixth and seventh races of Atlantis allowed themselves to become hardened and therefore became stationary. As we have said, the Chinese civilization is a remainder of that ancient civilization. The old Chinese possessed a wonderful Atlantean heritage, but they could not progress any further. (Steiner 1908/77, p. 139/40)

From the text itself, it is clear that Steiner is primarily referring to the transition from Atlantis to the **beginning** of the current evolutionary epoch and not the Chinese people as they are today. He says just prior to this quote: “Atlantis, however, had seven consecutive stages just as our own epoch has seven stages”. The fifth stage he was speaking of was of the Atlantean epoch, not our own. Now Staudenmaier leaves out the following which changes the meaning considerably. Just after the above Steiner says: “The old Chinese possessed a wonderful Atlantean heritage, but they could not progress beyond this zenith... You may examine **ancient** Chinese literature, it has been influenced in every direction, but its fundamental tendency bears the Atlantean character. This **self-completeness**, this capacity for making discoveries and going no further... all this proceeds from the character of Atlantis” (Steiner 1908/77, pp 139/40)(My emphasis). This is a claim about the **ancient** Chinese not as they are today. It is a statement about the putative self-completeness of that **civilisation** in **ancient** times. This is one of the reasons why the claim is not racist: it simply makes no sense to accuse someone of holding a racist theory if the particular race is long gone. Also, as an **ontological statement**, it is either true or false and can be refuted or verified by historical research into the nature of that civilisation. What it is not is a racist statement for two basic reasons. Firstly, the statements whilst phrased in terms of “the Chinese” are directed at the nature of the civilisation, not the biological race. Secondly, there is no “Principle of Harm” within the statement and which is necessary in order to designate a theory as racist (chapter 2). Steiner held no principle of harm here; he was only describing what he thought to be true. This view is **testable** through ordinary historical research into whether or not the ancient Chinese civilisation was “self-complete”, just as Steiner claimed. As a matter of fact, the French historian Fernand Braudel (1995, p. 168/9)

referred to the civilisations of the Far East, even in the late 19th and early 20th century, as being “impervious to change” and that they found it “extremely difficult to adapt themselves, to want to evolve and be able to”. In relation to the changes in China in the 20th century he claimed that “China reached one of those rare moments when a civilisation renews itself by breaking apart, sacrificing some of those structural features which as hitherto had been essential to it... What is being undertaken is an effort to establish order in many fields: social, economic, political, intellectual and moral” (Braudel 1995, pp. 204/5). The background to this is the notion suggested by Braudel that the Chinese as a people felt the need for their own civilisation to change, for the old to decline and the new to ascend. Such views as decline and ascent are not racist, they are historical claims about the nature of civilisations; they may turn out to be wrong. As I argued in chapter 2, a theory that is open to being falsified cannot be racist. It may well turn out that Steiner’s ideas are also wrong, but this is only an ontological question. As such, this view cannot be racist as it contains no “principle of harm”.

Likewise, Staudenmaier implies that Steiner is a racist because some races “remain behind”:

You might now be inclined to say: Is it not an extremely bitter thought that whole bodies of peoples remain immature and do not develop their capacities; that only a small group becomes capable of providing the germ for the next civilization? This thought will no longer disquiet you if you distinguish between ***race-development and individual soul-development, for no soul is condemned to remain in one particular race***. The race may fall behind; the community of people may remain backward, but the souls progress beyond the several races. If we wish to form a true conception of this we must say that all the souls now living in bodies in civilized countries were formerly incarnated in Atlantean bodies. A few developed there in the requisite manner, and did not remain in Atlantean bodies. As they had developed further they could become the souls of the bodies which had also progressed further. Only the souls which as souls had remained backward had to take bodies which as bodies had remained at a lower stage. If all the souls had progressed, the backward races would either have decreased very much in population, or

the bodies would be occupied by newly incoming souls at a low stage of development. For there are always souls which can inhabit backward bodies. No soul is bound to a backward body if it does not bind itself to it. The relation between soul-development and race-development is preserved to us in a wonderful myth. Let us imagine race following race, civilization following civilization. The soul going through its earth mission in the right way is incarnated in a certain race; it strives upward in this race, and acquires the capacities of this race in order next time to be incarnated in a higher one. Only the souls which sink in the race and do not work out of the physical materiality, are held back in the race by their own weight, as one might say. They appear a second time in the same race and eventually a third time in bodies in similarly formed races. Such souls hold back the bodies of the race. This has been wonderfully described in a legend. We know, indeed, that man progresses further in the fulfilment of the mission of the earth by following the great Leaders of humanity who point out the goals to be attained; if he rejects them, if he does not follow them, he must remain behind with his race, for he cannot then get beyond it. Let us think of a personality who has the good fortune to meet a great Leader of humanity, let us suppose such a personality confronting Christ Jesus himself, for example; he sees how all his deeds are evidence for leading humanity forward, but he will have nothing to do with this progress, he rejects the Leader of humanity. Such a personality, such a soul would be condemned to remain in the race. If we follow this thought to its conclusion such a soul would have to appear again and again in the same race, and we have the legend of Ahasuerus who had to appear in the same race again and again because he rejected Christ Jesus. Great truths concerning the evolution of humanity are placed before us in such a legend as this. (Steiner 1908/77, pp. 77/8) (My bold)

This is from the book *"The Apocalypse of St John"*, where it is clear that Steiner is referring to the transition from Atlantis to the ancient Indian civilisation. The "races" he was speaking of are not the ones that are present today but of the ancient past. The people that were "left behind" were Atlantean peoples, just before this quote he says: "We need not now consider in detail but we must at least understand how this

Atlantean civilisation passed over into our own” (Steiner 1908/77, pp. 76). The ongoing incarnations from race to race are meant here in the sense of first incarnating in the Atlantean race and then the Post-Atlantean races; this is little to do with reincarnating between the races present today. Steiner’s theory here is an ontological one with no value judgement involved, no “principle of harm” (chapter 2). Moreover, the ontological idea that an individual soul can transcend the bodily condition is not one that a racist could accept. If we recall from chapter 2, racism is determined by a form of biological determinism: it can accept no theory of soul distinct from and conditioning the body. But, as can be seen, Steiner argued for the primacy of the soul and spirit.

The next few quotes cited by the critics are drawn from five pages of chapter 8 of the book “*The Being of Man and his Future Evolution*”. I shall take these together as they form a unity in what Staudenmaier wants to suggest by them. There is no doubting the fact that there are some contentious questions here and that a careful investigation of Steiner’s ideas is required as well as an explanation and a contextualisation of them. These lectures will need to be related to others around that time (and later) in order to understand a more complete picture of Steiner’s theory of racial evolution. What is important at this point is to understand the **time context** about which Steiner was speaking:

Of paramount importance in their Atlantean descendants was that the germ of the ego, the consciousness of self, the foundations of which were already basically there from ancient Lemurian times on, went through a progressive development on the earth. If mankind had not to a large extent migrated to Atlantis, the active development of the ego would not have come about. For the Lemurian population would have gradually died out, having to succumb to passions, and the best souls of the North would not have descended to earth at all, for they would not have been able to find suitable bodies. The under-developed bodies of earlier times would not have provided them with the possibility of developing a strong consciousness of self within the bodily nature. Through the fact that the better sections of the Lemurian population migrated to Atlantis, the human body evolved its form to the extent that it could become the bearer of self-

consciousness in a harmonious way. And it was only in the course of time that the human body acquired this form in the regions corresponding to the present temperate zones. (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)

It is important to remember that the meaning of a quote can be determined by its immediate context, namely, the sentences just before and just after the ones given. Just prior to the quote Steiner says: “Now all the various stages of evolution leave so-called stragglers behind and there are also stragglers left from these ancient times. What we call the Lemurian population of the earth, that remarkable people of the North with strongly developed etheric bodies and less developed physical bodies, and that other equatorial population with strongly developed physical bodies and less developed etheric bodies, of these people nothing remains, they became *extinct*. For these bodies were of such a nature that we cannot even find remains; the substance was so soft that there can be no question of there being any remains” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)(my emphasis). Staudenmaier omits this which may lead the reader to think that Steiner was considering the “races” as they are now. But this would be far too simplistic a picture. Steiner was here concerned with ages long past, of a transition from ancient Lemuria to ancient Atlantis. The question here is about the role of self-consciousness in the transition between these periods. That is, Steiner was referring to an ancient time and this is not relevant to the concept of race within *our* lived time frame. This can be seen in what Steiner said in the lines that directly follow the ones above: “For in this period of evolution the human body was still evolving. In Atlantean times the human body was not yet confined to rigid forms, and the highly developed human beings, those of great spiritual significance, were physically small in those days, whereas a person who was not very significant spiritually had in Atlantean times a gigantically developed physical body” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8). It follows that, at this point, the “temperate zones” that Steiner mentions does not refer to those in which the current Europeans live, but that of the ancient Atlanteans (assuming for the sake of argument that they existed).

This de-contextualisation is also true of the following quote. By leaving out the time context, Staudenmaier implies that Steiner was talking about the present.

Thus it was the normal human beings that were the best material for the initiates to use for the evolution of the future, and they were also the ones that the great sun initiate, Manu, gathered around him as being most capable of evolving. Those peoples whose ego impulses developed too strongly, so that it permeated their whole being and made it a manifestation of ego hood, these people gradually wandered to the West and became the nation the last **survivors** of which appeared as the Red Indians of America. Those people whose ego-feeling was too little developed migrated to the East, and the survivors of these people **became** the **subsequent** Negro population of Africa. If you look at those things in a really spiritual scientific way you will see evidence of them right into the physical characteristics. If a man brings his whole inner being to expression in his physiognomy and on the surface of his body, then it permeates his external being with the colour of his inner nature as it were.

(Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)(My emphasis)

Adding the surrounding context we can see that in the same paragraph just before this Steiner says; “So we see that in Atlantean times the human body could still form itself according to spiritual characteristics. Therefore it could also take on the form which enabled it to mould all the organs, heart, brain, and so on, in such a way that they could become the expression of an actual ego being, a being with self-consciousness. These capacities and characteristics, however, developed on innumerable different levels. There were people whose inner nature was correctly balanced and who were normal, for they had not developed egoism to too great an extent, nor had they developed their ego-feeling solely on a lower level. With them, devotion to the outer world and ego-feeling maintained a balance. Such people were scattered about everywhere. And these were the men that the Atlantean initiates could do most with” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8). Here Steiner is talking about processes that he thought to have occurred on Atlantis, a time prior to the current epochs of civilisation. The talk of higher levels of development of ego-feeling was within the Atlantean epoch. This makes the quote that Staudenmaier refers to have a different meaning. The reference to American Indians and Black Africans then takes on a different significance: for Steiner they were the **descendants** of these ancient peoples. The attribution of the different levels of ego-consciousness was to the

antecedents, not the descendents. For Steiner, all human beings will have evolved since that time in the context of civilisations (chapter 3).

The following quote is still about the transition from ancient Atlantis to the current rounds of civilisation. That is, Steiner is speaking of the period which we might call pre-history. The omission of this knowledge may lead the reader to think that it is about the present. But what Steiner says is only marginally connected with the last ten thousand years of civilisation and to race as we understand it.

Those people, however, who had developed their ego being too little, and who were too exposed to the influences of the sun, were like plants: they deposited too many carbonic constituents beneath their skin and became black. This is why the Negroes are black. Thus both east of Atlantis in the black population and west of Atlantis in the red population we find survivors of the kind of people who had not developed their ego-feeling in a normal way. The human beings who had developed normally lent themselves best to progress. (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)

The line after this says: “Therefore they were the ones chosen to infiltrate the various other regions from the place we know of in Asia” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8). It is obvious from this that Steiner is primarily talking about the stage of evolution between Atlantis and the current age, a time when conditions were, putatively, very different from our own and not related to race as we understand it today. Again, these are also ontological claims with no “principle of harm” stated or implied.

The next quote, however, does appear to make references to the current time period and its connection to the past one.

Look at the colours to be found in Asia, from the Negroes to the yellow races. Hence you have bodies that are sheaths for every possible level of soul, from the completely passive Negro soul entirely given up the outer world of physical existence, to the other levels of passive souls in every possible part of Asia. Various characteristics of the evolution of the Asiatic and African peoples will now be comprehensible to you: they present

various combinations of surrender to the environment and the external manifestation of ego-feeling. So fundamentally we have two groups of people representing combinations: those on European soil, forming the root stock of the white population, who had predominantly developed the feeling of personality, but who did not migrate to where the feeling of personality permeated the whole body, but to where the ego-feeling became more inward. Therefore in western Asia and partly in North Africa and the countries of Europe, too, in earlier times you find a people with a strong inner ego-feeling, but who on the whole were not given to losing themselves in the outer world; their inner character was strong and firm, but it did not set its imprint on the bodily nature. On the other hand there are those peoples in Asia with passive, self-effacing natures in whom just this passivity expresses itself in the highest degree. This makes the people dreamy, and the etheric body penetrates very deeply into the physical body. That is the fundamental difference between the European and the Asiatic peoples. (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)

On its own, this quote may be interpreted by the reader as ascribing superiority to “Europeans” as they are today: use of the terms “strong inner ego feeling” and “passive self effacing nature” might give that impression. The next part of the text, however, says something quite different: “Manu, with his group of normal men, was wedged in between them. He had to bring the right form of culture to each different shade of the population, and he had to colour this wisdom and teaching to suit the external conditions of the people” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8). Firstly, the reference to Manu establishes the time period of Steiner’s view of history as being the transition between Atlantis and the current epoch (about nine or ten thousand years ago), so again he is not talking about races as they are now. Secondly, the “normal men” were not the Europeans of today but an undefined ancient group about which we know little. As shown, for Steiner, this group also ceased to be in the creating of the ancient Indian “race”. Moreover, the reasoning of this is about soul characteristics not bodily ones and that, for Steiner, the ancient Europeans were focussed on their inner life and ancient Asians we focussed on the outer life.

This becomes clear in the next paragraph in the book: “These were the basic conditions necessary for the **coming** civilisation that has developed roughly since the **beginning of our era** [which began with the ancient Indian civilisation]. The ego had to reach a certain point of development, as it were, but not overdo it in either direction. And it is our task today to understand this in the right way. For all spiritual science has in a certain respect to appeal to what we call the development of a higher ego from out of the lower” (Steiner 1908a, chapter 8)(My bold). The description is of an epoch of evolution prior to the current one and has little to do with the races of today.

Moreover, when Steiner does make a connection with the present, his argument is not for the absolute superiority of white Europeans but for a **balance** of the soul dispositions of the ancient Asiatic/Black peoples on the one hand and the ancient Europeans on the other. He says: “What we need is an ego that keeps itself mobile, neither losing itself in external physical observation or in external physical experience, nor remaining stationary at one point, but really advancing in spiritual development. That is why the great masters of wisdom and of harmony of the perceptions have not been telling us all the time in the theosophical movement that we should let the divine man within us speak; on the contrary they have given us quite specific impulses for finding the wisdom of the world in all its different aspects. And we are not pupils of the great masters by only wanting to let the God within us speak, or by imagining that each individual carries his own master within himself, but by wanting to get to know the structure of the world in all its aspects. Anthroposophical development is a striving to know all the subtle aspects of cosmic happenings. We attain our higher ego by evolving upwards from stage to stage. Our ego is there outside, manifest in the wonders of the world. For we are born out of the world and want to live our way back into it” (Steiner 1908a, lecture 8, paragraph 19). What this says is that Steiner thinks that the type of soul disposition we need today is a more dynamic one in which humanity can find the right balance between being occupied with one’s own inner life and being occupied with the outer world. Steiner recognises the need to find the inner aspect of the human being, but that to attain the higher ego we need also to look to the outer world. Were one to put this in terms of “race” one could say that he was recommending the dynamic mobile balance between the “ancient European” soul disposition of the “inner life” and the “ancient

Asiatic/Black” soul disposition of “surrender to the outer world”. Only then, for Steiner, could human beings evolve to attain their higher selves. This is not the view of a racist, but of someone who wants to promote unification of these qualities of the “races” in what he conceived to be a higher reality.

The subject of the next quote is the “Mongols” (or as Steiner also called them the “Huns”). Is there a sense in which Steiner was a racist towards them?

If we want really to understand health and illness, we must bear in mind how complicated the circumstances are. Illness need not be a matter of individual karma only; the karma of a whole people has to be taken into account. An interesting example of how things in the spiritual life are inter-related can be seen in the migration of the Huns and Mongols who poured from Asia into the West. The Mongols were stragglers of the Atlanteans. While the Indians, the Germans and other peoples were progressing, the Mongols had remained behind. Just as the animals have separated off from the evolutionary path of mankind, so have certain lower peoples and races fallen behind. The Mongols were Atlanteans whose physical development had taken a downward course. In the astral bodies of such decadent people an abundance of decaying astral substance can be seen. When the Mongols fell upon the Germans and other Central European peoples, they created a wave of fear and panic. These emotions belong to the astral body, and under such conditions decaying astral substances will flourish. Thus the astral bodies of Europeans became infected and in later generations the infection came out in the physical body, affecting not merely individuals but whole groups of peoples. It emerged as leprosy, that terrible disease which wrought such devastation in the Middle Ages. It was the physical consequence of an influence on the astral body.

(Steiner 1906/70, pp. 65/6)

This is from Steiner’s “*At the Gates of Spiritual Science*”. It would appear from this that Staudenmaier considers that expressions like “fallen behind” and “decadent people”, when applied to the Mongols / Huns, imply Steiner’s racism. The first question is that of the time context. In the following paragraph, which Staudenmaier

omits, Steiner refers to “Attila the Hun” as the leader of the attacks on the Europeans. So the dates are about 434 to 453 AD. So then, is it really possible to be racist towards peoples from over one thousand five hundred years ago; after all, Steiner is not talking about the current Mongols. Clearly, no “*principle of harm*” (chapter 2) was stated, nor, even if there had have been, could it have been applied. Moreover, even some scholars today consider the actions of the ancient Mongols to be questionable. Attila after all murdered his own brother, and led many attacks on European cities where, in some cases, whole populations were killed gruesomely and the cities destroyed (Roberts 2004). The nature of the Mongol invasions is historically well documented, so it is not entirely surprising that Steiner referred to them as “decadent”. The renowned French historian Braudel (1995, p. 164) also referred to the later Mongols as “violent, cruel, pillaging... savage nomads” and whose actions lead to “unsung catastrophes. Each time, millions of lives were lost” (p. 166), this is not a racist statement it is one of testable historical status. But remember, Steiner was speaking of those *ancient* Mongols, not the ones of his time. It is hard to see how this is racist in any real sense.

The following citation by Staudenmaier is suggestive of the notion that Steiner was a racist because of his views on human blood:

But all such questions are illuminated as soon as we recognize the nature of the spiritual essence which lies at the back of our blood. Who can deny that this question is closely linked to that of race, which at the present time is once more coming markedly to the front? Yet this question of race is one that we can never understand until we understand the mysteries of the blood and of the results accruing from the mingling of the blood of different races. And finally, there is yet one other question, the importance of which is becoming more and more acute as we endeavour to extricate ourselves from the hitherto aimless methods of dealing with it, and seek to approach it in its more comprehensive bearings. This problem is that of colonisation, which crops up wherever civilised races come into contact with the uncivilised: namely — To what extent are uncivilised peoples capable of becoming civilised? How can a Negro or an utterly barbaric savage become civilised? And in what way ought we to deal with them?

And here we have to consider not only the feelings due to a vague morality, but we are also confronted by great, serious, and vital problems of existence itself. Those who are not aware of the conditions governing a people — whether it be on the up- or down-grade of its evolution, and whether the one or the other is a matter conditioned by its blood — such people as these will, indeed, be unlikely to hit on the right mode of introducing civilisation to an alien race. These are all matters which arise as soon as the Blood Question is touched upon. (Steiner 1906b)

To begin with, as I will show below, Steiner was here referring to the historical stage when all of humanity was *tribal*: that is the distant past. More importantly, when the quote makes a connection with the present, what has to be born in mind with this is that Steiner was talking about the then global problem of colonisation and civilisation and of the “hitherto aimless methods of dealing with it”. When he expresses the questions that the critics object to, I would interpret this to be connected to the “aimless methods” he refers to and not his own opinion. Furthermore, he thought that we should “seek to approach it in its more comprehensive bearings”. His “comprehensive solution” is *not* to give a *prognosis* of what should be done, but rather to *describe* the positive results of *exogamy*, the interbreeding of races. Whilst one may acknowledge that the use of the terms “uncivilised peoples” in relation to race would today be regarded as unacceptable, the question is: is this an expression of racism? To answer this, we need to look at the broader context of the whole lecture. Later in the text, Steiner says: “In earlier times tribes held aloof from each other, and the individual members of families intermarried. You will find this to have been the case with all races and with all peoples; and it was an important moment for humanity when this principle was broken through, when foreign blood was introduced, and when marriage between relations was replaced by marriage with strangers, when endogamy gave place to *exogamy*. Endogamy preserves the blood of the generation; it permits of the same blood flowing in the separate members as flows for generations through the entire tribe or the entire nation. Exogamy inoculates man with new blood, and this *breaking-down of the tribal principle*, this mixing of blood, which sooner or later takes place among *all peoples*, signifies the birth of the external understanding, the birth of the intellect... But this mingling of blood which comes about through exogamy is also that which at the same time obliterates the

clairvoyance of earlier days, ***in order that humanity may evolve to a higher stage of development***" (Steiner 1906b, paragraph 72)(my emphasis). Now the question is: would a racist think that exogamy between races was a good thing for evolution? ***I think not.*** But one can see here that Steiner thought that the "mixing of blood" through interracial marriage was a positive thing that brought humanity forward to a higher stage. Clearly, not the view of a racist who would hardly accept interracial marriage as good let alone even think about its significance for human progress.

His views on the positive relationship between the races of the past are reinforced in his lecture cycle "*The Mission of the Folk Souls*". In a curious form of inverted logic, Staudenmaier (2008) cites this text as one that expresses Steiner's "racism" most clearly. The following quotes from here, however, show the exact opposite:

In the remote past man descended to the Earth... Then a ***progressive intermingling*** took place. Then the evolution of races is interrupted to make way for the evolution of nations... And the development of nations even enters the evolution of the individual human being.

(Steiner 1910/70, pp. 80/81)(My emphasis)

Miscegenation and the contact between different peoples have played a significant role in certain periods. Now not only the ***mixture of peoples*** and their interrelationships which lead to the ***introduction of foreign blood***, but also the psychic and spiritual development of the Folk Spirits have played a decisive role. (Steiner 1910/70, p. 171)(My emphasis)

Steiner's view is the complete opposite of Hitler's racist position expressed in the following: "It shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of Aryan blood with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people... The Germanic inhabitant of the American continent, who has remained racially pure and unmixed, rose to be master of the continent; he will remain the master as long as he does not fall a victim to defilement of the blood. The result of all racial crossing is therefore in brief always the following: Lowering of the level of the higher race; Physical and intellectual regression and hence the beginning of a slowly but surely progressing sickness. To bring about such a development is, then, nothing else but to sin against

the will of the eternal creator” (Hitler 1924, p. 208/9). For Steiner, in contrast, miscegenation (racial crossing) has been essential to the positive development of human consciousness for “all peoples” as it created the conditions for the evolution of a higher stage. Instead of lowering, Steiner spoke of a kind of enhancement; instead of regress he spoke of progress; instead of seeing this as a sin, for him it was a kind of virtue; rather than domination, Steiner spoke of harmonious cooperation (Steiner 1910/70, p. 185).

For Steiner, the relationship between the races was a positive one. He saw the “intermingling” as progressive and on three levels. On the bodily level, he conceived interbreeding as positively introducing new blood into the races and which aided their mutual evolution. On the levels of soul (psychic) and spirit, their development was decisive for the races of the Earth for the “blessings of all races and peoples” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 82). These are not the suggestions of a racist, nor are they even theoretically possible for racism as Michael Yudell describes in his *“A Short History of the Race Concept”*: “In Virginia, as head of the State’s Bureau of Vital Statistics, eugenicist and white supremacist Walter Plecker helped to shape the State’s segregation policies. For example, Plecker helped push Virginia’s anti-miscegenation Racial Integrity Act of 1924, and used that law to expose individuals he believed were passing as white in an attempt to stop what he feared to be the mongrelization of the races.”(Yudell 2013, p. 4). It was only in 1967 that the American Supreme Court declared the laws against interracial marriage as unconstitutional in terms of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. The anti-miscegenation laws are against the equal rights of all human beings to marry according to personal choice. Not only that but anti-miscegenation theory used to be commonplace amongst scholars as Benoist (2013, p. 15) states “In the 19th and early 20th centuries almost *all* anthropologists saw miscegenation as “an element of degeneracy with reference to anthropological distinctions between the races””.

Steiner obviously stands in complete opposition to racism: ***for him the evolution of humanity depended, at least in part, on being pro-miscegenation***. At least in relation to this, Steiner was ahead, not a part, of the scientific theorising of his time.

No doubt this was part of the reason that in terms of the human rights issue, he was convinced that “The content of such majority resolutions is democratic only if every single individual is on an ***equal basis with every other single individual***” (Steiner 1919/72, p. 62)(my emphasis). In light of this, it would only be reasonable to see him as advocating equality for all in terms of the most personal of relationships.

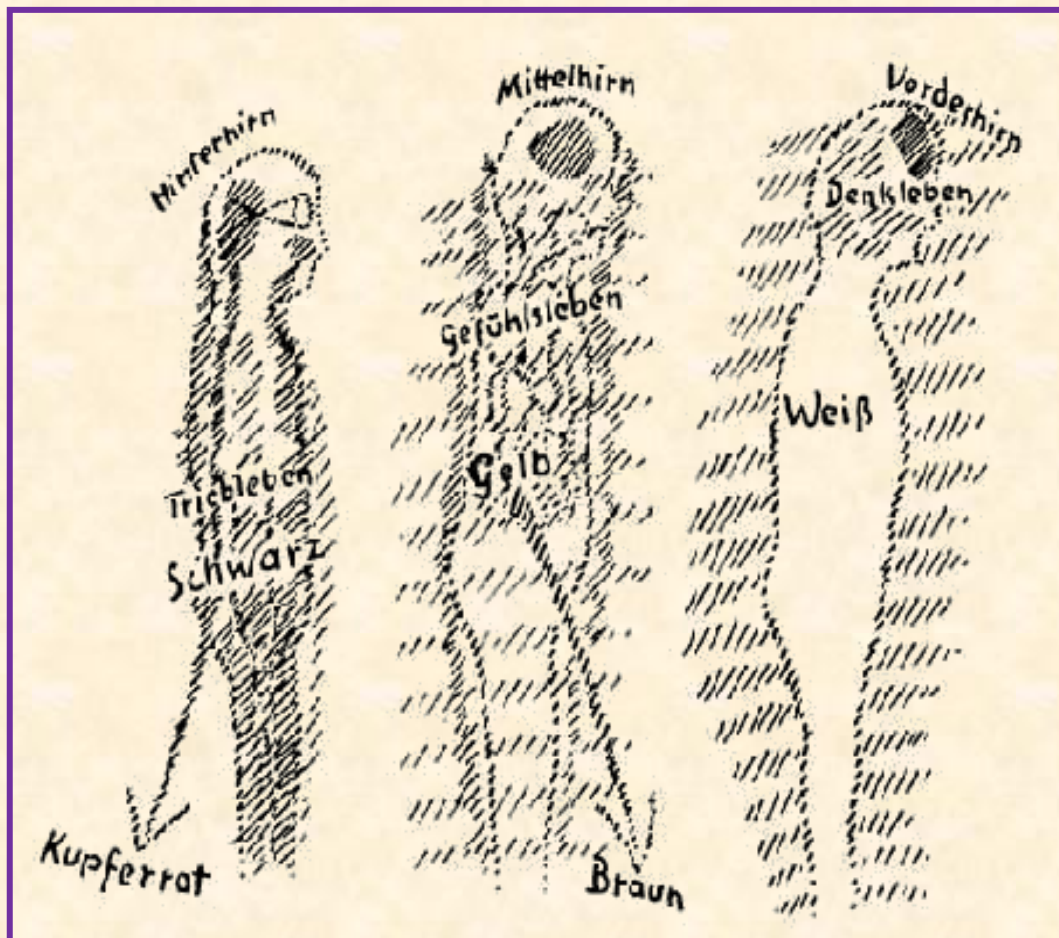
(5) THE MEANING OF “RACE” IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT

In this chapter, I will look at those quotes of Steiner which seem to refer to the “present”. By this I mean those parts of his thought which appear to be about the races of his day and with some connection with the present day. I will also make a link to Steiner’s views that are about the future in preparation of the next chapter. Of particular significance in this chapter is the distinction, made in chapter 2, between ontological statements and moral statements. This is shown here in that Steiner made certain ontological statements, i.e. statements about what exists, which are taken by his critics to imply racism. But as I tried to show in chapter 2, for a theory to be counted as racist, an ontological statement must be conjoined with a moral statement. It is only the two of these together which lead to the “principle of superiority” and the “principle of harm” rightly being applied to an author’s views. As I will show, this is not the case for Steiner. He certainly made some non-traditional ontological claims which, as argued in chapter 2, are scientific claims which may be true or false, but they are not racist.

Returning to Melanie Byng’s article of 2010, which draws heavily on Peter Staudenmaier, there is an aspect of this to do with the conception of “race” in relationship to the present. Within her claims is the hidden assumption that ontological claims necessarily imply some kind of “principle of harm”. There she claimed that: “Steiner’s views on race remain reprehensible”. I take her to mean that Steiner’s views, to her, are *morally* reprehensible in that there is some implied harm in Steiner’s claims. Philosophers sometimes refer to this as the fallacy of the “is / ought”, or as *Hume’s law: it is impossible to derive ought from is*. In this context, this means that, for her, because Steiner tried to describe how something *is*, that there are implications of how he considered how things *ought* to be. But this is a fallacy. As I will show, this is not the case. For Steiner, as for most philosophers, no “oughts” follow from what is; no loss of rights and freedoms follow from a description of what he thinks *is* the case.

In the picture below, Melanie Byng presents a picture that is supposed to represent Steiner’s alleged “racism”. This is an interesting one as it was used by Samantha Smith in the BBC program mentioned in chapter 1:

Fig 4.1



The picture is not present in the English translation of the lecture “*Colour and the Human Races*”, but it does correctly depict the content of what Steiner says and is present in the original German text “*Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde - Über das Wesen des Christentums*” (Steiner 1923, lecture 3, p. 56). In the middle of each of the figures, going from left to right, the German words “Schwarz” (Black), “Gelb” (Yellow) and “Weiss” (White”) can be read. What needs to be born in mind is that the text in **no way describes an evolutionary process going from left to right**. This is a false notion that was suggestively presented by Samantha Smith in the BBC program described in chapter 1. This notion is an **assumption** that Steiner viewed people as evolving from the “black race” (on the left) through the “yellow race” (middle) up to the “white race” (on the right). The implication is that the “white race” is more evolved than the others. **Nothing could be more wrong**. Firstly, Steiner is not

primarily talking about present races, but ancient ones. This can be seen in the following quote from the same text: “But in ancient times, it was the way I told you. The Negroes have generally moved to the west — they have taken boat trips to the west, and they went indeed to the Atlantic Ocean islands. Earlier, ***the Atlantic Ocean was once a continent***. So, if the blacks emigrate to the west, they cannot absorb as much light and heat as they could in their Africa. They come to areas having less light and heat. What is the consequence? Yes, their nature is set up to absorb as much light and heat as possible. Their nature is actually established, thereby making them black. But now, after emigrating, they do not get as much light and heat as they need to be black. Therefore, they become copper [i.e., copper-coloured], in other words [they become] American Indians” (Steiner 1923, paragraph 21)(my emphasis). The reference is clearly to do with a time around the Atlantean period, about ten thousand years ago. His description is about the change of skin colour from black to “copper” and nothing to do with the evolution of races. The other reference in the middle figure is to do with how “yellow” skinned people turned “brown” when they migrated in those ancient times.

Even when Steiner’s presentation is connected with the present races it is only concerned with the way physical processes affect people with different skin colours. He describes the way different skin colours absorb the light and heat of the Sun and what he thinks the consequent physiological effects are. Steiner states that, for “black people”, they absorb more heat and light which affects their “hindbrain”; for “yellow people”, they absorb less, which works into their “midbrain”; for white people, it is even less which works into their “forebrain”. This leads him on to say that “the Negro has a lively body and metabolism. He has, as people say, a strong instinctive life”; and that for the yellows: “This works namely in the respiratory system and blood circulation”; and for the whites: “has to work out through his brain“(Steiner 1923).

The question then is: is this an example of racism? If we recall from chapter 2, I argued that for a theory to be counted as “racist” a mere ontological claim by itself is not sufficient; that an explicit “principle of harm” is also required. If this can be agreed upon it has a number of consequences. Now, it is not doubted that the above quotes represent some very unusual ideas which some may find offensive. Someone like Byng might feel these statements to be an example of negative stereotyping

which means for her that “Steiner’s views on race remain reprehensible”. But they are clearly ontological assertions not moral ones, there is no stated “principle of harm”, nor are there any implied. These statements, for Steiner, do not express any depreciation of any race, for him they are about physical and physiological processes, what philosophers call ontological claims. But for Steiner, they are intended as statements of testable scientific ontology, not moral worthiness. As such, the claims of such physical and physiological effects are either true or false, but they are not racist. Furthermore, whilst some may regard these ideas as a form of stereotyping, as I discussed in chapter 2, this in itself and for itself cannot be counted as racist. If we recall, stereotyping is a form of classification, of typologising. This can be false, or true, or statistically accurate or inaccurate. For racism, however, there need to be two further claims: 1) an absolute superiority claim and 2) a moral judgement that leads to preferential action and loss of “rights and freedoms, etc”. These claims are not present in any of Steiner’s statements, therefore the racism assertion fails.

Also, as I argued in chapter 2, in a racist claim one would also expect to find expressions of superiority of one race over another, or perhaps, in addition, some one-sided negatives about the other races; i.e. an asymmetry in the claim. But consider what Steiner (1923, paragraph 14) really says: “At a higher level, man [i.e., the Asian] has the mid-brain, the emotional life that sits in the chest. And we Europeans, we poor Europeans, we have thought that sits in the head. Thus we do not have a feeling of our inner man. Because of the primacy of the head, we only feel when our being hurts us, when we are sick. Otherwise we do not feel our inner being. On the contrary, we take on the whole outside world, which means we can easily become materialists. The Negro is not a materialist”. As can be seen, if there are any negatives here they are about the so-called “white race” who are “poor Europeans” with “thought that sits in our heads” and “can easily become materialists”. All these facts put together argue that Steiner held no racist theories even if they are unusual.

Melanie Byng (2010) also presents the following (Fig 4.2) as an example of Steiner’s supposed racism and Aryan supremacism (Steiner 1907, p. 247). The diagram itself is highly suggestive of this, especially if just left as an image, leaving the reader to project into it whatever they might understand by such a thing. The original German

text does indeed express some startling notions concerning the American Indians. Such as: “But the Europeans have ascended to a higher cultural level while the Indians have remained behind and have thereby come into decadence“(Steiner 1907, p. 244); and “In the course of thousands of years our Planet changes and these changes condition the development of humanity. The side branches, that are no longer adapted, become decadent; we have a direct developmental stem and a descending side branch”(p. 244)(my translations).

Fig 4.2



The figure is from Steiner’s “*Menscheitsentwicklung und Christ-Erkenntnis*”(1907, p. 247). As can be seen in the diagram, at the top of the “evolutionary tree” is the German word “Arier” (Aryan) and just below is the term “Indianer” (American Indians). So what did he mean by this? There are at least two things to this. Firstly, what does he mean by “higher cultural level”? As was show previously, for Steiner the “task” of

the European civilisation was the “moulding of the external world” and that “The result is that humanity has become more material, indeed materialistic” (Steiner 1906/86, p. 102). For him, this is a necessary part of evolution, that humanity cultivates the materialistic world view and practice. But secondly, he thought that: “**We will be succeeded by another race which will retrace the path to the spirit...** There is great and powerful purpose in the course of evolution. Each group of peoples has its own task” (Steiner 1906/70, p. 102/3)(my emphasis). What this implies then is that the current “European” centred civilisation, because it is materialistic and will be succeeded by another, will also become a “decadent side branch” of evolution at some point. There is no preferential treatment in Steiner’s argument, or bias or asymmetry (see chapter 2) in his assessment of the different peoples of the Earth.

So what does this mean in terms of the American Indians? Just prior to the above diagram, there was a discussion about a “meeting” between the American Indians and the European immigrants. Steiner concluded that “The Indian stood in an inner relationship with Nature, such that in all its expressions he heard the voice of the higher creative spirit; meanwhile the European was **so stuck in materialistic culture** that he could no longer perceive the Voice of Nature” (Steiner 1907, p. 244)(my translations and emphasis). Now this is quite paradoxical. Steiner is saying that the American Indian could perceive the higher creative spirit and the European could not; but it was the civilisation of the latter that is at a higher stage of cultural development even though it is materialistic. From a certain perspective one might have thought that he would have claimed the opposite; him being convinced of spiritual reality after all. One has to bear in mind though that, for Steiner, the “materialistic world view” is a necessary stage in world evolution. This means an accompanying loss of spiritual perception. In this sense, he would have seen the American Indians (of his time) representing an older stage of consciousness in which spiritual perception was a natural given. However, as can be seen from the quote above “We will be succeeded by another race which will retrace the path to the spirit”, this means that the next civilisation, according to Steiner, will re-attain a form of consciousness of the spirit. The difference from the American Indians would have been, for Steiner, that they would have had this spiritual perception as a naturally given capacity, whereas with the future civilisation it would be something that humanity would need to attain through inner effort **after** an epoch of materialism.

As we shall see in more detail later, in his book *“The Apocalypse of St John”*, Steiner did not advocate any absolute superiority to the Western culture (sometime called the “fifth age” or “fifth cultural epoch”): “We are now living in the fifth age, when culture has descended even below the level of man. We are living in an age when man is the slave of outer conditions, of his milieu... If you were to make a statistical comparison between what is used for material culture and what benefits spiritual life, you would understand that the spirit has plunged below the human level and has become the slave of material life... For this reason mankind must be preserved by a new impulse from slipping completely into matter (Steiner 1908/77, p. 65/6). This new impulse Steiner envisaged as the spread of “brotherly love over the whole Earth” (Steiner 1908, p. 133). Clearly, for Steiner, Western culture had some severe negatives and should not be seen as representing a culminating point of human evolution; it is rather a necessary *passing point* to a further culture or civilisation that has the possibility for humanity to transcend being a “slave of material life” through brotherly love.

It seems to me that these ideas do not represent racism or supremacism. The fact is that there is no “principle of harm” expressed in his view; again it is a testable proposition. As such it is either true or false. Moreover, he is not saying that European materialistic civilisation is “better” in any absolute sense, only that it is “higher” in that he thinks that it is important for humanity to live in this materialistic state for a while. That is a state in which spiritual perception is lost. Thereafter, spiritual perception could be regained by some non-European civilisation. Clearly, this cannot be “white supremacism” as it would be a different “race” (civilisation) that would achieve it.

The following quote from *“Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner”* is an interesting one because, according to the critics, it is suggestive of the notion that Steiner was a “racist” regarding the French and also towards black people of his day:

The use of the French language quite certainly corrupts the soul. The soul acquires nothing more than the possibility of clichés. Those who enthusiastically speak French transfer that to other languages. The French

are also ruining what maintains their dead language, namely, their blood. The French are committing the terrible brutality of moving black people to Europe, but it works, in an even worse way, back on France. It has an enormous effect on the blood and the race and contributes considerably toward French decadence. (Steiner 1919-22, pp. 558-559)

The first problem with this is that the French are not a race they are a nation. Steiner knew this even though he did use the word here. He saw the French as an “intermixture of Celts, Franks and Latins” (Steiner 1910/70). Secondly, the fact that he referred to the “terrible brutality” of moving black people to Europe suggests a serious concern for their well-being: there is no “Principle of Harm” in Steiner’s thought rather an implied “Principle of Benefit” here. The rest of the quote would, on the surface, appear to be very contentious, but there is little in the text before or after it that puts it into a theoretical context. So the real meaning of it is highly speculative and could be taken to mean any number of things but without being able to know for sure. So, rather than making a pure speculation, as do the critics, it would be better to put this in the context of Steiner’s theory of Karma. For example, instead of saying that this proves Steiner’s supposed racism, it could imply that Steiner was concerned for the well being of *both* peoples. If one bears in mind the previous discussion about the positive influence of the “intermingling of races” (which was in Steiner’s 1906 publication), it is unlikely here (in 1919-22) that he is objecting to this. A more reasonable assumption is that this “terrible brutality” not only affects black people, it also has a backward effect on the inner life of the French and thereby on their Karma. It is known from his theory of Karma that Steiner was convinced that ill deeds, as well as good ones, have a Karmic affect on the inner life of the doer, for example on the ego and the soul, and that these have a direct impact on the body as well as the outer life. For Steiner, all actions, good or bad, can be imprinted on the Karma of all individuals and peoples.

This can be derived also from his ideas about the nature of blood: “In this word is expressed the fourth principle of human nature, the one that man alone possesses while on earth; and this I in its turn encloses and develops within itself the germs of higher stages of humanity... We can only take a passing glance at what in the future will be evolved through this fourth principle. We must point out that man consists of a

physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, and the ego, or actual inner self; and that within this inner self are the rudiments of three further stages of development which will originate in the blood... Blood is, therefore, an expression of the individualized etheric body, just as the brain and spinal cord are the expression of the individualized astral body. And it is this individualizing which brings about that which lives as the ego or I" (Steiner 1906b, paragraphs 40, 41, 57). What this shows is that, for Steiner, the "I" or human spirit has an effective cause on the blood. The nature of this "I" is to bring about individualisation in general and in the blood in specific via the "etheric body" (for Steiner the term etheric body refers to the living forces of something as distinct from the non-living physical forces). Now this is a very particular kind of ontological claim in which the theoretical structure accepts the existence and causation of spiritual and soul realities in addition to the physical kind. There is no value claim here, only an ontological one, which may turn out to be true or false (see chapter 2). Bearing in mind his overarching theories, I think that it would be reasonable to see him here as expressing concerns which would be to the benefit of the black people of his time; but also for the "karmic consequences" for the French people. If an individual, or a whole community, act wrongly (such as in the slave trade) this, for Steiner, would not only have a terrible detrimental effect on the black people, it also would have a negative karmic effect on the inner life on the perpetrator (e.g. the French) and thereby, ***through the agency of the "I" (spirit)***, on their blood. If my reasoning is consistent with Steiner's theories, then what he was showing here is not a racist view, but one which but showed concern for the benefit and evolution of all "races".

Another of the assertions that the critics make that refers to the present is based on the following which, they believe, gives evidence of Steiner's "white supremacism":

In time, however, blondness will disappear because the human race is becoming weaker. In the end, only brown- and black-haired people will be able to survive if nothing is done to keep them from being bound to matter. The stronger the body's forces, the weaker the soul's. When fair people become extinct, the human race will face the danger of becoming dense if a spiritual science like Anthroposophy is not accepted. Anthroposophy does not have to take the body into consideration but can bring forth

intelligence from spiritual investigation itself. You see, when we really study science and history, we must conclude that if people become increasingly strong, they will also become increasingly stupid. If the blonds and blue-eyed people die out, the human race will become increasingly dense ***if men do not arrive at a form of intelligence that is independent of blondness***. Blond hair actually bestows intelligence. In the case of fair people, less nourishment is driven into the eyes and hair; it remains instead in the brain and endows it with intelligence. Brown- and dark-haired people drive the substances into their eyes and hair that the fair people retain in their brains. They then become materialistic and observe only what can immediately be seen. Spiritual science must compensate for this; we must have a spiritual science to the same degree that humanity loses its intelligence along with its fair people.

(Steiner 1981, pp. 85-6)(My bold)

The problem with this quote is that it does not clearly distinguish races at all; it is about blond hair and blue eyes bestowing natural intelligence. Whilst it might appear self-evident to some that such characteristics would differentiate some races from others, it raises the question about the boundaries between a race determinant and a non-race determinant. After all, many “white” people do not have blond hair and blue eyes, in fact probably most don’t (at least not naturally); so such descriptions do not clearly differentiate between races, only between people that do and those that don’t have these features. If blond hair and blue eyes ***defines*** a race, or is a substantial part of a race definition, say “Aryan”, then most Europeans are not Aryan as they do not always have these features. The only people for whom this is genuinely relevant would be those who don’t have blond hair and blue eyes, or if they only have brown hair and blue eyes, neither of these attributes define race so such quotes have no relevance to the racism question.

More importantly, at this point, it needs to be remembered what a genuine racist theory, or a racist, can have and what it can’t have. A racist theory makes the proposition that races are bound to a specific biological phenotype (see chapter 2); this is how a race can be identified through a supposedly “scientific” process which collects people together into a number of types. Racism also is a form of biological

determinism (chapter 2) where an individual is *necessarily* bound to their type: there is no way out of the causal nexus between human biology and the human psyche (mind). In the case of the above, however, this is not the case. It is true that Steiner seems to think that blond hair and blue eyes give a kind of “nature given” form of intelligence; however, this is not the end of the story, *as it might be for a racist* (in relation to biological determinism), rather he is claiming that another form of intelligence *independent* of biology can be developed by every individual and which can *transcend their phenotype*. For Steiner, something like Anthroposophy can help us go beyond our biological state. For a racist, this would be impossible, for them you are what you are and there is no escaping it: *racism presupposes biological predestination*. In Steiner’s view, you might be *conditioned* by your type, but you are not *determined* by it; you are an individual “I”, who can transcend your typology, as I showed in (2.7). A racist on the other hand could not consider the possibility that the individual “I” is paramount, or even has agency, as they would not then have a rationale for preferential treatment towards given types or for a “principle of harm” towards those not of their type. The above quote has nothing to do with the supposed superiority of the “blond” European phenotype and everything to do with the cultivation of an *independent* intelligence of the “I” distinct from and primary to the biological phenotype. For Steiner this “I” is something that we all have irrespective of race and indeed is able to transcend race. This is not an idea a racist could believe in even in principle.

Some of the quotes that the critics refer to span across the three time periods under consideration. These are frequently about the past, but are suggested to be about the present and future through the way the critics present them. The following is another interesting example of how Staudenmaier ignores the contexts in which Steiner was writing as well as some of his most important propositions. Firstly, he ignores the context of what the whole lecture series was about and he omits the context of Steiner’s time. In doing this, an example of Steiner’s “Principle of Benefit” is left out of the equation for a real understanding of his notion of race. This shows itself in Steiner’s advocacy of the global spread of “mutual aid” (or mutual help) to all the peoples of the Earth. As shown in chapter 2, it is this “Principle of Benefit” which makes Steiner’s views clearly not racist.

Staudenmaier claims that Steiner's: "account posited a specific conception of brotherhood, one that is at odds with the notion of equality, and conjoined this with a clear postulate of racial inequality... While claiming for his doctrine the mantle of tolerance and enlightened thinking and rejecting the most obvious motifs of outright racial prejudice, Steiner simultaneously incorporated a series of normative suppositions about human development into the heart of the belief system he propagated" (Staudenmaier 2008, pp. 8-9).

One of the things which Staudenmaier ignores is that the starting point for Steiner's lecture series was a counterpoint between the "principle of brotherhood" and the "struggle for existence". It was these two opposing ideas that formed the thread throughout the whole lecture series "*Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*" (1906a) which began in Berlin in the Autumn of 1905. Prior to the lectures that Staudenmaier refers to, Steiner started the series with a discussion of "*Haeckel, the World Riddle and Theosophy*" and the impact of his ideas on culture. In lecture 2 of the series: "*Our World Situation, War, Peace and the Science of the Spirit*" Steiner expressed concerns about the way the Darwinian notion of the "struggle for existence" had permeated the global economic system and culture and was perceived as a "cultural lever" by many of his contemporaries through which to advance humanity (Steiner 1906a, p. 42). For them, this "struggle for existence" was a process through which human culture could evolve. Steiner's intent was to oppose this with the idea of "mutual aid" derived from Prince Kropotkin's book of the same name (Steiner 1906a, p. 44). Steiner's view was: "The **principle of mutual aid** in nature is: those come the furthest who express this principle the most" (Steiner 1906, p. 45)(my emphasis). In relationship to nature, Steiner interpreted this to mean that those species that exercise "mutual help" the most are the ones that evolve the most. He did not disagree that the "struggle for existence" played a role in evolution, but only between species, not within species. Moreover, he argued that "mutual aid" is the most important for evolution overall. Extending this idea from nature to human beings he then states: "Whatever the powers of Nature in this way brings forth, it is certain for humans that they have to bring it about **consciously** in their **individual** nature... That is the way of progressive culture, that humans continually become more individual, independent and conscious, self-conscious" (Steiner 1906a, p. 48/9)(My emphasis). For him, then "mutual aid" is a principle that should be acquired

consciously by every individual human being, it is not a mere given as is the case with nature.

For Steiner, however, in addition to the process of the individualisation of “mutual aid”, there is a part of the human soul which is common to all irrespective of race, a **universally human** element (see chapter 2): “To truthfully and really develop this unified soul in the whole of the human species; that is the task of the spiritual scientific world view. This is our first principle: to found a **brotherly** bond over the whole earth **without consideration of race, gender, colour, etc...** This purification must enter into our passions... that the **same** soul lives in our brother. In the physical we are different, in the Soul we are a unity as the “I” of the human species (Steiner 1906a, p. 52)(my emphasis). He then joined this up with the idea of “mutual aid” (Steiner, 1906a, p. 53). For Steiner, then, the aim was to cultivate “mutual aid” between, *inter alia*, all the races of the Earth, for him this, together with the unitary soul idea, form the basis for the principle of global brotherhood even though there may be physical differences. For him this feeling of “brotherly bond” should “enter into our passions”.

He went on to connect this to the search for peace and in opposition to war, or conflict: “We do not fight; we also do not fight the war or anything else, because fighting generally does not lead to higher development... A real Peace Society is one that strives for spiritual knowledge; and a Peace Movement is the spiritual scientific stream” (Steiner 1906a, p. 53). So in terms of the race question, Steiner’s intent was to **promote peaceful “mutual aid” between all the peoples of the Earth.**

Moreover, for Steiner, this was to be grounded in a positive emotion, namely love: “We do not fight, we do something different: we cultivate love, and we know that, with this cultivation of love, strife must disappear. We do not place strife against strife. We place love, in that we carefully nurse it, against strife... We work for the pouring out of love and found a society that is built on love. That is our ideal... It is not through strife that one overcomes strife, not through hate that one overcomes hate, but that, in truth, strife and hate are overcome only through love” (Steiner 1906a, p. 55). These ideas form the background for Steiner’s later lectures in the Berlin series and his understanding of “race”. Key ideas for this background are “mutual aid”, the “unified human soul” and “love”.

The quotes below, which Staudenmaier uses to suggest that Steiner was committed to racial inequality are from chapter 6 of Steiner's lecture series. For example: "how different the natural abilities, how different the talents of the individual races are" (Steiner 1906a, p. 133). What is interesting about this quote is the way in which Steiner's real position is distorted through omission. In the sentences just before this, Steiner says: "We carry within us the consciousness that in **all humans** lays a unified nature and essence. How does this **unified nature and essence** relate to the **multiplicity of forms and physiologies** that we meet in the **races**?" (Steiner 1906a, p. 133) (My emphasis). The question Steiner puts here is meant to address the **unity** and **multiplicity** of human beings. By omitting the former of these, Staudenmaier begins to suggest a racial bias. But as can be seen, the differences that Steiner is referring to are physiological; for him, however, all humans also have a unity of nature and essence. As was shown in relation to chapter 2 of this lecture series, for Steiner this unity lays in that element of soul which belongs to human beings as a whole. It is the recognition of this "unity of soul" that is at the foundation of his conception of global brotherhood. Whilst recognising the differences between races, this "unity of soul", together with "mutual aid" and "love", is a ground for a principle of equality of all peoples irrespective of differences.

Another example of significant omission is the following which Staudenmaier gives as evidence of Steiner's supposed racial prejudice: "People often feel that it is an injustice of nature that some are doomed to an existence in a race that stands far below, while others are raised up to an apparently perfect race.... Each of us passes through the different racial stages, and the passage signifies a progressive development for the individual soul" (Steiner 1906a, p. 133).

On reading this, the impression is given that Steiner was talking about races as they are today. But the sentence directly after this one says that "Those that appear today as members of the European race lived through other human races in earlier times and will live through others in a later time than ours" (Steiner 1906a, p. 133). As becomes clear in the later part of the text, this means that the "races" that Steiner is referring to are, to begin with, the "Atlantean" and "Lemurian" (pp. 137/8). These are then followed by the ancient Indian, Persian, Egyptian and Greek / Roman **civilisations** (pp. 150/1). As has been shown in previous chapters, these "post-atlantean" epochs Steiner really viewed as civilisations and not races. The process of

reincarnation that Steiner refers to is not from “race to race” as they are within recent history, but between the **ancient** races as outlined in chapter 3. It is hard to see, at this point, how the racial prejudice assertion could be valid as the races referred to here are from the ancient past.

Furthermore, the advancement that he is speaking of is about a proposed historical succession of civilisations in which he perceived higher progress achieved. This has nothing to do with the races as they exist in the present time. This is particularly the case for the next quote that Staudenmaier gives: “Progress in human capabilities can only occur if certain so-called higher grades of human existence are attained at the expense of the regression of earlier stages of development.” (p. 138). What Steiner was referring to here was Atlantis. Just before this Steiner says that “The Atlantean species... did not have the capacity to combine, to calculate, to think; what the human beings at that time was memory and speech“(p. 138). Firstly, Steiner referred to the Atlanteans here as a species not a race. Secondly, this proposition constitutes no form of racial prejudice as it merely described what Steiner considered to have changed in the way of historical progress from memory and speech to thought and calculation. This has no connection with races as they are today. This is true of the following also given by Staudenmaier: “only the progressing race is able to develop itself upward in the appropriate way” (p. 143). The race that Steiner was speaking of was the Atlantean. Prior to this he argues that had the conditions of the Earth not changed from Atlantis, when it began to rain and have sunshine, we would not have been able to develop to the level that we are at today (Steiner 1905, p. 143). The progress that Steiner was referring to was from the Atlantean civilisation to **all** the Post-Atlantean civilisations that followed. Likewise when Steiner says: “Our ancestors were structured differently from us today, and those they left behind encountered conditions that they could not tolerate. They therefore had to develop themselves downward, they fell into decadence, they degenerated.” (p. 143), he was talking about the Atlantean civilisation which, he considers, to have long since disappeared. Staudenmaier’s insinuation that this is an example of racial prejudice is completely wrong.

In a further assertion, Staudenmaier (2008, p. 8) claims that: “Steiner went on to elaborate the profound differences among “the Negro race,” “the Mongol race,” and

“the Caucasian race,” the last of which Steiner identified as “the truly civilized race”. He reviewed various scientific accounts of racial difference current at the time, concluding that none of them can offer an adequate understanding of the meaning of race”. Whilst it is true that Steiner described some differences between the races of “today”, the true picture is not as Staudenmaier would have us believe. In the same sentence Steiner goes on to say in reference to the Caucasian race “which had the task to, through the development of thinking, develop tools for the transformation of nature.., which is applied to the mechanical” (Steiner 1906a, p. 144). What is clear from this is that the so-called “Caucasian” race Steiner saw as having the task to transform the material world. This is what, for him, **defines** the “civilised race“ in this context. This is merely Steiner’s attempt to describe how the industrial revolution began in Europe as a result of a certain type of consciousness (see chapter 3). This is not an assertion of racial prejudice, but a mere explanation of a proposed historical fact of where the industrial revolution had its origin and its inner causes.

Staudenmaier also implies that Steiner’s view was that people reincarnate between the races as they are today with the implication that the white European race is the most advanced: “Each person proceeds through race after race. Those that are young souls incarnate in the races that have remained behind on earlier racial levels.” (Steiner 1906a, p. 154). Again, the problem with this is one of omission. This quote is preceded by the following at the beginning of the paragraph: “Step by step, the human being goes through a process of overcoming his or her own nature. The Lemurian humanity meant the overcoming of the astral body [soul], the Atlantean humanity meant the overcoming of the life-body, and our current humanity means the overcoming of the physical body. From this follows the overcoming of the forces of the spiritual soul, which is the task of our time“(Steiner 1906a, p. 153). Obviously, the process or reincarnation referred to here is from the extinct ancient “races” to those of today. No mention is made of anything else at this point in the text.

But just suppose that, for the sake of argument, Steiner meant what Staudenmaier is implying. What would it mean if the suggestion is that “young souls” incarnate in races that have remained at an earlier stage? Does this imply any kind of racism? If we recall from chapter 2, for a statement to be counted as racist there has to be a “principle of harm” present. This is not just in terms of physical harm, but can be a

denial of rights, or involve prejudice and preferential treatment. Does the idea of “young souls” imply this? First of all, what Steiner proposes is a contestable ontological question. It is either true or false that such things as “young souls” and “earlier racial stages” exist. What Steiner is saying may well turn out to be false. There is, however, no “principle of harm” to be seen in such statements even if they may well be disagreeable to some. There is nothing in what Steiner says that suggests preferential treatment towards “older souls”, quite the contrary as I will show below.

Staudenmaier (2008, p. 9) uses the following quote, also from “*Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*” (1906a), to try to make the point that “While claiming for his doctrine the mantle of tolerance and enlightened thinking and rejecting the most obvious motifs of outright racial prejudice, Steiner simultaneously incorporated a series of normative suppositions about human development into the heart of the belief system he propagated”. Staudenmaier then says that Steiner claimed that “Our own souls once lived within the Atlantean race, and they then developed themselves upward to a higher race. That gives us an image of the evolution of humankind up until our time. In this way we can comprehend how to justify the principle, the core principle of universal brotherhood without regard to race, colour, status, and so forth. . . . Our souls march from one level to the next, which is to say from one race to the next, and we come to know the meaning of humanity when we examine these races” (Steiner 1906a, p. 153). But in the sentence just before this Steiner said: “We must be clear about this: soul and racial development are different” (p. 153). ***This is the whole arc of Steiner’s lectures and to which Staudenmaier is oblivious.*** As mentioned above, right at the beginning of this lecture Steiner made the distinction between the two aspects of all human beings the: “***unified nature and essence*** relate to the ***multiplicity of forms and physiologies*** that we meet in the ***races?***”(Steiner 1906a, p. 133)(my emphasis). For Steiner, the human soul and spirit can transcend the physiologies of race. What this means is that it is also important to recognise the significance of the sentence that Staudenmaier left out. If we remember from chapter 2 of this book, racism is defined in terms of its biological determinism (see 2.7). For this view, this means that an individual is exclusively determined by the body, there can be no “soul” or “spirit” which can transcend it. This is why the difference between race and soul development is important in understanding Steiner. For him, the notion

that a soul can incarnate in different bodies and can in fact transcend them means he cannot be a racist, nor have any element of racism in his theories. This is why, for him, this is a core factor in establishing brotherhood between all races and nations: racism sees human beings as no more than bodies and a biologically determined mentality. For Steiner, brotherhood is founded on the notion of seeing past bodily differences to a soul and spirit that are capable of evolving. Consequently, for Steiner, no assertions of racial prejudice can be justified because of this.

In summary, there are three basic problems with Staudenmaier's interpretation. Firstly, what Steiner means by "race" here is not the same as what current sociology means by it. In most cases, Steiner was referring to past ancient races which no longer exist. A great deal of Steiner's discussion in this text is about the Atlantean (p. 137) and Lemurian (p. 139) "races" and their "sub-races". As shown in chapter 3, these are not to be identified with any race that exists today so the suggestion of racism, implied in the racial inequality assertion, fails. How could the question of racial inequality even be relevant if the "races" referred to no longer exist and were totally different from how humanity is conceptually defined today? In the majority of cases, when Steiner refers to races being "left behind" he is discussing these extinct "races", not the ones of today. This is also the case when he goes on to talk about the "post-atlantean" epochs. These are ages (races) of the distant past, not the present. The civilisations from ancient India to the present are nothing to do with the race question of today. This is not racist.

Secondly, Staudenmaier's assertion of "racial inequality" seems to be confused: inequality is only relevant if one is talking about rights. This is evident from the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights": "*Considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, colour or national origin*". Implicit in this statement is the obvious fact that some differences between the peoples of the Earth exist; otherwise there would be no point to such a statement. The problems arise when some differences are claimed to be superior in an **absolute** sense and then used as a means to deny rights and freedoms. In many cases, Steiner only **described** ontological differences and even when he did assign

“superiority” this was in relation to extinct ancient “races”. Even then, this was only **relative** to one aspect. As I showed in chapter 2, this “relativity” is not sufficient to identify racism. Moreover, there is no statement in Steiner where he denies rights and freedoms to anyone; on the contrary, as I will show in chapter 7, he asserted these for all human beings.

The third problem is that there is no **negative** normative element in Steiner’s thought, no “principle of harm”; but there is a **positive** normative element, a “principle of benefit” (chapter 2). Steiner makes no suggestions as to what the precise relationship between the races at this point should be; nor is there, more importantly, a “principle of harm” expressed in that chapter. As a matter of fact, the opposite is proposed. In lecture 2 of this series “*Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*” (1906a), Steiner advocates a “principle of benefit” in the form of the “principle of mutual help” derived from Kropotkin. When he says in chapter 6 of this series that “So we understand the fundamental principle the core of a general brotherhood to be grounded irrespective of race, colour and status and so on” this is in direct reference to his lecture 2 of this series when Steiner said “In this way we can comprehend how to justify the principle, the core principle of universal brotherhood without regard to race, colour, status, and so forth. I wanted to specially develop this thought. I wanted today only show how in the various forms is, however, the same being” (Steiner 1906, p. 153). **This is a fact that Staudenmaier does not consider.** Steiner’s normative advocacy was a positive one of universal brotherhood, peace and love: “We do not fight, we do something different: we cultivate love, and we know that, with this cultivation of love, strife must disappear. We do not place strife against strife. We place love, in that we carefully nurse it, against strife... We work for the pouring out of love and found a society that is built on love. That is our ideal... It is not through strife that one overcomes strife, not through hate that one overcomes hate, but that, in truth, strife and hate are overcome only through love” (Steiner 1906a, p. 55). This puts Steiner at the other end of the moral spectrum from any kind of racism or other forms of “groupism”.

(6) THE MEANING OF “RACE” IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FUTURE

The three time contexts for the meaning of the word “race” are not entirely separate, so this chapter will look at the connections between them whilst primarily aiming to provide an understanding for the **context of the future**. As was stated earlier, Steiner thought that races in the future will cease to be: “when our fifth post-atlantean epoch is superseded by the sixth and seventh, race as such will cease to exist” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 74). So what did he mean by this and how did he understand the concept of “race” over evolutionary time; and does this meaning refute the proposition that he held racist views? This is meant in the sense that the definition of racism is grounded in how races are identified in the current time era (presentism, see chapter 2) and not in some far future.

As I argued in chapter 3, Steiner used the word “race” to mean at least four different things. In the “context of the future”, he called a spiritual / moral community a “race”. This should not be confused with the biological meaning of the term as defined by contemporary sociology (see chapter 2). For Steiner, the meaning of “race” in the future is defined by concepts like individual freedom, universal love and progress; these stand in complete opposition to the biological determinism of racism.

The first question to be asked is: how did Steiner conceptualise the nature of “race” in the **near** future rather than the distant future? Just to re-state, it must not be assumed that Steiner’s “racial” theory implies any kind racism by itself: a theory of racial evolution is not a racist theory, after all a racial theory could, in principle, be a positive one. This follows from the fact that, as I argued in chapter 2, for a theory to be classified as racist it must contain a **negative** consequence, a “principle of harm”. A theory that includes a view of **all** races having a **positive** contribution to make to human evolution is still a racial theory, but not a racist theory. **Such a positive view is a refutation of the racist assertion**. As a matter of fact, Steiner did make a positive claim and that an understanding of race was significant:

It is particularly important because the destiny of mankind in the near future will bring men together in far greater measure than has hitherto been the case in order to fulfil the mission common to all mankind. But

members of the individual peoples will only be able to offer their proper, free and positive contributions if they have, above all, an understanding of their ethnic origin, an understanding of what we might call “the self-knowledge of the folk”... This maxim will have a certain significance for the activity of mankind in the future. (Steiner 1910/70, p. 23)

Steiner’s general view is that **all** “races” have a positive significance for the future of human evolution. There is no negative and no asymmetry in Steiner’s proposition as would be the case for a racist view (chapter 2).

The next question is how are Steiner’s views of “race” in the ancient past connected with those of the present and future? For the critics, one of the most contentious of the Steiner texts is the book “*The Mission of the Folk Souls*” (Steiner 1910/70). In this, Steiner describes the role of different “races” over evolutionary time showing some connections between past, present and future. Looked at simplistically, it is quite easy to see how the critics could interpret some of the statements as racist. A particular example of this is given by the American critic and ex-Steiner school pupil, Roger Rawlings, he claims that: “Steiner taught that the most backward people are black Africans, who are essentially just children” (Rawlings 2013). He then gives the following quote from Steiner:

[A] centre of cosmic influence [is] situated in the interior of Africa. At this centre are active all those terrestrial forces emanating from the soil which can influence man especially during his early childhood ... The black or Negro race is substantially determined by these childhood characteristics.

(Steiner 1910/70, p. 75)

To this Rawlings claimed that: “According to his followers, Steiner did not hate the members of inferior races. He simply, objectively, “scientifically” saw that they are inferior. There is hope for them, of course. A person who is currently a member of an inferior race may incarnate in higher racial forms in future lives, through the process of reincarnation. Starting in the lowliest, most childlike race (black African), an individual can develop and improve spiritually, which will allow him/her to move upward through the racial/spiritual hierarchy of races... The essence of racism is the

proposition that **some races are higher than others**, and we see precisely this proposition is Steiner's racial teachings. Whether or not Steiner hated anyone, he taught that races can be ranked, high to low. Thus, his teachings embody — in clear, unapologetic form — the central error of racism. They are racist”. (Rawlings 2013)(My bold)

So the question is what did Steiner mean by these quotes and does he really think that some races of the **present** are higher than others? The first thing to mention about this is the time context. Steiner was not primarily referring to the races as they are today, but how they developed before, during and just after Atlantis (assuming for the sake of argument that it existed, this was more than ten thousand years ago). Rawlings leaves out the proper time context which leads the reader to think that Steiner was speaking of the present races. Just shortly before the above quote, Steiner says: “In the latter part of the Lemurian epoch and in the early Atlantean epoch... man was directly dependent upon his physical environment. In later times race was no longer associated with locality but was bound up with heredity... In race therefore we see something that was originally within a particular geographic region, was later passed on via inheritance, but became increasingly independent of a particular locality... One cannot speak of race in the true sense of the term before the Lemurian epoch... Before that time he lived in the spiritual environment of the Earth. He then incarnated and racial characteristics were hereditary from the beginning of the Atlantean epoch up to our time.” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 73). He then goes on to describe, in his view, how the **transition** from Atlantis to the current epoch occurred. A part of this picture involves Steiner describing the effects of particular geographic locations of the Earth on the human physical body. Steiner goes on to say that “In this connection I should like to refer to certain regions of the Earth that are connected with the historical development of the human being (Steiner 1910/70, p. 74/5). He refers to these geographic locations as “centres of cosmic influence” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 75). So part of the context for this is the evolution of the human being and in the geographic regions of the ancient time periods, about ten thousand years ago at the end of the ice age (see chapter 3).

The first centre that Steiner speaks of is in Africa. Rawlings leaves out some significant parts of the text and this affects the way in which Steiner means his

statements. Remember Rawlings claimed that: “Steiner taught that the most backward people are black Africans, who are essentially **just** children” (my bold). But between the quotes given above Steiner also said “Later on [in ancient times] their influences diminish; man is less subject to these forces” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 75). So Steiner was not talking about “Black Africans” as they are now, but of some race from very ancient epochs. The only connection, for Steiner, between that ancient race and those of today is that of inherited **biological** characteristics, not **mental** characteristics. But if we also recall from chapter 2, it became clear that a proposed ontological claim about races by itself cannot be deemed racist. For a proposition to be racist it would need an **ontological statement about race expressing superiority combined with a “principle of harm”**. So in this example, what Steiner is doing is making an ontological claim that the forces of ancient Africa, during the Lemurian and Atlantean epoch, affected people who lived there making an imprint on their physical bodies in their childhood, this has a lasting effect but diminishes later on. Steiner does not say that the **ancient** “Negro races” are **just** children; he says that the forces of the Earth affected their physical bodies in their childhood and that this **reduces in later ages**. Just to emphasise, he was claiming that it is the **forces of the Earth** that **affected ancient** peoples with certain characteristics in the different geographical locations. He was **not** saying that “childhood forces” are the **essence** of black people, but that they were, in the ancient past, influenced by the “Earth forces” of Africa. As I will show below, there was an effect, according to Steiner, of the “Earth forces” on **all** peoples in all geographical reasons; it is not distinctive to Africa. Furthermore, there was no value statement, no “principle of harm” present in what Steiner claimed.

The second point to this is: does this imply any kind of superiority principle in Steiner’s views? If Steiner says that “The black or Negro race is substantially determined by these childhood characteristics” does this mean that he considers them inferior? Does this concept of “childhood” imply any kind of inferiority? To answer this we need to consider the statements he made about other races and put them into an evolutionary time context.

Steiner goes on to describe how the forces of the ancient Earth affected other races in the geographical locations of Asia, Europe and America. In Asia, it is the forces of

youth (p. 75); in Europe, it is the forces of maturity (p. 76); in America, the forces of old age (p. 76). Remember, he was speaking of the effects of the **external** Earthly forces on the human physical body, not about **inherent** biological forces of the time: “These forces – I beg you not to misunderstand what I am about to say, it only refers to man in so far as he is dependent on the forces which determine his **physical** organism, the terrestrial forces of his environment, forces unrelated to his **fundamental** being” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 76). For Steiner, this conditioning of the physical body is not his “fundamental being”. Now, if we recall from chapter 2, a racist holds to a form of biological determinism. This is a view of the human being in which we are our biology and nothing else. But for Steiner, we have a soul and a spirit too. It is these latter that are our “fundamental being” not our physical body. Steiner was no biological determinist; he thought that humanity had aspects that transcended biology. This is not the view of a racist, but of someone who accepts that all human beings are more than their physical / biological condition past, present or future.

The question then is: do these descriptions by Steiner imply superiority because of these “childhood – youthful – mature – old age” concepts? Is there something deprecating implied in referring to the “old age” “American” stage and the “youthful” “Asian” stage or the “childhood” African stage? Remember, Steiner was talking about ancient time periods not the current one, and putting this into an historical context in which Atlantis evolved into the current epoch Steiner says “The death of races begins with their westward migration. In order to **seek** the **rejuvenating forces**, races migrate **eastward**, from Atlantis across Europe to Asia. Then the westward migration is repeated, but on this occasion we witness, not the movement of races but, as it were, as higher stage of racial development of **civilisations**” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 76/7)(My bold). First of all, Steiner was no longer really referring to races but **civilisations** when it comes to the historical period in which we now live. Furthermore, he describes a **seeking** of the “youthful forces” in Asia, in the East, as a **positive** thing and in no way inferior to the mature or old age stages. He goes on to say that “If you bear in mind that, in reality, all civilisation is in a state of flux, you will then realise that the further we move westward, the less productive civilisation becomes... it is no longer vitalised by the forces of youth... Therefore it is only natural that those who migrate to areas lying more to the West must seek rejuvenating power, spiritual substance from the East” (Steiner 1910/70, p. 78/9).

This cannot be read as implying Western and European superiority because he is saying that the West should seek its spiritual substance from the East. After all, for Steiner who was inspired by the Christ impulse, Christianity's origin is in the East. Steiner's main aim was to describe historical events, often of the distant past, and relate them to what we need for the future. He speaks of what we need to do to "raise ourselves to the level of the all-human... if we wish to participate in the spiritual evolution of mankind" (Steiner 1910/70, p. 80). This requires, for him, recognising the value and importance of all races, nations, civilisations and individuals, past, present and future. This involves that "When we contemplate the destiny of our integral Self we may be sure that we shall share not only the positive or perhaps also the negative aspects of all races and peoples; but we may be sure that we shall also receive the countless blessings of all races and all peoples since we are incarnated in different races at different times" (Steiner 1910/70, p. 81). Now there is nothing in this that explicitly states or implies that Steiner is referring to incarnating from the black to white races, as Rawlings argues, but rather to the ancient "races" in the transition from the ancient Atlantean epoch to our own. After that time period when Steiner uses the word "race" he really means "civilisation" (see chapter 3 and Steiner 1910/70, p. 101). There is no element of superiority in Steiner's theory of "racial" evolution and there is therefore no sense in which it is a racist theory. He saw the positive elements in all "races", past, present and future, and identified these elements as essential to being "in accordance with the evolution of *all* mankind"(Steiner 1910/70, p. 80)(my bold) and not with a select few as would be the case with a racist.

Other quotes given by Rawlings (2011) are from a collection of Steiner's lectures called "*Die Geistige Hintergrunde des Ersten Weltkrieges*", a text which Rawlings calls "Steiner's Bile - The Worst", he prefaces this in the terms of the "Need for a Race War" in the **future**:

[Future human evolution] cannot happen in the world without the most violent struggle. White mankind is still on the path of absorbing spirit more deeply into its essence. Yellow mankind is on the path of preserving the period when the spirit was blocked from the body ... [T]he result will have to be that [mankind's next step upwards] cannot happen differently than as

a violent fight between white mankind and coloured mankind in the most varied areas ... You see, we stand before something so colossal that, if we regard it through the diverse perceptions of spiritual science [i.e., Anthroposophy], we will in the future recognize it as a necessary occurrence. (Steiner 1914-22, p. 39.)

In reference to this quote Staudenmaier has also claimed that: “Similar themes resonate throughout Steiner’s works on race: the stratified nature of racial difference, the determinate role of racial identity, the disparity between racial regression and racial advancement, and the **necessity of ethnic-racial conflict** in the ongoing process of race evolution (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 16/17)(my emphasis). Taken at face value, this looks, to Rawlings and Staudenmaier, as if Steiner is recommending a race war between the “white race” and the “coloured races” in the future. There are a number of problems with this interpretation. One of them is that Rawlings gives these quotes with some significant omissions (in the following, the translations from the German are mine). The first of these is the time context. Just before the first quote, at the beginning of the same paragraph, Steiner says “In the sixth cultural epoch of the post-atlantean time”. By Steiner’s way of thinking, this is in about 2,000 years. If we recall from previous discussions (chapter 2), the current sociological concepts of race and racism are conditioned by how they are defined today and not at some distant evolutionary time. So if in this context Steiner is talking about “races” of the far future, does it make sense to think of this future situation in terms of present races? Are the so-called “white” and “coloured” races of the sixth cultural epoch really the same as those of today?

A more important problem is that of translation and interpretation. Rawlings translates the German words “heftiger Kampf” as “violent fight”. But this is not necessarily the most appropriate translation; it could equally have been “great struggle”. “Violent fight” would strongly imply a physical war, but “great struggle” would not; it might just as well be an **inner** “spiritual struggle”. So which is it? Just before the above quote, Steiner spoke of “atavistic [ancient] forces” that “need to be saved up” for the future but were a part of the old eastern heritage and were to be unified with a new western impulse: “in following times, the old forces will need to be unified with the forward forces” (Steiner 1914-21, p. 37). But humanity would need to also “struggle against”

the “atavistic forces” because **on their own** they represented a past **consciousness** not a future one. As we saw in chapter 3, a central aspect of Steiner’s theory of evolution is the idea that all beings undergo an evolution of consciousness. This is represented in a series of stages; some are of the past and some of the future. As consciousness, for Steiner, is an inner state of being, in this context the discussion is about the relationship between past states of **inner** consciousness and future ones. So, from this, it would seem that Steiner was speaking of an **inner “spiritual struggle”**, not a physical one, in which past forces of consciousness will then be unified with future ones. This is supported in the later paragraphs when Steiner also says:”in middle Europe the souls have “gekämpft“(struggled), struggled with their **inner life**, in a personal **wrestle** in order to obtain a “God-Concept“ (My bold). Here Steiner is using the words “gekämpft“ and “Erringen” (wrestle) in the same sense and that the people “mit ihrem Inneren gekämpft haben” (have struggled with their **inner life**) (Steiner 1914–21, p. 42)(My bold). It would seem to me to make more sense to think that Steiner was talking about an inner struggle with the inner forces of consciousness rather than an outer physical one.

Moreover, earlier in this series, Steiner made an argument for a **peaceful** solution to global conflict. This is backed up by a discussion just a few pages prior to the above quotes where Steiner says, in 1915, the year after the outbreak of the First World War: “When those things, which European humanity and the World have to decide, and could be decided through **words**, then it would **not** be necessary to allow enormous streams of blood to flow. If only the possibility existed that Souls would **understand** each other from the perspective of their **national aspirations**, then they would **not** need to confront each other with cannons“(Steiner 1914–21, p. 33) (My bold). The emphasis on the use of “words” and “understanding” in connection with “national aspirations” through which to decide things between the World’s peoples supports a more pacifist interpretation of Steiner than the pro-war one of Rawlings. This is further argued by Steiner in the following paragraph: “When we stand on a pure anthroposophical foundation, when we develop the high truths for our souls, which touch humanity’s **highest being**, then we stand on ground that is **beyond all nationality and all racial differences**... these same truths are valid for the whole Earth... as soon as these **highest truths** that concern humanity come into consideration” (Steiner 1914-21, p 33/4)(My bold). For Steiner, his fundamental idea

was to enable global understanding between nations, not conflict. This he considered the “highest” ideal that humanity could strive for and which would make possible realistic solutions to aspirations based on national and racial differences and enable peaceful coexistence.

But Steiner also foresaw what might happen when people were *not* working out of the “highest ideal”. He contrasted the “highest ideal”, which goes beyond national and racial differences, with its opposite: “***It is different***, out of which something else speaks and must speak than this all highest being of humanity: when peoples confront each other... we are *not* dealing with that which reaches beyond the differentiation of humanity (Steiner 1914-21, p 34)(My bold). He goes on to discuss what happens when human beings are *not* working out of the highest ideal: demonic spiritual forces begin to work in when peoples believe they need to enter into war. When this happens Steiner says that we find that:”the hate of one nationality flows to another in the most dreadful way” (Steiner 1914-21, p 34). Clearly, this is a description of what happens *if* humanity is *not* working out of the highest ideal but out of its opposite, i.e. “demonic forces”; forces that lead humanity into hate and then to war: ***What Steiner is saying is a conditionality statement of what happens when humanity is not working out of its highest ideal.*** In contrast, Steiner promoted the highest ideal which leads to global understanding between nations and races that brings about a peaceful solution. This was true of the national and racial problems that surrounded the First World War, as he discussed, as well as those that may happen in the future. Returning to the discussion about the future sixth cultural epoch, Steiner concludes by saying: “What will one understand with the sixth cultural epoch?.. It will be comparable to seeing a feminine east being fructified by a masculine west“(Steiner 1914-21, p. 43). This sounds nothing like an advocacy of a physical battle between the peoples of the east and those of the west. Rather, it is an affirmation about fruitful connections based on the ***highest ideal*** and which may lead to a global solution where nations and races would “***understand*** each other from the perspective of their ***national aspirations***, then they would *not* need to confront each other with cannons“(Steiner 1914–21, p. 33)(My bold). This is supported by my earlier argument that Steiner was committed to a peaceful solution to the World’s problems: ““We do not fight, we do something different: we cultivate love, and we know that, with this cultivation of love, strife must disappear. We do not place strife

against strife. We place love, in that we carefully nurse it, against strife... We work for the pouring out of love and found a society that is built on love. That is our ideal... It is not through strife that one overcomes strife, not through hate that one overcomes hate, but that, in truth, strife and hate are overcome only through love” (Steiner 1906, p. 55).

One quote that has been discussed before is the following. Staudenmaier (2008, p. 18) uses this here to assert Steiner’s views on the future of the races; he goes on to claim that: “At the conclusion of the lecture, Steiner offered a synopsis of his racial teachings”:

On the one hand there is the black race, which is the most earthly. When this race goes toward the West, it dies out. Then there is the yellow race, in the middle between the earth and the cosmos. When this race goes toward the East, it turns brown, it attaches itself too much to the cosmos and dies out. The white race is the race of the future, the spiritually creative race. (Steiner 1923, paragraph 37)

This was from Steiner’s lecture “*Colour and the Human Races*” (1923). As mentioned before, the next sentence has been left out and this completely changes the meaning: “***When whites migrated*** to India, they trained the inner, poetic, artistic, spiritual culture of India. If it now migrates to the west, it will develop a spirituality that does not take so much of the inner man, but sees the outer world in its spirituality (Steiner 1923, paragraph 37, my emphasis). The problem with this quote is that the “races” referred to no longer exist. The period referred to here is between the ancient Atlantean civilisation and the beginning of the current one. The “colours” of these races are not to be confused with the ones of today. These races mixed with each other and ceased to be in the form that they were. This would have been about ten thousand years ago by Steiner’s reasoning. How then could it be racist to simply describe the dying out of races which do not exist anymore according to Steiner’s thought? After all, in Steiner’s view this ancient “white race” mixed with the “brown race” and thereby ceased to be! Speaking of the remote past he says: “Thus the foundations were laid for the development of the races. Then a progressive ***intermingling*** of the races takes place. The evolution of races is interrupted to make

way for the evolution of nations, i.e. nations develop out of races. And the development of nations enters into the evolution of the individual human being (Steiner 1910/70, pp. 80/1)(my emphasis). It is clear then that Steiner was arguing that these ancient races “intermingled” and thereby ceased to be in the original sense as first nation and then the individual developed.

What this shows is the incoherence of Staudenmaier’s statements: “The white population, then, represent normal human beings who continue to progress, while Asians and Africans are abnormal peoples who were not as capable of evolving“ (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 15); and “This closing passage sums up the lecture and provides a précis of Anthroposophical thinking on race: the black, brown, red, and yellow races all have their special characters and their special roles to play, but at this stage of cosmic development they are dying out, whereas the white race continues to move forward into the racial future” (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 18/19). But there is one small problem with this assertion: **there is no evidence that this was Steiner’s view**. The white race referred to here was in the ancient past and also no longer exists. Nor did he believe in what Staudenmaier (2008, p. 19) claimed: “He associated normality and spiritual progress with whiteness, while portraying non-white skin as a mark of racial regression and atavistic influences”. Steiner did not say that the white race as present today would continue into the future and that the others would die out. As a matter of fact, as the next quote shows, he argued that in the future **all** races would gradually cease to have significance and will unite under moral principles and form a new kind of moral community: “with the principles of **progress**, of inner **freedom**, of brotherly **love**, a small band from every tribe and every nation” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 140)(My bold).

Moreover, Steiner was committed to the overcoming of racial divisions in the future:

Therefore, in its fundamental nature, the anthroposophical movement, which is to prepare the sixth period, must cast aside the division into races. It must seek to unite people of all races and nations, and to bridge the divisions and differences between various groups of people. The old point of view of race has physical character, but what will prevail in the future will have a more spiritual character. (Steiner 1909/90, pp. 12-13)

The racist principle of “racial purity”, division and segregation is not something that Steiner would have agreed with, as has been shown here and in the last chapter. For him, the spiritual and moral unification of the races was vital to the progress of earth evolution. This is no racist position.

The next quote is one stated by Staudenmaier (2008, p. 21) where he asserts that “The process described by these teachings has been aptly characterized by one of Steiner’s followers as “cosmic eugenics”. This refers to Steiner’s “*Apocalypse of St John*” and is therefore about the **far distant future** and not the present:

Humanity has risen by throwing out the lower forms in order to purify itself and it will rise still higher by separating another kingdom of nature, the kingdom of the evil race. Thus mankind rises upward.

(Steiner 1908/77, p. 82).

Staudenmaier goes on to claim that “The path toward the Universal Human requires that unworthy elements be destroyed, that “the evil race” be overcome through “throwing out the lower forms” so that purification will be possible. In this way, the progressive and regressive facets of Anthroposophical race thinking are inextricably intertwined” (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 21). The time context for this can be seen from the previous paragraphs in this book. Speaking of the *Apocalypse of St John*, Steiner says: “Great truths concerning the evolution of mankind are placed before us in a legend such as this. We must distinguish between soul development and race development. No soul is un-deservedly obliged to remain in an old body... The souls who hear the voice which calls them to progress will... appear in new bodies which will be quite different from those of the present day... **After the War of All against All** there will be two kinds of human beings. Those who had previously tried to follow the call to the spiritual life, who cultivated the spiritualising and ennobling of their inner spiritual life... And those who turned away from the spiritual life... who retard evolution... They will show the evil passions, urges and instincts hostile to the spiritual... Just as mankind has separated into races and cultural communities, in the future it will divide into two great streams, the good and the evil” (Steiner 1908, pp. 78-80)(my emphasis). Steiner is referring here to a **far distant future** state and the word “race” is to be understood in the context of this future time and not the present.

More importantly, the term “race” is about the forming of a **community** according to **spiritual / moral principles** not **biological** ones as Staudenmaier implies (see chapter 3). As such, for Steiner, it is up to each individual “I” to make their own choices; the choice is not determined by biology. Racism as conceived of today, as already discussed in chapter 2, is partly defined by the idea of biological determinism. According to this, whether or not an individual belongs to such a “race” is not a question of choice, thought, feeling or action, but one of biology. In this context, however, Steiner is saying something quite different: firstly, being a member of either one of these future “races” (moral communities, chapter 3) is not due to biological causation; rather it is a question of every individual (irrespective of biological race) choosing and living spiritual and ennobling principles. For Steiner, the future “races” are nothing to do with race as we conceive them today; they are about **living** according to the good or evil principles, not biological determinism. As such, these “spiritual and ennobling principles” of the “good race” (that really is a distributed spiritual / moral community) would allow a unification of the supposedly biological races into a new spiritual and moral community that would enable a positive evolution in the future. This has nothing to do with any kind of “cosmic eugenics” which is about the manipulation of human characteristics through either selective breeding or genetic manipulation and has been discredited since the Nazi advocacy of it. Steiner’s views are the complete opposite of this as they promote the individual taking their own spiritual / moral development in hand and they have nothing to do with biological manipulation. Likewise, the so-called “progressive and regressive” elements in Steiner’s ideas are about individuals making their own choices of moral principles which identify the distributed “community” they would belong to.

Furthermore, this particular book is largely concerned with Steiner’s interpretation of the “*Apocalypse of St John*”, i.e. a book about the possible **distant future** of humanity; it is not primarily about the past or the present races. Later on in the book Steiner speaks about a far future state of the world where he interprets the *Apocalypse of St John* as predicting that there will be a “War of All against All”: “After the War of All against All, there will be two streams of mankind: on the one hand the stream of Philadelphia will survive with the principles of **progress**, of inner **freedom**, of brotherly **love**, a small band from **every tribe** and **every nation**; and on the other

hand the great mass of those who will be lukewarm... the stream of Laodicia” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 140)(My bold). This is no racist statement, quite the contrary; it is a description of the possible unification of all kinds of races (every tribe and nation) under the principles of progress, freedom and love. In this context, Steiner’s main concern was with the future of all humankind through these principles and that it lies within each individual to connect themselves with them. This “theory” is not rigidly bound to a particular biological race, as a racist theory would be, but is about the development of a new type of “race” (moral community) formed by the spiritual principles of progress, freedom and love. For Steiner, no person is causally determined by their racial biology, we become a new kind of “race” (community) by **self-identifying** ourselves with specific spiritual and moral principles such as “progress, freedom and love”. Arguably, for Steiner, those who are indifferent to, or even against, progress, freedom and love may be considered by Steiner to be “Lukewarm”. In either case, Steiner would have considered this to be a choice open to every **individual** to make and not down to the biological determinism of a specific **biological race**.

For Steiner this individual, this “I”, is of an individual spiritual nature, not of biological race. For him, this individual “I” is the centre of future Earth evolution. Speaking of how wisdom evolves into love he claims: “This is the secret of all future evolution... Then in the “I” of man, it is turned inward. From Earth evolution onward, the Wisdom of the outer world becomes inner Wisdom – Wisdom in man himself. And when thus resurrected in the inner life, in the “I” of man, it grows into the seed of Love... Love is the outcome of Wisdom re-born in the “I” of man” (Steiner 1909 / 63, p. 312). As can be seen, no mention of “race” is present in the biological sense of the term, but rather of “man” or “humanity” (German: mensch = humanity). In other words, for Steiner the concern was for the evolution of **all** human beings irrespective of racial origin. The wisdom and love he speaks of is a potentiality for **all** of humanity, not for one specific biological group.

Towards the end of his article of (2008), “*Race and Redemption: Racial and Ethnic Evolution in Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy*”, Staudenmaier makes an assertion about Steiner’s theory of the evolution of race that: “Conceived as a universal framework holding potential for all souls willing to progress, his racial doctrines are

nevertheless founded on prejudicial categories and value-laden classifications that have patently racist consequences... it may be appropriate to observe that unless thoroughly revised or rescinded, the racial doctrines promulgated by Steiner and his followers will remain incompatible with Anthroposophy's self-image as bearer of spiritual wisdom and cosmopolitan tolerance." (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 21). The whole story created by Staudenmaier can leave the reader with no other impression than that Steiner thought the future of humanity was for the "white race" only. First Staudenmaier begins by saying that: "He [Steiner] associated normality and spiritual progress with whiteness, while portraying non-white skin as a mark of racial regression and atavistic influences" (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 19); then he insinuates that Steiner was committed to a form of "cosmic eugenics" and that "that might be destroyed which is not worthy to take part in the ascent of humanity" and that "Humanity has risen by throwing out the lower forms in order to purify itself and it will rise still higher by separating another kingdom of nature, the kingdom of the evil race. Thus mankind rises upward". All but the first of these quotes can be found in Steiner, but the way they have been joined together is an act of pure fiction. Steiner never spoke of a cosmic eugenics, nor did he envisage a future that was only for the "white race"; nor that other races (as conceived today) were not worthy and needed to be destroyed and were evil. Steiner's real views were the exact opposite, as I have shown many times. Again, in his *"Apocalypse of St John"* he says speaking of the next cultural epoch to come:

It will be different for the next epoch which will succeed all these cultures there will not be a colony limited to one place, but from the general body of mankind will everywhere be recruited those who are mature enough to form the good, the beautiful side of the next civilisation... there is the possibility that from ***all races of the World*** will be recruited those who really understand the call of the Earth mission, who raise up the living Christ in themselves, who develop the ***principle of brotherly love*** over the whole Earth... not in the sense of Christian confessions, but in the sense of true esoteric Christianity. (Steiner 1908/77, p. 133)

For Steiner, brotherly love and other moral values were the unifying principles that could unite all the races. To ascribe to him an extreme and destructive form of white

supremacism is a complete falsehood. As has been shown, for him, what was important was that **all** peoples of the world, through the agency of individuals, could create a positive future. His view of the future was not one of white or European supremacism, but one of the “mighty marriage” of peoples:

The nations which today are the vehicles of Western culture were chosen to lead the fifth age to its zenith; they were the nations who were to develop the intellect. Hence wherever the Western culture extends we have predominantly the culture of the intellect, which is still not finished. This intelligence will extend further; people will exercise still more of their spiritual forces in order to satisfy their bodily needs; to slay one another they will employ much greater spiritual forces before the great War of All against All... endless amounts of energy will be exercised in order to satisfy the lower impulses. But in the midst of it something is being prepared, with which certain nations of the East, the northern part of the East, are gifted... a spiritual impulse... the opposite pole of intelligence... we shall experience something like a mighty marriage of peoples, a marriage between intelligence and intellect and spirituality.

(Steiner 1908/77, p. 134)

Obviously Steiner did not see Western culture as the most advanced civilisation of all time nor as the end point of social evolution as a “white supremacist” would have to. For Steiner each culture has a “task” and will be succeeded by others. In his view Western culture has its positives and negatives. One of its positives is the ability to use the intellect in the transformation of nature in order to satisfy bodily needs, such as the invention of machines for practical purposes. On the negative side it can lead to War and destruction when combined with egoism and its extension into nationalism (see below and chapter 7). The future for Steiner was a “mighty marriage of peoples”, of East and West, based on a unification of the intellect with spiritual and moral principles.

Moreover, when speaking of this “War of All against All”, he envisages this not as a conflict between the peoples or races of the World but between those individuals committed to egoism: “this War must be pictured quite differently from the way we are

accustomed to think about wars... Its foundation or cause is the increase of egoism, of self-seeking and selfishness on the part of man" (Steiner 1908/77, p. 136). He then contrasts this with those who are committed to universal love: "Thus the ego will be the pledge for the highest goal of man. But at the same time, **if it does not discover love**, if it hardens within itself, it is the tempter that plunges him into the abyss. Then it becomes what separates men from one another, what brings them to the great War of All against All, not only to the War of nation against nation... but to the War of each single person against every other person in every branch of life; to the war of class against class, of caste against caste, and sex against sex. Thus in every field of life the ego will become the bone of contention; and hence we may say that it can lead to the highest and on the other hand to the lowest" (Steiner 1908/77, p. 137)(my emphasis). This is how he conceptualises the two "races" the "good" and the "evil"; he identifies them with the particular moral qualities of "brotherly love" and "egoism" respectively, not with biological race. For Steiner, the extreme form of egoism leads to conflict in every area of human existence, whilst love leads to peace. He furthermore does not envisage that the "good race" will destroy the "evil race", rather that it will help redeem it: "After the great War of All against All, gradually the evil stream will be lead over to the good by the good race, by the good stream. This will be one of the principle tasks after the great War of All against All; to rescue what can be rescued from those who after the great War will only have the impulse to fight one another and allow the ego to express itself in the most external egoism" (Steiner 1908/77, pp. 140/1). It is these two qualities of brotherly love and egoism that, for Steiner, identifies the two "races", not biological inheritance. Put in other words, the community based on brotherly love will try to help the other community overcome their egoism. For Steiner, egoism leads to conflict whilst brotherly love leads to a peaceful future for all humanity:

True Anthroposophy can only be put forward as a final goal; the community of free and independent egos, of egos that have become individualised. It is just this that is the mission of the Earth, which is expressed in love. (Steiner 1908/77, pp. 137).

One can see in this that Steiner's view of evolution was one of individuals becoming free and independent egos who are willing to cultivate love between all the peoples

of the World. Such a view is the opposite of any kind of racism. The future “good race” has nothing to do with racial biology and is entirely to do with the choice of individuals:

Love would be impossible for man and freedom would be impossible for man without the possibility of sailing down into the abyss. A man unable of his **own free decision**, to choose good or evil, would be a being lead on a leading string to a good which must be attained by necessity and who had no power to choose the good of his own free purified will, by the love which springs from freedom. (Steiner 1908/77, p. 206)(My emphasis)

This freedom is the antithesis of that which is at the foundation of the biological determinism of racism. As was shown in chapter 2, a racist theory cannot allow for individuality free of biology; for such a view, being a member of a race is not a question of choice, there are no exceptions for individuals for this view and group membership is determined by the biological state and causation. In contrast, the question of belonging to a “moral community” (chapter 3) is down to the freedom of choice, thought, feeling and action of the **individual**. It is the latter of these that was Steiner’s view.

(7) INNER DEVELOPMENT OVERCOMES RACISM

In the last three chapters, I considered the vast time scales involved in Steiner's theory of evolution. The last chapter in particular came to the conclusion that Steiner conceived the future of humanity as the development of moral community founded on ethical individualism. The approach in this and the next three chapters is different in that I will look at how Steiner envisaged the **construction of a global ethics** that could enable a positive future for all the peoples of the Earth. I will look at this on four levels: individual, social, international / global and then in the field of education. Each of these levels corresponds to this and the next three chapters.

In this chapter, I will consider Steiner's ideas on the inner development of the individual person as central elements to his theory of evolution and, amongst many other things, as a means to overcome racism. In a sense, these ideas can be seen as safeguards against any form of negative groupism including that of racism. The primary reason for this is that Steiner's concept of inner development has its focal point in a form of "*selflessness*" (or altruism) that stands in opposition to "*egoism*" that, for Steiner, is at the root of racism and the competitive form of nationalism (Steiner 1919/72). It is the fact that altruism, as a "principle of benefit" (see chapter 2), is the centre of Steiner's "theory" here, that, I propose, racism can be overcome through inner development. It has to be noted that, whilst it is true that there is nothing specific concerning race in Steiner's ideas about inner development, it is my view that they are applicable to the issue at hand because of their **universality**: they are about **all** beings, situations, peoples and individuals in the present and in the future.

In the following there are a number of different aspects to Steiner's views on this "principle of benefit", which is perhaps better called a "principle of benevolence", within his ideas on adult spiritual development. These are: the altruistic motive; inner liberation (which includes love, selflessness and cooperation); the Golden Rule of moral and spiritual development; inner consciousness and self-reflection; veneration; selfless listening; compassion; reverence for human dignity and rights. Each of these principles plays a central role in Steiner's views on evolution and impact vitally on the question of race and racism. It is my position that anyone who holds and practices

these principles would be incapable of proposing a racist theory or of even having a racist attitude. In a sense, this is a rejection of Byng's (2010) hypothesis that racial discrimination, as an aspect of racism, is "*reflected in the actions and decisions of teachers in the classroom*". For those teachers who actually do practice Steiner's ideas on self development such a thing would not be possible.

The whole trend of Steiner's views on inner development is a form of altruism. This consists in finding the right moral balance between the individual person and the World. Without an understanding of this, his ideas about "race" can be greatly misunderstood. Writing of the "pupil of higher knowledge" (pupil here means an adult who freely and consciously follows a path of spiritual and moral development), in the first chapter of his book "*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*", he states:

He does not learn to accumulate learning as his own treasure of knowledge, but in order to place this learning in the **service of the world...**

*All the knowledge you pursue merely for the enrichment of your own learning and to accumulate treasure of your own leads you away from your path; but all knowledge you pursue in order to grow mature on the path of **human ennoblement and world-progress** brings you a step forward.*

(Steiner 1909/85, pp. 30/1)(My emphasis)

Steiner refers to this as "a fundamental principle which cannot be transgressed if any goal is to be achieved" (Steiner 1909/85, p. 31). What is clear from this is that what he is proposing transcends any kind of egoism in inner development and suggests a kind of altruism instead. This inner development is directed at "service of the world" and "*human ennoblement and world-progress*". There is no mention here of race, or family or nation, but of the **human** and the **World**. The totality of these two words **human** and **World** is important. It is the universal nature (the applicability to all) of the goal of human and World development which safeguards against the preferential treatment of one group such as race. It is this overall "theory" content of an altruistic approach to self-development that frames the understanding of the following.

The quote shown below, which Staudenmaier gives, is from Steiner's book "*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*". It is supposed to support the notion that Steiner held racist beliefs because the words "race" and "racial group soul" appear in it. As I will show, however, the real theoretical context of this book is that of **individual** human self development not racist theory:

Besides the separate individuals, a very real family and national group soul and racial spirit is at work in the life of a family, a people, or a race. Indeed, in a certain sense the separate individuals are merely the executive organs of these family group souls, racial spirits, and so on. It is nothing but the truth to say, for instance, that a national group soul makes use of each individual man belonging to that nation for the execution of some work. The group soul of a people does not descend into physical reality but dwells in the higher worlds and, in order to work in the physical world, makes use of the physical organs of each individual human being. In a higher sense, it is like an architect making use of workmen for executing the details of a building. In the truest sense, everyone receives his allotted task from his family, national, or racial group soul.

(Steiner 1909/85, p. 198)

So what is Staudenmaier reading into this quote? If we recall from chapter 2, he claimed that: "This optimistic nod toward racial evolution as a path of spiritual education was somewhat undermined by the equally firm emphasis on the **determining** power of race within each incarnation... In Steiner's depiction, the **ineluctable** nature of racial destiny is a source of neither pride nor denigration; it is a fundamental aspect of the cosmic plan" (Staudenmaier 2008, p. 11)(my emphasis). So what he is implying here is that Steiner held an outer determinist view of human beings, that they are totally determined by outer spiritual forces such as "race spirits". As I showed in chapter 2, however, outer spiritual determinism is not Steiner's position and neither are biological determinism and social determinism. For him, it is the freedom of the "I", its self-determinism, which is central to human beings. So what did Steiner mean by "separate individuals are merely the executive organs of these family group souls, racial spirits"? Does this contradict his ethical individualism and free agency?

It has to be noted that this particular book is concerned with the spiritual development of the human being and is only marginally connected with the question of race and not at all with any aspect of a racist theory. What Staudenmaier leaves out from this quote is just as informative as what is stated. Near the beginning of the same paragraph, Steiner states: “The individual concerned belongs to a family, to a people, to a race... The conscious activity of single individuals **by no means exhausts everything** to be reckoned with in a family, a people, or a race” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 197/8)(my emphasis). The rest of the text follows a little later, but significant is the connection to the first part of the quote: “**Besides the separate individuals**, a very real family and national group soul and racial spirit is at work in the life of a family, a people, or a race”(my emphasis). The reference to race is clear from the last part of this quote, but what did he mean by the first part? What is important in this and the whole context of the book is to consider the different levels of what it means to be human and how we can develop ourselves. For Steiner human beings are individuals **and** members of a family, a people and a race. All that Steiner says in this context is that human beings are individuals who have an imprint of family, people and race on their soul life. What Staudenmaier omitted may lead the reader to think that human destiny is in the hands of a “race spirit”; that our life is determined by “race spirits” and lays outside of our freedom. But this is not what Steiner is saying: he is of the conviction that, **in addition** to free individuality, there are influences from family, people and race. This is a proposition that includes the free agency of the individual with some outer conditioning, not total outer determinism. The question of the “allotted task” from the “race spirits”, etc, will become clear in the following.

By itself, it is hardly a problematic proposition that humans are individuals **and** members of a family, a people and a race, especially when one bears in mind that this book is about personal transformation and our relation to such groups. The book as a whole makes this clear, personal transformation can be meant on the level of individual, family, people and race. Now I would suggest it is therefore consistent with Steiner’s theory at this point to see his views as at least implying the possibility of overcoming of racial conditioning within ourselves. As I will show below, an aspect of this could be the liberating of oneself from racial prejudice. This is hardly the kind of proposition to be found in a racist theory, the exact opposite in fact. Moreover, a

genuine racist would not be willing to entertain the idea that they should liberate themselves from their own racism. This becomes even more obvious in the following which Staudenmaier gives as evidencing racism:

For peoples and races are but steps leading to pure humanity. A race or a nation stands so much the higher, the more perfectly its members express the pure, ideal human type, the further they have worked their way from the physical and perishable to the supersensible and imperishable. The evolution of man through the incarnations in ever higher national and racial forms is thus a process of liberation. Man must finally appear in harmonious perfection. (Steiner 1909/85, p. 207)

What was said about the previous paragraph is even truer for this one. Just before this quote, and in the same paragraph, Steiner says: “The presence of instincts, impulses, desires, egotistical wishes, all forms of selfishness... is expressed also in his membership of race, a people and so forth” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 207). In other words, for Steiner, egoism and selfishness can play into our connection to our racial identity. But what is his suggestion in relation to this? Just after the above quotation Steiner states: “When the pupil has recognised the things from which he must **free himself**... now, having yourself become free, you can now **liberate** your companions; now you make yourself a member of the whole... You now must share with others the powers you have acquired in their company... be able to contribute to the liberation of the human race... entirely something that goes out from him: **love** for the world and his fellows... the will for **selfless cooperation**” (Steiner 1909/85, pp 208-213) (My bold). The first point to make about Staudenmaier’s quote is the most trivial one: the implied concept of race here is that of the one discussed before, i.e. from the Indian, through to the current and further “races” (civilisations really). There is nothing in this whole book that refers to race as is defined by sociological thought. As shown above, the evolutionary direction described here does not stop with the European but goes through a sixth and seventh “race” (civilisation) and beyond. This is not the view of a “European supremacist”.

More importantly for the real context of this book, Steiner is discussing the possibility of **freeing** oneself from all conditioning, be that personal, family, people or race, i.e.

he is promoting *inner liberation*, not submitting to racial determination. Not only that, but when Steiner refers to “higher national and racial forms” he *means* “love for his fellows”, “liberation of the *human* race” and “selfless cooperation”. This is just another example of what we considered in the previous chapter: for Steiner “*race*” *can mean moral community*, for him these moral qualities *define* the “higher national and racial forms” and are nothing to do with biological phenotypes. For Steiner, “love for his fellows” and “selfless cooperation” can be obtained by anyone irrespective of background or origin. These are not the components of a racist theory. After all, a racist theory could not contain the idea that individuals should free themselves from their own racial prejudice (the latter of which would include giving preferential treatment to their own kind), let alone advocate liberation of *all* human kind (as distinct from only their own race), as well as love and selfless cooperation. It seems to me that Staudenmaier not only has completely misunderstood Steiner, but has ascribed the completely opposite view to him. For Steiner, it is the will to help “liberate your companions” through love and selfless cooperation that is our “allotted task”, a task taken on by a free choice not through the outer determinism of “Folk Spirits”.

The whole point of Steiner’s “*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*” (KHW) is a universe away from any kind of racism. As discussed in chapter 2, racism includes a “principle of harm”, i.e. as a theory it must have “harms” implied within it which leads one to conclude that it contains an immoral component. For Steiner, however, his KHW is a fundamentally moral “theory” which is pivotal in the evolution of a future moral community based on the freedom of every individual. The moral foundation of the “path of development” is perhaps encapsulated in his “*Golden Rule*”:

But before making any attempts in this direction it is imperative that he should work with particular earnestness at the purification of his *moral* character... This *golden rule* is as follows: *For every step forward in seeking knowledge of occult truths, take three steps forward in the improvement of your own character.*

(Steiner 1909/85, p. 69/70)(My emphasis)

As a side note, the use of the word “occult” here may raise some concerns in some corners, but for Steiner the word is merely about levels of reality beyond normal sense-perception: “Occult Science must spring from... that there is behind the visible an invisible world, hidden *to begin with* from the senses and the kind of thinking that is fettered to the senses” (Steiner 1909/69, p. 31). But what is important at this point, are the embedded moral principles within his idea of spiritual development. This “Golden Rule” has particular significance for the race question as it stands in complete contradiction to racism. This “Golden Rule” appears in a number of different guises throughout KHW and his other works on spiritual and moral development.

The critics of Steiner seem to ignore, or be oblivious to, the whole frame of KHW, especially the “Golden Rule”, and hence they do not perceive that central to Steiner’s theory is the cultivation of moral qualities that would safeguard against any kind of racism. For example, at the beginning of KHW, Steiner writes of how essential the acquisition of “*veneration*” is. An aspect of this is looking for the “good in all things” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 26). This principle is universal in nature, which means that Steiner sees it as applicable to all that exists. In this context, this means that Steiner is recommending that all people, which would necessarily include all “races”, have the capacity to see the good in each other. Contrarily, a racist theory could not have this notion within it as it would then find it difficult to have grounds for prejudicial judgements.

But Steiner’s “theory” goes even deeper than this, it is not just a cure for outer manifestations of racism, it also suggests the cultivation of *inner consciousness* that would prevent racism. One of the basic practices the Steiner promotes is “*self-reflection*”. In this he describes an exercise in which an individual may reflect on his thoughts, feelings and actions and he says that: “he looks at everything else in his experience from a higher standpoint... He must confront his own self with the inner calmness of a judge” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 34). This inner consciousness and judging from a “higher standpoint” is a part of the process through which an individual can transcend negative thoughts and emotions such as “anger” (p. 36). It seems to me therefore that it would be much more consistent with Steiner’s theory that an individual could transcend any of their antipathies, including, if they have any, those directed at other races.

This interpretation is backed up later in KHW where he argues that the pupil of spiritual development: "forbids himself at all times to harbour wrong thoughts and feelings" (Steiner 1909/85, p. 50). This is another example of how Steiner's "theory" of spiritual development is grounded fundamentally in a cultivation of an inner moral consciousness. Should an individual have negative thoughts or emotions about another person, for example, because of their race, then he recommends the practice of inner consciousness of this and then the forbidding of it. This overcoming of negativity is a part of the process in which Steiner's theory would overcome racism.

Another example of this is where he recommends "selfless listening" (Steiner 1909/85, p. 55). He writes here of a practice where there are particular moments where the pupil of spiritual development "must silence all such inner agreement or disagreement... The point is to silence not only intellectual judgement, but also feelings of displeasure, denial or agreement" (Steiner 1909/85, p. 53/4). What is clear from this suggested practice is that it is applicable to any situation or any person irrespective of race. The practice of self controlled listening would prevent the practitioner from feelings of displeasure that may arise with regards to **any** person.

But Steiner's "theory" does not just suggest the holding back of negative thoughts and emotions in inner consciousness; it also suggests the cultivation of positive ones. Later on he argues that the: "pupil should lose none of his qualities as a good, high-minded man... Throughout his training, indeed, he must continuously enhance his moral strength, his inner purity... the pupil must take care to ensure that his **compassion** for the **human** and **animal** worlds and his response to the beauty of nature are constantly increasing" (Steiner 1909/85, p. 60)(my emphasis). Crucial then to Steiner's view is the acquisition of compassion for the "human world". Note that this specifies the "human" in a universal sense so it necessarily includes all races. Now, it seems to me, that compassion for all human beings is not compatible with a racist theory. This compassion is a form of a "principle of benevolence" which a racist theory simply cannot have. What kind of a racist would someone be if their "theory" recommended compassion for all other races? This is vital because, as we have seen from chapter 2, for something to **be** racist it **necessarily** includes a "principle of harm" not a "principle of benevolence".

This is even more strongly the case in the following: “He must no longer allow himself to think of his fellow men in a way that is incompatible with the highest reverence for human dignity and human liberty... self-education must ensure... unlimited respect for the rights of every individual and with a recognition – both in thoughts and feelings – that what lives in each human being is sacred and inviolable” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 72/3). This inner and outer reverence for human dignity, liberty and rights is central to Steiner’s views on spiritual development and, indeed, evolution. This view has nothing to do with the stereotyping and the harms that are the cornerstones of racism as discussed in chapter 2. For Steiner, these moral principles, both inner and outer, provide the foundations for a positive future for all of humanity and the World.

But this idea is not restricted to the cultivation of inner virtues for the current stage of evolution. Particularly the quality of compassion is vital to Steiner’s views concerning a future stage of the Earth; in his “*Apocalypse of St John*”, he writes of the human being of that time: “he will have reached a stage of evolution morally... **the happiness of the individual is inseparably connected with the happiness of all**” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 176)(my emphasis). He elaborates this later, when speaking of the so-called “Jupiter” stage of evolution: “The pictures of sorrow and suffering would torment the Jupiter-man with his higher consciousness if he were to do nothing to alleviate this sorrow” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 212). “This feeling for the “happiness of all” is a universal virtue and applies to all beings and races, and as such Steiner’s theory of the future is a compassionate one which begins in the present with the self-conscious attainment of this positive virtue. This compassion, for Steiner, this feeling for the other, is what will lead to actions to relieve the suffering of **all** sentient beings. Compassion is a central principle to Steiner’s views on evolution. It is odd that this text “*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*” is often quoted as containing racist convictions; because, for Steiner, this “*Higher World*” is essentially a **World of Compassion** that has its root in the **Golden Rule**: three steps in the moral life for each one in spiritual knowledge. Nothing could be further from a racist view of the World.

(8) SOCIAL VALUES OVERCOME RACISM

After the consideration of individual inner development the next level in Steiner's vision of the creation of a global ethic is that of the social realm. In the context of his social theory, Steiner recommended the social values of liberty, equality and "brotherhood" (community) which oppose any form of racism and fascism *in principle*. These ideas are part of his overall theory of a positive social evolution for *all human beings* irrespective of race, class, gender, or nation.

Moreover, in relation to social values, one of the things that can be said about Staudenmaier's claims is that they are also the opposite of what Steiner himself proclaimed. So where Steiner asserted the importance of liberty, equality and brotherhood; Staudenmaier says he is "authoritarian, anti-democratic and an elite capitalist". In doing this, Staudenmaier attempts to re-configure Steiner according to the chief identifiers of *Fascism and its implicit racism*. Referring to Steiner's idea of the "Threefold Social Order", he says: "The three branches of this scheme, which resembles both fascist and semi-feudal corporatist models" Staudenmaier (2000/8). The reason he does this is that fascism often incorporates *racism*. Nothing could be more of a counter image of Steiner's ideas than this. In the final paragraph of his "Anthroposophy and Ecofascism", Staudenmaier states that:

With a public face that is seemingly of the left, Anthroposophy frequently acts as a magnet for the right. Loyal to an unreconstructed racist and *elitist* philosophy, built on a foundation of *anti-democratic* politics and *pro-capitalist* economics, purveying mystical panaceas rather than social alternatives, Steiner's ideology offers only disorientation in an already disoriented world. Anthroposophy's enduring legacy of collusion with ecofascism makes it plainly unacceptable for those working toward a humane and ecological society. (Staudenmaier 2000/8)(My emphasis)

The terms "elitist, anti-democratic politics and pro-capitalist" are, in fact, the opposite of what Steiner was convinced of, as I will show below. These false designations and the overall conclusions show a deep misconception of Steiner's three social values of liberty, equality and brotherhood and how they uniquely belong to his concept of the

three spheres: the cultural / spiritual, the political and the economic respectively. For Steiner, liberty belongs in the cultural sphere, equality in the political sphere and brotherhood in the economic sphere:

It will then be evident that human cooperation in **economic life** must be based on the **fraternity** which is inherent in associations. In the second member, the **civil rights system**, which is concerned with purely human, person to person relations it is necessary to strive for the realization of **equality**. And in the relatively independent **spiritual sector** of the social organism to strive for the realization of **freedom**.

(Steiner 1919/ 77, pp. 81/2) (My bold).

One of the things that one has to bear in mind when thinking about what Steiner means by these three spheres of society is that he does not necessarily understand them in the way we do. For him, the “Spiritual / Cultural Sphere” refers to those aspects of society where the individual person is of prior concern. Examples of this are science, art, religion, education and philosophy. He thought that what mattered in this area is that an individual should be at liberty concerning their personal convictions in science, art and religion, etc. The Political Sphere, should, for him, be about democracy and human rights, i.e. all those areas where human beings are equal and where greater skills in one thing or another should not matter; this idea should not to be confused with the current notion that politics is also about the governing of a country’s economy. The Economic Sphere, for Steiner, should be concerned with the production and consumption of goods that meet human needs and is directed towards community service not personal profit.

Furthermore, Staudenmaier shows little understanding for how Steiner saw them being **integrated** as well as being **autonomous**. Steiner’s view was for a **relative** autonomy of the different spheres of society, not an **absolute** one. Each sphere should operate, for him, according to its own principles, but would also influence the other spheres in distinct ways. I will show this below.

A part of Staudenmaier’s problem is that he derives most of his ideas from sources other than from an intrinsic study of Steiner’s primary works on the social question.

Instead, he draws largely on works about other themes as well as leaving out significant parts of the text which change the meaning drastically.

Libertarianism not Authoritarianism in the Spiritual / Cultural Sphere

Staudenmaier's approach is that, instead of referencing the relevant parts of Steiner's social works, he quotes extracts from sources on a different theme. For example, drawing on Steiner's "*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*", Staudenmaier states that:

In order to continue along the path of spiritual and racial advancement, Steiner taught, individuals must subordinate themselves to "the great leaders of humankind"... If they fail to obey these leaders, their souls are condemned to spiritual and racial stagnation. Anthroposophy is moreover based on an authoritarian epistemology which explicitly denigrates "criticism" and "judgment" while celebrating "reverent veneration" of ostensible spiritual virtues, and rejects "intellectual effort" in favor of "immediate spiritual perception". Contemporary anthroposophists' uncritical attitude toward Steiner's writings is further testament to this authoritarian framework... The seeds of Steiner's **elitist** perspective, including the conception of a small group of "free spirits" acting as authorities whom others follow, can already be discerned in his early work *The Philosophy of Freedom*". (Staudenmaier 2009a, footnote 8).

In endnote 4, Staudenmaier states:

Here is an excerpt from the former book: "Our civilization tends more toward critique, judgment, and assessment, and less toward devotion, toward reverent veneration. Even our children criticize much more than they devotedly revere. But all criticism, all passing of judgment repels the powers of the soul to attain higher knowledge, just as devotional reverence develops these powers." (Staudenmaier 2009a)(My emphasis).

The quote is interesting because of what Staudenmaier leaves out, for what comes next in Steiner's text is: "This is not meant to imply anything against our civilization..."

To this **critical faculty**, this conscious sense of human **judgment**, this principle of ‘prove all things...’ we owe the greatness of our culture... It must be emphasized that in the domain of higher knowledge it is **not** a matter of venerating persons, but of venerating **knowledge** and **truth**” (Steiner 1909/85, pp 24/5) (My bold). No mention is made here by Steiner of “subordination” to other persons, to an elite, or himself, quite the opposite, the **devotion is to knowledge and truth**. This can only be interpreted as seeing Steiner’s views as being based on the spiritual **freedom** of every individual, not on authority. Steiner goes on to explain what he means by veneration or devotion: “If I encounter a human being and blame him for his weaknesses, I rob myself of the power of higher knowledge; but if I enter lovingly into his qualities, I must master this power... Veneration, respect devotion, are nourishing foodstuffs which make the soul healthy and vigorous, especially in the activity of cognition. Disrespect, antipathy, under-estimation of what deserves recognition, exert a paralyzing, withering effect on the faculty of cognition” (Steiner 1909/85, pp 26-28). For Steiner then, devotion and reverence are essential components for the act of cognition. In the act of knowing these provide a starting point for a genuine knowing of the Other. What Steiner was arguing was that disrespecting and criticizing **people** acted as barriers to knowing them. He was not saying that critique of **arguments** is detrimental. Reverence for Steiner is about having the right moral virtues that enable the real knowing of the truth of other people and the world, not the adulation or idolization of authorities. As he said earlier in the text: “But it must not be thought that this will lead to submissiveness and servility. What was once child-like veneration for persons becomes, later on, veneration for **truth** and **knowledge**... those of free bearing are those who give veneration where veneration is due” (Steiner 1909/85, p. 23). What this means then is that Steiner considered veneration as an ability that enables a genuine **starting point** for cognition, but through the faculty of judgment it is possible to decide where veneration is due. This is no authoritarian concept but a **libertarian** principle of cognition. In addition, there is no elitist element in Steiner’s proposals, no “small group of “free spirits” acting as authorities whom others follow” as Staudenmaier claims. In the very first line of chapter 1 of this book Steiner states: “In **every** human being there slumber faculties by means of which he can acquire for himself knowledge of higher worlds” (Steiner 1908/85, p. 19)(my emphasis). Since when has “**every** human being” been elite?

Staudenmaier's reference to the "*Philosophy of Freedom*" is a curious one if it is supposed to give evidence of Steiner's elite authoritarianism. Staudenmaier offers no quotes here, so I will provide some. Steiner states: "Only when I follow my love of the object is it I myself who act. At this level of morality I do not act because I acknowledge a ruler over me, an external **authority**, or an inner voice. I do not acknowledge any external principle for my conduct, because I have found the source of my conduct within myself, namely my love for the deed... **Man is free insofar as he is able, in every moment of his life, to follow himself.** A moral deed is **my** deed only if it can be called free in this sense" (Steiner 1894/1963, pp 177-9) (My bold). Also, as shown in chapter 2, he applied this way of thinking to his later works: "I beg of you not to accept as an article of faith whatever I have said... not to accept my statements as authoritative. I beseech you to abjure the principle of authority, for that principle would be deleterious to our Movement" (Steiner 1910/70, p. 182/3). So Steiner is arguing here that the impulses for knowledge and moral action are in the free individual, not in some authority. Instead of seeing Steiner as someone who advocated elite authoritarianism, he should be interpreted as recommending a life free of external authority and based on what he called "Ethical Individualism" (Steiner 1894/1963, p. 175). Not only that, but he accepted this for all human beings not an elite few: "To *live* in love of the action and to *let live*, having understanding for the other person's will, is the fundamental principle of *free* human beings... comes nearest to doing justice to human dignity (Steiner 1984/1963, p. 181). The argument here is not aimed at any specific group, race or class, but at **any** human being willing to work with this principle. The notions of to "**let live**" and "**human** dignity" are not ideas that would be acceptable to any racist, or could even be a part of a racist theory. After all, the word "human" is a universal and racism cannot accommodate the universal human in its theory as it focuses only on one group (see chapter 2).

Moreover, as shown above, in "*Towards Social Renewal*", Steiner states:"in the relatively independent *spiritual sector* of the social organism to strive for the realization of freedom" (Steiner 1919/ 77, pp. 81/2). Furthermore, Steiner asserts: "Not only the creation but also the reception by humanity of this spiritual life must be **freely** determined in accordance with the soul's necessities (Steiner 1919/77, p. 79) (My emphasis). Clearly, no authoritarian would advocate the freedom of every individual in the spiritual / cultural sphere. For Steiner, it should be each and every

individual person who freely forms his or her own connection to the spiritual sphere, not some authority or élite. Steiner was for **liberty**, not authority, in the cultural sphere.

Pro-Democracy and Equal Rights for All in the Political Sphere

Now, a racist theory would not be able to accept the freedoms, equality of rights and the shared community of all human beings irrespective of race. This is because racism is predicated on the belief that one race is superior to another. This would mean that there is an ontological asymmetry that could lead to an asymmetry of freedoms, rights and community (chapter 2). Furthermore, fascism would not accept democracy as the latter is predicated on the conviction that every individual should make their own choice in the political sector. Fascism, on the other hand, is grounded in political authoritarianism. So if evidence could be given to show that a particular author held an equality principle for all peoples, then this would support the view that neither they nor their theories are racist:

Common human rights ideals are the main antidote to the persistence of racism. (UNESCO 2003, p. 9)

Staudenmaier has argued that Steiner also has anti-democratic inclinations even in the political sphere: “Even within the political sphere, Steiner’s attitude toward democracy was often firmly negative; in October 1917, for instance, he ridiculed “democratic institutions” as mere tools of the “powers of darkness” who are always “pulling the strings” from behind the scenes”(Staudenmaier 2009b). Curiously, once more, this is not from one of Steiner’s social works but from his book “*The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*” (1917/2008). In it Steiner is trying to show how it is possible, simply as a matter of fact rather than principle, for democratic institutions to be used for wrong ends, he is not arguing that there is anything **inherently** bad about democracy as such. Speaking positively about Francis Delaisi's “*La Democratie et les Financiers*”, Steiner was not arguing against democracy, but was showing how it can be manipulated by financiers, he stated: “It is interesting to note that in 1910 someone wrote that large scale capitalism had succeeded in making democracy into the most marvellous, flexible and effective tool for exploiting the whole population. Financiers were usually imagined to be the enemies of democracy, the individual

concerned wrote, but this was a fundamental error. On the contrary, they run democracy and encourage it, for it provides a screen behind which they can hide their method of exploitation” (Steiner 1917, Lecture 14, paragraph 34). The background problem, for Steiner, is that he thought that people were living with **abstract** concepts about society and not thinking about **real individual** people who operate in the social system: “People think they are realistic and materialistic today when, in fact, they are the most abstract of theorists you can think of, stuffed full with theories, fast asleep in nothing but theories and not even aware of the fact... Everything said about antagonism and opposition between nations only exists to cast a veil over the true reasons. For we shall never arrive at the real truth if we feed on words in order to explain these events, but only if we point to **actual people**... Delaisi has found fifty-five men — not a democracy but fifty-five **specific individuals** — who, he says, govern and exploit France. There, someone has discovered the real facts, for in ordinary life, too, a feeling must awaken for the real facts” (Steiner 1917, Lecture 14, paragraphs 32-37) (My bold). The key question for Steiner in this lecture was the manipulation of democracy for financial purposes by specific individuals. It was not the question of democracy **as such**, but how individuals working in one sphere, i.e. the economic, were affecting the political sphere. It is an example of why Steiner thought that these two sectors should be kept independent from each other and yet should work together in a healthy way. This is not an example of Steiner being anti-democratic, as Staudenmaier claims, but of how detrimental Steiner thinks it is to world society when individuals have vested interests based on finance and who are influencing democracy. **Steiner thought that the economic sector should not determine democracy.** The problem that Steiner was referring to is remarkably similar to the one reported by Michael Moore of the recent global financial problems (Moore 2010).

Some critics also assert that no equality principle exists in Anthroposophy. In addressing anthroposophists and Waldorf Education supporters, Peter Karaiskos writes:

How many people have to explain this to you before you get it... let alone declare victory? Show me ANYTHING written by Steiner that suggests he believed in the equality of people of all races and you can

declare victory. Short of presenting that statement, you'll have a lot more definition-twisting to do. If Steiner believed all races are equal he could have mentioned it in over 40 books and 6000 lectures. He DIDN'T – because he didn't. (Karaiskos, 2012)

The problem is that Steiner *did* speak about the importance of equality, and on a number of occasions. In his book, “*The Social Future*”, Steiner advocates the equality of rights for all individuals:

If this method be followed, it will be found that since the middle of the fifteenth century the longing for democracy, ***more or less fulfilled in the various regions of the earth***, has been growing out of the depths of human nature. *This longing is expressed in the demand that in social life the human being can recognize as valid for others only what he feels to be right and best for himself.* In modern times the democratic principle has become the sign and seal of human social endeavour and has grown out of the depths of human nature. The demand of modern humanity for this principle of democracy is an elemental force. He who has an insight into these matters must treat them with the greatest seriousness. He must ask himself: What is the significance and what are the limitations of the democratic principle? I have just defined this principle. It consists in the fact that the persons forming a definite social organism adopt resolutions approved by every individual within the community. These resolutions, of course, can only be binding if they are adopted by a majority. ***The content of such majority resolutions is democratic only if every single individual is on an equal basis with every other single individual.*** And these resolutions can only be adopted on any matter when every single individual is in reality the *equal* of every other. *That is, democratic resolutions can only be passed when every adult is entitled to vote because he is an adult and therefore capable of judging.*

(Steiner 1919/72, p. 62)(My bold)

If there is any doubt left, Steiner re-asserts his commitment to democracy and the equality of rights for all in his book “*Education as a Force for Social Change*”:

That means that alongside economic life, which administers commodities and guides production processes, we need a **democratic** government based upon **equality** among human beings.

(Steiner R 1919/97, p. 19)(My bold)

So Steiner was pro-democracy in the political sphere the guiding value of which, for him, should be the equality of human beings. Note that Steiner emphasised the equality of **all** human beings. This is not just a select few, nor was he speaking about one particular race, or nation. This can be seen clearly in his reference to “the various regions of the Earth”. Rather than Steiner being anti-democratic, he is a pro-democrat who argued for the equal rights of all human beings irrespective of race or nation.

Economy based on Fraternity not Elite Capitalism

Staudenmaier has claimed that Steiner advocates a form of elite capitalism which is connected to his supposed racism:

Despite this built-in incoherence, it is possible to discern a more or less consistent standpoint in Steiner’s economic vision. In many ways, that vision represents a spiritual defense of capitalism, private property, market mechanisms, and elite control of production. Steiner insisted that overcoming capitalism was simply impossible and would mean abolishing social life as such; for him, “capitalism is a necessary component of modern life”. Rather than replacing capitalist institutions with more humane ones, Steiner favored a combination of private ownership and social conscience, in which individual capitalists and small groups of especially “talented” executives would manage private capital as a trust for the ostensible good of the whole community. These precepts bear comparison with several of the nebulous economic doctrines of classical fascism and its ideology of the Volksgemeinschaft or people’s community... Steiner thus railed against socialism (not just its Marxist variants) and rejected the socialization of property (not just nationalization). Within a full-fledged threefold commonwealth, Steiner foresaw a spiritual meritocracy in which

the “most capable” would be given control over economic resources, and he vehemently rejected the notion of tempering this arrangement through community oversight. (Staudenmaier 2009b).

One of the difficulties for many people in understanding Steiner is that he tried to overcome the traditional boundaries between left and right. In the first part of this quote, Staudenmaier claims that Steiner is pro-capitalist, private property, market mechanisms and elite control over production.

Staudenmaier goes on to claim:

Steiner repeatedly rejected the notion that the exploitation of labor arises “from the economic order of capitalism”; for him the problem “lies not in capitalism, but in the misuse of spiritual talents”. In Steiner’s view, “Individuals should gain advantage for themselves in the totally free struggle of competition.” “Private property,” for Steiner, “is an outcome of the social creativeness which is associated with individual human ability.” Shared ownership, in contrast, is an obstruction to this all-important creative unfolding of individual talent: “The individual cannot make his abilities effective in business, if he is tied down in his work and decisions to the will of the community.” In Steiner’s utopia, “The spiritual organization will rest on a healthy basis of individual initiative, exercised in free competition amongst the private individuals suited to spiritual work.” Within this framework, “the spiritual life should be set free, and given control of the employment of capital,” indeed an “absolutely free use of capital.”

(Staudenmaier 2009b)

The first part of this quote is derived from Steiner’s “*Inner Aspect of the Social Question*” (1919/74). This is what Steiner says more completely:

People ask: whence come the social evils which are associated with capitalism?.. But no evils can arise from an economic system: **they arise first of all because we have no real labour laws to protect labour**; and further because we fail to notice that the way in which **the worker is**

denied his due share amounts to a living lie. But what does this denial depend on?... on the fact that the social order permits the **individual capacities** of the employer to be unjustly rewarded, at the expense of the worker... you are cheating him, taking advantage of him... the trouble does not lie in capitalism, but in the misuse of spiritual capacities.

(Steiner 1919/74, pp. 66/7)(My bold)

So what did Steiner mean by “the misuse of spiritual capacities” and his rejection of the notion that “social evil” is due to capitalism? It is important to note that these terms come at the end of a paragraph and should take their meaning from that context at the very least; not from some random association with “mysticism”. For Steiner, “social evils” are due to the lack of labour laws and that we don’t give the worker his due share. When Steiner speaks of “spiritual capacities” he is talking about what an individual is capable of doing, what his or her skills are. In this context this means that Steiner explains “social evils” as arising from a **political** system which prioritises the “spiritual capacities” of the employer over the worker, where the skills of the former are seen as more important than those of the latter. For Steiner, this is fundamentally a rights issue not an economic one. Furthermore, for Steiner, labour laws are a reflection in the political / rights sphere of what is perceived of what he calls “spiritual capacities” in the spiritual / cultural sphere. It is important to note at this point that whilst Steiner argued for the relative autonomy of the three social spheres, he also saw them as interconnected. For him, the economic sphere should operate according to economic principles, but rights issues played into this in terms of labour laws and “spiritual capacities” respectively. Exploitation, for Steiner, is not due to **any** economic system, capitalist **or** socialist, but to the absence of the appropriate labour laws and not recognising “individual capacities”. **Steiner is not making a defence of capitalism, but an argument for more fair labour laws so that all workers can receive their just share.**

The second of Staudenmaier’s quotes is from Steiner’s “*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte 1887-1901*”(1989). The article here referred to is Steiner’s letter to *John Henry Mackay* on the 15 September 1898. Mackay had written a positive response to Steiner’s “*Philosophy of Freedom*”, the discussion between them concerned **moral** issues, not economic ones. Recall that Staudenmaier claimed that

“Steiner repeatedly rejected the notion that the exploitation of labor arises “from the economic order of **capitalism**” (my emphasis). In other words, Staudenmaier claims that for Steiner this was as **economic** principle. Steiner, however, argued there for “individualistic anarchism” in the **moral** sphere as opposed to state control over the individual’s moral life. The supposed competition that Staudenmaier refers to is quite a casual translation of Steiner’s views. Steiner was against the state suppression of the individual and that the best ideas should be a striving all individuals should work towards. This is not about competition in the economic sphere. More fully quoted Steiner said:

The “individualistic anarchist” wants, so that no human being can be hindered by anything, to be able to bring his inherent abilities and powers to realisation. The individual should validate itself through completely free competitive struggle (Konkurrezampf)... The present State... hinders the individual, on every step of the way, from developing his abilities... The individual anarchist... knows this: that one can make the most independent human beings by having a free life pathway, that one removes all force and authority. (Steiner 1899/1898, p. 285)(My translation)

The discussion here is only understandable through its proper context, namely, Steiner’s book “*The Philosophy of Freedom*”. This is what Steiner and Mackay were discussing, not economics. There Steiner argues for “Ethical Individualism” (Steiner 1894/1963, p. 175) which is a form of **morality** free of authority and state control. One can see in the quote above that this is a continuation of this idea under the heading of “individualistic anarchist” and has nothing to do with competition in the economic sphere: it is entirely about the individual’s “competitive struggle” to assert itself against the state control of morals and life. It is about freedom in morality, a principle of **ethics**, not *laissez faire economics*.

Moreover, what Staudenmaier calls Steiner’s “Capitalism” is not one most people would recognise as can be seen from this quote from his “*Towards Social Renewal*”:

Liberated spiritual life will, necessarily, develop social understanding; and from this understanding will result quite different forms of incentive than that which resides in the hope of economic advantage. However, it is not a question of which impulses arouse sympathy for private ownership of the means of production, but whether the *free disposition* of these means or that disposition which is regulated by the community is what corresponds to the vital needs of the social organism... At this present stage, a fertile activation of individual abilities cannot be introduced into the economic process without free disposition over capital. If production is to be fruitful, this disposition must be possible, not because it is advantageous to an individual or a group of individuals, but because, when utilized with the proper social understanding, it can best serve the community... Private ownership is, however, nothing other than the medium for this free disposition. As far as the social organism is concerned, the only significance of ownership is that the owner has the *right* of disposition over the property through his own free initiative. One sees that in society two things are bound together which have quite different significance for the social organism: *The free disposition* over the capital base of social production, and the *legal relationship* through which he who exercises this disposition, by means of his right of disposition, precludes others from the free utilization of this capital base... It is not the *original* free disposition which leads to social damage, but only the *prolongation* of the right of disposition when the appropriate conditions which connect individual human abilities to this disposition have ceased to exist... It is a matter of intervening at the right moment, as the appropriate is about to turn harmful. The possibility of free disposition over the capital base through individual abilities must exist; it must be possible to change the related property rights as soon as they become a means for the unjustified acquisition of power... The right of disposition over a property cannot be administered separate from the **community's interests**. A means of eliminating the ownership of the capital base is not to be sought, but rather a means of administering this property so that it best serves the community... ***The democratic rights state, which is concerned with what affects all men in an equal manner, will guard against property***

rights becoming property wrongs. Because this state does not itself administer property, but ensures its transfer to individual human abilities, these abilities will develop their productive powers for the totality of the social organism. Through such organization, property rights, or the disposition over them, may retain a personal element as long as seems opportune. One can imagine that the representatives in the rights-state will, at different times, enact completely different laws concerning the transference of property from one person, or group of persons, to others. At the present time, when a great mistrust of all private property is widespread, a radical transference of private property to community property is contemplated. Should this way be followed, it will be seen to impair the vital potentialities of the social organism.

(Steiner 1919/77, pp. 98-101)(My bold, italics in the original)

Capitalism as we understand it today is almost invariably identified with self-interested profit motives, acquisition of private property, elite management, and a “free market economy” with minimal state intervention (Giddens 1998). The first part of this quote concerns the profit motive. As is known from current conceptions of Capitalism, this is perceived to be the most fundamental principle of business as well as the driving force as to why an individual does the work that they do. In Britain, for example, large banks are defined by this “profit motive” and a CEO’s income is supposedly justified by the assumption that high wages attract the “best people”. Steiner is against this notion; he thought that we needed “different forms of incentive” than this one. Secondly, Steiner argued for free “disposition” over capital which is not ownership as we understand it today: it is only a *right* to use, not an absolute possession. For Steiner, in order that the economy could be creative and fertile, the right to capital was needed to support the work. This was tied in for him with a *service to the community, not with personal profit* (which would be the case for standard Capitalism). Furthermore, this “ownership” was temporary not permanent and could be transferred to others when the situation called for it: this transference was to be guaranteed by the *democratic rights state*. Contrary to what Staudenmaier claims, Steiner did believe in an economy “tempered by the community”, i.e. by a democracy that determined the rights of *all* the community. For

Steiner, the economy is not only “for the people”, but legally regulated “by the people” through democracy, law and equal rights for all. Steiner only argued that one aspect of the economic sphere should be determined by an individual’s or a group’s abilities. This was because, for him, initiative, innovativeness and entrepreneurship depended on these abilities. But for Steiner, Socialism is justified in other respects:

Contemporary socialism is thoroughly justified when it demands that the modern facilities which produce for the profit of individuals be replaced by others which produce for the consumption of all... Through the realization of such social ideas as are presented here, the institutions which exist today will acquire a completely new significance. ***The ownership of property ceases to be what it has been until now.*** Nor is an obsolete form reinstated, as would be the case with common ownership, but an advance to something completely new is made. The objects of ownership are introduced into the flux of social life. They cannot be administered by a private individual for his private interests to the detriment of the community; but neither will the community be able to administer them bureaucratically to the detriment of the individual; rather will the suitable individual have access to them in order therewith to serve the community.

(Steiner 1919/77, pp 112/3)(My bold)

The key for Steiner is that of balance. If ownership falls entirely into the hands of private individuals, the community would lose out; if it fell into the hands of the community, its’ administration would become bureaucratic and individuals lose out. For Steiner, ownership should be a part of the “flux of social life” which finds the balance between individual and community. This is neither merely capitalism nor socialism, but something with “new significance”.

Not only that his views on production and wages were more of a socialist character, whilst the creative wealth production was more “capitalist”:

Should the suggestions contained in this book be realized, then the economic impulse to accumulate wealth through sheer quantity of production will no longer be decisive; rather will the associations adapt the

production of goods to actual **need**... Each working person must receive for a product an amount sufficient to completely satisfy his and his dependants' needs until he has again produced an object requiring the same amount of labour. (Steiner 1919/77, pp. 118/19)(My bold)

So not only are the products of the economy to be determined by **need** but also so are the wages. Rather than the current capitalist assumption that wages should be decided by the supposed value a job is worth to the economy, Steiner argued that it was the needs of the individual and their dependents that should be the decisive factor. The connection to socialist thought hardly requires pointing out.

Rather than being seen as a Capitalist, Steiner would be better interpreted as attempting to bridge the gulf between Capitalism and Socialism. From the perspective of individual creativity in the economy, he would have agreed with Capitalism, not however, with the self-interested profit motive. But from the perspective of how the economy would be **legally** regulated, and how the profits are to be shared, these, for him, were more of a Socialist character: it was to be done by those parts of the society where all are equal and where all human needs can be met.

Steiner also argued for what he called a “**principle of association**”. This is the way through which he thought the economic sphere should be managed. In this, he attempted to integrate individual creativity with community working and in that sense unified the creative aspect of capitalism with socialism. For Steiner, as expressed in his “*The Social Future*”, the principle of association consisted in:

These experts in technical knowledge and skill must unite and carry on the economic activity founded on the production that spring from **individual** initiative... The associative community can only receive what is produced by the initiative of the individual who offers it to the community, to the consumer... What is essential is that a connecting link be formed between human needs, which give the commodities their value, and the value itself because the commodity we need acquires its human value always in accordance with that need... A truly social order must be guided by the fact that those who quite justifiably must have commodities must be able

to pay for them, that is, prices must fit the value of commodities and correspond to it. Instead of the present chaotic market, there must be an arrangement by which the tyrannising over human needs and the interference with consumption be eradicated... But, through these arrangements, the price will really correspond to the value attached to the commodity in question by the **community** in accordance with its requirements. (Steiner 1919/72, pp. 37- 46)(My bold)

This principle of association accepts the role of **individual** initiative in production, but that from the perspective of consumption the value of a product has to be regulated by, and matched to, **community** need. For him, economic associations should be the institutions through which economic decisions are made; they consist in a relationship between individual (or group) production and community regulation rooted in human need. In that sense, Steiner argued for a unity of the creative aspect of Capitalism (whilst rejecting other elements) with the social working aspect of Socialism.

Steiner was no free market Capitalist, nor a Fascist. On the level of his social threefolding concept as a whole, in his own words he believed in an “individualistic social democracy... socialism for the economic life, democracy for the life of rights, and individualism for the spiritual life” (Steiner 1919/69 p. 11). How this is more connected to the question of race I will deal with in the next chapter.

(9) INTERNATIONALISM OVERCOMES RACISM

The next level of Steiner's global ethic is that of the international or global life. This chapter explores Steiner's idea of "Internationalism" as a way of overcoming racism and nationalism on a global scale. For Steiner's conception, internationalism is rooted in love and understanding between the races and nations of the World and leads to peace; whilst Nationalism is based on extended egoism and leads to conflict.

One of the sources used by Staudenmaier and other critics is a list of statements made by Steiner which has been judged by the Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien (BPjM)(German Federal Department for Media Harmful to Young Persons) to encourage racial hatred and discrimination (Lichte in Byng 2010). One of the questions that cannot be ignored is the status of the judgment by the BPjM: it is a **legal** judgement made by an official department of the German government. What the list is not is a **philosophical** discussion about the **theory** of racism; it does not research the context of the statements made by Steiner or even consider the **time context of meaning** as discussed in earlier chapters of this book. The BPjM assumes that the terms expressed by Steiner mean the same as in current use and asks the question as to whether or not these are racist in the context of current **law**. As was shown in chapter 3, the meaning of Steiner's terms cannot be separated from the time context to which they are referring. Therefore the argument that Steiner was a racist just because the BPjM judged it so is not a valid one because what Steiner was talking about were not the races of today but something altogether different.

Another problem with the BPjM judgement is that in none of the quotes does the word hatred appear. What is assumed by them is that something in Steiner's description of races **implies** hatred. The BPjM **infers** the presence of a supposedly encouraged hatred due to some **assumed** diminishment of the character of other races. Quotes are taken by themselves without putting them into the context of Steiner's whole theory. When this is done the asymmetry problem arises as discussed in chapter 2. But the problem with this is that it creates an artificial problem which disappears when the statements are compared with others. Clearly, the presence of genuine racial hatred within a person's theory would evidence racism.

Contrarily, should the advocacy of love and understanding between races be found, this would refute the racist assertion and verify it's opposite.

What I will try to show here is that ***Steiner advanced love and understanding between nations and peoples.*** In his “*The Social Future*”, Steiner did this by developing the idea of internationalism. He saw love and knowledge as the foundation of peaceful internationalism:

Internationalism is rather comparable to the feeling we acquire when we contemplate the beauties of nature; through this contemplation we are impelled to love, to reverence, to understanding, because it has become a reality to us, because it impresses itself on us, because we give ourselves up to it freely. Whereas we grow into our own nation because we are, so to speak, members of it, we learn to know other nations. They work on us indirectly through our knowledge of them, our understanding of them. We learn little by little to ***love*** them with ***understanding***, and in proportion to our ***learning to love and understand mankind*** in its ***different peoples*** in their various countries, does our feeling grow for internationalism.

(Steiner 1919/1972, p. 132)(My bold)

When we actually spiritualise what otherwise finds expression as individualism in the imagination of a people, the single peoples will become simply the manifold expression of what, to spiritual perception is one. Then, over the whole earth, people will find it possible to tolerate the different national peculiarities because there will be no need for an abstract uniformity everywhere; the concrete one, found through spiritual perception, will find means of expression in manifold ways. By this means ***the many will be able to understand each other in the spiritual unity.*** Then, from the many kinds of understanding of the unity, they will be able to frame articles for a League of Nations, and then, out of the spiritual conditions, out of the spiritual understanding, the ***legal statutes can arise that will unite the nations.*** Then in the individual peoples will appear what is possible to every people, namely, ***interest in the production and consumption carried on by other peoples.*** Then through the spiritual

life, the legal and judicial life of peoples, one nation will really be able to develop an understanding of other nations and peoples over the whole earth. (Steiner 1919/72, p. 141)(My emphasis)

Steiner argued that all forms of nationalism were an extension of egoism: “Nationalism is egoism experienced by the whole nation in common” (Steiner 1919/72, p. 131). According to Steiner, egoism, a theory of the individual self which only serves itself, leads to competition and conflict between individuals. The nation concept is similar but on a greater scale: preference is given to all those individuals who are in some way ‘like me’. In other words, for Steiner, nationalism can be seen as an extended form of egoism and which leads to conflict between nations, i.e. a whole other level to conflict between individuals. Steiner opposed the application of egoism to all areas of social life as he believed it leads to competition and conflict between nations: “Anthroposophy, in fact, shows that all human suffering is purely a consequence of egoism, and that in every human community, at some time or other, suffering, poverty, and want must of necessity arise, if this community is founded in any way upon egoism” (Steiner 1905/58, paragraph 36). He then formulates this in other words “the smaller the egoism is, the greater the human well-being” (Steiner 1905/58, paragraph 38). For Steiner, there is an inverse relationship between egoism and human well-being. Instead of egoism, he proposed the principle of love to bring the various peoples (races) and nations together in a cooperative and peaceful state of being. In other words, Steiner’s view of the races and nations is the exact opposite of what the critics claim.

Moreover, it can be seen in the above quote that Steiner wanted to extend the notion of social threefolding to global relationships. When he says that “the many will be able to understand each other in the spiritual unity” he is arguing that global understanding of the **spiritual sphere**, as the “many” (free individualism) and the unity (universal humanity) is the first step for world relationships. Then and only then should the “legal statutes can arise that will unite the nations” as a manifestation of equal rights for all in the **political sphere**. This then would be followed by an “interest in the production and consumption carried on by other peoples” as the global **economic system** rooted in brotherhood, community service and universal human need. Rather than being a fascist who would desire global domination through

authoritarianism, anti-democracy and elite capitalism, Steiner want liberty, equality and brotherhood for all human beings across the world.

Furthermore, Steiner, in his “*Cosmogony, Freedom and Altruism*” (1919), thought that different races may make unique positive contributions to the understanding of the evolution of civilisation:

We may say then, that of these three things: the impulse for Cosmogony, the impulse for Freedom, the impulse for Altruism, Asia possesses more especially the inner temperament for the third. It is, however, but one third of what is necessary to bring our civilisation into the ascendant that Asia possesses — the inward temperament for altruism.

It is necessary for Europe to solve the social question — but she has not the temperament to solve the social question. To solve the social question, she would need to have the Asiatic temperament. The social necessities of Europe are such as to supply all the conditions requisite for a solution of the social question; but the Europeans would first need to become permeated through and through with the way of thought that is natural to the Asiatic — only the Asiatic has no gift for actually perceiving social needs as they exist externally... On the other hand there is in Europe, in the very strongest degree, the talent, the ability which would provide the soil for freedom — for the impulse of freedom.

Leaving Europe and going Westwards — and I take Great Britain and America together in this connection—passing then to the Anglo-American world, we find again here *one third* of the impulses — just *one* out of the *three* impulses, that are necessary to the upraising of our civilisation, and that is, the impulse towards a Cosmogony.

(Steiner 1919, paragraphs 15-17)

It is important to note at this point that it is not a question of whether or not Steiner is right, but if his views evidence any kind of racism. As discussed in chapter 2, a racist theory would show bias in its propositions: there would be an asymmetry in the way races are discussed, showing that one race was supposed to be superior to another

or all others. This would show itself in an unbalanced critique of one and a one sided appraisal of the other. One can see, however, in this that there is no absolute asymmetry in Steiner's theory of race. In relation to the three "races" discussed, he points out the positive and negative. For the Europeans the positive is freedom, but the negative is a lack of the altruistic impulse: for the Asiatic there is the altruistic impulse, but an absence of awareness of outer reality: for the Anglo-American there is the cosmological impulse, but with an attendant materialism. Whether or not this was true is irrelevant at this point, the propositions may have been false; but what one can say for certain is that there is no asymmetry in Steiner's acclamation and critique between the different peoples of the Earth. As I showed above, a theory which does not have such an absolute asymmetry cannot be designated as racist.

In contrast to a racist, Steiner had a symmetrical appraisal of the different races of the world in his theory of their global contribution:

It is just when we penetrate into the inner nature and essence of the Peoples of the Earth that we find the differences of their individual natures. And then we realise that the all-embracing sphere of the 'human' is not expressed in its entirety through any individual man, or through the members of any one race, but only through the *whole* of mankind.

(Steiner 1920, paragraph 21)

This is taken from a lecture called "*The Peoples of the Earth in the Light of Anthroposophy*". There Steiner describes what a "race" has **naturally** and what it is **striving** for. For "Asians" it is a natural spirituality with a striving for the rights as represented by the "rhythmic element": "It is in the East, then, that man is able to express with a kind of natural spirituality his connection with the Divine" (Steiner 1920, paragraph 21). For the European it is a natural sense for the rights element: "*The search for equity*, misunderstood and hindered though it be, is a characteristic of the Middle European peoples" (Steiner 1920, paragraph 22) but with a striving for the spiritual: "If a European really tries to understand all that is great and holy in the oriental nature, he gains a knowledge which will elude him unless he consciously develops it" (Steiner 1920, paragraph 20). For the "Westerner" Steiner claimed that "The characteristic quality of the Western man inheres, then, in what I will call the

thinking system. The ideal for which the Middle European strives — which he endeavours to attain as a result of freedom, of free spiritual activity — does not have to be striven for by the Westerner and especially not by the American through this free Spiritual activity, for the Westerner possesses it instinctively” (Steiner 1920, paragraph 25). In summary, Steiner argues that what each “race” has the others are striving for. The “Asian” has a natural spirituality but is striving for the equity of the European and the abstract thought of the Westerner. The European has a natural sense of equity, but is striving for the free thought of the Westerner and the spirituality of the Asian. The Westerner has a natural freedom of thought, but is striving for the sense of equity of the European and the spirituality of the Asian.

Now the question here is not whether or not Steiner was right in his descriptions but if they represent any kind of racism. ***The first point to make is that Steiner’s arguments are symmetrical: what each “race” lacks it searches for in the others.*** Each “race” has a natural possession, but lacks something and searches for in the other races. This symmetry of argumentation is not something that a racist, or a racist theory, can have (see chapter 2): a racist uses an asymmetry in order to claim racial superiority and to establish preferential treatment and justify racial prejudice. But this does not exist in Steiner’s theory: each race has a natural possession but is striving to acquire what the other races have: “Our whole attitude should make us realise that the particular qualities which make one people great are not possessed by the others, and we can understand these qualities only when we are able to love the other Peoples and appreciate the full value of their particular gifts” (Steiner 1920, paragraph 20). Rather than being a racist, Steiner was striving for the recognition and acquisition of the positive value of all races; we can only do this when we love other peoples.

Not only that, Steiner again, in his “*The Peoples of the Earth in the Light of Anthroposophy*”, advocated that love and understanding between the races leads to the real evolution of humanity:

Whether we apply this to smaller races and individual peoples, or confine ourselves to what is typical everywhere we see that man in his *whole nature* is not expressed in the members of any one people or race. Full manhood is as yet only an urge within us, but this urge must grow into a

love for all humanity, for those qualities we do not ourselves possess by nature but can acquire if we sincerely seek for knowledge of the nature of other peoples of the Earth...

It is the striving of a true cosmopolitanism which, by assimilating all that can be acquired from a love extended to other races, ennobles and uplifts the individual people; knowledge of one's own race is sought by assimilating all that is idealistic, great and beautiful in other peoples of the Earth...

True internationalism... springs from a **love** which goes out to **all peoples and races** in order that the light received from them may be kindled in the deeds, concepts and creations of one's own people. Each individual race must so find its place in the great chorus of the peoples on the Earth that it contributes to the full understanding which can alone unite them all in real and mutual knowledge...

There must be knowledge of the conditions requisite for uniting the peoples of the Earth, in order that, as a result of this knowledge, each individual people may help to make the waves of love follow those of hatred. Human love alone has power to heal the wounds of hatred. If mankind has no wish for this love, chaos will remain...

Men who realise this will acquire the kind of knowledge that flows from a spiritual conception of the relationships between the peoples. They will take this knowledge into their *feeling* — *love* for humanity will be born. They will take this knowledge into their *will* -- *deeds* for humanity will be accomplished. The evolution of the age, with all the terrible paralysis that is appearing at the present time, places a solemn duty before the soul: to gather together all that can unite mankind in love and array it in opposition to the destructive elements that have made their appearance in recent times. This quest for loving unification, for unifying love is not merely a vague feeling. To those who understand the conditions of life today, it is the very highest duty of man. (Steiner 1920, paragraphs 29 - 35).

One can see in this not the advocacy of a racist belief, but the positive appraisal of all the races of the Earth. For Steiner, all the races of the planet have a positive contribution to make for its evolution. A racist could not acknowledge under any circumstances, let alone recommend, that all the races can learn from each other and try to acquire the positive attributes which they themselves may not possess naturally. It is this unification of all the races of the positive attributes of the Other that, for Steiner, will lead to the right direction for global social evolution.

There is one final point to this question. Critics of Steiner's views assert that he held racist views on the supposition that he saw the European races as superior. The background assumption to this is some form of stereotyping joined with an absolute superiority principle. As I have shown, this is not correct. The further problem for the critics is that Steiner was saying two things about the races: firstly about how he understood them as they were in his time; secondly he foresaw their convergence in the future. As was just shown, he said that each race had a naturally given set of characteristics and some which they did not have but were striving for and were to be found in, and could be learned from, the other races. In his day, the idea of the naturally given social attributes may have been a testable proposition.

Since Steiner's time, however, there have been massive changes world-wide and the scale and nature of globalisation has been wide-spread. As Held *et al* (1999) show, there have been, *inter alia*, political, economic and cultural perspectives of globalisation. It is without question that eastern spirituality has spread to the west; western economics and science to the east; and universal human rights have seen global growth. The connection to Steiner's ideas about the three spheres of global social life seems evident even if the realisation of their inherent values is neither complete nor perfect. Steiner predicted this process and the assimilation of the characteristics of the other "races" (and civilisations) to the mutual benefit of all. From the perspectives of these three spheres of the globalisation of the social, the social qualities of races as we know them now may well be very different from how they were in Steiner's day.

As was mentioned in chapter 2, the critics will have formed their understanding of the races as they are today. If so, it may not be possible to know how the races were in Steiner's time because the assimilation may well already have occurred to a sufficient

degree. We may never know if what Steiner claimed about the natural attributes of the races was true in his day. The critics' racist proposition based on knowledge of the present may well be untestable, an un-falsifiable hypothesis, and, in the terms of modern philosophy of science, "pseudoscience" (Curd & Cover 1998; Lakatos 1998; Popper 1998).

(10) FINAL THOUGHTS: AN EDUCATION FOR HUMAN VALUES

Introduction

In this chapter I will provide some final thoughts and a brief outlook into Steiner's **theory** of social and moral education as a part of his construction of a global ethic. I will show that his educational principles recommend social values such as liberty, equality and universal love. These ideas are compatible with the ideals of mainstream citizenship education as well as with his theories of evolution and of the social life.

In the previous chapters, I have tried to show that Steiner held no racist theory. Nor did he subscribe to any form of fascism and in all cases he can be conceived as holding both social and moral views in complete opposition to these. I have looked at his evolutionary theories in terms of his ideas about the past, present and future and his vision of inner development, the social life and international / global relationships. In all cases discussed, Steiner has been shown to hold an evolutionary theory whose central idea is a "principle of benevolence" towards all races, nations, cultures and individuals; that is a truly **global ethic**.

It remains to have a very brief look at some of his educational ideas that are pertinent to the question of this global ethic and the healthy relationships between the peoples of the World. This can be related to his concepts of education for human values. This is connected to the assertion, presented in chapter 1, of Byng (2010) that, in terms of racism: "The 'discriminatory effect' is **reflected in the actions and decisions of teachers in the classroom**" (my emphasis). So is there anything in Steiner's **educational theory** that would suggest this? As we will see, the answer to this is no.

A Theory of Social and Moral Education

It is my view that to educate for human values is to transcend and overcome any kind of racism. The reason for this is that human values are values for **all** humans; they are universal, whilst racist values are group specific. It simply is not possible for a

racist theory to recommend the universally human as it claims preference for an elite few (see chapter 2). So what does an education for human values look like?

Before we consider this, one of the problems for the critics is that Anthroposophy is the foundation of Waldorf / Steiner education. Amongst many examples of this, this was put as a question to Trevor Mepham, the principal of the Frome Steiner Academy, by the BBC interviewer Samantha Smith (see chapter 1). ***It would appear that the mere bare fact that Anthroposophy is at the foundation of Steiner education is a problem for the critics.*** There are many aspects to this, but a more extensive approach would need another book. For now, however, attention has to be given to how the critics' question is framed.

Anthroposophy stands for many things, the mere mention of the term cannot be claimed to be a problem without deeper investigation into the broad spectrum of the things it contains. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Anthroposophy advocates liberty, equality and brotherhood in the social spheres. Ethically it asserts ethical individualism, universal love and cooperation. It argues for truth, knowledge, openmindedness, positivity, equanimity, strength of will, tolerance, etc, in personal development (Steiner 1909). The critics, however, focus on issues concerned with their misconceived version of Steiner's views on evolution and reincarnation and a misunderstanding of Steiner's concept of "race". They then identify these ***exclusively*** as "Anthroposophy" with little or no consideration of its other essential elements. If they disagree with the Steiner's theory of evolution (although I have to say that their conception of it is not the same as Steiner's) this is only one aspect of Anthroposophy and as we have seen there is no racism within it. But do they disagree with the ideas of liberty, equality and brotherhood (community), truth, knowledge, openmindedness, positivity, equanimity, strength of will, tolerance, universal love? If they agree with these latter, then they agree with a great deal of the core elements of Anthroposophy.

So why is this important here? It is true that Anthroposophy is at the root of Steiner education, but one needs to look at the details as to what this means especially, in this context, of an education for human values, a type of education that overcomes racism; or any other kind of group dominated relations such as class and gender.

The first aspect of this is to note that the primary thing about Anthroposophy and Steiner Education is the holistic understanding of the human being as body, soul and spirit (Steiner 1924/95). This plays into Steiner's understanding of learning and child development. For Steiner, all learning should be of body, soul and spirit in the developing child, not just of the intellect. This is a view of human learning dating at least back to Aristotle (384-322 BC) and held by other educationalists (Tobin 1989). This extended view of human learning is not unique to Steiner education even today. In 1998 the British Advisory Group on Citizenship education published a report (the so-called "Crick Report") that proposed a model of learning based on 1) knowledge and understanding, 2) values and dispositions and 3) skills and aptitudes (Crick 1998, p. 44/5). Whilst I would not claim that these are identical to the anthroposophical view of learning through thinking, feeling and willing respectively, there is a close connection between the two views. The learning of human social values that overcome racism and other "isms" is no exception to this type of learning. In fact the "Crick Report" was about finding an effective way to educate the social element of, *inter alia*, freedom, democracy, equality, rights and co-operation (Crick 1998, p. 45). The Advisory group recommended that learning should not just be through **knowledge**, but also through the acquisition of values and dispositions (for example, **feelings** of concern, sympathy and tolerance) as well as **skills** and aptitudes (for example, the ability to co-operate)(Crick 1998, p. 44). So the question here is: do the critics disagree with the idea that humans learn better through more than just the intellect and that the inner life could play a role in education for human values? If the critics agree with this idea, then having something like Anthroposophy at the root of such an education is not really a problem. The real question is whether or not the propositions of Anthroposophy about human nature and child development are true and if Steiner's ideas on education are good. Despite the assertions of the critics to the contrary, it is not the bare fact that Anthroposophy is at the base of Steiner education that is a problem, the real question is whether or not his child development model is true.

The second and main point here, however, concerns the whether or not the moral and social values that Anthroposophy aims for are good, or right for today. Hence, the following will look at this in relationship to an education for human social values. It is without question that Steiner thought that his idea of the threefold social order and

its social values was important for his view of education: “Obviously, the Waldorf School can be successful only if it is completely inspired by the Spirit that aspires toward the threefold nature of the social organism” (Steiner 1919/95, p. 7). The question in this particular text was the separation of state influence on education; he thought that the methods and content of education should be derived from a holistic understanding of the human being, an understanding best achieved by those active in the educational sphere, not by politicians or those whose work is in the economic sector. In other places, however, he saw education as supporting the actual development social virtues of liberty, equality and brotherhood:

Adults will have to live in a social organism which, in regard to the economic aspect, will be social; in regard to the government, democratic; and from the spiritual aspect, liberal, free. ***The great problem of the future will be that of education.*** How will we have to deal with children so that they, as adults, can grow into the social, democratic, and spiritually free areas of living in the most comprehensive way?

(Steiner 1919/69, p. 12)(My bold)

Between birth and the seventh year, a child is an imitative being... For men will have to make clear to themselves that when children grow to adulthood in the social organism they will have to be ***free human beings***, and *one can become free only if as a child one was a most intense imitator.* (Steiner 1919/69, p. 13/14)(My bold)

From the seventh year of life until puberty... there lives in the child what may be called action based on authority... ***Equal rights*** will not come about in any other way, because *people will never become ripe for these equal rights if in childhood regard for authority has not been implanted in them.* (Steiner 1919/69, p. 14) (My bold)

After puberty, between the fourteenth and twenty first years... develops... a special manifestation of universal human love... Brotherliness, fraternity, in economic life as it has to be striven for in the future, *can only arise in human souls if education after the fifteenth year works consciously*

towards **universal human love**... Upon this threefold educational basis must be erected what is to flourish for mankind's future.

(Steiner 1919/69, p. 16/17)(My bold)

There are many aspects to these quotes that would need further discussion. For now, however, one can see that Steiner recommended the cultivation of three foundational social / moral values for the education of the child: **freedom in the spiritual / cultural sphere, equality in the government / democratic sphere** and **universal human love in the economic sphere**. He saw these as values, or virtues into which the children would grow into in time. For him, it was the central task of his views on education to help with this.

No doubt some would wish to question the nature of imitation and authority. But for now, suffice it to say that Steiner views these as “natural” capacities in the children that teachers could help develop and use in the teaching process: “We need to see what it means when children have been guided by a teacher they can look up to because this teacher is a **natural** authority for them” (Steiner 1919/ 95, p. 139)(My bold). These ideas were not conceived as **imposed** or **forced** upon the children; they were seen as **natural** tendencies that could be cultivated at the appropriate age phase so that learning can occur (Steiner 1924/95). In one place he referred to a “justifiable feeling of authority” (Steiner 1920/2001 p. 93) as distinct from an unjustifiable one which is really authoritarianism.

The connection to his ideas about social threefolding is evident: “the social, democratic, and spiritually free areas of living” refer to the economic, political and cultural / spiritual sphere respectively (see chapter 8). For Steiner, these were central aspects of his views on education and what he considered them to be all about in terms of a positive human future. Located within these spheres are the social values of “freedom, equal rights and universal human love” respectively.

As can be seen from chapter 8, these are ideas which he advocated in his “Anthroposophy”: social threefolding is central to this world view. The question is this: if the critics of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education reject them, does this mean that they oppose the social values of “freedom, equal rights and universal

human love”? I think they would not say so. But, if they do agree with these ideas, does this not mean that, at least in respect of these social values, that they agree with Steiner and his philosophy “Anthroposophy” in these respects? If so, in what sense is it wrong to have Anthroposophy at the root of Waldorf education?

As was argued in the previous chapters, Steiner’s social threefolding, and its inherent social values, oppose the fascist / racist conception. His educational theory promotes positive social values for the development of children and the future of human social life. These social values are also an integral part of his views on human evolution based on “**progress**, of inner **freedom**, of brotherly **love**, a small band from **every tribe** and **every nation**” (Steiner 1908/77, p. 140)(My emphasis) and which lead to a **moral community based on ethical individualism** (Chapters 3 & 6). These values are **universal** (they have no conceptual restriction to a particular group as there would be with racism (chapter 2)), they enable individuals to recognise the liberty, equal rights and universal human love for **all** races. As was shown earlier, for Steiner, these apply to all the peoples of the Earth, not just the Europeans. Due to the presence of this “universality” in Steiner’s thought, and this is applicable across all groups of human beings, his views must stand opposed to all forms of racism, to all forms of “groupism” such as one-sided nationalism, sexism, ageism, etc.

But it is not only social values that Waldorf Education recommends for children, it is also the social attitudes or dispositions of the **educators**: “The second thing that we must develop as we work toward a more **humane form of society** is a **social attitude** of teachers... We must find it so that a new **love of humanity** may come into the relationship between teacher and pupil” (Steiner 1919/25, p. 59)(my bold); and referring to what a child requires Steiner states “Teachers he needs with happy look and manner, and above all with an honest unaffected **love**” (Steiner 1909/27, p. 41))(my bold). Steiner saw **moral virtues** as being at the core of teaching and the social life: “We can bring the social question into proper perspective only through a genuine comprehension of morality” (Steiner 1922/96 p. 18) and the role of education in this is: “If we now turn to the moral aspect... the **most important** of educational tasks” (Steiner 1922/2004, p. 51)(my bold).

Steiner argued that the social and moral attitudes of teachers are essential for the development of those of the children. For him, the teacher should be a moral role model on different levels. He described these attitudes as being three principles of human moral virtues (Steiner 1923/88, p. 127). For him, these virtues are (1): “**gratitude** should grow naturally, simply through the children’s witnessing the **gratitude felt by their elders**... For out of this there will develop an all-embracing gratitude towards the **whole world** (Steiner 1923/88, p. 128/9); and (2) “the teacher must have acquired at least some measure of the **universal** nature of **love**... love for **everything in the world** (Steiner 1923/88, p. 132)... For nothing else can be the basis of the truly ethical virtue except the kind of love for **human kind**... It is the general love towards **all people**, love that reaches out for human understanding everywhere (Steiner 1923/88, p. 139). Furthermore (3): he develops this further in terms of adolescent education: “We must have enabled him or her to enter this new phase of development after puberty with full inner awareness, so that in a certain way the adolescent comes to find the **self**. Then **love of work** will develop... What part do teachers play in all this?.. If they can stand in the school as **selflessly** as possible... And for those who spread a socializing influence, the two things that matter are loving devotion to what they are doing, and an understanding interest in what others are doing (Steiner 1923/88, pp. 144-146)(My bold in all quotes).

For Steiner, the social attitudes of the teachers’ are central to the moral and social development of the children: the **gratitude, love** and **selflessness** of the teacher would lead into the **gratitude, love** and **love of work** in the children. These would be extended to the whole of humanity, all people and the world. Such a conception of “the most important of educational tasks” (Steiner 1922/2004, p. 51) transcends any kind of racism or groupism because of its universality. These social and moral virtues are directed at “**human** kind, all people, **everything** in the world, human understanding everywhere”; they are **universal** and not specific to any one sub-group. These universal human virtues stand in complete opposition to any kind of racism. They are the foundation of a **positive ethical future for ALL human beings**.

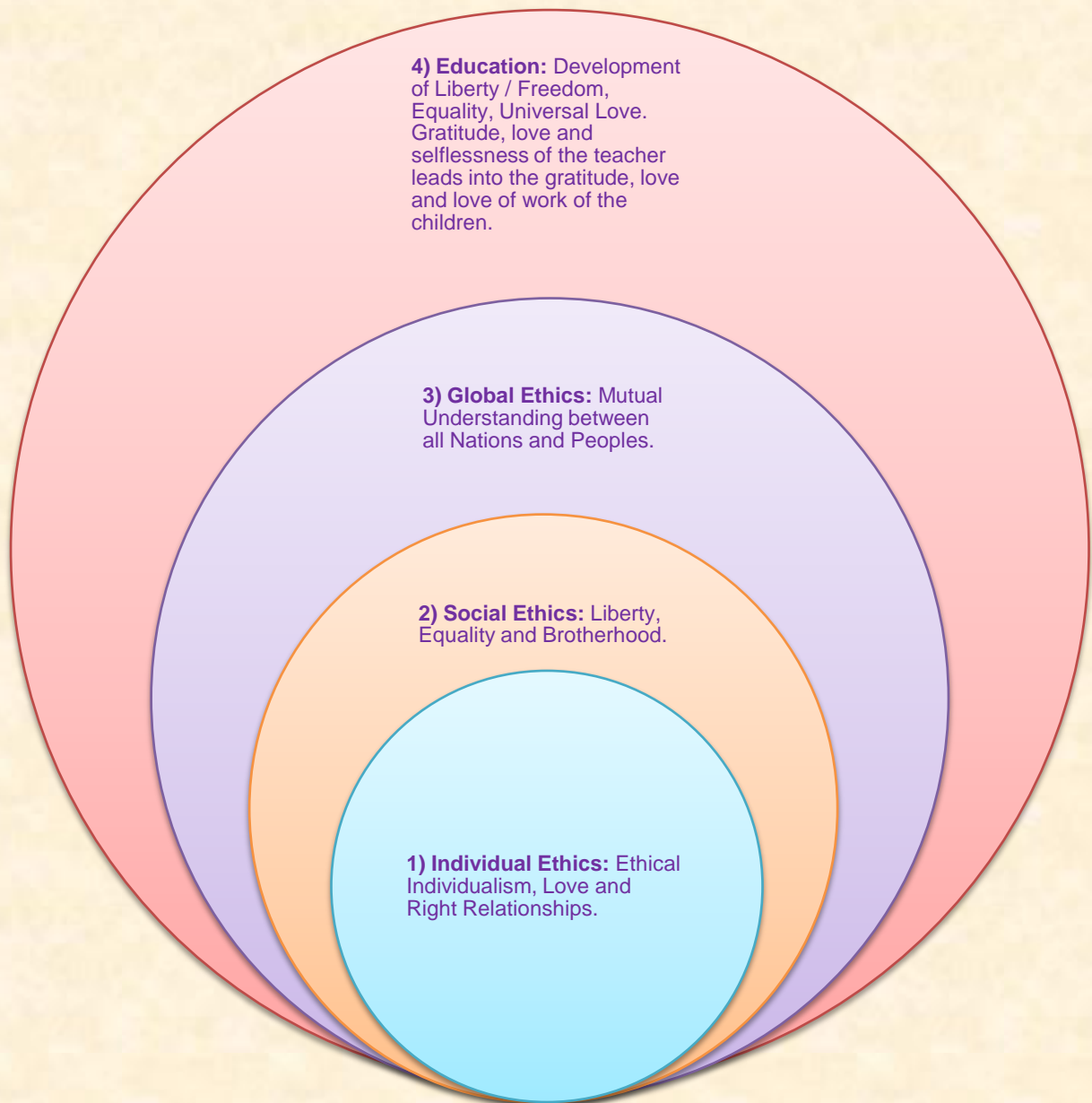
One of the ironies of the criticisms of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education is that of those by some British Humanist Association (BHA) members. Anthroposophy would agree with a large part of humanism, especially its moral and social values. So if the

BHA critics reject Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education wholesale then they are also rejecting large parts of humanism. ***In a curious contradictory logic, these particular critics reject the very thing which they accept as humanists.*** Of course this is dependent on how humanism is defined, what its **core** principles are rather than its **peripheral** ones. The main point of departure between Anthroposophy and the BHA form of humanism is the ontological conviction that the spirit exists for the former but not for the latter. But from the ethical / social values perspective they have much in common. If the atheist component of BHA humanism is central then maybe it should not be called the humanist association at all, but rather an “atheist association”. If the ethical values **are** central, then it really does agree with some central aspects of Anthroposophy. But as BHA members Robin Grinter and Anna Whitehead (2010, p. 7)(my bold) state: “Atheism or agnosticism is indeed necessary for Humanists, but it is not sufficient. Humanism is **above all an ethical approach** to life without a religious basis”(my emphasis). So the real central concept of humanism is its ethical values. So what are they? Core to humanism’s ethical convictions are: “the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual... Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare... Humanism supports democracy and human rights... Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility” (Grinter & Whitehead 2010, p. 11). This is not a view unique to British Humanists. The American Humanist Corliss Lamont has argued that “Humanism believes in a far-reaching social program that stands for the establishment throughout the world of democracy, peace, and a high standard of living on the foundations of a flourishing economic order, both national and international... Humanism believes in the complete social implementation of reason and scientific method; and thereby in democratic procedures, and parliamentary government, with full freedom of expression and civil liberties, throughout all areas of economic, political, and cultural life” (Lamont 1997, p. 14/5).

It does not take much to see a degree of convergence of anthroposophical social theory with core aspects of humanism: they both support individual liberty, democracy, equal rights and social responsibility. They both agree on a scientific approach, although Anthroposophy would extend the notion of what this means to include a scientific approach to spiritual things.

On the basis of this we can develop an image of Steiner's global ethics and how this is cultivated in his views on Education:

Fig 10.1



It can be seen from the above that Steiner's views on education reflect many of his concerns and hopes for the cultivation of positive social and moral values and virtues that could lead to a positive future for the whole of humanity. Starting with his philosophical ideas about Ethical Individualism, love and right relationships, he extended these notions to liberty, equality and universal brotherhood in the social

realm and then to his views on internationalism and then their practice in education. The crucial question then is not whether Anthroposophy is at the root of his education but whether or not its **specific** values and virtues are good for humanity as a whole.

Conclusion

The question here then is: what are the ethical and social values that can overcome racism and other forms of groupism such as the competitive and aggressive forms of nationalism. If education, of one kind or another, does not support or promote these ethical and social principles then it is unlikely that they will come about. But Steiner / Waldorf Education does support the ethical and social values of liberty, equality and social responsibility amongst many other principles. Only when such ideas are supported can all forms of racism and other types of groupism like sexism, nationalism, ageism and class prejudice be overcome. What the critics need to decide is whether or not they agree with the social and moral ideas represented in fig 10.1, not just reject Anthroposophy and Steiner / Waldorf education wholesale. If they do agree with them, then they agree with one of the central strands in Steiner's Anthroposophy.

I will finish this book with a final quote from Steiner which we have seen before in chapter 9 and which encapsulates his views on "race" and humanity as a whole:

Whether we apply this to smaller races and individual peoples, or confine ourselves to what is typical everywhere we see that man in his *whole nature* is not expressed in the members of any one people or race. Full manhood is as yet only an urge within us, but this urge must grow into a **love for all humanity**, for those qualities we do not ourselves possess by nature but can acquire if we sincerely seek for knowledge of the nature of other peoples of the Earth...

It is the striving of a true cosmopolitanism which, by assimilating all that can be acquired from a **love extended to other races**, ennobles and uplifts the individual people; knowledge of one's own race is sought by assimilating all that is idealistic, great and beautiful in other peoples of the Earth...

True internationalism... springs from a **love** which goes out to **all peoples and races** in order that the light received from them may be kindled in the deeds, concepts and creations of one's own people. Each individual race must so find its place in the great chorus of the peoples on the Earth that it contributes to the full understanding which can alone unite them all in real and mutual knowledge...

There must be knowledge of the conditions requisite for **uniting the peoples of the Earth**, in order that, as a result of this knowledge, each individual people may help to make the **waves of love** follow those of hatred. Human love alone has power to heal the wounds of hatred. If mankind has no wish for this love, chaos will remain...

Men who realise this will acquire the kind of **knowledge** that flows from a spiritual conception of the **relationships** between the peoples. They will take this knowledge into their **feeling — love for humanity** will be born. They will take this knowledge into **their will -- deeds for humanity will be accomplished**. The evolution of the age, with all the terrible paralysis that is appearing at the present time, places a solemn duty before the soul: to **gather together all that can unite mankind in love** and array it in opposition to the destructive elements that have made their appearance in recent times. This quest for loving unification, for unifying love is not merely a vague feeling. To those who understand the conditions of life today, it is the very highest duty of man.

(Steiner 1920, paragraphs 29 - 35) (My emphasis).

It is my view that Steiner's views on education and evolution make a significant contribution to positive global ethics and the evolution of a positive future for all peoples of the World: through knowledge of right relationships, love for humanity in feeling and deeds in the will. From his perspective, only then can we "gather together all that can unite mankind in love".

CENTRE FOR PHILOSOPHY AND ANTHROPOSOPHY

Aims

The Centre for Philosophy and Anthroposophy is essentially a research, teaching and writing / publishing initiative. This has its root in the following.

In Britain, anthroposophical institutions, such as Steiner / Waldorf schools and Camphill / Curative initiatives, have largely been operating outside the mainstream system. But with recent changes, new academies and stricter regulation for publicly funded bodies, their practices and underlying philosophies are beginning to be increasingly evaluated by the wider world. In these circumstances, public authorities and others will find themselves challenged by the radical ideas presented by Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy. The potential for misunderstanding is high. At the same time, in the last twenty years there has also been a growing interest in Steiner's ideas on education in the academic world and in mainstream schools as well as in medicine and agriculture, etc.

In light of this, the Centre for Philosophy and Anthroposophy aims to research and make public the core ideas of Anthroposophy and of its daughter movements, such as Steiner / Waldorf Education. Its special intent is to do this in a modern context, contrasting anthroposophical ideas with those in contemporary culture and society. On the basis of twenty years of researching, teaching and course development in relationship to Anthroposophy and Steiner / Waldorf Education in a University and in many anthroposophical settings, the Centre aims to offer the following:

- To give public courses to help enhance the public understanding of Steiner's philosophical and anthroposophical ideas. An example of this is his ideas on education and its philosophical and scientific foundations and to place this in a modern context.
- To carry out and publish research ideas pertaining to Steiner / Waldorf Education and its philosophical / anthroposophical and pedagogical (curriculum and method) foundations and locate this in contemporary research. This will include researching Steiner's own ideas about research methods.

- Give courses for teachers and trainee teachers on the basis of this research. These can be through attendance, distance learning or a combination of both. These are short courses are drawn from blocks of the Diploma course described below.
- For those wishing to go deeper, there will be a Diploma course available in 'Researching Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education'. For those undergoing current training the Diploma may be seen as a complement to their other studies. Please contact the Centre for further details.
- To research criticisms of Steiner's ideas and Waldorf schools and prepare and publish research documents about such criticisms and provide advice about already existent research.
- Offer consultancies to schools on the nature and importance of Anthroposophy in Steiner Waldorf schools and how it is represented to the public.
- Research and present to the public philosophies of spiritual and moral education as the foundation of a healthy society.

Funding

- The publications are funded by voluntary contributions. Every individual who reads the books is free to contribute any amount they wish, even if they are unable to, there is no set price. The payment is to support further research. So if you have read the books and found them valuable, please feel free.
- The Centre also aims to obtain funding for particular research tasks and commissions set by initiatives based on Anthroposophy.

Publications

There are two other books published available from the author:

- ***'Creative Evolution – a Goethean Perspective'*** is the outcome of a doctoral dissertation (formerly called "Being and Becoming Whole"). This explores and evaluates the application of Goethean Philosophy to the question of Creative (or emergent) Evolution. It does this by investigating the implicit, and often deeply hidden, Goethean ideas in writers such as David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Brian Goodwin, Daniel Dennet, Stephen J Gould, Rupert Sheldrake and Richard Dawkins. It considers the unique creativity of beings in fulfilling their potential in the course of evolution and argues against the materialistic interpretation of evolution.
- ***'Philosophies of Spirit and Nature – A Historical Context for Steiner's View of Reality'*** attempts to put Rudolf Steiner's ideas about nature and the spiritual hierarchies into the context of the history of ideas. The book considers how ideas about the so-called "Great Chain of Being" have evolved from the time before Plato and Aristotle, through Dionysius, Augustine, Aquinas, Locke, Kant and Goethe up to the 20th and 21st centuries with Alfred North Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Sheldrake and McGrath. It shows how Steiner made a unique contribution to the development of the idea of the relationship between nature, humanity and the spiritual hierarchies whilst at the same time locating him in a mode of thinking that was predominant throughout 2,000 years of history and is now regaining its place in culture through a "convergence of science and spirituality".

Both are available in PDF and soft copy format.

Please contact for further details.

Organisation

The director of the Centre is Dr Robert Rose who has a PhD in the philosophy of science and was the modules leader in Philosophy and Anthroposophy at the University of Plymouth from 1992 to 2012. He is one of the main tutors on a new MA in Steiner's Educational Philosophy at the Christ Church University, Canterbury. From 1987 to 1990, he was a student and co-worker in the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum.

Alison Rose is the business manager. She has a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Studies and has worked in this kind of role for the last twenty years. Previously, she was the book shop manager at Rudolf Steiner House, London.

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