



Rudolf Steiner's Viewpoint on the "Spirit" in "The Spiritual Ground of Education"

Dr. Tran Minh Hieu

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Published Online: 30 June 2023</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Dr. Tran Minh Hieu</p>	<p>In this article, we present Rudolf Steiner's views on spirit and spirituality which help us gain insight into the spiritual approach to education, from there has a new, more positive attitude to solving problems in education in Vietnam today, contributing to bringing education through the current crisis simultaneously, it also affirms that the achievements of Vietnamese education are reliable to promote it confidently.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS: Education, spirituality, spirituality in education, Rudolf Steiner</p>	

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the development of technology has brought about many changes and achievements in education. Besides, education also faces a crisis due to uneven development, for example, slow improvement in content and curriculum, not keeping up with practical requirements; is moral degradation in the school; is inequality in educational opportunities; is the disconnection between parents and children in family education, between teachers and students in school education... Educational reforms have been proposed and tried, but not always successful. One of the main causes of inefficiencies in change is in the approach. For a long time, we have relied almost exclusively on the materialist scientific worldview in solving problems, but that is not enough. Practice shows that it is necessary to add another approach, although not new, but we either forget or do not want to face it: The perspective from the spiritual science of education. One of the proponents of this approach was Rudolf Steiner Joseph Lorenz (1861 - 1925) - an Austrian philosopher, social thinker, architect, and psychologist. Understanding his views on Anthroposophy, especially the concept of "Spiritual" in the work "The spiritual ground of education" (1922) will help us gain insight into the spiritual approach in education. Education, thereby having a new and more positive attitude to solving problems in education in Vietnam today.

This article has 3 parts. Part 1 introduces the basic contents of Anthroposophy; the contents of Part 2 is Spirituality as a Foundation in Education; Part 3 presents some comments on the spiritual perspective - the foundation in education. Similar studies like this have been published by us in works [4], [5], [6], [7], [8] and [9].

RESULTS

1. Basic contents of Anthroposophy

To understand Rudolf Steiner's view of "The mind of the spirit" or "Spirit" in "The spiritual ground of Education", it is first necessary to understand his fundamental ideas about Anthroposophy. Anthroposophy is the spiritual or scientific view of human nature. It is presented in part one entitled: "The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy" of the work "The Education of the Child" [1]. Rudolf Steiner came from the recognition that modern man is facing many problems, but that modern scientific knowledge based on a materialistic worldview is not enough to solve. The void in that understanding is the science of spirituality or the knowledge of the "hidden part of man's nature". According to him, the main barriers that have made people "avoid" this knowledge for so long are: 1 – The materialistic and natural-scientific worldview with the characteristic of research methods only recognizes that what is perceived by the senses or measured to exists, outside of that scope is "agnostic"; 2 – People believe that there are limits to perception. Discussing these barriers, Rudolf Steiner said: 1 - The method of natural science, although it has brought many great achievements, also leads to a partial understanding of human nature, man's physical body is only a part of that nature; 2 – Humans should not limit their cognitive ability to concepts and categories but should believe in the possibility of cognitive evolution by developing new cognitive organs.

He takes a visual example of a blind man to make this point clear. Blind people can't see light and colours don't mean those things don't exist. On the other hand, if blind people receive eye surgery, they can completely perceive

objects that were previously incomprehensible. More importantly, Rudolf Steiner emphasizes, even if eye surgery fails, the blind man still has inner powers that allow him to make sense of the world [1, 6 - 8]. Such reasoning leads to the search for methods that allow the limits of perception to be extended. And this is what Rudolf Steiner emphasizes, the higher organs that allow one to penetrate the higher worlds that are always latent in each person. Anyone can develop these organs as long as they have the patience, endurance and energy to apply them to their situation. Therefore, Rudolf Steiner devotes all his focus to how, how to expand cognitive capacity to understand knowledge about the "hidden human nature", a "supersensory" world ' which is traditionally considered 'agnostic'. On the one hand, he promoted the methods of natural science and its achievements, and on the other hand, proposed combined methods such as sincere observation, without prejudice to the development of human nature, and should observations in children; Spiritual experiences, practices of spiritual connection between people and the universe... Based on the concept of expanding the limits of human perception and methods, Rudolf Steiner builds knowledge of spiritual science. - Anthroposophy.

The basic content of Anthroposophy on the inner nature of man, according to Rudolf Steiner, can be summarized as follows. 1 – In terms of structure, the inner nature of man consists of 4 parts: the physical body "Physical Body", the vital body "Etheric Body" or "Life-Body", the emotional body "Astral Body" or " Sentient Body", and Ego. The "Spirit-Self" spiritual self appears associated with these four components and is the product of their transformation. 2 - These four factors appear together as seeds in the child, but develop sequentially at different stages: from 0-7 years old, from 7-14 years old, and after 14 years old. Each of those stages must have the right environment to protect, nurture, and provide living conditions until each part of the body perfects itself, is mature, and independent (environment in the broad sense, including the physical environment and the mental environment). This fundamental knowledge of the inner nature of man must be the foundation of education.

2. Spiritual as a foundation in education

2.1. The concept of "Spiritual" or “The mind spirit” from the point of view of Rudolf Steiner

Rudolf Steiner believes that grasping spiritual scientific knowledge is not only to satisfy understanding or serve abstract arguments but to apply it to practice. And one of the main areas of life where we must recognize the existence of spirituality is education. But first, we still need to clarify what is "Spiritual" in his opinion.

Rudolf Steiner discusses the concept of "Spirit" in his second lecture "The Perception of Soul and Spirit" (August 17, 1922) [2, 15]. In this lecture, he does not define "Spirit" as is commonly found in science, but mainly describes it, perhaps because it is the "inner part of human nature".

First of all, he affirmed that his concept of "Spirit" is not identical to the idea of "Intellect" or "Mind" in English. It is also not synonymous with "Spirit" from a mystical religious point of view. “On the one hand, my meaning must not be confused with the way certain mystical, fanatical, or superstitious sects and movements use the words *spirit* and *spiritual*. On the other hand, it is quite distinct from what is meant by *intellect* or *mind*” [2, 15 - 16]. He says we still have a vivid sense of how spirituality is conveyed through every word. It is this spirituality and its essence that is what you mean when you use the word spirituality. “It is not revealed by intellect, nor by what we call the mind” [2, 17]. Described further, this "Spirit" is close in meaning to "Spirit" in the view of the ancients, a form of cosmic energy, a connection and harmony between humans and heaven and earth. Rudolf Steiner gives two examples of spiritual approaches: An ancient man’s way and a modern man’s way.

The method of the ancient Indians is the method of yoga breathing meditation. They are aware and observe the breath going in and out within themselves, from there they experience the connection between the breath and the whole body, entering the spiritual world - where the harmonious relationship between man and the universe. According to Rudolf Steiner, the development of modern science with intellectual achievements, on the one hand, brings the world of material civilization to man, but on the other hand, also makes man away from his spiritual world. Pure intellectualism has made people stop at superficial perceptions. “Today, at some point, we must experience the suffering that goes along with the realization that, as long as one is occupied solely with intellectual activity and observations, one life in emptiness and mere images, remote from reality” [2, 23]. “Yogis looked for their humanity in the breath; today, we must lose our humanity and become weak and faint through thought-picture, our intellectuality” [2, 23]. Rudolf Steiner pointed out the limitation of knowledge in perceiving the world, "Knowledge, it is said, involves abstract, logical concepts. This is true – but how, if the world is not meant to be comprehended through abstract, logical concepts? If the world is a work of art, we must understand it artistically, not logically. Here, logic is only a means of discipline. We should not understand anything about the world through logic. Consequently, we must enter the objects themselves” [2, 24].

If the ancients approached the spiritual world with yoga meditation, modern people today, with their intellectual capacity, approach it differently. In the specific case of education - the main field of life, it is the preparation of an active attitude based on the spiritual science of the teacher. The teacher with endless creative energy, love and respect for the unopened spiritual world of children, uses the art of education to penetrate that world appropriately. The fables, inspirational portraits, life tones, natural colours, and sensory touches always create a strong connection between what you

want to convey and the hearts of children. “Thus, through the soul’s work and by working our way into imagination itself, we approach and enter gradually into the spirit” [2, 27].

Thus, the concept of "Spirit" in Rudolf Steiner's point of view carries the colour of cosmic spirituality, a sacred connection between man and the universe, with feelings of gratitude. “Correctly speaking, all human feeling should function from a fundamental sense of gratitude that the cosmos has given us birth The Art of Educating Young Children 57 and a place within the universe. Any philosophy that ends with abstract observations and fails to flow out in gratitude toward the universe is incomplete. It is a philosophy for the activation of the head, not for the experience of the whole human organism. A head activity that can’t warm the remainder of the organism does not make you happy, but sad. For it develops like an alien body, like a tumour. The final chapter of every philosophy—its effect on human feeling—should be gratitude toward the cosmic powers...Therefore, the first important thing to be worked for in spiritual knowledge is thankfulness that the universe has given a child into our keeping” [2, 56 - 57].

To access cosmic spirituality, according to Rudolf Steiner, people should have an overall view of the big picture of life, thereby focusing their will and action on long-term goals instead of spending too much effort on rational analysis, logic in the immediate moments or short-term goals.

Such a view of spirituality became the cornerstone of Steiner's education. There are 3 highlights in his practice and application: The art of educating children (from the age of 0-14), the role of the teacher, Educating morals and art.

2.2 Some Applications of the Spiritual Perspective in Education

2.2.1 About the Art of educating children

If you approach education from a spiritual perspective, the goals and methods of education (for young children) will be very different from the approach from a scientific and intellectual perspective.

First, regarding educational goals, Rudolf Steiner believes that education must lead people to the free development of emotions, wills and souls. Explaining this, he recognized that the nature of child development is an internal, internal struggle between genetic traits and the ability to adapt to the environment, which is the replacement of the old body with the new body, new inside. Education must help people be able to accept everything that happens in the world with a free and open mind, so that before each new thing, they can make their judgments, feelings as well as emotions, and take appropriate action. So educating children is like the process of spiritually leading them to freedom. To do so, there will be no such thing as an imposition, “This means that there is something in a person that we must not touch, something we must approach with sensitive reverence, without bringing a copy of our abilities to the student” [2, 49]. “Respect for the freedom of the child, so that the child’s freedom is not

threatened, but maintained, where it is the unconscious element of organic growth” [2, 60]. The teacher’s main job is to remove obstacles to ensure that the young mind is free to learn everything from life.

Secondly, in terms of educational attitude, Rudolf Steiner from the spiritual approach said that "Gratitude, and respect" must be the keywords of educators. From feelings of gratitude to the universe, educators are always aware of gratitude for children. Because children come to us from the depths of the universe, the highest manifestation of the universe, bringing with them news about the nature of the universe and the world. “With this feeling, we find one of the most important impulses of our educational method” [2, 57]. Deeply understanding children's gratitude from a spiritual perspective will help many parents and teachers comprehensively change their emotions, thinking, and acting in connecting, caring, and nurturing their children and their students. Even in so-called "tragedy" situations, when the universe hands us "incomplete" children such as difficult temperaments, and disabilities, we can still have a positive attitude from the outside in to accompany our students. “But we must live through this feeling of tragedy because it is this very feeling that will help us over the rocks and crags of education. If we can feel gratitude even for a difficult child and also feel the tragedy of it, then we will be in a position to feel gratitude to the divine world. For we must learn to perceive how something “bad” can also be something divine, although this is a very complicated matter. Gratitude must permeate teachers of children up to the change of teeth; it must be their fundamental mood” [2, 58].

Third, regarding educational methods, Rudolf Steiner believes that the spiritual development within the child will govern the development of the physical condition as well as the appropriate educational method. Therefore, the way of education must come from the inner nature of the child instead of from the outside or the will of the educator. This requires educators to have a very detailed and thorough understanding of the nature of children. Rudolf Steiner illustrates with many examples, for example, why children should not be taught to write letters from the beginning but should go from hieroglyphs, and why children should not be taught to start from abstract things but to start with words. lively overall, why not teach kids subtraction instead of addition...

2.2.1 Teachers as Artists in Education

Approaching education from a spiritual perspective, Rudolf Steiner argues that a teacher should be an artist in education and not just an expert, scientist, or person with pure pedagogical techniques. An artist in education should have the following characteristics:

Firstly, to determine what knowledge to teach children, the teacher must come from a delicate, detailed and thorough understanding, of the physical and mental development of children instead of coming from

understanding abstract, intellectual, and logical. Children will only learn knowledge that is consistent with the motivations and experiences that come from the body. For example, children between the ages of 11 and 12 have certain characteristics of the respiratory, circulatory, and muscular systems. Children's bodies have experiences of "building an inward rhythm system", so teachers can only teach them knowledge about the earth, creatures, animals, or some historical images. history in visual, visual form instead of teaching knowledge about leverage, dynamics or causality in the form of abstract principles. Rudolf Steiner requires teachers to have flexible ideas and feelings. The introduction to children of knowledge according to the external curriculum framework, not coming from the understanding of the child's inner nature can even harm development. For example, a teacher trying to teach dynamics or mechanics knowledge to children before the age of 11 can clog the brain, causing it to lose flexibility, as children grow up, it will develop into a migraine and get worse. All the teacher needs to do is "We lovingly build what is working within the children" [2, 80].

Secondly, the teacher's artistic quality in education is also reflected in the classification of students based on the internal basis - the temperament factor, thereby finding the appropriate educational method. This is in contrast to the classification of children from the outside: by age, skin colour, region, or family income level... The spiritual approach always comes from within the child, creating an objective basis for applying appropriate educational methods. For example, Rudolf Steiner divides children based on temperament, including three groups: anxious, active and impatient children. At first glance, according to our senses, we think that, for anxious children, it is necessary to introduce exciting and dynamic elements into the educational environment to pull children out of that contemplative world; or with flexible children, it is necessary to bring opposite elements such as silence, quietness, and slowness into the environment to pull the child to calm down; or with a child with a temper, it is necessary to give him an element of tenderness... But Steiner's detailed analysis from the perspective of spiritual science shows that inside the child there is a connection between temperament, food and environment, so the method of education that is suitable for each group of children in the world is "take poison to treat poison".

Third, teachers as educational artists need to optimize the use of art forms in education. Music is in tune with the child's rhythmic system, colour helps to detect and heal inner wounds, and Eurythmy - the art of expressive movement is intimately related to the whole person.

3. Some comments on spiritual perspective – the foundation in education

It can be said that Rudolf Steiner's views on "Spiritualism" in "Spiritual Foundations of Education" are built based on Anthroposophy doctrine, pondered over a long

period, containing many valuable values. We make some comments.

Firstly, together with the Anthroposophy theory, the concept of "Spiritual" has provided a new and unique approach that complements the natural science approach to education, allowing people to broaden their audience's consciousness of the inner parts of human nature. Although it is not possible to confirm using the proven method of natural science, it is his sincere, unbiased observation combined with realistic scientific achievements in medicine, biology, and neuroscience, psychology, especially the results in educational practice from this approach, Rudolf Steiner showed the objective existence of the spiritual and spiritual world in children. This is the basis for opening up a new way of thinking, a new method in education compared to the traditional way.

Secondly, the spiritual science approach in education makes the perception of educational goals and educational methods have revolutionary changes. All educational methods must aim to guide and create conditions for each person to achieve freedom of mind. It is the process of "self-finding way" of spirituality. This approach helps us "slow down", rethinking the current educational method, which is imposing, and overvalues reason and logic, causing unnecessary pressure and stress for teachers, students, and parents.

Third, the spiritual science approach to education helps teachers find a natural, sincere, loving, respectful and grateful connection towards the child. This emotion is not forced from the outside but comes from understanding the sacred spiritual connection between man and the universe. This is the essence of human education.

Fourth, the spiritual approach to education makes each teacher constantly learn seriously and cultivate himself not only intellectually but also mentally. Because a teacher is not simply an educational expert, an educator, or a person proficient in pedagogical techniques, but first and foremost, must be an artist in education.

Finally, although Rudolf Steiner's spiritual approach to education contains many positives, it still encounters barriers, especially educators' awareness and understanding of politics and this doctrine. The stereotype of "Spiritual" as a mysterious, unprovable thing will make many people afraid, not daring to experience and practice this method.

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