

## The Future of intelligence: An example of a research question in the context of Waldorf teacher training

John Chalmers, Bangkok, ITEF meeting, 16 November 2024

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Research is about the art of asking questions and finding a way to new concepts.

*...epistemological problems must be pursued a little further. Without turning psychical observation to the process of forming representations, it cannot be understood what role the percept plays within the cognitional process. The representation-forming process, however, makes this apparent: the percept is, in contrast to the universalizing, contextualizing concept, the individualizing element of reality. For it ties the fluid concept down to a single case. The process of forming representations is therefore not only characterized as the transition between percept and concept, but also as both of these elements that are connected in it.*

Herbert Witzgenmann<sup>1</sup>

Research has emerged from our ITEF meetings together. One example is our colleague from Taiwan June's research work around the Will in the Waldorf approach and her pedagogical explorations of the Will in the learning process. Research also can be understood in most if not all of what we do as Waldorf educators. This can be from our research for a main lesson and also the working with an individual student to support their learning experience. We can ask the question; what is a main lesson, traditionally in Waldorf Education? Research can also be seen as a lifelong activity in which we come to terms by a practice of inquiry with what it means to live in these modern times.

The topic for today is based on presentations and workshops I have been giving over the last two years. The provisional title I've been using is: *Education and the Future of Human Intelligence*. We are at a crossroads in these times as artificial intelligence emerges from many different directions into our lives. Asking the question; what might be the role of Waldorf Education for the future of human intelligence, might be one way to proceed. We would need to compare AI and human intelligence.

This has of course already begun in the world of AI development, and discussions about the nature of thinking and consciousness itself are common in this high-tech world. Ray Kurzweil's book *The Singularity Is Near* from 2005<sup>2</sup> and his newer book *The Singularity Is Nearer*<sup>3</sup>, poses a challenging vision of the future; an actual prediction of a fusion of human intelligence and artificial intelligence. This is what he has

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<sup>1</sup> <https://freedom-and-creation.blogspot.com>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Singularity\\_Is\\_Near](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Singularity_Is_Near)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Singularity\\_Is\\_Nearer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Singularity_Is_Nearer)

called and still calls today *Singularity*, and he has predicted it will happen before 2040. So, the questions about consciousness, such as what is consciousness are not just out-lying philosophical questions any longer. Questions about the nature of consciousness and thinking are now at the center of the evolution of humanity. The coming of AI must also be seen now as an aspect of human destiny.

Waldorf education possibly (even hopefully) represents an alternative approach. As our colleague from Taiwan Hornfay Cherng has commented, it is the embodied human experience, the whole human experience of Thinking, Feeling and Willing that brings a lively approach to the developmental health of children in these times. Research is a constant practice, and I have proposed that research into this question can lead to fruitful discussions and new insights about the essence and meaning of Waldorf education today.

To proceed we can agree; research is the art of concepts. We must activate and be active with our whole being towards a future for all of humanity. We need to bridge the gap between the academic world and demonstrably effective theoretical and practical approaches in Waldorf pedagogy. The meaning of the arrival of artificial intelligence can be seen from different perspectives, but regardless of what perspective one is researching we must be and stay awake to the implications of this new AI world, for the future of education and the future of human intelligence.

And to end, a quote from a summary of one of the participants in the ITEF meeting, Raphael from the Philippines, paraphrasing our Taiwanese colleague Shi Ting's comment and adding a summation of his own to the meeting's questioning:

*As an integral part of the human being, this gives human intelligence a quality that may not be found in AI, i.e. an embodiment. Human intelligence is embodied and resides within the very nature of the human being. There is, consequently, an almost mystical aspect to this embodied intelligence.*

*AI is perhaps the «fire» for modern humanity. If fire brought about a significant change and development in human intelligence in the past, perhaps the role that AI has to play in the present is similar to fire. It is a tool that helps organize information and makes it accessible to human beings. It helps human beings to express themselves in written form. The challenge is to build a relationship to the information generated by AI so that it becomes the information of the human being. In a sense, it is embodied.*

*What does the future hold for intelligence? AI will be very much a part of human intelligence, but will humanity be able to learn and build a healthy relationship with AI so that human intelligence will always be embodied?*