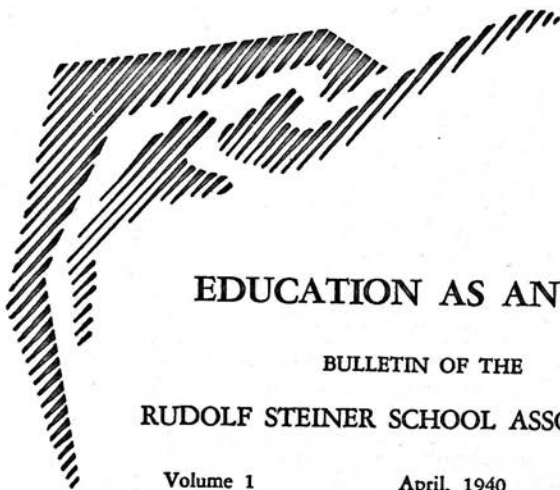




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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THE ASSOCIATION AND ITS BULLETIN

This is the first number of our bulletin, and it will be sent to some non-members of the Association. For both of these reasons it contains explanatory material which, naturally, will not be used in subsequent issues. We shall continue with articles about teaching in the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. It can be considered as one example of the general trend in all Rudolf Steiner Schools, which stress the individual touch of the teacher. There will be quotations from the works of Dr. Steiner and general educational articles. If our readers wish to ask questions of the contributors we shall try to start a question-box and publish answers as the space allows. We will keep you informed of the news of the New York school, of the new ventures in this country and, if possible, tell you about some of the European schools.

Owing to the limited funds of this young association we must start our bulletin in a modest way, but we hope it will grow. We will welcome any suggestions from members which contribute toward making this little paper more interesting, informative or alive.

In the first number we would like to tell you briefly of the Rudolf Steiner way of education, what the Rudolf Steiner School Association is and what we hope it can do.

These methods are not experimental for they have been used since the forming of the Waldorf School in 1919. Dr. Steiner said at that time; "The principles of the Waldorf School are in no sense revolutionary. . . . There is no desire to cast everything aside and imagine that the only possible thing is something radically new. The aim is rather to investigate the inner forces now ruling in the nature of man in order to be able to take them into account in the sphere of education, and thereby to find a true place in the social life for the human being in body, soul and spirit. For education has always been a concern of social life, and still is so at the present time. It must be a social concern in the future as well."

Walter Lippmann, among others, is also conscious of education as a social concern. In writing about the communistic trend revealed at the Washington meeting of the Youth Congress he says; "What is serious about this is not the nature of these opinions but what has been revealed about how, as a result of recent theories of education, this new generation, or at least an articulate part of it, has learned to form opinions." And further on. "The fact is, however, that if you remove authority and discipline and tradition, what you create is an unsatisfied need, a vacuum, which is then filled by some other tradition and by some other form of authority."

The Rudolf Steiner way of education does not teach a child *what* to think but rather gives him a non-rigid basis for thinking which can cope with new situations as they arise. It teaches him in such a way that he is *able* to form independent opinions and to stand erect when outside influences tend to make him lose his balance. He is in little danger—if he learns to think—of becoming a mere tool to influences attacking him from all directions and he is protected, in later life, from falling into the traps so cleverly set for him by various "ideologies".

The Rudolf Steiner School Association has been formed by uniting the several groups interested in and working for one Rudolf Steiner School in this country. In Germany there were nine such schools, before the present form of government started closing them, and one in Austria. There are three schools in Switzerland, one each in Hungary and Holland, two in Norway and six in England.

The immediate aim of the Association is to support the present school at 20 West 73rd Street, New York City. If we consider this as just one small school situated in a certain city, then it would be the task of us in New York to run that school as well as we could and keep our problems to ourselves. But because the larger aim of the Association is to make this way of education known throughout the country it seems logical that the existing school, composed of kindergarten and seven grades, should serve as the nucleus of that effort.

But if the New York school is to be considered as a true example of this way of education, it must be strengthened and built up until it is truly worthy of such an important function. It is a good school now—the children love it and the parents are pleased with it. It should have a high-school before it can be a model school. It must have a training school for teachers if it is to become a "parent-school". In all its branches it must be brought to an absolute state of excellence if it is to stand before the country as a Rudolf Steiner School where the methods may be observed in action. It is not enough to talk about them!

But for this school to act as a "parent" or model it must have help to provide more adequate quarters, a finer equipment and a larger staff of teachers trained in this pedagogy. It must be relieved of the terrible financial strain under which the teachers have been working with such fine courage and loyalty. We have not done badly with the limited financial backing we have had. But there is still much to do before we will be able to give our attention to a wider program than the day-to-day problems which confront any small school.

One of our parents suggested that each member of the Association should be able to bring in five new members. If each tried to do this and the new ones, in turn, should do the same our association would grow rapidly. Any moneys received, above the running expenses for the Association, will be given to the N. Y. school. We do not wish to burden our friends with appeals for money but a large Association membership would provide funds, both financial and moral, and would serve to create more and more interest in the Rudolf Steiner way of education, in an ever wider field.

Editor

THE NEW YORK SCHOOL IN THE MAKING

Rudolf Steiner's ideas on education, although widely known in Central Europe, were scarcely heard of in the English-speaking world until 1922. A conference held at Oxford University in that year dealing with "The Realization of Spiritual Values in Education and Social Life" brought these ideas impressively to the attention of educators in England. Through this conference and others on the continent a few Americans learned of these educational principles and plans were made to start a school in New York City.

It was seven years before these plans matured. The problem of finding and preparing teachers and of interesting parents in this new approach to education occupied the thoughts of Miss Irene Brown during these years. Beginning with her personal friends, she succeeded in continually widening the circle of interest. Through her influence several teachers from private schools attended conferences in Europe, heard Dr. Steiner and visited the Waldorf School. Later several took the training courses there. Meanwhile a Quarterly devoted to Dr. Steiner's educational ideas was published which created interest and made many new friends.

The actual opening of the school in the fall of 1928 was made possible by the enthusiasm and generosity of Miss Brown and the courage of Mrs. Virginia Birdsall, a teacher of long experience who had been preparing herself over a period of years. The little school began in a modest way with thirteen pupils. Mrs. Birdsall was assisted by Mrs. Irene Foltz in the class teaching and by others who taught languages, eurythmy and art. The following year the present building was leased, the proper permission obtained to give the school its name and a charter granted to the school by the State of New York. More teachers were engaged and the school opened with thirty-three pupils.

The inevitable difficulties of initiating such a work were greatly increased by the depression and the fact that the original financial support could not continue. At this time when many private schools were forced to close, the Rudolf Steiner School continued to live due to the sacrifice of those who realized the importance of this work. At one time the faculty saved the school from closing by voluntarily cutting their all too modest salaries in half. However, during this first decade several of the teachers were able to spend a year of study at the Waldorf School and new, thoroughly trained teachers were added to the staff.

The school is directed by the faculty itself in all matters pertaining to the teaching and the educational policy. In the other branches—administration, finances, contact with the public etc.—they are aided by an active board of directors. The close cooperation between faculty, directors and parents permits these groups to work together with unusual effectiveness.

Interest in the work of the school is steadily growing. The parents' evenings, to which friends of the school are invited, have been so well attended that they are now held on an average of twice a month. Lecturers are engaged for the meeting or a member of the faculty speaks on the teaching of some special subject. After a general discussion the class-rooms are visited. There the work of the children is inspected and a teacher is in charge to answer questions.

Another activity of the school, which is growing in proportion to the interest it creates, are the educational conferences. Last year two morning conferences were held at the school for public and private-school teachers and were well attended. So far this year there has been only one, but it was a more ambitious undertaking, held at the auditorium of the Child Study Association and lasting three days. Our own staff of teachers was aided by

two European lecturers of wide experience and a eurythmist, just returned from the School of Eurythmy in Switzerland, took part in the eurythmy demonstration with our own teacher.

The New York school is growing but it has not yet the enrollment it should have. Yet one thing we find very encouraging is the fact that children are being sent to the school from Long Island and New Jersey every day, parents have moved to the vicinity solely to enroll their children and a few children from distant cities are boarded near by. This seems to indicate that all the effort, sacrifice and courage which went into the founding and the building up of the school have been worth while. But we do not forget that still more of these efforts must be freely given to keep intact the things accomplished and to enable the school to approach the degree of excellence toward which we aim. We know that we will never be completely satisfied with this first Rudolf Steiner school in America because that would mark the end of its growth. When a living thing ceases to grow it ceases to live, and a true Rudolf Steiner school is a living organism.

Miriam Wallace

"The Waldorf School pedagogy* is on the whole not a pedagogical system but it is an art by means of which that which is in man is awakened. Fundamentally the Waldorf School pedagogy does not educate but it awakens. For it is that with which it deals today, with awakening. First the teacher must be awakened, then the teacher in turn must awaken the children and the young people."

Rudolf Steiner.

A GLIMPSE OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL

The first thing to be observed in this school is the feeling of cooperation which exists between teacher and children. This may be due in part to the fact that, whenever possible, one teacher remains with the same class through the full eight grades.

The morning starts with exercises in speech-formation and recitations of poetry which awaken the children's minds for the work of the day. The "main lesson" follows. It lasts for two hours without intermission and has proved its value by encouraging concentration and a deeper feeling of interest in the subject being taught. This one subject is studied for a period of several weeks—then another takes its place. These main-lesson subjects, in the lower grades, are arithmetic, English, writing and geography. In the higher grades they include man and animal, history, botany, science, geometry and astronomy. They are lessons for the intellectual forces of the head. Because a child is a rhythmical being he likes repetition and an interplay between such polarities as laughter and weeping, the comic and the tragic. And so, during the lessons, this is observed in modified form to avoid monotony. The teacher varies the methods of study from writing to reading, quietness to activity and from drawing or painting to verbal discussions.

After these "head lessons" the schedule provides subjects connected with the feeling forces of the heart, such as the foreign languages, singing, flute-lessons and eurythmy.

*The Waldorf School was founded in Stuttgart, Germany, by Rudolf Steiner in 1919 and was directed by him. As this was the first of these schools, and the largest, Dr. Steiner's educational methods are sometimes referred to as the Waldorf School Pedagogy. Ed.

Finally, there are on the schedule such activities as handwork, shop-work and gymnastics, promoting the coordination of all limb movements.

Of particular interest to visitors is the grouping together of the different temperaments—the choleric, the sanguine, the phlegmatic and the melancholic. The phlegmatic group is placed at the front of the class and the melancholic by the windows. By allowing the children to observe their own characteristics in each other, as in a mirror, the Rudolf Steiner pedagogy brings the temperaments into balance. This induces children to recognize what they themselves lack by observing what the other groups express.

No text books are used in a Rudolf Steiner School. The pupils write their own, largely with colored pencils. The notebooks reveal the individual and artistic expression of each child's learning and understanding.

That the child is an artist at heart can be seen in his paintings and colored drawings. Once a week these children paint with water-colors and some of their work shows a really remarkable and entirely new feeling for color and movement. It is as though the pictures of sunsets, landscapes and trees, the interpretations of fairy tales and myths had been formed by the particular living quality of the colors themselves. Color is not used to outline separate objects, but blended so as to express both the composition and the child's innermost being and artistic ability.

The same artistic principle is used in speech training and recitation. The teacher insists upon a certain rhythm and quality of vowel sounds which become an educational force in the child's development.

Acting is a much used medium. Through it the children can express what they have absorbed in their studies, and little plays are given at the general assembly the first Thursday of each month. Then the children play selections on the block-flutes. This is the first instrument taught because, resembling the human voice, it is connected with the breathing processes. A large part of the assembly is given to eurythmy, a new art of movement created by Dr. Steiner. Here the child can sense the reality of harmony in tone and speech.

The natural artistic nature of the child and his strong feeling for authority and devotion are carefully observed and developed. This point is particularly stressed because the general trend of the modern generation is to ignore these two important factors.

At the present time there is a growing tendency to force the intellect to abstract thinking, and the will to thoughtless activity. But the Rudolf Steiner pedagogy is expressly designed to enable the individuality of the child to unfold a harmony of the forces of thinking, feeling and willing in a living and balanced way. The feeling life of the child is cultivated in such a way as to carry out the individual and social principles inherent in Christianity. The aim of this sort of development for a child lies in the healing quality it can bring to the physical, mental and social disorder of modern civilization.

And why is this possible in such a school?

Because the teacher, himself, shows an equal devotion to the subject taught and to the child's balanced unfoldment; because he, too, is a student. He is a student of the profound knowledge of mankind and of the eternal laws of man's development which have been made available to him through the research of Dr. Rudolf Steiner.

Frederick Hiebel

"All that the child learns during his school years should ultimately and in some way be so applied that he can everywhere trace its connection with practical human life."

Rudolf Steiner

WHEN SHALL GRAMMAR BE TAUGHT?

In an effort to make education a less stereotyped and more living experience for the child, there is a marked tendency to defer the study of grammar to a much later age than formerly. But this raises two questions. 1. Is the child of today at a disadvantage in not possessing a working knowledge of his mother-tongue? 2. Can this knowledge be brought to him in a manner suited to his stage of development?

Rudolf Steiner, whose art of education closely follows the child's natural development, contends that the child of nine or ten not only is ready for the study of grammar but actually needs it. For a knowledge of the structure and laws of his mother-tongue gives him a feeling of confidence in using it. Before the age of nine or ten, children speak or write largely from their unconscious instinct of imitation, but from then on it is important for them to become more conscious in forming their sentences, in choosing their words. At this age a child becomes really aware of himself as an individual and the study of grammar helps him to strengthen this awareness.

Because grammar has not been presented in a manner actually suited to young children a feeling against teaching it has arisen. We have expected children to reason from cause to effect with adult logic. But Rudolf Steiner has made us see the child as an artist, learning through his feeling and imagination rather than through his intellect. This does not mean that we should make a game of the grammar lesson, but that we should teach in such a living manner that the child will work in the same wholehearted way in which he plays.

Each teacher can build creatively on Dr. Steiner's broad and general indications. He suggests beginning grammar with the verb which, in its activity, is most akin to the child. Such a sentence as, "Ann is writing on the black-board", describing what one of the pupils is actually doing, grows out of their own actions and makes a real impression. Since children delight in color it is helpful to write the words in different colors. They instinctively see a verb as red, a noun as blue, if they have real feeling for color. The choice for each different part of speech is never arbitrary, but the color should be found which gives a certain individuality to each word.

Definitions are avoided in early stages since they tend to crystallize a concept too soon. It is better to call a verb a "doing word" and a noun a "naming word". Nouns may be introduced by enacting the story from Genesis. One child plays the part of Adam; the others choose an animal which is represented by action or description. Adam then gives the proper name to each child.

The following verses arose from the desire to stimulate the understanding of the various parts of speech by letting them come to life and speak for themselves. We give only three, but the adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection each has its own verse.

THE VERB

I am a verb; I like to act,—
To walk, to run, to dance—it's a fact—
To plow, to build, to work, to strive,
I like to feel that I'm alive!
But sometimes I just say—I *am*—
And act as meek as a little lamb.

THE NOUN

I am a Noun; I give names to things,
To persons, from beggars to royal kings;
To animals also, great and small;
To flowers and trees that grow so tall,
To things like tables and chairs and sticks,
To houses and stone, concrete and bricks;
And to things you can't see or hear or feel,
Like goodness and truth and honor and zeal!
I like to be quiet,—I don't run about—
I just sit still and let others shout.

THE PRONOUN

I am a Pronoun; it isn't quite fair,—
I'm only about when the noun isn't there!
Sometimes I'm *I* and sometimes I'm *you*,
Or *he*, *she* or *it*, or *they* or *them*, too;
I change my form when it suits my whim,
Then *she* becomes *her* and *he* becomes *him*.

Sentence-structure is given when the parts of speech have become familiar. If diagramming seems too stereotyped, one may depict the subject and predicate as the main trunk of a tree and the various modifiers as branches. This could later be transformed into a simple diagram, for the plant form out of which it grew would remain in the back of the pupil's minds. A compound sentence of two independent clauses may be shown by two colored circles drawn side by side, connected by the conjunction. A complex sentence can be a small circle within a larger one, the circumferences touching at one point where the conjunction is written.

Many other ways might be found to bring the living forces of a child's active imagination into play. If this is done, the parts of speech may be taught even in the third grade. It is always well to anticipate the work of a later stage, and to begin serious study of grammar in the fourth grade. By this means the child will be strengthened within himself at this crucial moment of his life. For, to quote Dr. Steiner; "It is the task of speech to inaugurate self-consciousness (consciousness of self) between the ninth and tenth years . . . and in a general sense the principle of self-consciousness invariably comes to light in grammar and syntax."

Virginia Field Birdsall

With the first number of The Bulletin we have to report the death, at Easter, of Mrs. Irene Foltz, one of the school's original teachers.

From the moment of joining the school project twelve years ago her whole thought and energy were poured into the task of establishing the educational principles which she considered essential for the world at the present time. Through this task she not only served the children with contagious enthusiasm, but found the way of her own development. The children felt this reality of her striving as a living force for their own learning. By this power their hearts as well as their heads were vitally nurtured.

"The Rudolf Steiner School is the only one I visited, before selecting a school for my children, in which an avowed effort is being made to develop the spiritual life of the child, along with the mental and physical. It has all the advantages of a public school with none of its disadvantages. I have never heard the children express a dislike or fear of any subject taught them."

A. E. (A Parent)

*"If he who has fear had not fear,
he would not be hurt,
If he who has fear had love,
he would not be hurt."*

This was the spontaneous expression of a schoolboy not yet ten years of age.

The boy and his mother were looking over his notebook on the fourth-year study of "Man and Animal". The lion was the subject of the composition, and the boy explained what one should do on meeting a lion in a jungle. He was very reassuring that the encounter could be a friendly one if the person knew how to act. "One should not run," he said, "nor injure the lion." And then followed the reason why—"If he who has fear had love, he would not be hurt."

When the mother was prompted to ask the youngster how he came to an understanding such as he expressed, he answered: "I guess I was thinking of St. Francis."

In an age when it is so difficult to keep education and the moral life in close association, a grateful parent gives thanks for a pedagogy that can evoke within the child such an understanding and reads more comprehendingly from Dr. Steiner's lecture on Education in which he says:

"Where knowledge of man is concerned, there is no sense of talking of a difference of theory and practice. For a knowledge of man which cannot become directly real and active in the practice of life, is a mere sum-of ideas, hovering shadow-like in the intellect but never coming near the human being. And a practice of life unenlightened by the perceptive knowledge of the human being is an uncertain groping in the dark."

E. P. (A Parent)

NOTICES

A real music department may be added to The Rudolf Steiner School in the near future, made possible by the generosity of one of the friends of the school. It would include theoretical study of music for the older children; orchestra, chorus and music appreciation for all the grades. Lessons on almost any one of the various instruments would be available to any pupil at no additional charge above the regular tuition fee. This would afford an opportunity which, if it can be realized, we believe would be found in no other private school in the city. The plans are being carefully considered and we hope to be able to make a definite announcement in the next issue of the Bulletin.

The first Annual Meeting of the Rudolf Steiner School Association will be held at 20 West 73rd Street, New York City, on Wednesday, May 22, at 8:15 p.m. The principal business will be the election of officers and the adoption of a constitution.

It is hoped that a short, intensive lecture-course on the Rudolf Steiner Pedagogy may be held this summer. This possibility will depend on the number of persons wishing to form a study group. Members of the Association are asked to inform the secretary of the R.S.S.A. before May 20th if they, or their friends, would like to attend such a course.