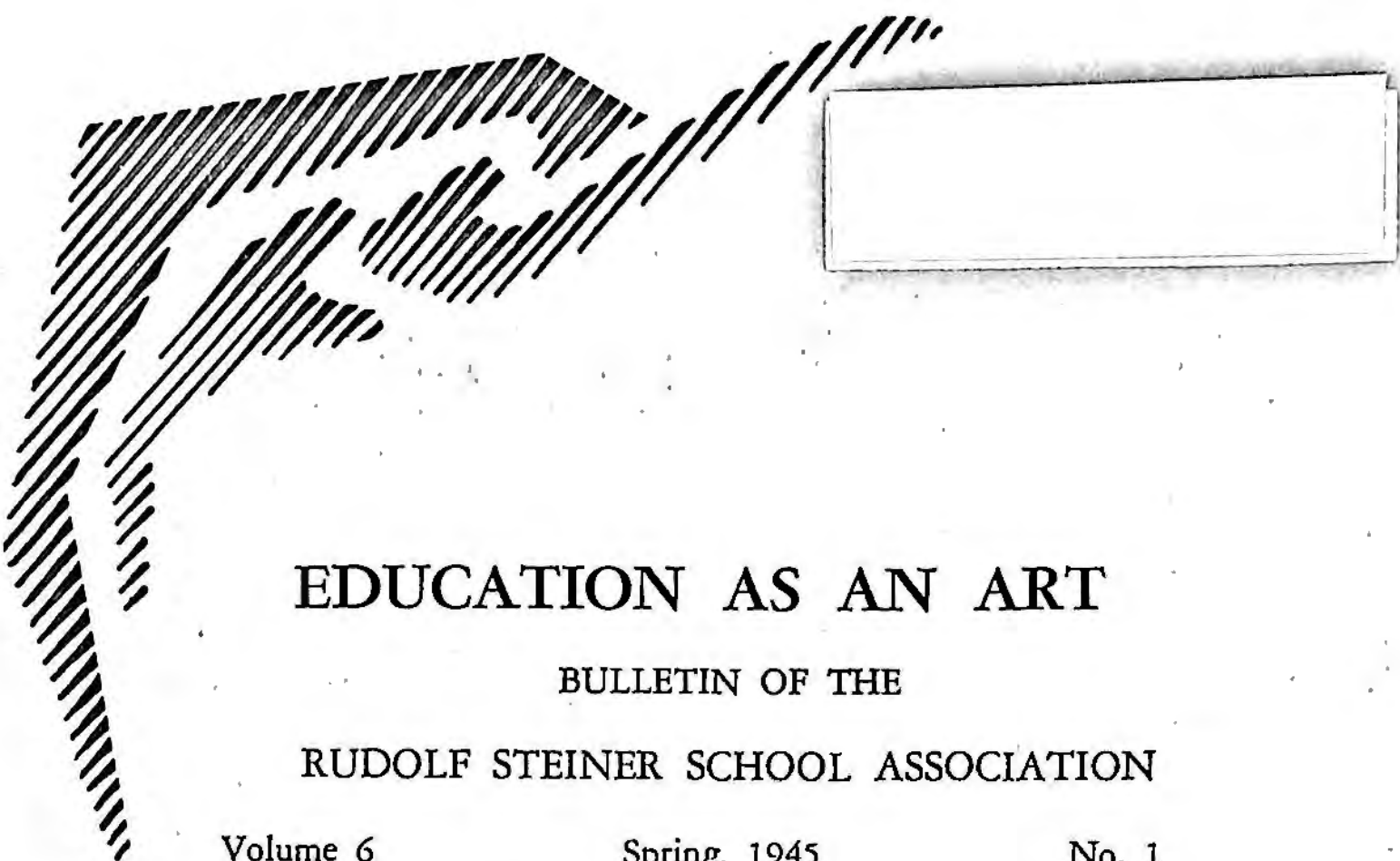




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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THE SENSE FOR REALITY

To be asked to write an article for the Bulletin is like being waked up out of deep sleep to find oneself again in a part of the country which was once well known, but which at first sight seems to have belonged to another life. As one begins to move about in the half familiar landscape, the realization comes suddenly how very happy one is to be home again and, at the same time, one is grateful for the new and broader perspective which has been gained in exile! Unfortunately, however, in two years' time the pen has rusted and the vocabulary has been stocked with phrases which hardly belong in an educational journal! But even if army experience has not been along strictly pedagogical lines, it has led to a deeper conviction of the need for an education which will go to the roots of the human illnesses which possess us and are the causes of war.

To say that our education as it exists today has failed because it has failed to avert war and to remedy the causes of war is to say nothing new. And yet it has to be said, and said with greater seriousness than ever before. As has often been pointed out, our educational system has failed to educate the human being to be able to handle the social, economic and technological forces which he has himself developed for his own good and that of mankind as a whole. Scientific achievements have unleashed physical forces which man is morally and spiritually unable to control. Yet we have learned a thousand times over during the war that men are still capable of the greatest individual heroism and sacrifice. The individual goodwill is there, the willingness to make a sacrifice for a cause, and for a group is there, but the weakness lies in our inability to think our way through to an understanding of the forces which are at work and which make a war, such as the present one, inevitable. We are clever children playing with high explosives, ignorant of the laws which make them operate, and ignorant of the hidden motives which operate within ourselves.

It is primarily as thinkers that we need to be educated, but in a manner of thinking which is not merely a matter of skillful intellectual combination and technical ingenuity. The type of thinking we need is one which can discriminate between reality and abstraction, and it must be backed up by an honesty which will accept no substitute for the truth. A sense for reality which can not be cheated, a sense for the truth which can not be bribed, backed by courage and moral integrity, these are our primary needs and our greatest lacks.

But how can a sense for reality be educated? One thing is certain — it can not be done vicariously, nor can it be done by simulation, to use a hard-worked army phrase! Only reality itself can educate the organ for its perception. And this leads us to the question: What is reality? But now, some will protest, we are being dragged into philosophy, into the realm of speculation, where one man's concept is as good as another's. Granted that this is a philosophical problem, it nevertheless underlies every educational system which has ever existed. For the materialist, what is real is what he perceives and can investigate through the physical senses, and the education of the sense for reality can only be accomplished through handling physical things. For the religious man, reality is what must be believed in and can not be investigated by the senses nor understood by mere logic. For the fascist mind there is a primal power in the blood, in sheer will-power, which, according to its view, is the original source of all human action. Consciously each of these conceptions of reality will shape the details of the education which they inspire. In a school in which the materialistic philosophy prevails the curriculum will be based on the natural sciences, the humanities will be neglected as unrelated to real life, art will be considered only as a means to an end, the teachings of history will be in terms of economic forces, the development of a religious attitude will be eliminated as an irresponsible effort to delude a child's judgment (he must be left free to decide for himself, it will be said), the curriculum will tend to divide sharply into an entirely practical, vocational training and, on the other hand, into a purely intellectual schooling in which thought will become more and more disconnected from the moral and emotional content which is the subsoil from which the conscious mind draws its vitality and capacity for action. In such a school the primary emphasis will be on teaching the little child to know his immediate physical environment, his town, the transportation system which brings him to school, the industries which feed and clothe him; the study of the human being will be taught as physiology; the body will be explained as a mechanism, the soul and spirit will be ignored as non-existent. In contrast to this, the school with the religious bias will emphasize the soul and the development of the emotional forces of devotion, sacrifice, faith, goodness. There will be a tendency toward sentimentality, toward moralizing, toward an unjustifiably personal relationship between teacher and pupil especially during the puberty years. There will be the danger of carrying over the basic elementary school attitudes into the later years in high school when it is a necessity of development for the young person to challenge intellectually and to demand explanations where the church is unwilling and often unable to give them. And in the third instance, the goal will be blind obedience, an unquestioning imitation of authority; prejudice will be strengthened until it replaces individual thought as a motive for action; leadership by virtue of physical force and emotional power will be the criterion of success; history will be taught in terms of ruling instincts, of race, and the will to power. The training of the will will dominate in everything and the individual will be subordinated to the group.

Each of the philosophical attitudes we have mentioned has its sphere of influence in the educational world at the present time, and is responsible for its share of the social illnesses which became acute in the present war. And these illnesses will merely pass temporarily into a latent stage when the war is over unless they can be cured at their roots. Although there are endless variations of these three basic attitudes, they tend to produce three distinct types of men and women who are familiar to all of us. There is the utilitarian for whom all values are measured in terms of usefulness and efficiency, whose mind is trained to an abstract intellectualism, clever and quick to make judgments, but failing to penetrate the deeper levels of experience. There is the sentimentalist for whom all values are in terms of his own feelings, which may be very beautiful and altogether unique, but which can never be the basis for a genuine social relationship because they can only be communicated emotionally. And there is the bully, the mass-man, for whom all values are in terms of power and success. Only an educational philosophy which recognizes in each man an individual entity capable of harmonizing the forces of thinking, feeling and willing, and of transforming them from within so that they become more and more the objective expression of the higher rather than the lower nature of man, can hope to work as a positive force in the world at the present time. Only an educator who knows that in every child in addition to his physical organism, in addition to his brain and the developing intellect, in addition to his emotional capacities and to his will there is also present an ego which is little by little taking possession of the organism and of the soul forces, and who knows that it is his job as an educator to facilitate the development of this ego so that it will have full possession of its faculties when it matures, — only such an educator is in a position to do justice to the pupils entrusted to him. It was for this reason that Rudolf Steiner stressed that the only kind of teachers' training that was worth anything was based on the study of the nature of the human being, and that only a science which included a knowledge of the spirit as well as of the physical could hope to understand man who is both a physical as well as a soul and spiritual being.

So it was, for example, to Rudolf Steiner's credit that he was able correctly to interpret the three familiar phases of child development which correspond roughly with the three periods of seven years each from birth to the age of twenty-one, when an individual is said to "come of age." By drawing attention to well known facts of physical development such as the change of teeth and puberty, and showing that they are the outward expression of psychological, or soul, changes in the child's inner development, he pointed out that each phase has its own psychological character and its own medium of experience. During the first six or seven years a child is predominantly a being of will. He lives in movement, his energies are chiefly directed to the shaping and individualizing of his physical organism, and his medium of experience is imitation of his environment, by means of which he learns to speak and to do the myriad things which a little child learns in his first years. During the second period, which parallels the elementary school years, from the change of teeth until puberty, the child's individual emotional life emerges in addition to his will development and he draws upon a new level of experience, that of an imaginative consciousness in which the world presents itself to him as pictures, as drama, as music. Every percept is accompanied by a shade of feeling and his thought processes are closely bound up with his emotions in this dream-like, pictorial consciousness. Every child at this time has the artist's approach to life, whether this ever expresses itself directly in some form of so-called artistic creation or not. During the third phase of development, from

puberty to twenty-one, the child finally enters into the independent use of his intellectual powers in addition to his feeling and will. This is the time when his mind wants intellectual exercise for its own sake, when he starts to explore the world of abstract ideas. Authority is spurned, everything must be proved to be accepted. He passes judgment on all that is most holy to his elders with a coolness and a grand manner that is sublimely irritating. Imaginative pictures give way to concepts. The artistic approach gives way to the intellectual. History, which during the elementary grades was experienced as a succession of more or less independent biographies and dramatic incidents, becomes an evolution subject to the laws of cause and effect. And as the years go forward from eighteen to nineteen to twenty, still another element emerges which gives its own individual character to the thoughts and the emotions and sets its own stamp upon the decisions and acts of will. This new element is the ego itself which will more and more take over the reins from the instinctive forces of nature and which will undergo further stages of development in terms of consciousness as the individual grows older.

Looking upon the familiar facts of childhood in this way, it is possible to go ahead and build a curriculum which corresponds to the child's needs at each stage, even carrying this into the details of the curriculum for each school year. The result is a strengthening of the child's confidence in his own capacity to learn and of his sense for the reality of what he learns. He feels as he progresses from year to year: The subjects which I study and the way they are presented to me is what I really want, without knowing that I wanted it. They belong to me and I belong to them. It is such experiences in childhood (which remain subconscious at the time) which are the foundation for the sense of reality for which there is so much need in later life today. And right along with it there develops the sense for truth, for the child feels that what comes to him through his education is part and parcel of his own nature, and our sense for truth arises in our sense for what is and what is not an integral part of our own nature. What is imposed upon us from outside without inner relation to what we feel to be our essential self we experience as untruth.

If, for example, the education of the elementary school grades is intellectualized and treated in a manner suitable to a high school, then children are unable to grasp it inwardly and something which is foreign to them is being forced upon them. If they take to it, they learn to parrot something for which they have no inner experience and this leads to superficiality and intellectual dishonesty, or they become shy and timid or disappointed and take refuge in their own emotional world, which weakens their ability to meet life and master it. And, on the other hand, if the more emotional-pictorial presentation of the elementary school is carried over into the post puberty years, the pupil's development will either be stunted and weakened, or he will break loose in rebellion against what he will feel to be falsely smothering his own nascent freedom. And if the type of education which is right in the earliest years, when the approach is through imitation addressed primarily to the will and not at all to the conscious mind, is continued over into later elementary and high school years, then a stupefying of the mind will result which will lead to an easy conquest by a leadership which works directly and powerfully upon the will and the emotions of its followers.

Let us return for a moment to the problems which confront us as adults today. Everywhere we see symptoms of the same disease. Why, for instance, do we see such an apparently uncontrollable growth of administrative red tape which paralyses individual initiative without bringing any of the benefits of

collective action? Why do we see such a spread of the contagion of "degree consciousness" in our educational system, which leads us to ask first what graduate degrees a man has before we learn to know what kind of a man and a teacher we have to deal with? Why do we allow labels — Jew, Labor, Catholic, Red, American — to prevent us from seeing the individuals themselves? Why do we tolerate Hollywood productions which falsify every genuine emotion and every concept of reality? Why are we willing to be bamboozled into buying things we don't want by advertising which deliberately plays us for suckers? Why — ? Because our sense for reality and our sense for truth have been more seriously sabotaged from within than the war effort has ever been sabotaged from without. And, although it may seem fantastic to some, to identify a materialistic philosophy of education as one of the chief causes of this sabotage, I am nevertheless convinced that this is the case. The damage done does not lie in the fact that children grow up who don't believe in Santa Claus and who run away from Sunday School, the damage is that children are being cheated of the nourishment which their soul needs during the elementary school years as much as their growing bodies need food. Instead of getting knowledge in a form which they can digest and transform into vitality and enthusiasm for life, they get it as intellectual concept, as adult definition, as abstraction. This is to give them stones in place of bread. And a materialism which fails to recognize that man is a soul and spirit as well as a physical being and fails to see how these factors are related to each other in child development is responsible for the intellectualization of elementary school education for which we as a nation must pay the price in weakened vitality, in inner dissatisfaction and above all in a damaged sense for reality and for truth. Because they strive to work against this tendency, basing their educational methods on a knowledge of the physical, soul and spirit being of man, the Rudolf Steiner Schools are justifiably pioneers.

Sgt. Henry Barnes

POETRY FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

It is the purpose of this article to suggest the way in which the sounds, rhythms and imaginations of poetry can awaken and nourish the growing capacity for thought.

One knows that children not only love the sounds of words, but that they also delight in rhythms. These keys of sound and rhythm unlock the door as it were, and allow imaginations to troop in and fill the child's mind, — imaginations in which his thoughts can settle and live. The teacher must make the effort to give the children poems which have simple, regular rhythms and in which the sounds enhance the meaning of the words. It is also important that colorful pictures appear through the words. If a poem has these three qualities of rhythm, sound and color, the children will enjoy it and will say it over and over to themselves after they have learned it. It is in the art of selecting such poems that the teacher must become sensitive.

Many poems are written for children from out of an adult sentiment for what is supposed to be child-like:

"Are you a Giant, great big man, or is your real name Smith?
Nurse says you've got a hammer that you hit bad children with.
I'm good today and so I've come to see if it is true
That you can turn a red-hot rod into a horse's shoe."

—from "Big Smith" by J. H. Ewing

Another example of the extreme in this sort of children's poetry in which the poet resorts to baby-talk, is:

"I 'tend that in the garden
Lives a nugly little man
An' he always wants to catch me
If he can — if he can,
But I 'tend that I am quicker than
The nugly little man."

—from "The Nugly Little Man" by St. J. Webb

In all such poems, which are really caricatures of the way a child sees the world, the value of poetry is lost. One has the feeling that if one were to teach this sort of poetry to children one would be dwarfing them mentally and imaginatively.

It is also important to avoid poems that are too old for the children, poems in which the concept and words are as yet not within the range of what a seven year old can experience, unless such poems are strongly rhythmical and full of lively sound relationships. The rhythm, the sounds, will be enjoyed, and yet if the poems do not paint pictures, which the children can see in their mind's eye, they will not serve the purpose of helping to open a door for the children to a world of richer and brighter thought content. They will only rattle the door knob.

In the following verses, from some of the poems collected in *A Treasury of Verse for Little Children*,* one finds those qualities of rhythm, sound and color which one must seek:

"I wake! I feel the day is near;
I hear the red cock crowing!
He cries, "'Tis dawn!" How sweet and clear
His cheerful call comes to my ear,
While light is slowly growing!"

—from Chanticleer by Celia Thaxter

"Daffy-Down-Dilly
Came up in the cold
Through the brown mold,
Although the March breezes
Blew keen in her face,
Although the white snow
Lay on many a place."

—from Daffy-Down-Dilly by A. B. Warner

A poem should not be read to little children as if it were a story for their passing interest. Rather should the teacher say it for them and then have them say it too. A poem should be learned by ear, and then said daily in class for several weeks. It becomes a part of the child's life in this way. In teaching poems the teacher should emphasize the rhythm and sounds and allow the meaning to grow out of this. When poems can be enlivened by means of gestures it is good, for the movement of hands and arms in wide, expressive gestures helps to free the speech. Children who cannot speak out usually have cramped gestures. Children whose thinking has been trained without the benefit of work in speech find it almost impossible to make gestures. The out-going character of gestures not only helps the speech to be out-going, it also helps the whole child to be out-going and interested in others.

* *A Treasury of Verse for Little Children*, Selected by M. G. Edgar, Publ. Thomas Y. Crowell.

We can say that speech must be one with thought in the moral sense, that we must be able to say what we mean and to mean what we say. The artistic use of the right words for the expression of thought and feeling in poetry develops this moral sense without which we cannot distinguish between honest and dishonest words.

When observing children who have reached the sociable age of six or seven years, one sees how impossible it is for them to converse with each other in any consequential way. There is a great enjoyment of words and sounds which seem to be uttered for their own sake. The children are at the mercy of all they hear without being able to discriminate. If they hear certain words with strong sounds they make them their own. The subject matter of their conversations depends largely on the words they have at their command. The continuity of a conversation is usually achieved because certain words suggest other words. I have heard six year olds return week after week to a conversation about the "junk wagon" which had a certain trend, a trend toward the use of words like "garbage" and "sewer". The connotations in the words "junk wagon" held the children's thinking in their grip.

The words in poetry also have connotations, and the teacher pits the strength of these more artistic connotations against the power of words and sounds that the children have picked up in a more haphazard way. More than this, imaginations that are linked with rhythm and sound, as they are in poetry, carry the qualities of will and feeling over into thinking in such a way as to prevent it from drying out. As soon as a child has a certain repertoire of poems at his command, it often takes the place of mere chatter. Then when the child feels the impulse to raise his voice in speech, one hears him repeating verses of the poetry which has become a part of his speaking ability. When this happens the teacher can be comforted with the knowledge that the child's powers of speaking and thinking have found good ground in which to grow.

It is then possible for children themselves, when they are older, to express something which has already taken root in them from out of the world of sound and speech. The following poem by a girl in the seventh grade in the Rudolf Steiner School is an illustration of this.

SPRING

Soft the breeze of the morn
When the flowers are new born.
Wind now blows through the skies
Where the clear water lies,
Glide the leaves on blue spray
While the buds gently sway.
Blossoms grow bright and fine,
Ivy green now doth twine.
In the woods all birds sing,
Daisies bloom, blue bells ring,
Sunshine plays bright and gold,
Winter's gone, gone the cold.

—G. A.

Dorothy Jeffery

SUMMER EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

This year, we are happy to announce, there will again be a Summer Educational Conference at the Threefold Farm in Spring Valley, N. Y. This conference has been prepared by representatives of Kimberton Farms Day and Boarding School, High-Mowing School in Wilton, N. H. and the Rudolf Steiner School in New York. The conference will be sponsored by all these schools. The Chairman of the conference will be Professor Hermann von Baravalle.

The conference aims to convey the essentials both of the educational philosophy and the practical methodical work which have been inaugurated by Dr. Rudolf Steiner at the Waldorf School and have since been practised and developed in various schools both in Europe and in the United States. The Kimberton Farms Day and Boarding School will be represented by its principal, Miss Elisabeth de Grunelius, Dr. Hermann Poppelbaum from the faculty of High-Mowing School will be one of the lecturers, and the New York area will be represented by Dr. von Baravalle. There will also be courses in the arts of painting, eurythmy, speech formation, etc.

The dates of the conference will be from August 21st until the first days of September. A detailed program will appear later.

And now for the business part of our preparations.

The price of the Course with Room and Board is \$35.00 per week.

Single admission to daytime courses..... \$.30 and tax

Single admission to any art course..... .50 and tax

Single admission to evening lectures..... .30 and tax

Owing to the limited accommodations, we ask a deposit of \$5.00 with each reservation. For rooms, please write to Mrs. Elizabeth Kroth, Threefold Farm, Spring Valley, New York. Please bring ration cards.

For information about the Educational Courses, please write to Professor H. von Baravalle, Adelphi College, Garden City, N. Y., or to Miss Dorothy Jeffery, The Rudolf Steiner School, 15 E. 79th St., New York 21, N. Y.

The program is subject to change without notice.

Mary Holliday Mitchell.

A LECTURE

AT THE LINCOLN SCHOOL BY DR. VON BARAVALLE

Dr. von Baravalle will give a lecture entitled: *MULTISENSORY AIDS IN TEACHING MATHEMATICS*, arranged by Teacher's College, Columbia University at the Lincoln School Auditorium in New York, on July 5th at 3 p.m.. There will also be an exhibit of work done by students of the Mathematics Department of Adelphi College.

Membership in the Rudolf Steiner School Association, including the quarterly Bulletin, is \$2.00 per year. Single copies of the Bulletin, 15c each; for more than 10 copies 10c each, postpaid.

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