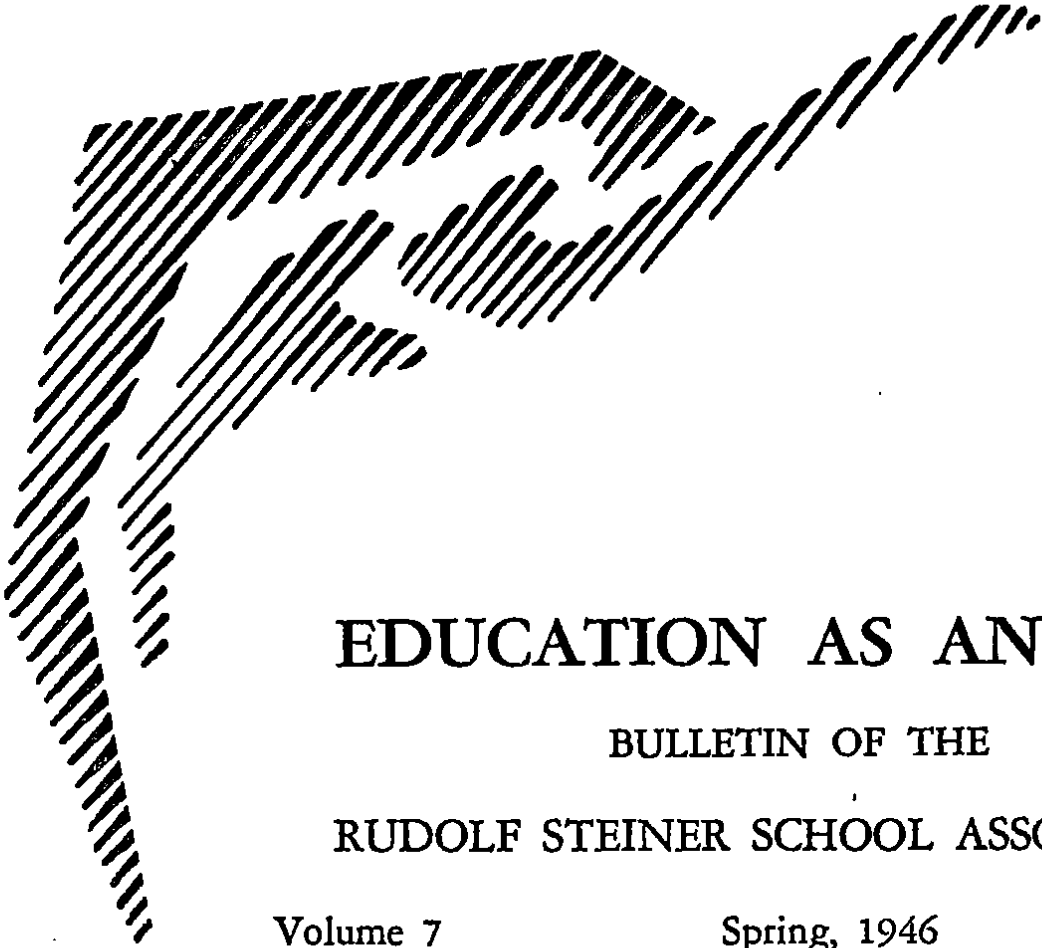




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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MODELLING AS THE EXPRESSION OF THE CHILD'S INNER BEING

Translation of an article by Dr. Elizabeth Klein in the Waldorf School magazine "The Art of Education" Vol. 5, No. 5, December 1931.

After the change of teeth, plastic formative forces loosen themselves from the body of the child, in which they have worked until now, and press on to new activities. Knowledge of the transformation of these forces, as observed and described by Dr. Rudolf Steiner, is fundamental for pedagogical work. These liberated forces not only enable the child to learn writing, painting and drawing, but they also help him to build concepts and to keep impressions in his memory.

As these plastic forces long for an outlet in work, it is good to let the children, in their first school years, do some modelling from time to time. The desire to knead something into shape streams out of their very finger-tips. For this reason modelling presents a particularly good opportunity to study how these formative forces work in the child.

When we started modelling in the first grade, our subject was the figure of a little child. To begin with each child took a ball of beeswax, of a color chosen by himself, and held it in his hand. Just then I was called away from the class and was forced to leave the children alone.

I was greatly surprised when I returned. One boy had formed a figure in red wax with two giant arms spread out in the air and two long legs — and —nothing else! I asked him: "Have you finished? Isn't there something lacking in your man? Just look at yourself and see!" But the boy did not notice that his figure had no head.

He was a strange child. I will describe him briefly. From the first day he was a disturbing element in the class. Fundamentally he had a good heart, but before he himself was aware of it he would kick someone. His actions lacked consciousness, as if his will acted of itself without being directed by thought or reason. He was really headless, like his figure, which actually presented a picture of the forces that especially dominated him. In temperament he was choleric. His ungovernable will caused much disturbance in his environment. And yet, in the gestures of the plastic figure was contained such splendid activity. At my suggestion this boy was allowed to beat the rugs at home.

In the work of another boy the opposite pole was shown. The head of his figure was over-large and the arms and legs were mere stumps. This child lived in an inner world of his own; he was a dreamer. He moved like a snail, but his soul was filled with the most beautiful pictures. As he had narrow, flat feet, he often fell; but if you asked him what he would like to be he would beam and say, "An astronomer".

The following incident in this boy's school life was very characteristic. On one occasion, when his class was to act out the fairy tale of the shepherd boy, we were looking for someone who would be good in the part of the king. After class, this boy said to me in a low voice, "You must make me the king for, first, I know how a king speaks, and, secondly, how he walks." And though he had formerly had certain difficulties in speaking, he played the part of the king successfully through the living quality of his imagination. When the golden crown was given to him, after the play, he experienced his greatest thrill.

Thus this child lived strongly in his imagination, in the forces of his head. He had, in fact, a huge head; so, in this case too, the plastic figure he made was a true reflection of the distribution of forces in the child. The two examples are polarities.

One remembers the description Rudolf Steiner gave of the arrangement of the human organization. He described the head organization with the nerve-sense system as the seat of thinking; the breast organization with the rhythmic functions as the physical basis for feeling; and the limb and metabolic system as the bearer of the will. He showed graphically how the preponderance of one or the other pole might bring about one-sided types.

Thus the small creations of two children bore witness to a fundamental law and in them the two poles of the threefold human organization were convincingly manifested.

A third example lies between the two which we have already considered. It again was the work of a very vigorous boy. But the child had a phlegmatic streak in his choleric temperament. His outbursts were not quite so chaotic as those of the first boy, and though he also struck out around him, he was on the whole more considerate. One could say: "To the extent that the small cone-shaped head rose above the huge form of his plastic figure, to that extent was he more considerate."

A plump, easy going little girl of phlegmatic temperament gave me her work with a beaming look. She had produced the amusing form of a little child with a small stomach like a ball, emphasized by a row of carefully placed buttons. The similarity between the little girl and the plastic figure is, in this case, so striking that no further comment is needed.

A fifth figure, bent-over and contracted into itself, was the work of a melancholic child. Here, too, a definite connection seemed to exist between the temperament of the child and his work.

The temperament is closely bound up with the distribution of forces within and, as these latter function in the child, so they pour themselves into his work, making it a small reproduction of himself which can reveal much and be of great help to the teacher. In these first lessons, with seven year old children, the connection between the inner nature and outer expression can be seen clearly.

Not only are the finished figures characteristically differentiated but also the methods of working show characteristic differences. Once, when the fairy tale of the White Snake was told, the children were supposed to form the shell with the ring inside, which the three fishes bring to land. As the children were grouped according to their temperaments, one could observe their characteristic ways more easily than otherwise. One whole group, after having formed the shell, tried to give it a richly decorated edge, working diligently with the very tips of their fingers. This was the group of sanguine children, children who move their heads as quickly as birds, who discover everything at once, but who have no perseverance. Most of them had slender bodies, delicately shaped limbs and wide-awake senses. Such children live, for the most part, in their nerve and sense system. Their experiences touch only the surface, the periphery of their bodies. It was very evident, in this lesson, how consciously they lived in their sense of touch; how their vitality extended to their very fingertips.

Opposite to them sat some children who dug and bored into the wax with their thumbs, even with their fists. They worked hard, with red and earnest faces. They found satisfaction in modelling deeply hollowed-out forms with thick, clumsy margins. One child, in his zeal, had even bored right through the bottom of his wax. The work of hollowing out was the chief interest of this group. For the sanguine children that was too difficult. As the wind ruffles the water, so they liked to mould only the surface.

The second group consisted of the choleric. They live more within their bodies. They are connected less with their senses than with their blood. These are the children who, at the beginning of the lesson, enjoy warming up the cold, hard wax with their hands. They like to help with their warm fists when some other child cries: "My wax does not feel soft!"

From a pedagogical point of view one can accomplish a great deal in these lessons. For instance, a girl from the sanguine group said she had finished. The margin was beautifully decorated, but in the middle the wax was thick and unformed, the shell was flat. This child, then, had to accustom herself to dig down more vigorously into the wax. Or one showed a boy, who had made a deep, heavy shape, the beautiful margin of another child's form, saying: "You should decorate yours just as nicely." And so the clumsy boy had to try to make his fingers delicate and mobile.

Most of the children had formed an open shell boat. A melancholic girl gave me her work, of white wax, the shell of which was closed. Only through a narrow slit could one see the ring. She was told: "When the shell is closed, the ring cannot shine out over the water." The little girl understood this and opened her shell.

To the boy who had made a headless figure it was a great shock when, at last, he saw that his figure had no head. To the other children it was merely amusing. They just cried: "He has forgotten the head!" But to the boy himself it was a shock—and wholesome.

Help given in this way penetrates more deeply into the being of a child than many words. And it is possible, in the modelling class, to make something clear through the shaping of the forms, through the action itself. This works back upon the child, perhaps even into his organization. Not only do children in their modelling reveal the formative forces working in them, but also it is possible through modelling to work back upon these forces in a healing and transforming way, and to build up, in the course of the lessons, a picture of the living, harmonious human being.

(Translated by Christianne Sorge and published in the Rudolf Steiner School Association Bulletin with the permission of the teachers of the Waldorf School.)

We are happy to have the following poems by pupils of Mrs. Martha Harris of Kimberton Farms School, near Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

SPRING

These things three
Mean Spring to me:
Robins gay,
Forsythia's sway,
Lambs at play
These three
Mean Spring to me.

*Mary Jane Brillhart
Fifth Grade*

SPRING TIME

I saw a bluebird flying
Over the hill;
He had a head of feathers
And a snappy bill.
I saw some buds a-sprouting,
By a tree;
The bluebird and the tiny buds
Mean Spring to me.

*Mary Irma Wade
Fourth Grade*

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

(Continued)

THIRD GRADE

Main Lesson

Bible Stories

While the work of the third year is an enlargement of the work begun in the first, a new quality of inspiration is given by the study of the Old Testament Stories. This starts with a feeling of wonder on hearing of the creation of the world and man. It is followed by sorrow at the loss of Paradise, and ends with the prophecies looking toward man's redemption. The children make their first approach to history with the story of Abraham and of other ancient Hebrew leaders. The children hear and retell these stories, influenced by the fine English of the Bible, for at this age their sensitiveness to the inner beauty of sound is ready to develop. This sensitiveness is further developed by learning rhythmic poems with the emphasis on beauty of melodious sound.

Main Lesson

Reading and Writing

In this year the children gradually change from printing to script. The printing practice is kept up in special work such as copying poems. The Bible Stories form the material for the beginning of writing original compositions. Reading should now be fluent enough to sound well. Third Readers are used.

Main Lesson

Grammar

Grammar becomes a more definite teaching of the parts of speech — verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs—though the terms are not yet used. The children learn how to form sentences and to recognize their main parts. Spelling is approached as a direct drill through studying word families and words which can be spelled as sounded, a few exceptions are added.

Main Lesson

Man's Ways of Living

The following subjects are a continuation of the stories told in the first two grades, forming a simple approach to geography.

Farming

The children become acquainted with farm life. They learn to understand the fundamental needs of farming based on the interdependence of the four kingdoms. They see how the plants feed the animals, the animals enrich the soil, how man cares for all of them and how they all serve man.

Building

This study can start with man's relation to the four elements; earth, air, fire and water. It begins with the cave men and tent dwellers, who are the most exposed to the elements and who must protect themselves with clothes and shelters. The homes of the American Indians are studied as being most closely associated with the children's own country. Eskimo homes in the cold

North follow naturally and then, by way of contrast, life in the hot African jungle and desert. The work is concluded with the study of the construction of more modern dwellings. The children can make sand table models of an Indian village, a farm or the other dwellings studied, if it helps to make the subject more vivid.

Main Lesson

Arithmetic

Rhythmical counting and drilling are continued. Mental arithmetic, using the four processes, is carried further. The 2, 3, 4 and 5 tables are reviewed. Then the 8 table is learned in relation to the 4 table, the 6 table in relation to the 3 table and the 10 table in relation to the 5 table. One can go further in teaching number relations by comparing the tables and the numbers within a table in different ways. By the end of the year all the tables up through the 12 table are learned. The naming and placing of numbers is practiced; 1's, 10's, 100's, and 1000's. The children become familiar with fractions without studying them deeply; halves, quarters, thirds and even eighths. Small practical problems are now written down. The dollar and cent signs are learned and used in these problems, as well as time-telling and calendar-reading. Short division is practiced and multiplication is shown to be the reverse process of division and is used for proving division examples. Rulers are used for making lines to frame pictures after their use has become familiar through measuring familiar objects. Dry measure, liquid measure and weights are demonstrated and their tables are learned. Carrying numbers in all four processes is started.

Main Lesson

History

At this age history is taught through the lives of great men, especially national heroes. National holidays give an opportunity to tell of such famous men.

*Margaret Peckham
for the
Faculty of the Rudolf Steiner School*

French and German

Beginning in the first grade two foreign languages are taught, so that, with the mother tongue, the children actually learn three languages at the same time. The earlier they start the easier it is for them, since at that early age the speech organs still have great flexibility.

For the first three years the languages are not taught in an intellectual way, but rhythmically, through songs, poems, and games. The lessons are given as much as possible in the foreign language. Toward the end of the third year the children start to write the language, but neither spelling nor grammar is taught yet. A little writing, with their own illustrations, forms the content of their first French or German book.

Christianne Sorge

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Errata: The autumn and winter issues of the Bulletin were erroneously numbered Vol. 7, Numbers 3 and 4. The present issue corrects this error by continuing as Number 1 of Vol. 7.