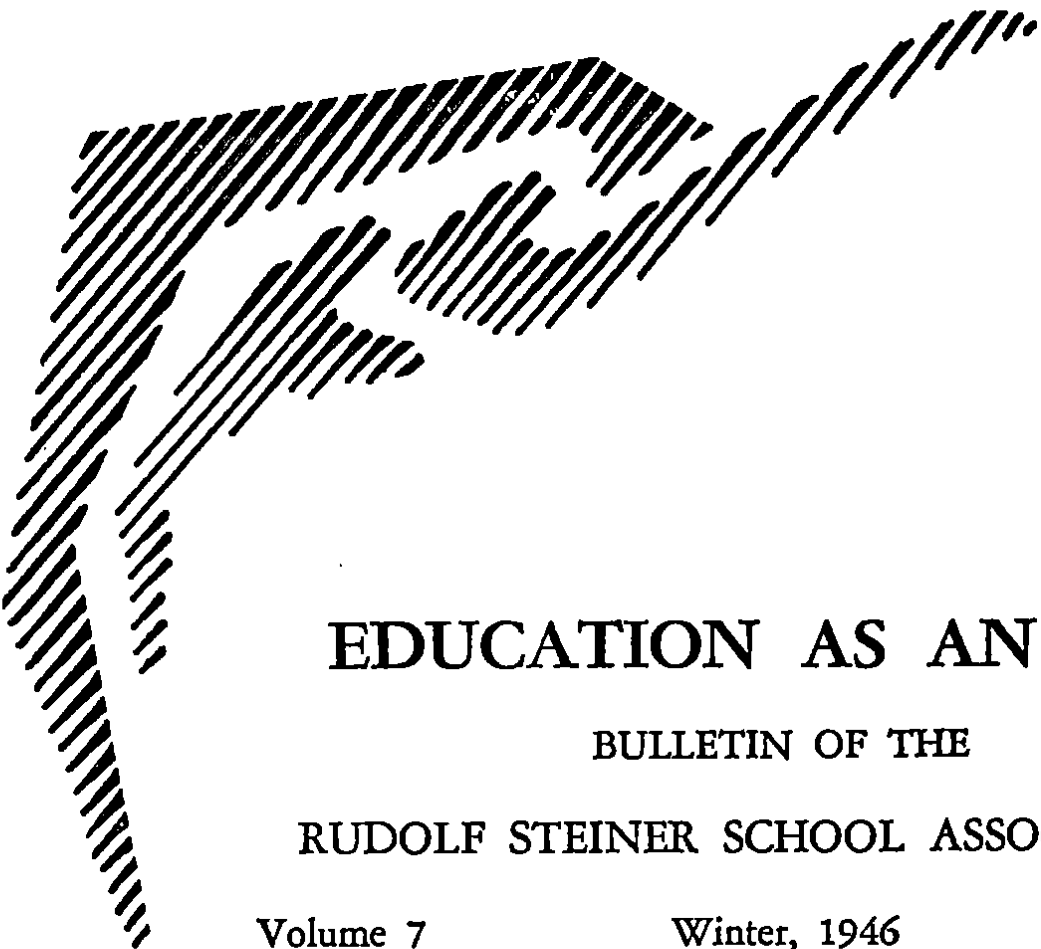




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE RUDOLPH STEINER SCHOOL IN PREPARING ITS CHILDREN FOR THE MODERN AGE?

A Lecture given at the Rudolf Steiner School, December 12, 1945

A story relates that in the 13th century a monk, in a cloister situated in the foothills of the Black Forest in southern Germany, was experimenting in his laboratory in search of gold. The monk's laboratory was crude compared with that of a modern chemist. It resembled a smithy, with forge, anvil and hammers.

The monk, whose name was Berthold, experimented with the chemical substances sulphur, charcoal and saltpeter. He ground them each into a fine powder in a metal mortar. When he had brought them to the desired fineness he mixed them in a certain proportion and put the whole aside while he attended to some other work. He heated some iron and forged it on the anvil. Sparks flew in all directions and, unfortunately, one landed in the chemical mixture. No sooner had this occurred than with a tremendous bang, the pestle was thrown up to the ceiling. The laboratory was filled with smoke and with a peculiar smell. Berthold's face was blackened, and he stood there shivering with fear, when his holy brothers rushed into the laboratory to find out what had happened. After Berthold had told them about his experiment and the explosion, they were all convinced that the devil had played a trick on him.

Berthold, however, who had the making of a scientist, would not follow his brethren's advice to avoid such devilish and dangerous undertakings. The monk continued with his experiments and gradually learned to master and direct the forces which he was able to let loose. His brothers, however, became more and more convinced that Berthold had made a pact with the devil, and they named him "Black Berthold." Although the monk's experiments did not

result in gold, he earned fame. The news of his invention soon spread, and he found many admirers among the knights living in neighboring castles. Before long this black powder was in use as a means of smashing the fortifications of warring knights.

This story, regardless of whether it is authentic or fictitious, is symbolic. The American physicist, Ernest O. Lawrence, of the University of California, wrote, in the recent publication "The Autobiography of Science," a chapter on atom smashing, with the title: "Atom-smashing Brings True the Alchemist's Dream." The alchemists aimed to make gold, and while the monk Berthold failed, his scientific research was rewarded by the discovery of a black powerful substitute, gunpowder.

Modern science has accomplished *the transmutation of the elements*, and the first product in its practical application is the atomic bomb.

An eye-witness described the Nagasaki explosion as follows:

"By the time our ship had made another turn in the direction of the atomic explosion, the pillar of purple fire had reached the level of our altitude. Only about 45 seconds had passed. Awe-struck, we watched it shoot upward like a meteor coming from the earth instead of from outer space, becoming ever more alive as it climbed skyward through the white clouds. It was no longer smoke, or dust, or even a cloud of fire. It was a living thing, a new species of being, born right before our incredulous eyes . . . it was a living totem pole carved with many grotesque masks grimacing at the earth." (*N. Y. Times*, Sept. 9, 1945).

Comparing the two events in a pictorial way, the frightened monks in the 13th century cloister who suspected the devil's hand in Berthold's doings, and the explosion of an atomic bomb in 1945 with its devastating effect upon the world and humanity, one probably can discover a resemblance or a connection between the two. In both instances the effect upon man was fear. The pious monks were afraid of the devil, and the people living in the atomic age are fearful of the supernatural, devastating force man has been able to let loose.

The atomic bomb threatens humanity and civilization as a whole. It has become a first degree danger. While at the moment people know that there is no immediate danger that such bombs might drop on our cities, in a few years there probably will be uncertainty. When the world no longer knows how much material for atomic power has been produced, and by which nation, the uncertainty will become a psychological problem of the first magnitude: and the great aim which has been stated so often during the last few years by leading statesmen, "Freedom from Fear", will become unattainable unless human relationships among all men on earth change radically. Natural science has taken a long jump ahead of development in social relationships among nations, and unless men are able to bring order into international affairs a catastrophe will be at hand.

Dr. Albert Einstein says on this subject: "At present, atomic energy is not a boon to mankind, but a menace. Perhaps it is well that it should be. It may intimidate the human race to bring order into its international affairs, which, without the pressure of fear, it undoubtedly would not do." (*Reader's Digest*, Dec. 1945).

It should not be hard to find hundreds of quotations made by statesmen, politicians, scientists, educators and churchmen, all pointing out the dangers that lie ahead of us.

When we teachers ask ourselves, "What can we do within our miniature communities, in our class rooms, toward the solution of this immense problem of humanity?" we might at first be at a complete loss. We feel that we have no influence, no *say*, towards bringing about a world government. And yet it is our task to prepare the youth entrusted to us for whatever may be in store for them as they grow up.

Frank D. Ashburn, headmaster of the Brooks School, North Andover, Mass., wrote in a recent article in the N. Y. Times Magazine, September 23rd, 1945.

"Indeed, the responsibility and opportunity laid on American teachers is a grave one, perhaps the gravest ever laid on any group of people. The symbol of today is the atomic bomb, the symbol of the future is not known. It may be beautiful or it may be hideous. All we do know is that there is a new vast power, whether for beneficence or evil. Children now in school will grow up taking this as a matter of course, but they must, in a perilously short time, be prepared for their privileges and dangers."

Then he describes the aims of a group of liberal educators. "These advocates of a liberal education return unashamedly to an old concept which was in danger of being forgotten, the concept of man as a child of God, the idea of character and standards as the most important by-product of education. Without these, they say, education is a means of increasing man's danger. The highly educated man is more dangerous than the ignorant, just because he knows more."

Ashburn speaks of the idea of *character* and *standards* as the most important *by-product* of education. I would go further than that. I could not be satisfied if character building were but a by-product of education. Character building, the awakening and developing of the inherent qualities in an individual must be the *major aim* in education. With this we come to the kernel of our discussion. What can we do in preparing the children entrusted to us, for this complex age in which they will have to live?

In thinking about this problem I have come to the conclusion that, regardless of whether the future of the atomic age is going to be beautiful or hideous, the atomic age will be in need of individuals with strong characters, high ideals and beliefs. It will be in need of:

- (1) People who have confidence and faith in the future of mankind.
- (2) Personalities who cannot be swept off their feet by waves of fear.
- (3) Human beings who have trust in each other, who have developed a sense for tolerance and mutual assistance.
- (4) A youth which is enthusiastic and positive towards life.
- (5) A humanity which loves truth, beauty and goodness.

Aiming at such high ideals in education, one is fully aware of the limitations. Were it not for the inexhaustible guidance material which we have received through Rudolf Steiner, one might easily become utterly discouraged.

I will try to illustrate with a few practical examples from situations in teaching how we hope to come to at least a partial realization of our aims.

Psychologists have of late realized and emphasized more and more the great importance of proper, wholesome environment for children at this early age. In the November issue of "Childhood Education" Professor W. H. Kilpatrick discusses some fundamental principles which must underlie all social relationships. He emphasizes the most important steps of human development in early childhood, such as learning to stand, learning to speak, and learning to think.

To mention another authority, Dr. Arnold Gesell, Director of the Clinic of Child Development, Yale University, has published a new kind of book in which he lets photographs of children in action speak for themselves. The book is called "How a Baby Grows". He expresses the importance of the pre-school age period by saying, "In the first five years the child learns the alphabet of living."

We all know that a child would not learn to speak did he not have the living example of human speech surrounding him, which he desires most emphatically to imitate. Rudolf Steiner calls this period of child development the period of imitation.

If one searches for a key-word, a guiding line, in pre-school education, it has been expressed most simply and fittingly by Rudolf Steiner. He said:

"The pre-school child should grow up *in an environment worthy of imitation.*"

The kindergarten child's world is a world of play. In the form of play he *imitates* his surroundings, and his environment influences and affects him to the degree that he imitates it. It is not surprising that a child who grows up in our mechanistic age often seems to lack the playful imagination children used to have when they played at farming, or carpentering, or at various other human occupations. Because of their different environment, their play is different. They play with trains, cars, airplanes, with guns and tanks and aircraft carriers. In some instances the play impulse seems to have turned into a desire to destroy things, to see things tumble down, to take pleasure in disrupting the constructive play of others.

Of course the child is not to be blamed for such behaviour, but the circumstances of our age, the child's environment, are to be blamed for it. It is at this point that education has to fulfill a most important task.

The child who lacks the desire to play and finds no pleasure in it is as badly off as the adult who has no desire to work or finds no pleasure in it. The child who is constantly in a state of excitement, who has to race around, knock things over, push and pull, lacks the inner harmony which is so vital for a healthy growth. The nursery and kindergarten teachers must aim to bring about this inner harmony.

One of the most effective means towards this end is the telling of suitable stories. It has been the experience of ever so many teachers that the old fairy-stories which have come down to us by word of mouth through the centuries, and have finally been collected and written down by the brothers Grimm, have the desired healing effect on children. In these stories a world of imagination comes to life in which the child feels at home, for he finds a quieting, restful refuge in that world. These stories are so pictorial and full of varied events that the child's imagination is stimulated in many directions. With some guidance he will begin to bring the content of the stories into his play. I cannot see that any harm is done if he begins to play farming, or shoemaking, or tailoring, or if he imagines himself a prince or a king; or if she takes the part of the beautiful queen or the fairy; even though their environment does not suggest such activities. The environment created through the story, however, can be very lively and strong. In this I can see only a wholesome effect, which manifests itself in the fact that the children begin to play happily and harmoniously. The inner orderliness that can be brought about in children through such activity is but one example of a way to reach the indicated aims.

In another example I will try to describe a situation with an older class.

It is a definite aim in our school to lead gradually from the joyful, constructive *play* in the kindergarten over into joyful, enthusiastic *work* as the children grow older. I do not claim that we succeed in every instance and with every child, but we have a definite aim, and I should like to indicate briefly how we try to come a step closer to realizing it.

We start our work every day with a verse by Rudolf Steiner. In saying the verse we orientate ourselves in the world.

I look into the world
In which the sun is shining,
In which the stars are gleaming,
In which the stones repose.
The living plants are growing,
The sentient beasts are living,
And man imbued with soul
Builds there the spirit's house.

In saying this verse we consciously relate ourselves to the world. We see the shining sun, the gleaming stars, the quiet stones, the living plants, the feeling animals and man, who, imbued with soul, builds in this world a house for his spirit. Nothing has been forgotten. All four kingdoms are present in their characteristic way.

And then the verse continues:

I look into the soul
Within my inner self.
God's spirit weaves in light
Of sunshine and of soul,
In wide world's space without me
And depths of soul within.
To thee, O living spirit,
I turn my heart to ask
That blessing and pure strength
For learning and for work
May ever grow within me.

After we have oriented ourselves in the outside world and have become conscious of the world outside of ourselves, we turn towards our inner being. We realize that God's spirit weaves in the sunshine as well as in the soul, in the wide world's space and deep within ourselves. And then we turn to this living spirit and we ask with our hearts that pure strength for learning and work may ever grow within us.

This verse in its simplicity and beauty is a symbol of the spirit that we desire to create in our classroom.

The verse, of course, must never be said lightly or absentmindedly, and from time to time it is necessary to speak about its content in various ways so that the children speak it livingly. We speak it in unison and feel its importance. If a child is late, he knows he has to wait outside the door until the morning exercises are completed.

The morning verse is followed by an exercise based on eurhythmics. We call it the *I-A-O exercise*. This exercise may appear strange to someone who comes for a short visit to the class, and unless he receives some explanation he will not understand the purpose and meaning of the exercise. In his books

on the knowledge of the human being, Rudolf Steiner has described how conscious exercises, repeated rhythmically every day throughout a long period of time, strengthen the will. When one carries this exercise through for a long time consistently and consciously, not allowing it to become casual or careless, but giving it full concentration, one experiences a remarkable harmonizing effect upon the class. A group of people who belong together in their attempted work becomes a unity. I am convinced that the morning verse and exercise are to a great extent responsible for the creation of a joyful working spirit. Gradually the child should come to the point where he feels and knows that he wants to do what he should do or what he must do.

There will be a joyful working spirit present when the children are interested and enthusiastic about their studies. This interest, however, cannot be created in a classroom in which the teaching consists in giving an assignment in a textbook and asking the children to study it from page 70 to 80, so that they may be checked on it by a test. Interest and enthusiasm are created by the teacher's interest and enthusiasm as he presents the subject matter. Every time a subject is taught, it should be created anew by the teacher. If children are not interested in what is presented to them, in most cases it is the teacher's fault. It must be his constant aim to create an atmosphere which stimulates interest and eagerness to learn, a desire to work and to discover and to be active. I know this is more easily said than accomplished. Fortunately, in striving for this we are tremendously helped by the wisdom that underlies our curriculum. The various subjects are introduced neither too early nor too late. The approach is always from the imaginative to the abstract, never the reverse. The sequence which follows in the teaching of history or natural science is definite and unique. It would lead us too far in this discussion to show how the sequence alone tends to create confidence in the future of mankind.

Among the previously stated aims, I have not yet given an example as to how to develop a sense of tolerance and mutual assistance.

When Dr. Robert Ulrich recently spoke at Black Mountain College about "The Dilemma in Modern Education," he said:

"We have trained young people and we have no better civilization. We must admit that we have never been closer to universal barbarism than we are today. The great dream, the establishment of universal education, has been realized institutionally but has not achieved the deeper moral results expected."

These are strong words, and a most sorrowful admission in the Twentieth century.

Doesn't the reason for our not having a better civilization lie in the fact that educational principles have been and still are based on the materialistic point of view—*The Survival of the Fittest*? The phrase "struggle for existence" has become the watchword of scientific research. The fittest have survived and the unfit have perished. That is what has been taught in natural science for the last one hundred years. Exploitation has been practiced and sanctioned by this philosophy. We can witness almost everywhere the struggle for political and material power, from the strife in the smallest community to conflicts for world domination.

So long as we continue to believe in the doctrine that the fittest should survive and the unfit perish, there is no hope that we will achieve the deeper moral results of which Dr. Ulrich speaks. This doctrine is not Christian. Christianity teaches tolerance and mutual assistance.

How has this idea affected the classroom? Today there is a widely accepted point of view that we should boost and push along the bright students in school and advance them as fast as they can take it. Isn't this the same idea,—the advancement or the survival of the fittest? I cannot agree with this point of view. It is my conviction that a student who is intellectually brighter than the rest of the class gains more, morally and humanly, if he remains with his age group than if he is advanced ahead of it. Of course the classroom situation has to be right. If the teaching produces nothing but boredom in the bright child, he will either become a trouble-maker or his mind will wander. Both can only be harmful. But in such a situation the teacher has an important task to fulfil. He must find a way to keep the student interested in his work and at the same time—and this is just as important—he has to find a way to interest him in another direction.

The intellectually bright pupil is apt to become easily annoyed at the slowness of other students. If he can be interested in wanting to help the slow ones, a great deal will have been accomplished in the direction of moral development. We must realize that such qualities as patience and helpfulness can and should be cultivated. When the bright student learns to realize that everything does not come easily to everybody, and so develops the will and patience to be helpful, he gains a sense of tolerance and mutual assistance. It is also true that the bright child enjoys the help of the slow one in other than intellectual activities.

Once humanity changes the doctrine of "The Survival of the Fittest" to that of "The Survival of the Neediest," there will no longer be any danger that atomic bombs may drop on human habitations.

William Harrer

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

(continued)

The work begun in the first grade is carried further in the second grade, intensifying the activity by using the pictorial and musical qualities in sound and motion. The chief change in the curriculum is the transition from the wholly imaginative fairy tales to Aesop's Fables and the beginning of a more realistic animal study.

SECOND GRADE

Main Lesson

Letters, Reading and Story Telling

The alphabet is reviewed, both in capitals and small letters, with drill on names and sounds. Sound exercises accompany the drill. Aesop's Fables are told, then retold by the children and acted out by them. They copy short versions of the Fables from the blackboard and read them from their own printing. To the Fables are added simple descriptions and comparisons of animal characteristics. The children begin to make up their own sentences and write them down with the help of a list of words on the board. They illustrate their Fable Books and often model whole scenes. The first grade primer is finished, and during the year one or two second grade readers are used. Besides the Fables the children hear legends and nature stories which are still in the fairy realm, in that mountains, rivers, rocks and trees speak and act with the other characters. Many poems, chosen for their beauty, rhythm and sound, are learned.

In this year primitive grammar is begun through the children's own activity. They stand, walk, run, talk, sing, etc., and out of this on the board grows a grammar picture of a boy or girl, in the midst of the world, doing these "doing words" (verbs). Those things which the child sees and hears in the world are named (nouns) and become "name words" to him. The pictorial quality of adjectives is also felt, as nouns are clothed in these descriptive words. No grammatical terminology is yet used. Spelling arises naturally from words frequently used and from word families, particularly from words where each letter can be sounded. Easy dictation is also given

Main Lesson

Arithmetic

In the second year the fundamental rhythmic counting continues to animate all number work. Starting the day with rhythmic moving and counting awakens each child through his whole body and prepares him to enter into the quieter and more intellectual work of printing numbers and examples and doing mental arithmetic. The lessons include work in the four processes on small problems with the use of actual objects and from this the approach is made to purely mental work. Children who enter mental arithmetic slowly can always be tactfully returned to practice with objects without discouraging them. After the children's memories have been refreshed by varied rhythmic drills in the 2 and 3 tables, they can easily evolve the 4 table from the 2 table. They soon learn counting by 5's and so learn the 5 table. Counting by 10's is even more easily learned.

In this year the children learn to write their examples in the four processes both vertically and horizontally. They should be able to add a single column of 6 figures, 3 columns of 2 figures, *i. e.* 1 2 3, work out sub-

5 1 4

traction in relation to addition, and learn multiplication and division in relation to each other. Odd and even numbers are made clear. Thorough drill is given in adding combinations of all digits, or up to twelve.

Eurhythm, painting, modelling, handwork, music and languages as special subjects will be described in separate articles.

Margaret Peckham, for the Faculty

NOTICES

The Association needs one or two volunteers to help in filing, typing, and mailing. The work is occasional, depending on the need, and anyone who would like to volunteer should get in touch with Miss Dorothy Jeffery at the school.

EUROPEAN RELIEF

We would like to thank all who have sent donations in response to our request for help for the Rudolf Steiner Schools in Europe. The needs are still great and we ask you to keep them in mind throughout the winter. In the future we will not have the time to write individual thank you letters, and so take this opportunity to thank you in advance.

Vera Leroi

The following publications may be ordered through the Association:

The Mystery of the Human Temperaments	
by Rudolph Steiner	\$.75
The Three Fundamental Forces in Teaching	
by Rudolph Steiner	\$.40