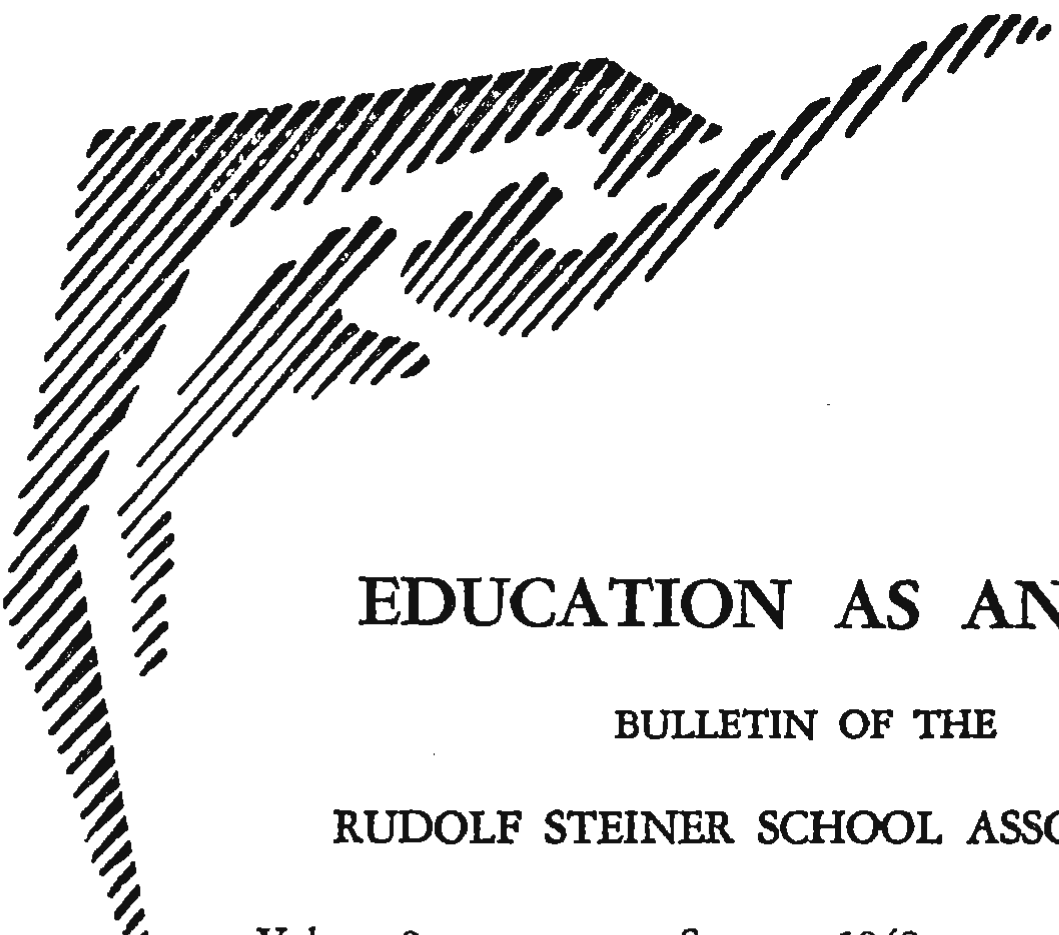




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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AUTHORITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Rudolf Steiner speaks frequently, in his lectures on education, about the need for the teacher to be the authority in the classroom. Here he is referring to the teaching of children between six and fourteen years of age. Considering this statement superficially, one might easily misunderstand what he means. When he speaks of authority he does not mean the same thing for the young child under six as he does for the older child over fourteen. He also differentiates somewhat between authority as regards the child from six to nine or ten and the child of ten to thirteen or fourteen.

As for the last ten years I have had the pleasure and the opportunity of teaching children between ten and fourteen, this brief consideration will be concerned mainly with this older group.

With regard to the teacher as the authority in the classroom, there are two schools of thought. First, there is the traditional, conservative school of thought according to which the teacher is the unquestioned authority. This authority is established either naturally through the gifts of the teacher, or by way of rules, regulations, punishments and pressures. Second, there is the progressive school of thought according to which the teacher steps into the background and becomes a counsellor who will give advice when it is needed.

According to the first method the children are taught by the teacher. According to the second, the children are left more to themselves and are often guided so as to learn from each other.

In the first case—if it is carried to extremes—the children may be oppressed, free expression curtailed, imagination put into a straitjacket and crea-

tive ideas smothered. If the second method is likewise allowed to go to extremes, the imagination and creative ideas of the children run wild and lack the formative forces which would give them backbone and inner structure. In the first classroom there may be excellent discipline. In the second, there may be chaos. Nowadays both of these methods are permeated, as a rule, by the idea that the children ought to learn to use their powers of reasoning as adults do, as soon as possible.

To which of these two schools of thought do we belong? We try not to fall into the extremes of either the one or the other.

I believe there is common agreement among parents and educators today that children, in general, have an instinctive craving to put their wholehearted trust in one or more adult human beings. This seems to be especially true of the child between six and ten. The child looks up to the adult with the greatest confidence; he feels protection; for him the adult is a vessel of truth. If such relationships exist, the child is happy and develops well.

This feeling of unquestioning trust in the adult begins to change somewhat about the age of nine or ten, or earlier if the child has been maltreated through a premature fostering of his reasoning powers. Fundamentally the trust is still there, but something new enters into this pure feeling of trust, something that comes from the realm of thinking. He begins to look at the adult with a somewhat more critical eye; he begins to judge or question the deeds and action of the adult. During this process of testing, which is not at all fully conscious, he has—or his higher being has—no greater hope and wish than that the trusted adult friend may pass the test successfully. He does not want to lose him.

In the classroom the child becomes now more and more conscious of what the teacher can do, and of that in which she fails. His sense of whether the teacher is fair or not becomes ever stronger. But what counts most with him is whether the teacher is honestly and deeply interested in him and loves him just as much as she loves Johnny or Anne. *If the teacher is able to create and maintain an atmosphere of confidence which springs from genuine interest in the well being and development of every child in the classroom, then a natural and wholesome form of authority is established.*

With this we come to a third school of thought which lies between the other two mentioned. When we said, in the first case, that the teacher teaches the child—and we might add to this, regardless of whether the child wants it or not—and in the second that the child is left more to himself, in the third case we can say: the child *wants* to be taught by the teacher. When Rudolf Steiner speaks of the teacher as the authority in the classroom, he means an authority that is created from within through interest, enthusiasm and love, and not an authority created from without through laws, regulations and oppressions.

From ten to fourteen years of age, the child is not yet interested primarily in what the teacher knows and, provided that this above-mentioned, natural authority exists, the child will gladly forgive the teacher if she makes a mistake in arithmetic. Of course if this happens too often the confidence begins to falter and a critical attitude replaces trust. As the child becomes older his interest in whether the teacher is a scholar in her field grows, and by the time he is ready for high school a transformation in the relationship between the teacher and pupil has taken place. Now the teacher is no longer the authority whose word is trusted, but the subject matter must be presented in such a way

that the child can find the truth in it for himself. During this period of transition the teacher must make a conscious effort to train the children for a new kind of authority. This is an authority which does not come from an individual, but from knowledge itself. The earlier sense of security brought about by trust in an adult human being has laid the basis for this new trust in knowledge.

William Harrer

THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOLS

The first post-war international conference of Rudolf Steiner Schools took place from March 31st to April 6th of this year at the Waldorf School in Stuttgart. The Waldorf School was closed by Hitler in 1938 and was reopened in 1945 under the friendly auspices of the American Military Government. It is attended by twelve hundred children and there are an additional twelve hundred waiting to enter. Rudolf Steiner School teachers from England, Holland, Switzerland, the United States as well as from the seventeen schools in Germany were present. A similar international conference, to meet in London, is planned for next year.

Thanks to the parents of our school, I was enabled to represent the Rudolf Steiner School of New York on this occasion, as well as to revisit Michael Hall, one of the Steiner Schools in England. Let me sketch for you briefly some impressions of this trip.

An international train carried me, together with teachers from the Steiner schools of Zurich and Basel, through the sunny landscape of southern Germany. An old man, with long white hair and beard, rolled a cigarette and glanced keenly at us as he spoke. His tone had no bitterness but his quick glance gauged the effect of his statement on the minds of the foreigners who shared the carriage with him.

"Yes, the peasants are building. They are the only people who have goods to barter for bricks and building materials. But what are they building for? They'll only get their houses finished in time to see them smashed again!"

Shortly thereafter we arrived at Stuttgart. The station is an empty shell but the fearfully crowded trains bring their loads, and the passengers pour through the ruined gates on their way to work. Outside the station we had our first impression of the city. Only the Zeppelin Hotel across the street, entirely rebuilt for the use of the Americans, stands intact—every other building in the immediate vicinity of the station is in ruin. I recalled the busy and prosperous square which I had seen from the station steps nearly fifteen years before, and now the effect of the devastation was not what I had expected. The trams pushed past, bursting with passengers; men and women hurried to and fro. I noticed that there were shops built into the ground floor of the ruined structure across the street. The first impression was not so much one of the fearfulness of the ruins as one of human activity which now takes the ruins for granted as fifteen years ago it had taken for granted that the external world was whole and sound and would forever be so.

From the station to the height on which the Waldorf School stands, overlooking the city from the east, the crowded tram ascended through familiar streets which now appeared like well-known scenes experienced in the distortion of a bad dream. What had formerly been solid blocks of dwelling houses,

now was pitted with the shells of bombed buildings through whose empty windows one could look up at the sky. The structures least destroyed were in many cases being restored and red bricks saved from the rubble marked the extent of the damage which had had to be made good. Glad as one was to see this rebuilding, the old man's question—"What are they building for?"—echoed in the background of one's mind.

Hausmannstrasse, formerly Kannonenweg, a broad balcony-like street overlooking the ruined center of the city, brought me once more to the steps leading up to the school yard and the Waldorf School itself. The yard was deserted, the conference had already begun, and I found my way to the new hall, rebuilt on the ruins of the old. This is the heart of the school and a center for a great part of the spiritual life of Stuttgart. Between three and four hundred friends were gathered there and I arrived in time to hear the last introductory words of welcome from Herr Weissert, who represented the Waldorf School, and to hear the words of greeting spoken on behalf of the Swiss and the Dutch teachers. Unfortunately the English teachers had been delayed by travel restrictions. I was then asked to say a few words for our own school in New York. It was a very deep joy to bring the greetings of the teachers, the children and the parents to the Waldorf School, first founded by Dr. Steiner nearly thirty years ago, where many of our teachers have received their training and the first impulse to work in this education. There was great joy and gratitude also on the part of the German teachers that it was possible for them once more to meet with representatives of the school movement outside of Germany after the fearful years of isolation and suppression. There was on all sides the recognition that we were once more in fact, what we had never ceased to be in theory, a world-wide educational movement the seed of which could take root and bear fruit in every country where there is a recognition of the need for an education founded in a spiritual knowledge of man.

It will be impossible to give a detailed report here of the seven days of concentrated work which constituted the conference, but I shall try to sketch with a few strokes some of the lasting impressions with which I left Stuttgart and which I would like to share with all those friends in this country for whom they are of interest. The theme which united the work of the Conference could be translated as—*Education toward individuality of soul as a healing force in the present crisis of humanity*. This was no phrase or slogan but a concept issuing from the experience of classroom teacher, upper school specialist, artist and physician, and it was evident that all seventeen of the schools within Germany had been actively preparing themselves for this conference with this particular theme in mind. This was possible because the present conference had grown out of the preceding one held last Christmas which, in its turn, had grown out of the work of the preceding autumn. A conference to be held next November was planned in the final meeting. When one considers the almost unbelievable difficulties of travel in Germany today, one can appreciate the importance which the teachers attach to this common work. Whereas before the war there were individual schools working almost independently, there is now a concerted movement, conscious that only a free yet active cooperation can hope to achieve the goals which the times demand. To a considerable extent this is also true of the English and Dutch schools, and there is now the determination to make this true also for the world-wide movement.

The seven conference days were also the expression of another form of collaboration—that between class teacher, artist and natural scientist. One ex-

ample of this was the discussion of the role of painting in our schools. Here a very valuable new impulse has been given through the presence in the Waldorf School of Julius Hebing, a painter who has worked for years to lay the foundation for a scientific experience of color in the direction indicated by Goethe and Rudolf Steiner. Herr Hebing's presence in the school—he has his studio right in the main school building—has not merely been a personal stimulus to the individual teachers, but has helped the faculty as a whole to come to a new and far more objective understanding of the role of color and painting in education. This was revealed in the glowing colors of the exhibition of paintings from the first through the twelfth grades, as well as from the extension high school course, teachers' training course and adult evening classes. It was in work of this kind, where the impulse of an individual has been taken up in concentrated group work, that the visitor could best feel the reality of what Dr. Schwebsch, Chairman of the School's Executive Committee, refers to as the "blessing of a second start". The Waldorf School and the school movement in Germany is not merely a continuation of what was there before Hitler suppressed it, but a new start on a deeper level of experience.

It was a special joy to attend the "Monatsfeier", or monthly school assembly, repeated especially for the conference. Here one could experience what Eurythmy can mean to a school in which the little ones have the opportunity to see the eleventh and twelfth grades perform a Bach Chorale of which they may have studied one voice in their own lessons. Recitation in English, French, Latin, Greek and German, choral singing, lower school orchestra of recorders, fiddles, cellos, triangles and drum, and the full school orchestra, which gave an excellent performance of a movement from a Beethoven piano concerto and the Freischütz Overture, all united to create an impression of vitality and joy which outshone the negative effects of physical undernourishment and insecurity. Another remarkable example of this vitality and initiative was the production of Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part I, in English, by pupils of the Twelfth Class. Falstaff, Percy, the King and several others really lived in the English language as they acted. The production was prepared outside of school hours, with the help of Dr. Sandkühler their English teacher, but entirely on the initiative of the young people themselves.

One evening during the Conference was given over to a Parents Evening at which seven to eight hundred parents and friends were present. They were eager to hear of the work in the schools outside Germany and it was a special satisfaction to be able to tell them that it was the parents of the Rudolf Steiner School in New York who had made it possible for me to speak to them that evening. The quality of the mood which lived in that meeting was evidence that national differences are secondary where the human spirit is concerned.

A great part of the last three days of the conference was devoted to reports on the work of the schools throughout the world. It was wonderful to be able to form a picture of the different schools, some in ruined cities where there had never been a Rudolf Steiner school before and yet where, within a few months, three to four hundred children were enrolled; others in conservative middle class Swiss cities where it has required years for recognition to come from state authorities and influential groups; others in stately English parks, in cities like London and Edinburgh or in a gray coal-mining center such as Ilkeston. One Dutch school was driven out by the German invasion, another existed throughout the war undercover in Amsterdam. And lastly we heard about a German school of eleven hundred children which now appears to take its place among

the 'foreign' schools because it is in the Russian zone. Only one teacher was able to come from Dresden—in contrast to twenty-four from Hamburg!—and it was with special feelings that the audience listened to her report. The school is licensed by the city of Dresden, the teachers are paid by the city, but they have so far been left free to conduct their work as they see fit. In Berlin friends have been preparing to open a school for nearly two years. Now they have everything ready: children, teachers, a building, sufficient funds—but the permission for the school to operate must be given by all four occupying powers, and there is still no school! At the present time over seven thousand children are being taught in Rudolf Steiner Schools in Germany each day, in many cases under incredibly difficult conditions.

I was deeply impressed to hear the teachers from these war-torn countries describe the conditions among their children which have arisen as a result of the war years: restlessness, fear, weakened moral feeling, inner insecurity. As I listened, I thought of our own children and the question arose: "To what an extent does our technology and the pressure of our American life create the same phenomena in our children as did the war years in the children abroad?" It is the experience of the teachers over there that the influence of a genuinely artistic and social education can do wonders in counteracting these devastating effects.

It was for this reason especially heartening to find that the American Military authorities responsible for education in our zone of Germany are very well aware of the good work which is being done in the Steiner schools to overcome the human disintegration resulting from the war and the Nazi regime. I had the opportunity to have several talks with representatives of our military government and they were very much interested to know what had brought me to Stuttgart; how our work in the States is related to the work abroad; what is Eurythmy, etc. At the conclusion of our first talk, the opinion was expressly stated that our authorities wished to see the Waldorf School become a model for the state schools in Wuertemberg-Baden, the difficulty being the lack of interest on the part of the responsible German officials! In German state educational circles the cry is all for pushing up quickly those with ability so that their universities can once more regain their former intellectual eminence! The *Abitur*, the stiff German entrance examination for the universities, is still the goal of German secondary education and so long as this continues German schools will never find their way to educate children prepared to grapple with the life about them as full human beings. Our American authorities have very wisely decided not to interfere directly in German educational affairs for they see their role as advisory. My impression is that they are following this course tactfully and intelligently (this is equally true of the British Zone) and the Waldorf School, as well as the other schools in the American Zone, have reason to be grateful in many ways for their help and backing.

I cannot end the report on my Stuttgart visit without passing on to you in these pages the overwhelming chorus of gratitude to the friends in America who have helped the teachers and children abroad with food, clothes and school equipment. No day passed without teachers from every one of the German schools coming to me and asking me please to tell the friends in America that they could not possibly have kept on with their work, or stood in their classrooms before their classes if it had not been for American help. How can they ever repay their debt is their constant question. I promised that I would carry their messages across the ocean, but I have no doubt that the healing and fortifying work done with each single child and teacher is the thanks which will live the longest, and is the justification for the great efforts which friends in

the United States have made. Readers of the Bulletin will be glad to know that Miss Vera Leroi, who did so much to initiate and carry our relief work in America, and who is now completing her training as a Eurythmist at the Goetheanum, was also present at the conference.

To conclude my report on my experiences in Germany, let me return to the first remark we heard on our journey: "What are they building for?" The teachers of the Rudolf Steiner schools in Europe are quite as well aware of the dangers threatening them, as was our white-haired fellow traveler, but their conclusion is: Let us now work in such a way that the seeds we plant in human souls can thrive and bear fruit even if we ourselves are swept away. Seven thousand children are being taught in Rudolf Steiner schools each day in Germany, and thousands of human beings besides are coming into contact with this work in other ways. If, as I believe, these men and women and children are better able to find themselves as human beings through these contacts which they have made, this positive gain will certainly not be lost, no matter how difficult the future may appear from an external point of view.

My trip to Europe was completed by a visit to England. I was very happy to be able to stay at Michael Hall, the largest of our schools there, and renew old friendships with former colleagues with whom I had worked in London from 1935-1939. Thanks to the determination and sacrifice of the teachers, parents and friends of the school, Michael Hall survived two major operations during and after the war. The first was evacuation to Minehead in the West of England, and the second was the purchase of and move to its present location, a beautiful estate on the edge of Ashdown Forest in Sussex, about thirty miles south of London. The school now has three hundred and fifty children, over half of them boarders, and the number of local day pupils is growing steadily. Owing to very tight building restrictions, the classes are still housed in long wooden barracks originally built by the insurance company which occupied the premises during the war. Here, as everywhere in our schools, the cry is for more space as well as for more teachers! A training course with about fourteen members is working at Michael Hall to try to fill the latter need. It was a pleasure to meet there Carol Coates Cassidy who taught at our New York school for two years, and who is taking part in the training course while her two children attend the school.

Beside Michael Hall, there are six other schools in England and Scotland and a total enrollment of at least twelve hundred children. Representatives of all these schools meet each year. This year for the first time representatives from the Curative Homes also attended the conference. In talks with the English teachers, one thought emerged with special clarity. This is the need for a far greater awareness in the collaboration between England and America in regard to exchange of experience, publications, and the presentation of the education to the English-speaking world.

Perhaps the deepest impression with which I returned home was the knowledge that we are not an isolated school in New York City, but a part of a world-wide educational movement which has grown up out of the needs of the times in which we live. No matter what catastrophes may overtake the world, this education will of necessity take ever stronger root in life because it is so greatly needed. This conviction can be a source of courage to us all, when we look into the difficult years which lie ahead.

Henry Barnes

EUROPEAN RELIEF

Surveying the funds which have come in for relief, and the packages which we know to have been sent recently, we see that there is need for a far greater proportion to go to the teachers upon whose strength and initiative the schools depend. Therefore we would like to make a special appeal for *Teachers' Relief*. The teachers receive no Hoover feeding from the Military Government as do the children. They are all physically below par, several have had to go to sanatoriums. Among the 300 teachers and their families there are cases of tuberculosis, pneumonia, paralysis and impending blindness. The 184 student teachers upon whom the future of the education rests have received no relief that we know of. Owing to the uncertainty of the times, we would like to send a major part of our winter shipment as soon as possible. Yet some of the costs of our last shipment must first be repayed to a kind friend who advanced it. Any contributions, no matter how small, can be put to very efficient use.

The cheapest way to send food is in bulk purchased by us at special rates. \$8 will send 100 lbs. of sugar; \$8.50, 100 lbs. of flour. \$30 will send 100 lbs. of fat. You can send these shipments through us in your name.

Next to food, clothing is the most urgent need. In some schools only a third of the children have any underwear at all even in winter.

The cheapest way to send clothing is for those living in the Eastern and Southeastern states within postal zones 1, 2, 3 and 4 to send through us. For those living further from New York, it is cheaper to send direct to Europe although we will gladly handle all packages we receive.

Especially needy is the Dresden school which we cannot reach with bulk shipments. We are asked not to send direct to the school, but you may send individual packages to individual addresses which we can furnish. So far as we know, no clothing has gone to two addresses recently received: Freie Georgen Schule, Klosterstr. 28, (14b) Reutlingen/Pfullingen, French Zone; Freie Schule Ulm, Roemerstr. 95a Ulm (Donau) Germany.

Two new schools have been started. One is in Strassbourg, France, the other in Milan, Italy. We expect reports on them shortly.

We would greatly appreciate a card from you when you send off packages as to where and what you send (food or clothing), so that we may have an all round picture of the relief work and help to keep it in balance. Please make checks out to:

Waldorf Schools Fund, Inc.
15 East 79th Street - New York City

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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