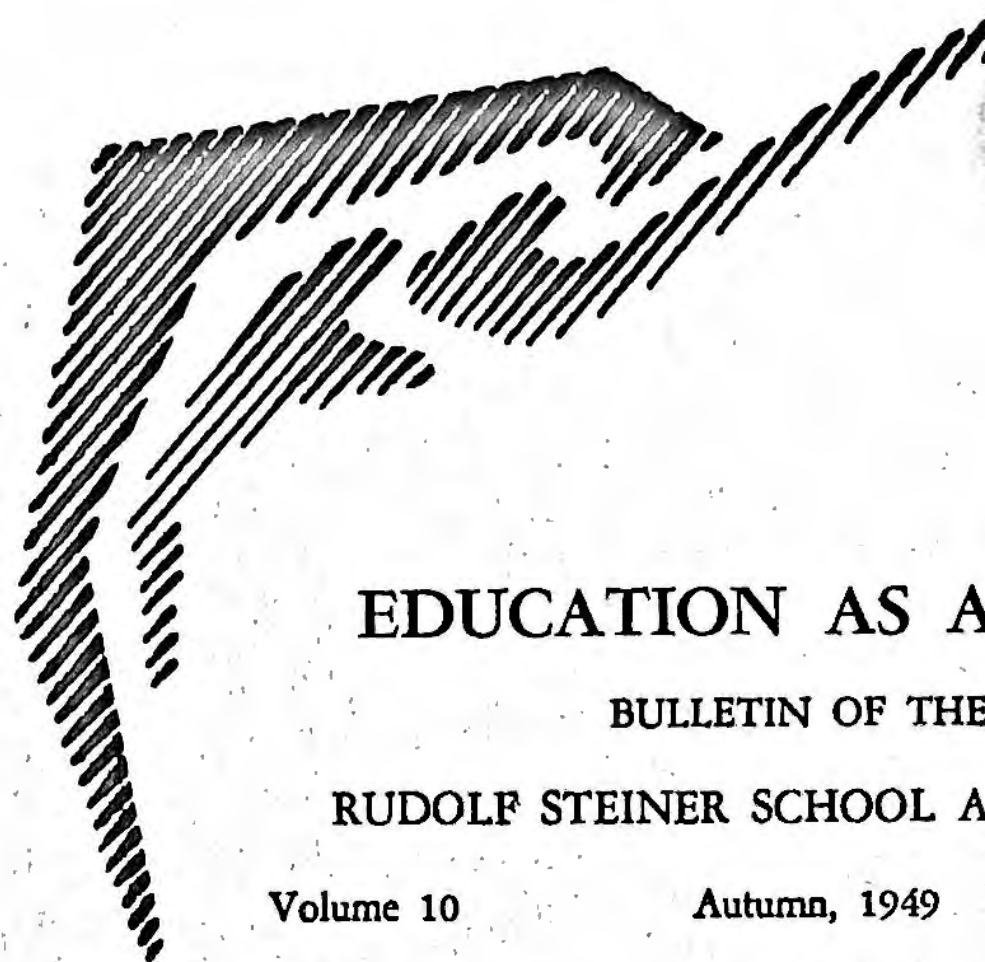


EDUCATION AS AN ART

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THE BUNCH OF FLOWERS

by Rudolf Steiner

Once there were two children who took a walk one Sunday; on the way home each one of them carried a bunch of flowers. One child said, "Oh, but *my* flowers are beautiful!" The other said, "And *mine* are beautiful too!" Each one liked only his own bunch of flowers. But the bunch of the one child did not please the other child at all. The one child had in his bunch beautiful flowers, full of sweet perfume, but also the common grass, and even ears of field grain, too—this child even had thistles in his bunch.

The other child had only sweet-smelling flowers, nothing but sweet flowers, and so this child with the sweet flowers said to the other, "Do you know, your bunch of flowers has every possible kind of blossom in it—I do not like it at all!" But the other child did not like the bunch that only had sweet flowers in it, either.

How do you think, dear children, that the story continues? Now you see, my dear children, the child with the bunch containing ears of grain and thistles told the other child a story. Listen to what he said:—

"One other time I was out walking on Sunday, and out there in the open I fell asleep and dreamed. But what did I dream? Listen. I lay in a meadow"—so the child said—"and there came great animals and small animals, and they talked to each other. There was an altogether strange, very very small, quite tiny animal and a large animal. The tiny little animal was a Bee, the large one a Calf, and Calf and Bee talked together. The Bee said: 'O you Calf, you understand nothing at all about the plants, but I, I understand everything. I know which plants are sweet and from these I sip honey: the honey I take then to men, and men love the honey so much! If I should not fly to all the beautiful flowers with their lovely scent, there would be no honey for them.'

"Then spoke the Calf: 'Do you know, I could not live only from the sweet-scented flowers which taste so good to you. All the flowers over which you fly quite carelessly—these I must eat. And if I should not eat them, there would be no milk in the world. But without milk men could not be nourished and then no honey would be needed, for there would be no men to enjoy it!'"

After this fashion the two children conversed. And the child who had the bunch of sweet flowers understood that there was something for him to learn. The other child had already learned what was right through his dream. What the child with the sweet flowers realized was that there cannot be *only* sweet flowers. He understood that there must be all sorts of different flowers, all working together. And so the child learned to love the bunch which held every possible kind of plant. And the child who had gone to sleep and dreamed could say: "Yes, that is what the Calf said. There are certain kinds of flowers and then there are other kinds of flowers, but all of them are necessary and therefore a bouquet which contains all kinds of flowers is much more worthwhile and precious than one which contains only sweet flowers."

Now, my dear children, when you go to school it is as if you went walking on a beautiful Sunday and from school you should take with you all the most precious things with you out into life. And when you can take with you into life a bouquet of flowers from all that your dear teachers have taught you, you will have the greatest joy in such a bouquet. But it must contain all the flowers, not only the sweet-smelling ones! This you must learn, that you take into yourselves sometimes something that is not exactly sweet! If you study earnestly and industriously you will notice that into your later life you can bring not only a bunch of sweet flowers, but a bunch of all those life-filled flowers upon which your life depends.

Think this over, my dear children, so that each time that your teachers ask something difficult of you, you obey them lovingly. From school you will receive the most beautiful bouquet of flowers for your whole life, and it will give you the most pleasure if it contains all the different plants of life. Each memory of your school years will give you strength for life itself. For human beings, when they are grown up, win the finest forces for their lives, when they can take with them from their school such a bunch of flowers. They are life forces which endure until death, and even beyond death.*

Translated by Virginia Field Birdsall

WHAT IS THE EFFECT UPON CHILDREN OF WHAT THEY IMITATE?

More and more today, children are surrounded by the achievements of the technical world, which seem to them to belong to the necessities of life. They see that everywhere all one needs to do is to press a switch or turn a knob, whether it be for the radio, the vacuum cleaner or in an automobile, and something is immediately set in motion or begins to whirr or sing. It is this sort of thing, frequently, with which children are occupied and entertained by grown-ups.

Why then still read them fairy tales or even make up stories and tell them ourselves? For this there is no time; they can be heard over the radio. It seems to grownups as though it were much more fun for children if, for example, a vacuum cleaner glides humming through the room each morning and the children can lay down paper or bits of cloth for it to gulp down hastily.

* From *The Waldorf School Reader*.

But what goes on in the children then?

In the book "The Pedagogical Value of the Knowledge of Man and the Cultural Value of Pedagogy", Rudolf Steiner says that the little child clings with his perceptions to gestures, movements and motion before all else, and that when he perceives any kind of motion he feels the inner urge to imitate it.

We can often observe how everything in motion attracts children immediately and transports them with enthusiasm so that they cannot stay still but must move too and imitate the example which is set them. We can even see this still in grownups sometimes. If they are in an uninhibited mood they may suddenly imitate some motion and this immediately effects others as being "childish", and rightly so. A child may be allowed to be uninhibited, which is meant here in the sense of being "lost in his surroundings"; for the grown-ups, however, this is an exceptional condition.

All the motions and gestures which children see should be really worthy of imitation. The child's loving wonder and astonishment should be bound up with each imitation. But the imitation of the before-mentioned technical objects makes the children restless, their motions take on something of a hasty, unfree quality, not, however, a careful one. The great speed of automobiles, trains and other machines leaves the children no time for quiet observation. They are wrenched along with them, so to speak; gestures and expressive movements can not unfold themselves at all.

Through the often penetrating noises which also play their accompanying role, these objects of imitation become all the more dominating. Gradually the child's interest is awakened by roaring, rushing objects only. An airplane humming across the sky attracts his attention; the flight of a bird or even a bird's song he overlooks or fails to hear.

The hearing of the child becomes coarsened when, as is so often the case, he is surrounded by radio music all day. A listening in the stillness in which something can echo from within, is impossible. The natural feelings of wonder, love, devotion and above all of reverence, with which a child should be continually surrounded, are smothered over.

How often today we meet young people who are no longer able to feel reverence for anything in the world! It is something quite unknown to them. In earliest youth they have lacked the objects for imitation which could have kept alive in them forces of love and reverence; their native capacities have been stunted.

A little child with all his innate qualities is altogether steeped in the element of religion, Rudolf Steiner says.

Who has not experienced how devout a child can be when, for instance, morning and evening, he speaks his prayer with a grownup or already says it alone. Not through the words, the sense of which he can still scarcely understand, but through the reverent attitude and gestures of the grownup and through the quiet tone in his voice; through these the child can be devout according to his own nature. Then he feels quieted and protected, and surely he is so. Or with what reverent absorption a child can listen when he is told of fairies, dwarfs and giants and the description is accompanied by appropriate gestures! How busily afterwards he may build a cave and work away tirelessly inside it, or try to paint many-colored little dwarfs on a piece of paper. How joyous a child becomes when we take him into a meadow and pick a bunch of flowers. He brings back happily the tiniest, most delicate blossoms. And if

we then show him butterflies, bees and beetles, and tell him about them, he learns to love and to watch all the unassuming, secret things and beings of nature. For instance there are animals that fly, swim, creep, climb, hop: in the air, in the water, on the ground, in the trees. Everything is in motion in ever different ways, each creature according to its own nature. There the child copies the naturally beautiful motions with joy. Here he can wonder, admire and rejoice. In this way he wins for himself inner mobility and a gift for outward observation at one and the same time.

But above all a grownup must find time and quiet attention to bring to children again. And he will surely have them if only he can dedicate himself wholly to the moment whenever he is concerned with children. This quiets the children and awakens their confidence. To do this he must call awake the power of imagination within himself anew. He need do none of this if he turns on the radio. But before all else he must control his own gestures and try to ennoble them!

In the presence of a child we should avoid everything which they should not imitate, says Rudolf Steiner in the above mentioned book. This is a difficult task which the educator must set himself. He must accompany each of his deeds with consciousness. Surely an achievement for himself, his fellow men, and the child at the same time! To be an "example" must always be connected with work upon oneself.

And Rudolf Steiner says further: "If I do not behave lovingly when in the presence of a child, if, without taking the child into consideration, I do something which is only appropriate for older people, and am not constantly aware that the child is near me, then it can happen that the child will devotedly imitate something not childlike but befitting an older person, and then his physical body will be molded accordingly . . ."

In the vicinity of a child one must consciously act otherwise than when alone or with other grownups. That, however, does not in the least mean that one should not let a child take part in various household tasks such as cooking, washing the clothes and so forth. What child is not delighted to have a bowl too in which he may stir away just like his mother! Only with him it must all remain play. It would be wrong to demand accomplishment of a child.

Such efforts alone, however, are still insufficient to create the necessary counterbalance to the more and more widespread mechanizing influence upon children. The subhuman forces roused through technical achievements have too unhealthy an effect. Corresponding cosmic influences must counteract this damage. A relationship to such forces and beings, consciously striven for, may reinstate a certain balance.

This is done in an entirely new way in the art of eurythmy, for instance. Through an understanding of speech and its individual sounds, cosmic influences show themselves. Through knowledge we win a new relationship to the living, upbuilding, sculptural forces of the nature which surrounds us.

In the eurythmy lessons developed by Rudolf Steiner especially for the little child, the whole being of the child is taken into consideration. It is not called upon in a onesided manner but all its original capacities are activated and harmonized in a most wonderful way. Here the child imitates primeval cosmic laws transposed into motion which work creatively and healingly against the damages already done him.

Into the practising of eurythmy the teacher can bring within his sphere of activity the living, formative powers which grow ever more invisible to men of the present day, yet are everywhere at work. The eurythmy teacher's motions and gestures, which the children imitate, must be brought to expression with an ever more conscious sense of responsibility.

Then the child will have before him examples which can keep alive his original, innately true and good capacities and can surely develop his physical body too in the proper way.*

Margarethe Buehler

NINE YEAR OLDS AND THEIR STUDY OF MAN AND ANIMAL

By nine most of the changelings of the year before have accomplished their change and reappear in school after the summer holidays with a strangely different look and a new reserve. It is a sad day for them and their teachers if he cannot become a new person with them and win their trust afresh by revealing strengths they have not yet known in him. For their new selfhood sits insecurely in the saddle, filling them with a deep sense of uneasiness. Now, more than ever, they have need of adults whose character and talents make them feel how fine it is to be a human being. To have such a teacher throws light on the path ahead. And they need this illumination, for the rosy glow of early childhood which once made the world so magically bright has gone forever.

Inner and outer worlds are no longer one world for the nine-year-old. They have been irrevocably sundered. The greatest care must now be taken to bring the outer world to the child in a light that everywhere discovers its human meaning.

No study is so ideally fitted to offer strength and comfort to the child at this critical moment of his development as the study of man himself.

This accordingly begins in the fourth grade with a contemplation of man's upright stature. Of all the myriad creatures in the universe man is best able to wrest his head free of the hold of gravity and to stand erect. Only in him is this the entirely normal posture. He moves over the earth in perfect balance. How different he looks from the animals with their horizontal spines and their heads dangling almost to the ground!

Man's hands too are free. They need not serve him as humble carriers like the animal's forepaws, but can be used to perform the most varied and wonderful functions.

And man has another great gift, the gift of speech. Animals cannot tell us what goes on inside them. We can only guess at their feelings when they bark, mew, grunt, roar or whinny. But human beings are able to pour their experiences, thoughts and desires into clear and even beautiful expression.

To have a really vivid impression of the contrast between man and animal, teacher and children may get down on all fours and find out how it feels to be in the position of a dog, a cat, a pig, a horse, a cow, or any other familiar creature, to have one's head down near the earth, one's nose sniffing and rooting, one's mouth biting, gnawing, tearing, one's hands and arms mere feet and legs, one's voice inarticulate. And when one disengages oneself from the animal position how lofty the head seems, how large and coolly de-

*Translated from *Das Goetheanum*, 24 July, 1949, by the editor.

The legs and arms too embody the same three structural principles, exhibiting the round, immobile head structure in the knobs inserted into hip and shoulder sockets, the chest principle in the flexibility and partial freedom of the knee and elbow, and the limbs proper in the agile hands and feet.

The hands and feet in their turn carry out the same form-motives. The heel at the one extreme is round and rigid, the arch flexible and curving, the toes and fingers linear and highly mobile. The children will make many similar discoveries as they look for the head, chest and limbs in the various parts of the body. And they will find them even in so small a portion of the organism as a single finger.

When they again compare the human form with that of various animals, their respect for man is heightened by finding that in man alone have these three basic structural principles been harmonized and carried through to some degree of perfection. There is not a single animal whose head, for example, has attained approximate roundness, whose foot has all three principles embodied in heel, arch and toes. The ape, man's nearest relative among the animals, makes an excellent object of comparison. Studying his head form with its crushed and sloping forehead, its heavy thrusting jaw, its fearful fangs, its flattened nose, observing its stooping posture, its dangling upper limbs, which are more like legs than arms, its strange hands, its flat-foot, the children see how great is the difference between this brute beast, which has fallen so pathetically short of humanness, and man. A visit to the zoo to have a good look at him makes a tremendous impression on the children. When, back in the schoolroom, they try to get under his skin in a faithful impersonation, adapting his posture, his gait, his voice, his expression, they will realize as they never could through words how far removed man is from that specialized deviation from a balanced structure betrayed by each animal form.

A study of the forms of various animals will make this principle of specialization still more clear. The horse's life in his environment has changed his earlier foot form almost beyond recognition. His toes have disappeared and been replaced by a horny hoof. His heel is actually part way up his leg, making him look as though he were walking on tiptoe. Studying the cow, one sees that this animal has specialized in the direction of becoming all metabolism. One stomach is not enough for the cow; she must have several! And the heavy head that looks so hard to lift is more an extenuation of the cow's long digestive tract than a perceptive organ as it is in man.

The specialization of a great variety of other animal forms is observed in detail. The giraffe, for example, presents an extraordinary picture of over-emphasized neck-development. Its whole body is as though fixed in a gesture of craning. The kangaroo is in many ways an opposite pole to the giraffe: the whole giraffe has gone up into its neck, whereas the whole kangaroo has gone down into its hind legs. The giraffe's spindly legs hardly look as though they were meant to carry it. The kangaroo's hind legs are mightily developed, while its forelegs are grotesquely stunted.

In the tapir and the elephant, the upper lip and nose have grown together and become one elongated organ. The squid or cuttlefish is a head organism with many tongues. The jelly-fish may be likened to a brain floating around without its skull. The bat, which has no legs at all, is outfitted with claws on the ends of its wing-tips by which to hang.

The child's attention may further be called to the fact that each animal species over-emphasizes some one of the three systems which in man are held in perfect balance. The lower animals may be described as onesided head de-

velopments in both form and function; the fish as trunk or chest organism; the higher mammals as limb and digestive systems. Such specialization in one of the three systems takes place at the expense of a stunting of the other parts. Man's capacity to refrain from specialization has preserved him from this stunting, and we therefore see in him a beauty, a perfection and a harmony of form which no other animal can equal.

Grotesque though their forms may sometimes be, animals are all distinguished by the possession of some special gift which in man is far less perfectly developed. The eagle has keener vision than any other creature. It can look down and see a rabbit or a chicken on the ground a mile below. The monkey, the squirrel, the leopard are sure climbers, as much at home in tree-tops as on solid earth. They do not grow dizzy at great heights and fall. The dog has an acute sense of smell. The deer, the horse, the kangaroo are specialists in locomotion. Each animal is found to have a special ability inherent in its structure.

Man is not gifted by nature with these special talents. But the very non-specialization of his form gives him the freedom that is his human specialty. His behaviour cannot be predicted as can the animal's. His life in his surroundings has an entirely individual character.

The same evolution which gives man the potentiality of freedom has also endowed him with the power of thought. Through exercising this power he has invented means whereby he can easily outdo the animal creation in specialized performance. He can fly more swiftly than a bird, travel at high speed over land and under water, ascend great heights and look out into spaces which the eagle's eye can never penetrate. His hand, so ill-fitted for digging and climbing, can make instruments which serve him better than the most specialized animal paw. He makes use of it to become an artist or a scientist.

In all these studies, man and animal are contemplated only in their external forms. No investigation of their structure is pursued below the surface of the skin. Most children of nine have not yet developed to the point where they can look without the wrong kind of fascination at denuded bones and inner organs.

The study of man and animal offers rich opportunity for the telling of stories and legends, the learning of poems, the painting and drawing of pictures. And modeling plays an especially important role. Now for the first time the child is concerned with exactness and detail of form. In the first three grades his modeling had an entirely different character. There he created whole scenes made up of all the figures in some story or real life situation. But now he models the heads and forms of man and the animals he has been studying. And as his fingers shape the sphere of wax or clay into the rounded head of man or the elongated head of some animal, he can experience in still another way the forces which have been at work to create these differences.

Such a study is an important contribution to the child's social training. To come to know man in concrete detail as the crown of creation is to inspire the deepest reverence for human beings. To have a vivid experience of the animal's limitations is to arouse compassion and a sense of man's responsibility toward this lower kingdom.

After this survey of man and animal, the children will understand in what sense man may be called the whole animal kingdom resolved into a single perfect form—the animal kingdom a fan-wise projection of specialized fragments of the human being. *

Marjorie Spock

* From the unpublished manuscript of the book "Toward a New Art of Education."