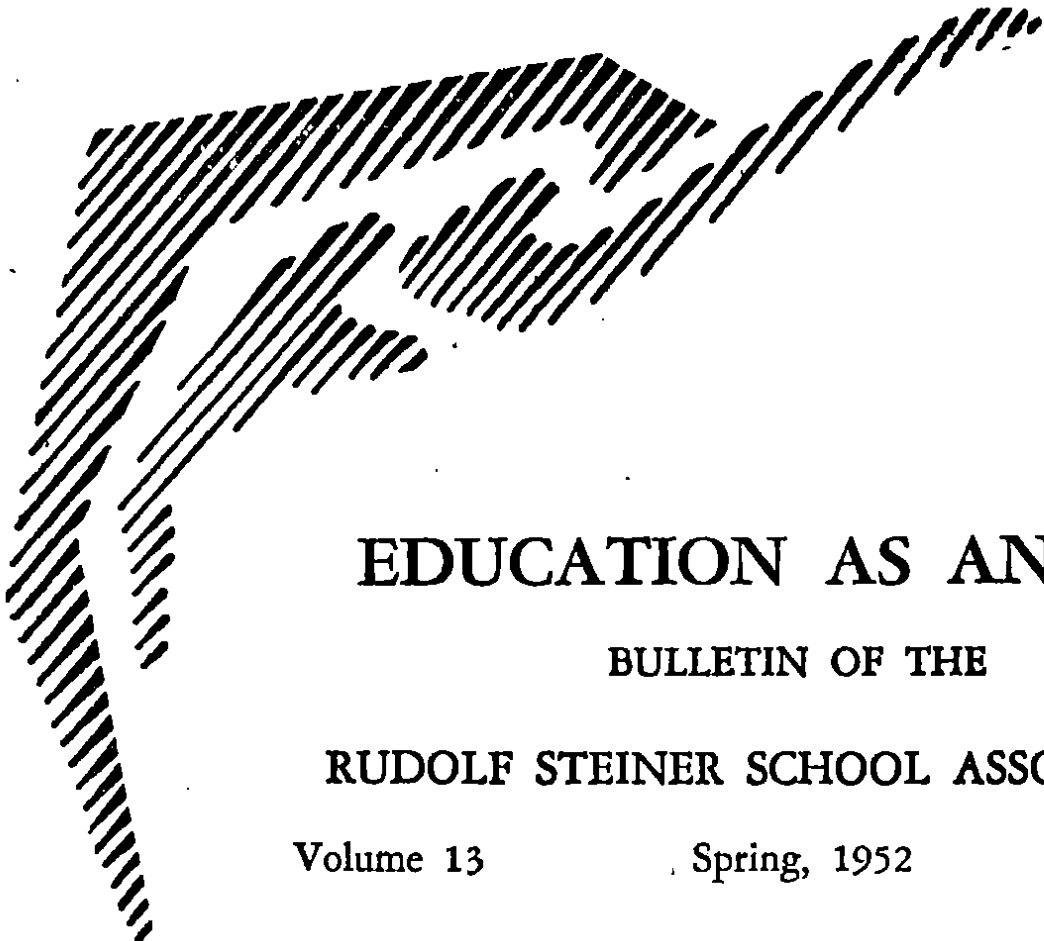




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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MAN AND ANIMAL

As Taught in the First Four Grades

This title standing alone will convey little to one not yet acquainted with Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy. One might expect the animal kingdom to be studied in a course by itself, but, as in the world all things are related to each other, we feel that in school, where we are fitting children to live in this world, we must not let them lose sight of the whole while studying details. For this reason we start each course by relating the particular subject to a larger whole. The reasons for relating animal to man will be indicated in the following pages.

To the children starting their fourth year at school the title "Man and Animal" is one of delightful significance as a goal finally reached. The first steps leading upward to this goal are taken unconsciously in the first grade when the children listen to fairy stories. On the very first day of "real" school, the small first-graders listen trustingly to the teacher as they are told that they are to begin to learn those things which grown people know and do in the big world. As we talk to these six and seven year old children, we see that their eagerly parted lips reveal half-formed second teeth, or toothless gaps, indicating that the hardest, most material part of their organism is not yet quite finished, and that for this reason they still live to a certain extent in the dreamy, fairy-tale world of their kindergarten days.

Now, in these tales there are many animals, with animal natures which are just as important to the children as the human characters and, for them, are not really differentiated from the world of man. In the story of *Snow-White and Rose-Red*, for instance, the children love the kind bear, who, not strangely at all, is a prince; or in the tale of *The Golden Bird* they expect the fox to be a friend and guide to the youngest son; and I am sure that no one can feel that the cruel Wolf in *Red Riding-Hood* is not an important character. Thus the animals become a living part of the child's world at this age.

As the first year draws to a close the teacher grows more and more aware of an unfolding and widening of the children's interests and powers of comprehension. After the summer vacation they return to the school definitely more grown-up and alert. The love of fairy stories has not yet vanished, but the teacher can feel that the transition to Aesop's Fables, suggested in the curriculum, is now possible and actually required by their developing consciousness. It is an accepted fact that the fables are a part of the cultural heritage of humanity, yet it is not so clearly realized that they are needed at just this stage of a child's development. The teacher must now use them with care as the perfect food for the child's growing appetite for learning. It is not the right approach to tell a fable and then analyze it in a tiresomely dry and intellectual way. Instead, the appetite is first stimulated by a thorough, pictorial description of people, animals and their ways, all in connection with the particular fable; then, as a climax, one might almost say "dessert", the fable itself is told with its brief and witty characterizations. Now, with their interest thoroughly aroused and thoughts active, sometimes even stirred further by acting out the fable, the children are ready to do some very childlike analysis of their own. Such analysis is based on observation and comparison, as science is. And here it is good for them to describe consciously the difference between the woolly covering of the innocent lamb and the shaggy hide of the wolf, between the cruel, meat-tearing teeth of the wolf and the grass-munching ones of the lamb. These animals are so different, yet they both move parallel with the earth, have four supporting legs and feet, a tail, etc. Such observations can be made at this time when the quality of dreaming is gradually falling away like a cloak, and the animals are no longer looked upon as being just the same as human beings and thus too close to be studied objectively.

The next step in preparation for a conscious understanding of the animals comes in the third grade with the study of farming and the farm animals in their relation to the earth and to man, as his willing servants. The children are now two steps removed from fairy-tale dreams, and are ready to feel a conscious love and gratitude toward the animals, who not only serve them but are also dependent upon them. These steps, which are only visible to the teacher, finally bring them to the fourth year and its goal.

Having heard many hints from older children in the school about the importance and interest of the study of "Man and Animal", the children are now full of wonder and anticipation, with an eagerness to begin to learn, which proves the truth of Aristotle's saying that "wonder implies the desire to learn". The teacher, who has spent a thoroughly enjoyable and stimulating period of study, preparing the best possible presentation of the subject is guided by the school curriculum, which says, "first an elementary study of man will be pre-

sented to the child in an artistic and reverent manner and then the animal world will be observed, always in its particular relation to man. In this way one teaches the child to perceive the manifold variations of the animal world, and to see how these are united in fixed order and harmony in human beings."

Each teacher who has taught this period of "Man and Animal" stands ready to help the next teacher whose class reaches the fourth grade; but no two teachers approach the subject in just the same way, though the fundamentals are of course the same. To this year's Fourth Grade teacher, it seemed good to relate the first lesson to the Bible stories taught during the previous year. We talked over the stories of Creation, and I recalled to the children the verse which says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth". In this way out of their earlier experience, it was natural to the children to start with the idea of the dignity of man made in God's image, which does not imply any concrete physical picture, but rather a sense of the moral character of man, which distinguishes him from the beasts.

Continuing to develop the curriculum plan of presenting man in "an artistic and reverent manner" in order to reveal in him "the variations of the animal world in fixed order and harmony", I turned to a book on zoology which definitely presents man's qualifications as exercising dominion over the animal world, due to certain potentialities. First it points out that we ought "to define the hand as belonging exclusively to Man" and continues, "There is in him, what we observe in none of the Mammalia that approach him in other respects,—a complete distinction between the functions of his two pairs of extremities; the upper being adapted to prehension alone, the lower to support only." This naturally leads to "Man is further distinguished from all other animals by his erect attitude." The zoologist also emphasizes that man's slow growth and dependence upon parents is "closely connected with his ultimate superiority". And he concludes with two important statements; one, that man's power to "articulate sounds, or language" is another of Man's unique abilities, the other, that "Above all, it would seem that the mind of Man is distinguished from theirs (animals) by the faculty of conceiving of a Superior Being, enjoying a purely spiritual existence". Implied in this last statement is Man's moral character which enables him to distinguish between good and evil. These above indications, and much more physiological data, were studied by the teacher and presented in a manner suited to nine year old children.

Man's spiritual superiority to animals having been thus indicated, we can now point out man's physical inferiority by showing that in each type of animal some physical part of the organism is carried very close to perfection, though at the expense of other advances in development. It is easy to show the superiority in speed of the horse's one-toed hoof over man's delicate foot; or how much better adapted a lion's unsheathed claws are for rending food, than man's delicate fingers; and when it comes to the air it is obvious that the eagle's wings outstrip all man's limbs in flying. But here we turn back once more to man's superiority, for all that he lacks physically is made up by his potential capacities that work through his creative and imaginative thought. He invents all manner of vehicles

which produce great speed, all kinds of tools for cutting and for eating food, and his airplanes of the present and future carry not one, but many through the air.

Having thus introduced man as a whole, the teacher goes on to lessons dealing with man's various physiological aspects, among them those which can be experienced directly by the children. The senses now become of conscious interest to them when they realize how unconnected with the world man's head might really be were it not for these doors and windows through which he goes out to the world and lets it in. Compressing their own ribs with their hands and then feeling how the air pushes them out again; letting the air in through the nose and out through the mouth while speaking; feeling the throbbing pulse; observing the color of veins; and recalling the red of arterial blood often seen; all such observations make these daily occurrences a stimulating study. Digestion may also be followed in a simple fashion from experience. With this foundation, the study advances to a comparison of man's functions with those of the animals.

To the surprised interest of the children, man's head is shown as having its counterpart in such primitive creatures as squids and octopuses, (cephalopoda), whose outreaching tentacles do the work done by man's senses. As a simple example of a counterpart of the human trunk in the animal world, we chose the mouse which the children were able to study at first hand as a pair of white mice live in our classroom. In these tiny creatures one is aware of a short body carried swiftly and lightly by slim legs and feet. At one end the pointed head is attached to supply the body with food and to protect it from danger with the bright watchful eyes, the keen smelling nose, the shell-like, alert ears and the sensitive whiskers. At the other end the long tail serves the trunk by helping to balance it like a fifth leg when the small creature reaches up for a berry on a vine, or cake on a shelf. But when we come to the human limbs, we can find no representative for them in the animal world, for man's limbs with their divided duties are unique. This brought us to the end of our first period of the study of animals in relation to man.

When the fourth grade later resumed this study of "Man and Animal" in a second period, their interest and enthusiasm were unabated throughout a brief oral review. Now began a closer and more exact study of the physical characteristics of various groups of animals, starting in the ocean with the cephalopoda. These spineless feeler-equipped creatures were followed in the course of development by fish which breathe through gills, like the gold fish in the bowl on our shelf, and have spinal bones like those which we can observe on our plates after fish dinners. The next surprise came to the children when they learned that a whale is not a fish, but a warm-blooded mammal, "loving" its young, not cold-bloodedly deserting its eggs to hatch and be devoured wholesale. Another surprise was the fact that mother whales nurse their "calves" with milk. One little girl looked at the picture of a whale with its great ugly mouth and remarked disappointedly, "She doesn't look like a mother!" Though some individual animals were studied thoroughly, only a general survey of the animal kingdom is made in the fourth year, giving a foundation for later studies.

Thus we continued our survey and stepped ashore to find other mammals, among whom we visited some small familiar rodents in field and wood, particularly the beavers as they cut down trees without saws and engineered their dams to protect their well-made houses. One child wrote in her book "beavers have lovely homes". And the same child, with great naivete, ended her description by writing, "beavers are relations of whales". When she read this aloud her classmates were greatly entertained and one said, with a twinkle in her eye, "Perhaps they are cousins because they are both mammals."

To round out the course, we ended with a study of ruminants, especially the cow; the cat family, centering on the lion, the King of the Beasts; and the eagle, as King of the Birds.

This fourth year course about animals in their relation to man lays the foundation for a more mature study of zoology in a higher class. It is on a childlike level, yet has a depth of meaning which forms a true basis for future learning. It wakens in the children an energetic interest for further knowledge and gives them accurate information in an artistic and living way.

William Harrer



THE GENTIAN
An Easter Legend
by Karl Ege

Have you ever heard about the gentian flower with its bitter juice which works such wonders when you have a stomach ache?

In a sunny spot on a mountain slope, where the grasses do not shoot up so high into tall stems and blades but remain small and lowly, I have seen one of a deep blue variety.

With its delicate roots it had felt its way into the warm spring-damp earth. Round about its frail short stem, tiny leaves were clustered and at the very top the big blossom had just opened. It was formed like a chalice; yet it did not bend toward the earth like the pale blue cups of the blue-bells close by, but looked directly upward into the sun and the stars.

"Is he proud, that he stands there as straight as a candle?" the blue-bells were asking, and their voices were like a soft ringing.

"Not proud! Not proud! He is longing . . ." ran a whisper through the grasses.

"He is sad. He knows so much about the pain of all the world," sounded from the daisies.

"We can give you the key to his sorrow," said the yellow-gold primroses, whom some people call key-calixes. "Do you not remember that dark hour of the world when our Great Mother was so sorrowful and a terrible dread laid hold upon all heaven and earth until it trembled?"

"Yes," said the grasses, "we were afraid that we would become so hard and brittle that we would no longer be able to nourish any living creature."

The blue-bells nodded, "We thought we would lose all our color."

"And we were afraid we would turn into dried-out straw-flowers," the daisies reminded themselves.

"Yes," continued the primroses, the little secret key-calixes, "it was the great dread which filled all creatures lest the earth might become so hardened that no living thing could grow upon it any longer. It overcame all creation at that very hour when our Lord, in the third year after he had come to dwell within a human body, had to pass through the night of all loneliness and despair in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"All the sins of the earth—yes, of the liar, the murderer, the war-maker, the hard-hearted and the hot-tempered—all the great and the little sins of men he felt heaped upon his holy shoulders, and his heart throbbed as it gathered into itself all the pains and ills of men's bodies and the sufferings and longings of their souls. This infinite pain pressed the blood like sweat from the pores of his skin, and from his lips came the words:—'The human soul within me is sorrowful unto death.'

"When the Cosmic Father heard these pain-laden words, he called before his throne the blue Angel of Ageless Strength and Consolation and said to him: 'Go to the Great Mother of all springing life that she may give you the chalice of bitter refreshment.'

"And the Great Mother looked about her. There were many, many chalices—those of the tulip, the magnolia, the lily, the rose, indeed of all the flower chalices which are to be found in the whole universe. Each of them is destined to hold a special drink. The rose the draught of courage, the lily that of purification. Unnumbered others are each filled with a health-giving fluid for all the hundreds and thousands of ailments by which human beings may be afflicted. For each of these there is a special healing remedy in a special chalice. Certain people know of this and as true healers can prescribe the right herb for every ill.

"Yet the Great Mother could not immediately find the right chalice.—But why not! Now, just think for a moment. What happened at that hour there upon the Mount of Olives never ever happened before and will never ever be again as long as the earth exists. Her searching gaze went from one flower cup to another:—'In which of them might the heavenly refreshment be offered to the Saviour?' she pondered.

"All at once she beheld the gentian and in that instant she knew that this was the right one. And she gave it to the Angel."

* * *

Yes, but now some of you who are listening to this story will be thinking—was the chalice then big enough?

Surely it was big enough! For you must understand that the little key-calixes were talking about the heavenly gentian which makes all the gentians upon the earth grow. It is made not of gold, nor of silver, nor indeed of any earthly substance at all. It is formed of the purest deep blue light. Angels are also light-beings. And with their hands of light they can carry a chalice of

earthly material just as little as with our hands of flesh and blood we can take hold of the light, or the rainbow.

The little key-calixes, the grasses, the blue-bells, the daisies and naturally the gentian knew all this of course very well.

* * *

"Then the Angel of Ageless Strength and Consolation," so the key-calixes continued their tale, "returned with the gentian flower to the throne of God the Father. And he blessed it and filled it with the draught of heavenly refreshment.

"With it the Angel now descended to the Mount of Olives and held it to Jesus' lips, who, as you know, had betaken himself to a lonely spot apart from his disciples. And Jesus drank the heavenly liquid. Its bitterness permeated his body through and through with strength. His bowed back straightened, and the blood which ran from his pores ceased now to flow.

"Then Jesus returned to his disciples, whom he found asleep. With warning earnestness he said to them: 'Wake! and pray! that the evil one may not overwhelm you.'

"The Angel, however, disappeared into heaven.

"After all this had happened Christ Jesus served the Last Supper, the Meal of Life, and fulfilled the redemption of man. And since that hour death is overcome! You daisies need no longer be afraid of drying up. You grasses will not now grow brittle and hard as stone, and you blue-bells will become ever bluer and more beautiful.

"Do you understand now why the gentian is so earnest and lifts his deep blue chalice straight toward heaven?"

This is the story told by the little key-calixes, the yellow-gold primroses. And when they had come to an end, the blades of grass bowed in the wind, the blue-bells nodded and the daisies turned their gold-white faces right into the sun.

But the gentian was still and remained silent and became even bluer. For that is his way of being embarrassed and of showing his longing for the heavenly gentian-existence.

Translated by Arvia MacKaye Ege



NOTES OF INTEREST

International Exchange

As one of nearly fifty schools based on the educational principles of Rudolf Steiner, the New York school is interested in an active program of exchange of teachers. The school has now been given a number by the State Department as a recognized institution within the government's international exchange program. Miss Kari Lunde is on a teaching fellowship at the school this year under this program. She is teaching eurythmy in place of Vera Leroi who is in Dornach to continue her training. Kari Lunde is Norwegian and has taught eurythmy for seven years in the Rudolf Steiner School in Bergen, Norway, and previously in Yugoslavia, Switzerland, and England. We are very happy to have her with us.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrer visited a number of Rudolf Steiner schools in Holland and Germany on their trip abroad last fall. During the summer Miss Paulsen visited Michael Hall, in England, and the Rudolf Steiner School in Edinburgh.

Educators Visit the Rudolf Steiner School

On January 28th, John W. Tietz, Professor of Psychology in the Department of Education at New York University, brought three of his graduate students to visit the school. They were especially interested in the creative aspects of the curriculum. Dr. Theodore Huebner, Chief of the Division of Foreign Languages of the New York City Department of Education, spent an afternoon at the school in February. Dr. Huebner is the author of an excellent article on the Waldorf (or Rudolf Steiner) schools in Europe, and has published a second article on the same subject in the American-German Review of the Carl Schurz Foundation.

A Family Concert

On March 20th, Sigurd Rascher, the world's finest classical saxaphonist, and his three oldest children gave a family recital for the children of our school. Stafan, twelve, plays the trombone, Christina, ten, the clarinet, and Karen, six, the saxaphone. Our children greeted the performance with wonder and enthusiasm.

The Rudolf Steiner School and the Waldorf School, Adelphi

Teachers from both schools have spent two useful and pleasant evenings together. The first occasion, before Christmas, took a group of Rudolf Steiner School teachers to Adelphi where they were cordially entertained and had the opportunity to exchange experiences and see the work of the Garden City school. This visit was returned on February first when ten teachers from the Waldorf School spent the evening with their colleagues in New York. Both faculties have expressed the wish that this type of personal contact and exchange may develop further.



CAMP GLEN BROOK, MARLBORO, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Season opens June 29th—closes August 25th.

For further information and illustrative material please contact the Directors, Mr. and Mrs. William Harrer, 15 East 79th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

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