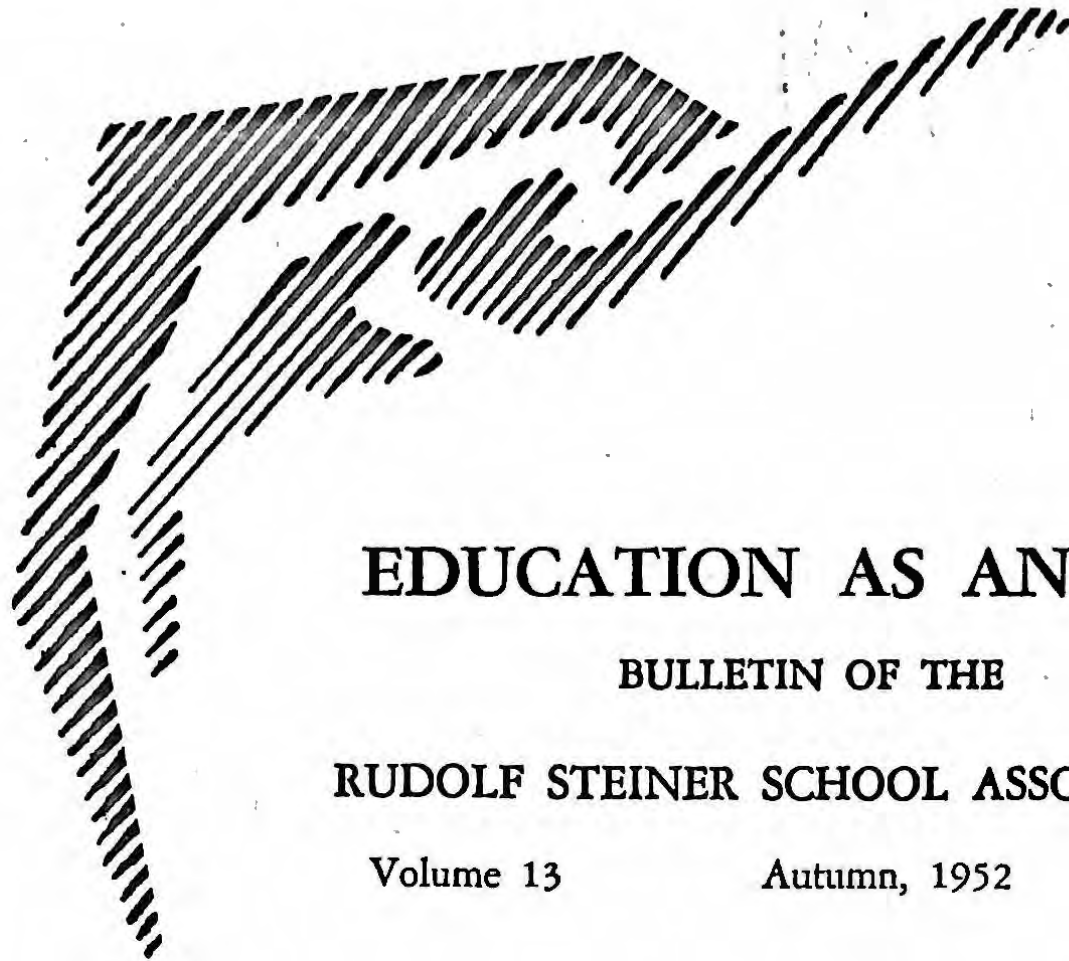




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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SHOULD MY CHILD GO TO THE MOVIES AND WATCH TELEVISION?

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There are many levels on which the mechanical reproduction of pictures, music and the human voice can be discussed in their relation to the lives of children. Their most obvious danger is that, especially with radio and television, children are inevitably subjected to things which are quite unsuitable for them. I do not suppose that there is a house in the country with a radio set or television where children are not fairly constantly hearing or seeing things which are unsuitable for them to hear or see. It is one of the tragedies of our times also to witness the number of children present in the movies when unsuitable and even objectionable films are being shown.

There are, however, many other aspects of the matter to be taken into consideration as well. Especially with regard to the radio the very fact that it is so often left on when there is nothing suitable or interesting for children to hear, breeds habits of half attention which are extremely difficult to eradicate. At Michael Hall we are convinced from our twenty-seven years of teaching that children today have not the same power of attention as they had a quarter of a century ago, and we have found that this conviction is supported by teachers in other schools. To many people and to not a few children the pres-

ence of something going on in the background, to which only scattered attention is paid, has become a necessity of life. Children, who are accustomed to listen to a voice to which no special attention or respect need be paid and which is often switched off in an arbitrary manner, lose their natural respect for the voice of a real person telling them things which it is important for them to hear. The radio is already breeding a generation who cannot listen, and there is a real danger that television will make a generation which cannot see.

There is, however, a still deeper aspect of the matter which was touched upon by the Archbishop of Canterbury, when he recently opposed the idea of bringing television into the schools because it cuts across the human relationship between teacher and pupil. Not the teacher who knows the children, but a Corporation who knows them not, decides when they shall see and hear it. For a child there is an immense difference between hearing something told them by a person whom they know, respect and love, and hearing even the same thing uttered by an impersonal voice. This difference is one of the many points which brings to light the attack made in our time on the human soul. There is little in our modern civilization to stimulate the finer qualities of love and devotion in the intercourse between human souls. Many people today hardly distinguish between the real voice, which is the product of living breath and living soul, and the dead mechanical reproduction which comes from the vibration of dead substance in the radio. Nor do they distinguish between real movement in its rhythmical flow and the series of static pictures which make the illusion of movement in the movies. It is true that the consciousness is not able to move fast enough to detect the series of jerks which make up the movement of a film. The unconscious, however, the deeper part of the soul, experiences such things so that people of finer perceptions feel jangled and wearied after a film in a way they do not after a play. All who have studied Rudolf Steiner's work would appreciate how much more this means for children who receive impressions of the outer world right into their physical body than it does for the adult. It builds into them something of a mechanical quality at a time when the life-body and the soul need nourishment from what is richly natural and richly human.

A similar mechanical illusion is found on the television screen, which also shares with the films one eminently bad quality which is typical of the modern age. In the modern theory of sense perception the senses are purely passive. The eye, for instance, is a sensitive camera receiving different vibrations of light on the retina. Rudolf Steiner always attacked this one-sided view of sense perception; for he always regarded the senses as active entities embracing also the energy of the will. In the eye there is the meeting place of nerve activity, the bearer of pure sensitiveness, and blood activity, the bearer of the will. Everyone who looks at a painting feels instinctively that he must not stand in one fixed position in front of it. He will move backwards and forwards, to left and to right, to get different aspects. This not only brings his whole body into motion, but it also brings into play the fine muscles and activity of the eye. In a theatre, also, the interest in the acting is an interest in depth. An actor speaking from the back of the stage makes an entirely different impression from one who speaks from the footlights. The eye is always travelling from background to foreground, and to background again. At the films, however, or before the television screen, the

focus of the eye is always constant. The activity of sense perception is dimmed and a purely passive attitude is adopted in the sense itself to what is placed before it. This is a subtle difference, but one of immense importance. It can be illustrated by this difference. Sometimes one goes for a country walk with a man whose senses are really active, and then it is astonishing how much there is to be seen, what fine distinctions of colour and form are perceived. At other times, one has the company of a man whose senses are passive, and then even a beautiful piece of country becomes somehow flat and uninteresting. The television will certainly develop the latter kind of man rather than the former.

I was recently in America where television is almost universal, and everywhere between the two coasts teachers told me of the bad effects it was having on children. When a child is accustomed to having everything presented to him in ready made pictures, he loses the faculty of making his own pictures, in imagination. Normally, when one tells a story to a class of young children, one can see plainly, far more plainly than with adults, that, listening to your words, they are painting a wonderful picture in the mind's eye of castles and forests and giants and heroes. This ability to make pictures in the mind is one of the most precious capacities of childhood and one of the most valuable and practical gifts which childhood can make to adulthood. I would beg all parents to think very carefully before they introduce into their homes a modern mechanical device which possesses an immense fascination for children but which tends to destroy in the child one of the most childlike and beautiful qualities of the mind.

And with regard to the radio, I would say, keep it from your children as long as you can. They will be far better employed when themselves engaged in active occupations. It is, indeed, one of the results of modern, easy, mechanical means of amusement that children today often do not know what to do with themselves unless some entertainment is provided for them. When the children are older, perhaps over fourteen, and there may be something important and valuable for them to hear, let them go to the radio with the same expectation and concentration as they would go to hear a real man really speaking or real music being played by real musicians. Then out of the powers of their own soul, they may be able to make good something of that soul quality which is essentially lacking in all means of mechanical reproduction. If parents and teachers combine together in such an attitude, they will really be fighting a battle for the human soul which so many powers and influences are attacking at the present time.

A. C. Harwood

THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOLS

Reprinted from The American-German Review, February, 1952, with the kind permission of the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation.

Millions of American dollars have been spent in Germany in the last six years in an effort to democratize the schools. Textbooks have been rewritten, teachers retrained, courses of study reorganized and audio-visual equipment introduced.

The extensiveness of this enterprise has led many Americans to believe that the German schools were woefully antiquated. Actually they did many things very well, but they reflected—as every school system does—their own

social and political environment. That, in the case of Germany, consisted of a structure that was essentially undemocratic. Only ten per cent of the children enjoyed the privilege of a higher education leading to university training.

Far from being backward, however, in educational matters, the Germans have made lasting and distinctive contributions in this field. The ideas of Basedow, Herbart and Fröbel deeply influenced American educational theory and practice. A hundred years ago the founder of the kindergarten enunciated the concept of social training and the method of self-activity.

It is not strange, therefore, that Germany should maintain, even at this time, a type of private school which is exemplary as a liberal and progressive educational institution. Known as the Waldorf School, it is based on the anthroposophic notions of Rudolf Steiner. This noble-minded idealist and humanitarian, who became deeply interested in Goethe, organized the first school of this type in Stuttgart in 1919. Despite suppression and persecution by the Nazis, the Waldorf School movement survived. Since World War II the "Rudolf Steiner" schools have flourished; today there are twenty-five of them in Germany and thirty in other countries, including five in the United States.

The first institution of this kind began purely as a school for workers' children, but rapidly developed into a unified elementary and secondary school of twelve years. In fact, it was so outstanding in its achievements that it soon became the model for numerous similar schools in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and England.

Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophism seeks to counteract the supposedly pernicious effects of materialism and intellectualism by stressing the spiritual in man and by placing him in the center of the sensuous and supersensuous world. Man is bounded by the physical, but through ceaseless striving after worthy ideals he is able to develop gradually into a nobler, higher type of being.

From the anthroposophic philosophy stem the educational theories and practices of the Waldorf School. In it the teacher plays a vital role. It is his duty to discover and liberate the spiritual essence of the child, to remove all obstacles and hindrances, and to make possible the free development of the child's talents for later service in behalf of mankind.

This requires carefully observing the child, so that the specific capacities of every year of his growth are discovered. Child development varies and the educator must adjust himself to the individual character and temperament of each pupil. The teacher, however, cannot mold the child's nature; that is entirely a matter of self-development. Hence, the curriculum of the Waldorf School is actually the child himself, spread, like an open book, before the eyes of the teacher who must learn to read therein.

To do this properly requires complete freedom on the part of the teacher. He cannot be hampered by extraneous aims and outwardly imposed regulations and directives which are entirely alien to the free unfolding of the powers of the growing child.

In fact, freedom permeates every activity, procedure and aim of the school. Although based on a definite philosophy, the Waldorf School carefully avoids every tendency to bind the child's mind to a given world-outlook. His latent powers are to be unfettered, so that he is entirely free to accept the influences of life and make his own choices.

Parents decide in what religious faith the child is to be enrolled. (*Religion has always been a subject of formal instruction in German schools.*) However, a course in non-sectarian, ethical teaching has been specifically planned for those children whose parents do not insist on formal religious training.

In view of the theory that the potentialities and talents of children vary greatly, the curriculum is an unusually rich one. In addition to the regular subjects there are gardening, surveying, mechanics, first-aid, bookbinding, weaving, spinning, etc. With such a variety of offerings, every child will find something of interest and something in which he may excel. The generally accepted distinction between gifted and non-gifted thus tends to vanish. Every normal human being is gifted in some area. It is left to the perspicacity and skill of the teacher to discover the nature and extent of each child's capacities. Instead of a selection of the gifted, the Waldorf School aims at a development of gifts. In every human being there is buried treasure; it is only a matter of knowing how to raise it. This requires an entirely new method of teaching. Traditional pedagogy, with its emphasis on the intellectual, aims at a scientific treatment of all educational problems. In this way it has moved away from the child, particularly the young child, who is still a part of nature. One must regard the developing being with the eyes of an artist, for pedagogy is an art.

The natural instincts of the child, too, are artistic. Hence, from the very beginning the artistic phases of every subject are stressed. An important place is assigned throughout the twelve school years to painting, modeling, choral speaking, singing, orchestra and eurythmy. Everything is done to develop the imagination and the sense of beauty.

The basis of life is health. Therefore, much attention is devoted to health inspections and physical activities. The staff includes a physician who is also a teacher.

In order to effect unity and achieve concentration, a core program is followed. Every morning two hours are devoted to the basic subject-matter. The school is co-educational; boys and girls participate in the same activities. Children are promoted according to age; there is no retardation. Thus the children of one class grow into a life community. The home-room teacher, who is also their instructor in basic subjects, advances with them throughout the first eight years. Thus he knows each child intimately and can really make individual adjustments.

Children are admitted freely from all social strata, without any discrimination. Nor is any child rejected because of lack of means. In fact, only about half the pupils pay the full fee, the rest being supported by interested patrons.

It is evident that the Rudolf Steiner schools are a happy combination of modern, progressive pedagogy and liberal ideals. The administration is extremely democratic, discarding all forms of educational hierarchy. Organized as the Association of Free Waldorf Schools, their influence has radiated to a dozen other countries. Although they are only twenty-five in number and enroll about 10,000 pupils, they are a precious bit of leaven in the dough of German education.

Theodore Huebener

Theodore Huebener is Director of Foreign Languages in the New York public schools and has served as a consultant for the State Department in Germany.

VERSES FOR VOWEL SOUNDS

These verses were written to illustrate the sounds of the vowels. They were introduced in the first grade as a part of the preparatory phonetic training for reading and were repeated during the second grade. The children recited them with gestures which emphasized the long and the short vowel sounds. They also learned the alphabet forwards and backwards and practiced the phonetic alphabet as well as the names of the letters.

A *I am the letter A.
You greet me in angel.
You run when I play.
You eat me in apple.
You fry me in fat.
You spank me in Annie.
You wear me in hat.
You know me in all things.
You come when I call.
You hear me in caw-caw.
You cut when I saw.
I shade you in arbor.
I twinkle in star.
You love me in father.
You seek me afar.*

*A as in angel.
Ah as in star.
A as in apple.
Aw as in saw.*

*I am a bird with many a call.
Listen most carefully till you
 know all.*

E *Look and see!
I am E!
Without me
You can't be.*

*When I'm short,
I am eh
As in Ellen
And Ned.*

*I'm in three
And in seven,
In ten
And eleven,
And also in twelve.
I ride on the elephants
And dance with the elves.*

*Ee! Eh!
Eh! Ee!
Without me
You can't be!*

I *I is a king.
Mighty and wise.
Ih is the princeling
Smaller in size.
You find him in thimble,
You hear him in sing.
He'll prick with a spindle.
And tickle your chin.*

*Ih and I,
I and ih.
Hit it high!
Hide it quick!*

O *I am jolly Brother O.
Hear my merry Yo Ho Ho!
See me roll.
Feel me blow.
Watch me wiggle
My great big toe.*

*I'm easy to know
When I'm long as in go —
When I'm short
It is different.
It just isn't so.*

*I am o
As in Tommy,
In hot, pot and not.
Then I'm uh
As in oven,
In done, ton and some.*

*Again I play
I'm a u
As in who, do and to.*

*O as in go. o as in pot.
 Uh as in oven. u as in do.*

U *U is a busy young fellow
 He's dug in under and through.
 He stretches his arms straight up
 sunward.
 With him it's not I — it is you.
 When he's short he has fun.
 He curls up in the sun*

*And is snug as a bug in a rug.
 When he's long he's a duke
 Who plays loud on the flute
 And goes root-ti-toot-toot
 On his bugle.*

*He's a stubborn old mule
 This duke as a rule —
 But whoever he is — he's no fool.*

Henry Barnes

THE GREEN APPLE

A Story by Karl Ege

A young, still very green, apple said to the leaves which had grown with him out of the same bud on the old gray tree: "It is just wonderful to be still in the midst of growing and to feel the fresh sap within me. You leaves are already so grown up and boring."

The leaves said nothing for the moment, the apple was still too green for them. Yet for weeks they had already noticed with misgiving how fast the little spud, which was left over after the blossom had fallen, became ever fatter and fatter and was growing even larger than themselves.

"Do not act so puffed up, you little green-snout! One day you too will be getting on in months."

They had almost said, after the custom of men, "getting on in years". But they remembered just in time that their lives were counted only in months.

"You talk about getting old," insinuated the apple throwing out his chest. "Your dying is like a weak, waning, sallowing away. You become just brown and ugly. And when finally you tumble to the earth all dry and schrumpled up, you are nothing but helpless playthings for the winds. But when I am old I will have the most beautiful red cheeks. And I will shine and laugh when the wind has long since blown you into a furrow and the snow covered up your moldering grave. I can already feel in my green sap how a delicious sweetness and spicy fragrance are ripening. And how good it will be when in the winter men take me in their warm hands and praise my beauty and flavor!"

"Who brings you the sweetness about which you brag so proudly? And where does your gown come from which makes you so vain?" asked the leaves full of indignation.

"What do I care — if only I am beautiful and much sought after."

This was too much for the leaves. They turned away from the apple, bending their points downward until they almost touched one another. There they huddled and whispered together, but still just loud enough so that the apple could hear them.

"How right the ancient folk were when they called this bloated green-horn *malum*, the evil one."

And if the apple tree on which they grew, and who had naturally overheard the whole dispute, had not taken a hand in the matter at this moment, something dreadful would certainly have happened.

He spoke in a wise and kindly voice: "Do I not nourish you both with the same stream of sap which the Mother Earth bestows upon us?"

Once again the apple was about to burst out with another impertinence — when suddenly there came a ray of sunshine. It said not a word, but laid itself like a bright shimmer over the apple and the leaves and enfolded them all in its motherly warmth.

EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE AT HIGH MOWING

This summer, thirty-three years since the founding of the original Waldorf School, all four major schools in this country were represented for the first time by a considerable group of teachers at a common conference. According to Mrs. Emmet, our kind hostess, there was a record attendance of sixty-three adults.

The composition of the schedule resembled that of previous years. A main lesson upon the teaching of English in the morning was followed by a choice of eurythmy or speech class and in the afternoon by either painting or modeling. A study group was soon formed in the later afternoon on nature study and there were lectures and a eurythmy performance in the evenings. New teachers in the conference this summer who awakened special enthusiasm for their subjects were Sabina Nordoff in eurythmy, and Richard Kroth and Pat Ericson in painting.

Mr. John Gardner, chairman of the morning sessions on the teaching of English and some lively evening discussion groups, guided these so that all felt free to bring up particular questions and problems. The discussion was continually brought closer to the essential impulses and difficulties involved in each subject so that the underlying themes appeared in an ever sharper light. This aroused the enthusiasm of those who participated and prepared the ground for the very valuable contributions of Mrs. Kimmick, Mrs. Harrer, Mr. Ege, Dr. Hiebel and Mr. Barnes.

One of the outstanding events at the conference was the reading by Mrs. Emmet of the chapter dealing with Egyptian culture from her book which is in progress on the History of Art. Dr. Hiebel's lectures on the Aristotelian Categories in relation to the Logos tied in with the subject of the main lesson on the teaching of the mother tongue. Mr. Kroth gave a lecture and demonstration upon the Nature of Color. Dr. Schaeffer, professor of physiology, showed how the psychic evolution of the child corresponds with its physiological development thus verifying Dr. Steiner's conception of the child's nature.

The afternoon study group was conducted by Mr. Ege and was based on direct observation of nature. The attempt was to show how an imaginative understanding could draw from the observation of nature an endless variety of stories suitable for younger children on the one hand and on the other hand an artistic treatment of factual material appropriate for older children.

Lydia Lecraw

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