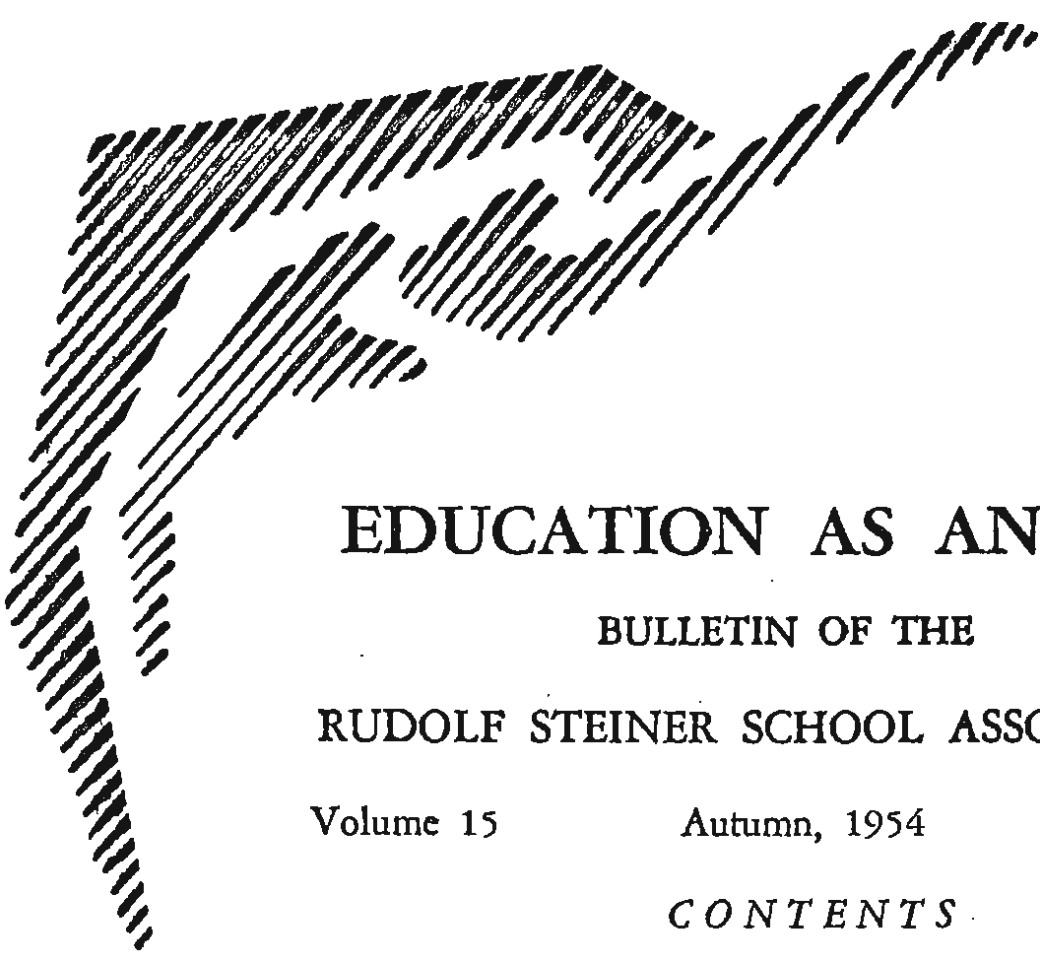




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Volume 15

Autumn, 1954

Number 3

CONTENTS

The Teaching of History — John Gardner
Crystalization — Henry Barnes
To the Children — William Harrer

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY*

In the Waldorf School, children begin the study of history with the earliest traditions of representative major cultures. The young part of history is the history most congenial to youngsters. It is somewhat unfortunate that this youngest part should have been given the name of *ancient* history. This name often prevents educators from realizing that while the origins of culture may be far away in time, they are nearest at hand in interest for children.

For our children history begins with the dramatic, pictorial, spiritually saturate myths that nourished the antiquity of all cultures. It progresses from them down to and through history proper. Thus between the ages of nine and fourteen the children make their first progressive survey of world history, from its mythological origins down to modern times.

Two features of this treatment of history are characteristic: 1) The sequence is not from the contemporary scene backwards into history, but vice versa. 2) The traditional myths of early time are taken seriously as a starting point for study of the origin of man. Each of these features deserves comment, in that each represents a marked divergence from prevailing educational practice.

I. Cultural Recapitulation

We in the Waldorf School believe that the so-called biogenetic law (that individual development repeats the stages of racial development) is as true of the child's inward as of his bodily evolution, even though in the case of the

* Reprinted by kind permission from *The Waldorf School News*.

former, this truth is admittedly a subtle and even elusive one. Thus, there *is* an appropriate time for children to study antiquity, the mediaeval age, the Renaissance, the Reformation, as preparation for the full experience of the modern era. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his incomparable way, expressed the matter as Waldorf school teachers also see it:

"The student interprets the age of chivalry by his own age of chivalry, and the days of maritime adventure and circumnavigation by quite parallel miniature experiences of his own. To the sacred history of the world he has the same key." *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, Wm. A. Wise & Co., 1929, "History," p. 132.

"What is the foundation of that interest all men feel in Greek history, letters, art and poetry. . . . What but this, that every man passes personally through a Grecian period. The Grecian state is the era of the bodily nature, the perfection of the senses,—of the spiritual nature unfolded in strict unity with the body. . . . The Greeks are not reflective, but perfect in their senses and in their health, with the finest physical organization in the world. They made vases, tragedies and statues, such as healthy senses should,—that is, in good taste. Such things have continued to be made in all ages, and are now, wherever a healthy physique exists; but, as a class, from their superior organization, they have surpassed all. They combine the energy of manhood with the engaging unconsciousness of childhood. The attraction of these manners is that they belong to man, and are known to every man in virtue of his being once a child; besides that there are always individuals who retain these characteristics. A person of child-like genius and inborn energy is still a Greek, and revives our love of the Muse of Hellas." *ibid*, p. 132.

"Thus in all ways does the soul concentrate and reproduce its treasures for each pupil. He too shall pass through the whole cycle of experience. He shall collect into a focus the rays of nature. History no longer shall be a dull book. It shall walk incarnate in every just and wise man . . . (We) shall find in him the Foreworld; in his childhood the Age of Gold, the Apples of Knowledge, the Argonautic Expedition, the calling of Abraham, the building of the Temple, the Advent of Christ, Dark Ages, the Revival of Letters, the Reformation, the discovery of new lands, the opening of new sciences and new regions in man." *ibid*, p. 136.

"I am ashamed to see what a shallow village tale our so-called History is." *ibid*. p. 137.

Note that historical study is for Emerson, as it is for us, a study not alone of external phenomena, but also of deep changes in human consciousness that underlie the external changes: "the opening of new sciences and new regions *in* man."

The implications for the curriculum, of Emerson's essay on History, are clear. They stand in contrast to the recommendations made by many educators at the present time. Compare one such:

"If the learner has (the freedom to seek experiences of his own choice) he will, obviously, first become involved in current issues.

It would not be sensible for him to start with those matters which are farthest away from him in time and space. Children would never by themselves start to study the history of man by going back to the ancient Greeks. They could start only with those around them. They would automatically settle the age-old educational question of scope and sequence. The sequence would be the order of things as he could reach them. The scope would be as far as he could reach."*

Now, obviously, children by themselves would never start a school in the first place. They would be perfectly content to tag around after the garbage man, gape at the local trains, aspire toward jet propulsion, and spend half the night at the TV set. These are all good things when wielded by man, but not when they wield man. Yet this is precisely what they do to children, whose interest in them at first is not a matter of choice, but one of inadvertent fascination.

The problem, as Waldorf-type schools deal with it, is to prevent defenseless childish souls from being sucked up into the powerful vacuum cleaner of the industrial-technical machine that surrounds them. How prevent them from being bemused, besotted, bedwarfed by what reaches out to them from all sides. How give them really human types of form and behavior to model themselves on, so that they may ennoble themselves while still plastic, and may not have to grapple with the sub-human and anti-human powers prematurely, before they have fully "come into themselves?" . . . Those who admit that the disasters of our day stem from the fact that technical progress has outrun human progress, will be forced to consider this problem of the education of early youth.

Rudolf Steiner stated the protective side of the educational ideal thus: "In grade-school instruction we should really always be penetrated by the feeling that when a human being is placed in the world, he is exposed to things from which we must actually *protect* him through our teaching. Otherwise he would become one with the world too much. . . . We must see that the child grows slowly into the outer world and not let him do so too rapidly."**

Emerson, Rudolf Steiner, and we teachers, are of one opinion as regards the teaching of history: Children in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades have a love for, and an intuitive understanding of, the earlier stages of culture. These stages, in turn, offer children worthy lessons in thought, feeling, and action. The lessons are by no means sentimental, since the early cultures were if anything more conscious than we are of the forces that must be overcome in man's struggle to establish his humanity.

II. *The Origin of Man*

Eastern Indians, American Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, Hebrews, and Celts . . . all have immemorial traditions of the origin of their culture. In one respect these traditions are the same for every people, primitive as well as civilized. All traditions agree that the most distant past was a time when the foundations of human capacity were received by heroes from the divine world. This is what Emerson calls the Foreworld, or the Golden Age, common to the lore of every nation.

* Kelley & Rasey, *Education and the Nature of Man*, p. 113.

** Steiner, Rudolf, *The Three Fundamental Forces in Education*, p. 14.

Looking to the past, then, we see this golden light, translating the figure of man from a purely spiritual to an earthly condition. We see a Garden of Eden, for example; and we see man leaving this illumined world to face increasing darkness. All this is contained in mythological prehistory as the children of the Waldorf School come to experience it. And this illustrates how it is that, from the Waldorf School point of view, the earliest cultures contain images of wisdom, strength and love that are proper patterns for children, who grow according to what they revere.

While our practice is in this line with the liberal arts tradition by which Western civilization has been nurtured, and conforms to the historical practice of most peoples, East and West alike, it contrasts sharply with the contemporary American curriculum.

The newer varieties of education in our country tend to deal with history proper very gingerly, for reasons earlier quoted from Kelley & Rasey. But with regard to one aspect of history they have no compunctions, because they are sure of the elementary school child's intense interest. The overwhelming majority of schools today do not wait beyond fourth or fifth grades to introduce children to the study of *primaeval* origins: the hypothetical ideas now current concerning the origin of the earth and of mankind.

Most schools nowadays encourage children on the one hand to pay studious attention to the industrial, technical, mechanical phenomena of our time, and on the other hand to absorb the lore of dinosaur and cave-man. The child is led to look upon the brutes as his direct ancestors. These and machines are the images selected to work upon him as educative forms.

Now this is not the place to debate whether it was Prometheus or the brutish cave-man who placed fire at man's service, or whether the true origin of man lies in heaven or in the dust. The Waldorf School calls attention simply to the fact that these two origins are poles apart, not only as problems of reality but as educative influences. Behind the former view stand the cultural memory and the religious feeling of every nation and people from the dawn of history down to one hundred years ago or less. Behind the latter stands the authority of popular science.

We know that all natural forms have evolved and that they stand in some family relation to one another. But true natural science, as distinguished from popular interpretations, is not at all sure *how* this evolution has taken place, despite certainty that it *has* done so. Rudolf Steiner has demonstrated to our satisfaction the possibility of scientifically reconciling the mythological and religious account with the observed material facts. Such reconciliation rests upon the understanding that "there is one order to the senses, another to the spirit."

Our teachers know that the spirit in each of us is a primary reality, not a derivative one; is self-existent, self-productive and self-sustaining. They realize that the origins of spirit can therefore lie nowhere else than in the spiritual. Hence, when it is a question of seeking the origin of man in the true sense, they direct the children's gaze towards the spiritual background of world history.

According to Emerson, "Fact is the end or last issue of spirit." Yet American children are now being taught, in the theories of so-called "emergent"

evolution, that spirit is the end or last issue of matter. The Waldorf School curriculum sides with Emerson in full confidence that what is spiritually self-evident cannot be found to contradict in any way the materially discoverable.

*John Gardner, Faculty Chairman
The Waldorf School of Adelphi College*

A CHANGE OF OFFICERS

For some time Mrs. Frances Walling has asked to be relieved of her office of President of the Rudolf Steiner School Association as her health and the fact that she lives out of town have made it impractical for her to continue. We are very grateful indeed to her for carrying on until someone could be found to take her place, and want to thank her most heartily for all that she has done for the Association!

We are fortunate to have Sonia Tomara Clarke as our new President. Mrs. Clarke lived abroad for many years and has made a special study of the Rudolf Steiner schools in Europe. She is known to many readers in this country as a writer of special articles on matters of international interest in the New York Herald Tribune.

CRYSTALLIZATION

From a Talk at a Parent-Teachers Meeting

In preparing what I had to say tonight, I remembered a remark made by a little girl when she was four years old. She belongs to that group of long-suffering little girls who have long braids. During the course of a conversation the subject of "brains" cropped up and she was asked the question: "Where are your brains?" For answer, she tugged at her braids and said, "Here!" This year she was asked the same question. She is now in the first grade and this time she took her finger and pointed, very knowingly indeed, to her forehead. Alas, the golden age of mythology had ended, and the little girl's brains were in her head!

Anatomically, the first grader was undoubtedly correct and the four-year-old's answer was merely a very cunning mistake. Psychologically, however, her earlier response had not been so very far from the mark, for the consciousness of a small child is not yet centered in the brain in the same way as it later is. Consciousness at that age is far more diffuse, and peripheral, far dreamier and more unfocussed than we usually realize. Our sharply centered adult intellect makes it so very difficult for us to enter into the conscious experience of a small child, which does not yet come from within, but seems to surround and envelop it like a cloud, out of which strike flashes of insight and intelligence.

In thinking of the contrast between the consciousness of the child under six or seven and that of the adult, and how one develops into the other, a picture has been helpful to me which may also be so to you.

I have brought along a quartz crystal and a piece of agate to illustrate my meaning. There are many ways to picture the development of the child from the point of view of consciousness. One of these is the process of crystallization. If we consider the quartz crystal which we have here, so clearly transparent, so characteristically hexagonal, like the wax cell of the honeybee, we can see it as the end product of a process which had its beginning at a

stage of the earth's development when the mineral earth was not yet hardened, but was subject to vital powers. Let us picture three stages in the evolution of the quartz crystal.

At first, there was the molten, incandescent infusion of silica into already existing older rock. This molten flow hardened and, under certain conditions of heat and pressure, a quartz crystal was formed. However, the process of crystallization is sometimes arrested or diverted, and instead of the transparent, six-sided crystalline form, the colorful, shadowy, translucent patterns of the agate is the result of a single line of evolution.

If you will permit me the metaphor, we might say that each of us during the course of the evolution of our individual consciousness began at the molten stage of the quartz infusion, and passed through an agate phase in order to emerge finally with the crystalline capacity for clear-cut conceptual thought. As little children we experienced the world with a warmth and intensity of activity which we can scarcely recall. Bent sticks and sharp stones were alive. We talked to them and they to us. Everything spoke a language of gesture and form in which we lived so intently with our whole being that it was echoed within us until the gestures and tones of those around us formed our way of speaking, moulded our gait and impressed themselves upon our attitudes and habits of life. We learned by imitating the world around us. Self-consciousness was almost non-existent, memory in the earliest years was entirely lacking, and our conscious experience had the quality of a deep and wonderful dreaming.

In the middle period of childhood which followed—the years, in particular, from six and seven to twelve and thirteen—our experience of the world gradually underwent a profound change. Imitation—fortunately, never entirely lost—receded and the faculty of experiencing through the imagination came to the fore. Everything in the nature of picture and story, everything dramatic and musical, appealed to us most powerfully. Our interest was no longer attracted almost exclusively by what moved and happened around us, but the world began to reach us through our feelings. Our consciousness was less active, and also less opaque. It became more vividly colorful and gradually grew translucent to the dawning, objective power of rational thought.

With adolescence and the growth toward adulthood our way of experience underwent a second, and equally profound change. We found ourselves developing a new ability to stand back from life and to observe it critically and sharply. Behind the ebb and flow of experience we began to seek for causes, for explanations, through which we could make life our own through knowledge. We experienced a new joy, the joy of solving a problem of pure geometry, whose solution depended upon no external observations, but entirely upon inner logic.

It is the teacher's task to learn as much as he can about the underlying pattern of child development, to learn to see the characteristics of each year in a child's growth more clearly, and then to bring to his children a knowledge of the world which corresponds to the unfolding pattern of their conscious development. But, above all, it is the teacher's task to discover *how* to teach his subjects at each age level so that they will come to the child in the way in which the child is himself experiencing life at that particular time. These are the elements out of which a curriculum is formed and it is just here that a

teacher in a Rudolf Steiner school receives special help. This help is not only the curriculum itself which Rudolf Steiner inaugurated in the Waldorf School which he directed, for this was never intended by him as a fixed model according to which the curricula in every school following his methods must be set up. The help comes primarily as one learns to recognize more and more concretely the needs of each year of childhood.

Henry Barnes

TO THE CHILDREN

At the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Rudolf Steiner School

On this twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rudolf Steiner School it would be appropriate to recall the history of the school. But we would not have time for much else today if I were to tell you of all the kind people who have been, or still are connected with the history of the school. We would have liked to invite all the people who carry the Rudolf Steiner School in their hearts to share with us in this celebration. But as you can see, this room and even the whole building is not large enough to house all of them. So although we were not able to do that, there is one thing that we can do. We can open our hearts and send out our loving thoughts to all those people: former pupils, former teachers, to friends old and new, near and far, including those who have passed away from this physical world, and we can say, "Come and share with us this twenty-fifth anniversary. We welcome you in our hearts."

When I thought about what I should say to you on this important day, a number of things came to my mind, but one especially stayed with me. I will describe it to you in a picture.

I see a child, or it might also be a grown up, at any rate a human being, who has left home. He has gone away and he has lost his way in the woods. Night has come upon him and it is cold and he is hungry. He is frightened and he does not know where to go. He has searched and prayed and searched and finally he has found a hut with light and warmth and food in it.

This picture is familiar to each one of you. You have heard it told in fairy stories and the older ones among you have come across it in one form or another in the study of a biography. But in some way you have all experienced it. Maybe your mother has put you to bed some night and turned off the light and you have felt alone and frightened. Or you have had to fulfill a certain task but you neglected to do it. In some way you drifted away from the right path and you lost your way. Or maybe you did something wrong and you tried to hide it and you lost yourself in the thickets of confused thoughts and feelings. But every time and in each case you found the hut filled with light and warmth. And this hut was the heart of your mother or father or friend or teacher. You were helped and you felt relieved and you could breathe freely again. In short you had found your home again.

Now you will ask, "What has all this to do with our anniversary?"

As you grow older and become adults you will experience that the hut which is now such a comfortable place to find refuge in will gradually satisfy you no longer. And then when you are lost in the woods, in coldness and darkness, and search for the hut, you will experience that you cannot find it anywhere else but in yourself. As you grow up each one of you must build your own hut within yourself. And the stronger, clearer and the more beautiful you can make your hut, the brighter will shine the light within it.

It is here that the school enters into the picture. It is the school's task to help you to build your hut. All the manifold things you learn in school, as well as those you learn otherwise, are building stones for your hut.

Now you all know that in building a house one has to have experience, one has to have a plan, one has to know the building material, how to shape it and how to put it together. Your teachers have learned to some extent, and are learning more and more how to build such a house out of which can shine a bright light. One of the architects to whom they go is Rudolf Steiner. He has given them the ideas for floorplan and methods of construction. With the knowledge the teachers have gathered and the ability they have developed, they want to assist you in building your hut.

But in doing this there is one thing of the utmost importance. Again you know something from experience. You know that if you do a certain piece of work it becomes more beautiful the more interest, love and enthusiasm you put into it. That of course is true also when you build your hut. The more love, interest and enthusiasm you are able to put into your work—and that the teachers who work with you can likewise put into their work with you, and the more love you can foster for your teachers and the teachers for you, the more beautiful will become the hut you are building and the warmer will be the light that radiates from it.

And now there is one more last thought in this picture and it is the most important one.

Imagining all these beautiful huts that are being built, no matter how bright and warm the light shines out from them, if it were not for one fact the light would gradually become dimmer and dimmer and would finally go out.

And this fact is that in building the hut we must find a way of connecting the light within the hut with the light of the Creator.

So as a goal of our school I have meant to put before you, on this day of celebration, the picture of thousands of little huts, each one connected by a golden thread to the Creator spirit of light and truth and love.

And in closing I shall tell you a secret. When you are in your little house and you feel the connection, by way of the golden thread, with the Creator,—if then you are not only on the receiving end of it but if you send up along this golden thread deep thoughts and feelings of human gratitude, you will gradually perceive that heaven smiles upon you.

I do not know of any greater wish to express on this twenty-fifth anniversary than the wish that this picture which I have described to you—the thousands of little houses connected by golden threads to the light of the world—may come true.

William Harrer

THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

15 East 79th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

President: Sonia Tamara Clarke

Treasurer: Anne Barnes

Vice President: Margaret C. Wesson

Editor: Christy Barnes

Secretary: Ellen Kitchen

Membership in the Association, including the quarterly Bulletin,
is \$2.00 per year. Single copies of the Bulletin, 25c each.
