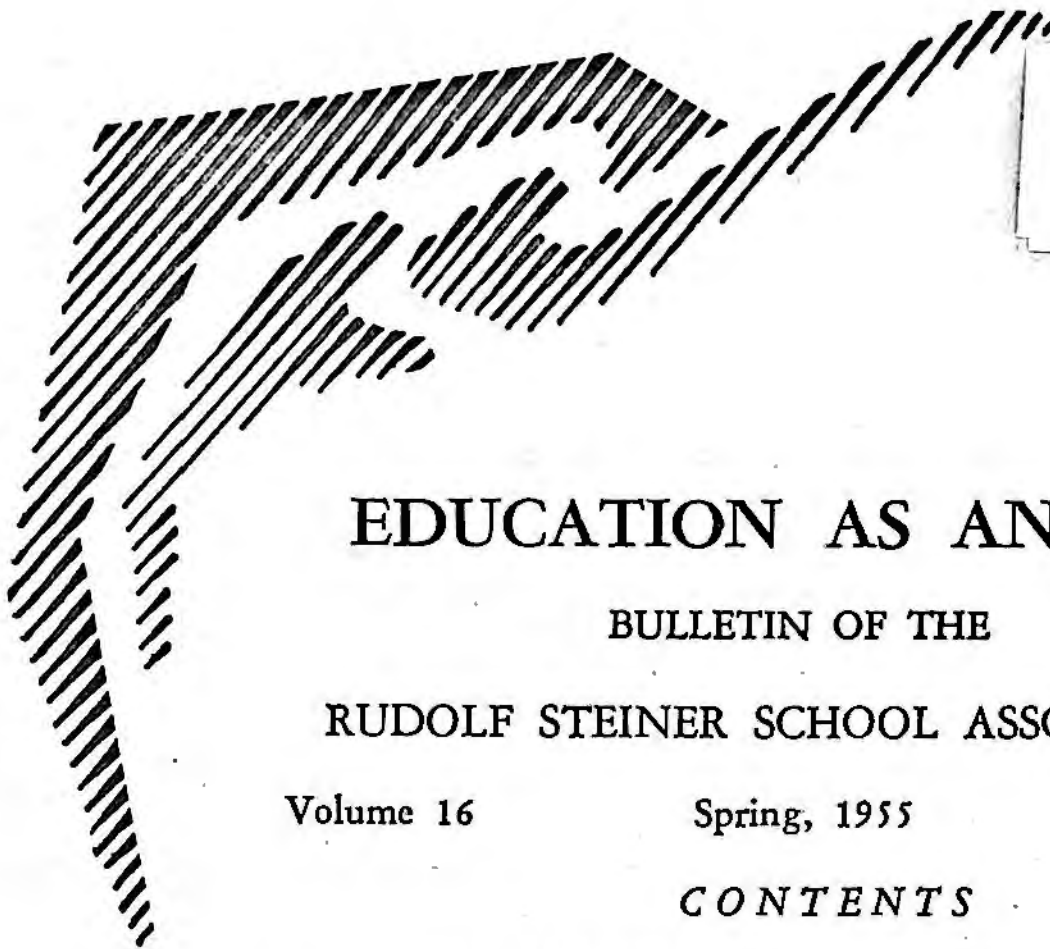




Edmunds

EDUCATION AS AN ART

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THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

The transition from childhood to youth brings many problems. The critical faculty is awake but not yet maturity of judgment. The impact of life becomes deeply personal but the direction in life is in no way clear. The most familiar relationships fall subject to question. The young person needs guidance but jibes at authority. He guards jealously the little flame of independence of which he now becomes aware. There is a longing for self-expression and little ability to express—this gives rise to all manner of crudities. There is quick resentment over little things. Moods swing easily from elation to depression. The will to love and be loved brings confusing emotions and desires, if not actual eroticism, nursed to profusion by our 'sexy' age. Ideals and aspirations wrestle with worldly ambitions: 'castles in the air' are rife. Even the intelligent youngster is not secure from sudden follies. To understand is not to conform. Temptations come strong. Vanities play their part. In a chaotic environment where the adults themselves live in fear, anxiety and contradiction, what can these young folk do? The pronounced delinquent of the headlines covers incipient ills that are far more widespread than is generally admitted. There is much corruption everywhere. Moral appeals may bolster up 'the good' but they have little effect on 'the wicked.' Where is the *method*? Things that were once considered 'bad' are now considered 'not so bad.' Alternatively, placard morality is busily in search of scapegoats. Meanwhile the adolescent, no longer just a child to authority and not yet an adult responsible to himself, does as best he can: for the most part he seeks refuge in his own kind. But the sensitive and susceptible suffer acutely. A disturbed life of youth may easily wreck a whole lifetime. Theories do not help. For the youngster most of all proof of the pudding lies in the eating.

Two questions occur: How can we best prepare for adolescence? How can we best educate the adolescent?

Rudolf Steiner education claims that childhood makes one whole. As surely as a plant has root and leaf and blossom and yet is indivisible in its unity, so surely does childhood comprise its three main phases, pre-dentition, elementary years to puberty, and adolescence, each succeeding the other in the one great process of becoming man. The ideal of such a school can only be to guide the child through all the years from kindergarten to college entrance. Exceptions there will have to be—children have joined our schools as late as the eleventh grade with happy results—yet the ideal remains. In this total range of childhood there is a natural progression from limb to heart to head. That which the little child can learn to *do*, that which the elementary child can learn to *feel*, the adolescent can learn to *understand*. Thirty-five years of work, spread today through some sixty schools in many lands, have brought much evidence in their train.

The little child lives primarily by imitating all that is around him—his open consciousness, little aware of 'self,' allows the world to stream into him just as it is; in this sense nothing escapes him. For him the world is action: thoughts and feeling also act upon him. This immense receptivity and power to copy bespeak a devotion to life and a trust in man comparable only to a religious attitude of selflessness at its highest level. The power of the spirit in these years is strong. The little child grasps the world with fearless hands transmitting all things to the depths of its own inner being: that which is thus received in infancy is uttered forth in latest maturity. The child that has learnt to pray in his earliest years will know how to bless in his old age says Rudolf Steiner. The little child carries within him an unconscious faith that the world is grounded in *goodness*. The adult who admits the truth of this in heart and soul, striving to think, to feel, to act accordingly, striving also to create a harmony of life in the environment, removing all nervous influences such as radio, television and the rest, will be best able to help, guide and encourage these early growing years.

The child in the elementary school years lives first and foremost by his feelings. What we remember best in later years are the things we felt most whether in people, in circumstances or events. In these years, education is of the heart, not by precepts but by an appeal to the imagination. The ideas of good and bad mean nothing to a child of seven; but a story with contrasting characters, the one 'good,' the other 'bad,' though the words be never mentioned (it is best to leave the story to speak for itself) will go straight to the child's heart. There are colours that live harmoniously together and others that clash; there are tones that merge in happy concord and others that are strident and discordant; there are actions that are beautiful in themselves and others that are ugly. The child, wakening from infancy, builds up an inner world of impressions penetrated with feeling; more and more, as he grows older, does this become his refuge and his home. Even as he approaches the more thoughtful years from twelve to fourteen, it is still a 'felt' thinking, a thinking with the heart. For the adult this is the gift that makes him an artist or a poet; for the child in these years it is natural. The ideal that lives below words in these years is that of *beauty*. In all that is 'beautiful' in thought, in word, in action, in nature itself, we behold more than the outer eye can yield; here the spirit shines into the world of the senses. It was a scientist who claimed that 'art enhances consciousness.' The teacher must above all work as an artist—he describes all life with all its many faces, be it in literature and history, be it in the kingdoms of outer nature; he brings the precious intangibles of the world to the child's powers

of apprehension. The scribes and the pharisees of our times will regard this as fanciful; they are wrong today as they were of old. One who has witnessed health and strength and cheerfulness and confidence entering into a child's looks and gestures as the years go by must know them wrong. The story of man, rooted in depths, powers and dimensions of creative existence beyond his knowing, is itself the revelation of a mighty and transcendent work of art.

Then comes the birth of independent thought, the love of the abstract and non-sensely, following as near as possible the phase of puberty. Here disturbance makes itself felt at once. There is much on record to show that puberty may set in too soon and true adolescence correspondingly too late, making an uneasy gap where many harms arise. Then education needs to be alert and therapeutic—but we are concerned now with the normal.

The adolescent looks outward with a new gaze and also inward. All that he has quietly assimilated through his childhood years, all he has learnt and felt and practiced, the capacities he has been able to develop, the difficulties he has had to encounter—these now meet him at the level of thought—he has entered upon the phase of learning to know himself, of having to learn how to face himself. At the same time, his environment lights up for him with a new interest—it pulls him to itself. He recognizes *his* world, the world he is to enter fully one day, the world of enterprise in which he must play his part. This birth to a life of independent thought does not come overnight, nor does it come equally to all children: it is generally blurred in the ninth grade, comes to clarity in the tenth, and grows to relative strength in the eleventh and twelfth grades—but it invariably brings with it a force of personal enthusiasm for life: if it does not, then something is badly amiss already. The adolescent wants to believe in the world, he wants to love and approve his age, he wants to have confidence in life, to enjoy and admire and even idealize the achievements that confront him. He wants to be *modern*, to accept what is there as his right, his heritage, and careless opposition on the part of his elders will easily drive him to rebellion. The ideal he brings is for *truth*. The first assumption of his nature is that the world is built on truth. His spontaneous aspiration is to be a true man, to live in truth and to expect truth in others.

But now, by degrees, there come the contradictions. He reads the headlines and dives down beneath them, sees the inconsistencies in adult life, is first astonished, then bewildered, and then unhappily dismayed. In his first burst of confidence he may easily mistake good for evil, evil for good. He meets on every hand with a presentation of life where spirit is denied and matter exalted. Is man an animal after all? The learned say so: true he is something more, but how much? He begins to question his childhood faith—then he believed because others believed, but now he wants to justify belief. He questions his dependence on his parents—is he not *himself* and why should he not have *his own way*? He questions the authority of his teachers—are not they, too, *only men*? As he enters his most sensitive years at seventeen and eighteen, he nurses many a doubt and sorrow in secret. He wants a hero he can trust and follow—one of his own choosing. Where can he find him? Is there truth? If so, what is truth? What is life really based on? Youth is naturally introspective. Is there a soul? Is there a God? What is he *himself* apart from heredity and environment—is *he* anything at all? How can a man's statement be more than his opinion? Who *knows*?

Not all will place their questions as radically as this or as consciously. Some will, but all carry them in mood and feeling—this is the bond of communion the young have with one another—fellows in adventure, and the loves follow. This is where the problems begin for the adolescent himself, for his parents, his teachers. What can life offer? At the same time life *does* offer many attractions and rouses many desires and longings—healthy youth is virile and has wants and tastes and appetites. Even these bring inner conflicts and moral doubts and scruples. One of the most honest lads I knew confessed he thought himself a liar and he suffered from it. Another, realizing for himself that all desire was selfish, fled from love and then asked whether desire for an ideal was not also selfish. At eighteen, beginning for some with the thought of national service and all its implications, life suddenly seems conditioned against one's will. The reverse is to abandon oneself to mere living, taking all things as they come. Are there not theories today to excuse almost any line of conduct? Chastity, it is taught, belongs to the middle ages. Gratification relieves repression. How are the young to know? Some turn religious; many go the other way. We adults must admit that life is a welter—we do our best, but our own premises are often none too strong. Life is sadly inconsistent, yet we want strong men and gracious women and a generation that loves the truth.

All this puts the greatest possible burden of responsibility on education itself. If the adolescent has been rightly protected in his kindergarten years, if he has been rightly guided through his elementary school years, if in these earlier years he has felt the force of *goodness* and the strength of *beauty*, he will also find his way to *truth*. Then the security of the heart will come to meet the doubts of the head and the turbulence of the will. He has been taught through art and can be further taught to develop a *sense of fitness* in life itself. He is taught in such a way that he can clearly discriminate between fact and theory—the fact will always hold the truth in itself but theories have changed and will change again. He sees as a matter of course that life is a conflict and always has been and that it must be so. There are thoughts that add to the content of life, that make it nobler, and others that take away, reducing man to an ignoble thing. There are dragons to fight in this age as in all ages and the call for knighthood is as strong as ever.

The animal lives by desire: man can acquire motives to combat desire. The plant lives by necessity; man can call to his aid powers of self-determination. The crystal is bound to its form; man can strive for inner form and he can also transform. Creation is bound in law, and man is also bound but he can unbind. Defeat is not the end but only the spur to further effort, and there *have* been victories and man has never yet been finally defeated. In the end all rests on the initiative of man, whether he can draw up from the depths of his own being the powers he needs to humanize existence. Goodness, beauty, truth—these are his attributes, his childhood faiths before he is a man: these he can apprehend in consciousness and translate into life and so declare himself and find his way to freedom. The greatest have known that freedom can be born only from within even as manhood itself must be born from within—nothing can make for true manhood other than man himself. But then goodness, beauty, truth, expressed in religion, art and the search for knowledge, themselves give evidence of man's real being—*he* has engendered them and through them he is related to his source. If education can lead to this synthesis of confident striving within the soul of man, it has surely led to something.

In a Rudolf Steiner school, instruction is a means for education, and education has to do with a right growing into life. There is no indoctrination, only the aid a child needs at the different levels of his growing to discover his own inherent powers, that in adult life he may truly find himself. For the adolescent the teacher should be a witness for truth—his knowledge needs to be rooted in the realities of human nature, realities that far transcend the light of common day. The knowledge that Rudolf Steiner has given of man as a being of body, soul and spirit, that knowledge the teacher can make his own, and with that he can work. It is a knowledge that bring illumination to human life and shows the way to inner freedom, a knowledge that enables the teacher to address himself in confident mood to the highest potentialities in the child, making of him the gardener of the most precious plant of all. The perilous years of adolescence require such a knowledge in the teacher; then the stability engendered in the first years of childhood, the training in social relationships and heart-fitness of the middle years with the class teacher, flower into a right independence of outlook, right discrimination and judgment, right confidence and right initiative in the adolescent. But that this may come about at its best, we need to guide the child progressively through all his years of schooling.

In the ninth grade the child begins to waken to himself, in the tenth grade he begins to waken to the earth as a whole, in the eleventh grade he begins to question into the meaning of life, in the twelfth grade he may come to the assurance that the ultimate answer rests in man himself. He has learnt to understand the descent of man to earth, he has learnt to love the kingdoms that surround him, and now he can foresee the means for man's reascent. He has learnt to appreciate the scholarship of his day and to view it as a transition process to an age of new discoveries when religion, art and science which appear to have fallen apart will one day be reunited to give new insight to the meaning of life on earth. He has learnt to see that the contradictions which surround him are of man's making and may be resolved again; that in this lies the task of evolution and that life is a call to action. He has learnt to value each man for himself. This his childhood will have given him to take into adult life—the details he will by then have forgotten but the attitude and the endeavour he will remember. He will have been prepared to enter life.

Francis Edmunds

HISTORY THROUGH THE GRADES

I have been asked to sketch for you briefly one branch, the basic historical branch, of the humanities curriculum which extends throughout the middle years of childhood. Within the character of this middle period a bridge of experience is built from the Age of Imitation to the Age of Reason which permits the children to make the transition at their own pace and in their own way at each stage of the journey.

It can be said that history, as we teach it, is a full eight year course, if we consider the starting point of the teaching of the humanities as the telling of fairy tales in the first grade. This is a statement not to be accepted by many educators, for from their standpoint a fairy tale is a fantasy. I am thinking now in particular of the Grimm Tales. These tales are pictures full of deep human wisdom and human reality. You can't tell these stories to a group of six-year-olds without acquiring the conviction that these are not tales of nonsense. They picture a deeper truth.

In the second grade the children are told fables and legends. As a child passes from first to second grade, from the age of six to seven, he begins to become aware of himself as an individual and discovers within himself capacities which are embodied, in a certain sense, in the various animals as they speak and live in fables. When they hear the fables and experience the cleverness of the fox, the patience of the cow, the innocence of the lamb, the ferociousness of the wolf, they experience these qualities within their own souls and learn to discriminate between them and bring them into a certain harmony in themselves. In the legends they are introduced to the great figures on the borderline of history and myth who stride across the horizon of the human story.

3 In the third grade, as the children approach nine, they begin to become aware of sequence in time. They are aware of what comes before and after. The curriculum brings to them the grandest, the most consecutive of the great mythologies, the story of the Old Testament which takes them with an epic sweep from the divine creation, followed by the introduction of evil, down through the history of a great pre-Christian culture.

4 In the fourth grade they hear stories from the background of the folk lore of our own Anglo Saxon people: the Germanic sagas, stories of the gods of Asgard. Here, as the children approach ten and are beginning to be aware both of themselves and their own personal egos on one hand, and of the experience of disillusionment and disenchantment with the world which inevitably comes with this awakening, they hear the great drama of the twilight of the gods. They love the personality of Baldur, the radiant sun being, enlivening all life. Because the gods have entered into certain contracts and have bought peace and security through Loki's cunning, and have paid for this peace with compromise, the gods are inevitably drawn into the day of Ragnarok where they must meet the beings of evil whom they can no longer hold in check. The story ends with the thought of the new world which follows.

5 In the fifth grade the children come to the introduction of history proper out of the great mythologies. They hear stories from the Sanscrit, the ancient stories of India. The Persian culture follows with its taming of animals, transforming of wild plants into cultivated crops. They go on to hear of the Egypto-Chaldean period and come to the study of Greek times. If you look at a fifth grader you can see in the way in which he moves and runs that there is a wonderful physical harmony in the boy or girl of this age, an inner balance of heaven and earth. This history study brings them at this time an experience of the wonderful harmony which produced the works of a Phidias and a Praxiteles, and at the same time they learn that the Greek age was the period of historical transition when an ancient pictorial wisdom was transformed in the forge of the human mind and Plato handed on the torch to Aristotle at a turning point of civilization.

6 In the sixth grade there is a great change in the physical maturity of the boys and girls. They experience a new heaviness, a new sense of their own bodies and at the same time a strong sense of personality, of what is mine and what is yours, of what is right and what is wrong. In this year we come to the history of that people who conquered the physical world and ruled it—that people from whom we have so many concepts of government and law. We come to the study of Roman history which leads on into the early middle ages.

7 In the seventh grade the early struggles of puberty are beginning. Doubts arise in regard to authority, doubts in regard to many aspects of life. At this time the children come to the study of the time of the Renaissance when the unquestioned unity of the medieval world was shattered and men fought their way out from this harmony into a world of ideas and science. You have the struggles in the age of the Reformation, the struggles in individual consciousness.

9 In the eighth grade the study of history is brought to a momentary conclusion by bringing the children from the seventeenth century down to the day in which they live. Also a special course is given in American History in the seventh and eighth grades.

The children have been led from the imaginative experience of the fairy tales through the great mythologies to the realism of the twentieth century. In high school the whole scope of human history is studied once more, but this time from the point of view of the general historical principles at work rather than from the point of view of biography and narrative. What has spoken to the children's feelings through the language of the imagination during the elementary years is the fertile ground from which an independent historical judgment grows in later years.

Henry Barnes

THE GRASSHOPPERS AND THE ANTS

Based on the fable by Aesop

This little play was written originally for twenty-one second grade children. Any number of children, however, can take part. The lines may be said as choral recitation or they may be broken down to couplets for individual children. The songs are danced and sung to any simple melody fitting the rhythm and spirit of the play. Children may accompany the songs on their recorders.

Two Grasshoppers *enter happily calling to others:*

Grasshopper green, grasshopper gay,
Dance and be merry! Play all the day.
Warm is the sun, ripe is the wheat,
Come let's have fun. There's plenty to eat.

Other Grasshoppers *enter and all dance and sing:*

Hop! Hop! never stop!
Spring! spring! laugh and sing!
Play and play for life is gay,
Dance, dance, dance, dance, leap and prance.

During song a group of ants enter. Grasshoppers say:

Look at those ants! My what a sight!
They work all the day, and even at night!

Ants: Foolish grasshoppers, get out of our way!
Begone from our homes. We've no time to play!

Grasshoppers *leave with:* Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Ants *sing as they work:* Pull and push and push and pull!

Till our food bins all are full!
Dig our homes and keep them clean!
Feed our young and guard our queen!
Work and work and work and work!
Do your job and never shirk!

First Ant: Hurry, hurry, scurry, scurry!
Never time to fret or worry!

Second Ant: Frost will soon be on its way,
Wild north winds and skies of gray.
We need not fear such dangers here
Our home is snug wherein we stay.

(Ants form circle on their knees simulating an ant hill. Grasshoppers return hopping and eating and then frost and wind sweep down on them. The grasshoppers cower.)

Frost and Wind:

Crisp and cold and bright are we.
Blight we bring to plant and tree.
Frosty fingers o'er the earth,
We foretell bleak winter's birth.
Leaves we paint with frosty glitter.
Soon the weather will be bitter.

Song: North winds blow, to and fro,
Ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo,
From the land all warmth will go,
Ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo.
Blow winds blow, now comes snow. *Frost and wind leave.*

Grasshoppers: All the ground is frosty white
Not a weed or leaf in sight
Oh, I'm wet and tired and cold! *They see ant hill.*
Please, some food, if we're not too bold.

Ants: Food? But we have none to spare.
Our large family is our first care.
We've worked and worked our bins to stuff,
Last summer there was food enough
What did you do all summer long?

Grasshoppers: We danced and played and sang our song.

Ants: Well, dance and play the winter away,
We've nothing for you. We bid you good-day.

Grasshoppers: Woe is me, oh woe is me!
I am so cold, I cannot see!
I am so tired, I cannot last!
We die in this wild wintry blast. *Grasshoppers die.*

Frost and wind dance in to: North winds blow, to and fro.
Ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo!
From the land all warmth will go.
Ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo, ooo!
Blow winds blow, now comes snow!

THE END

Virginia E. Paulsen

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