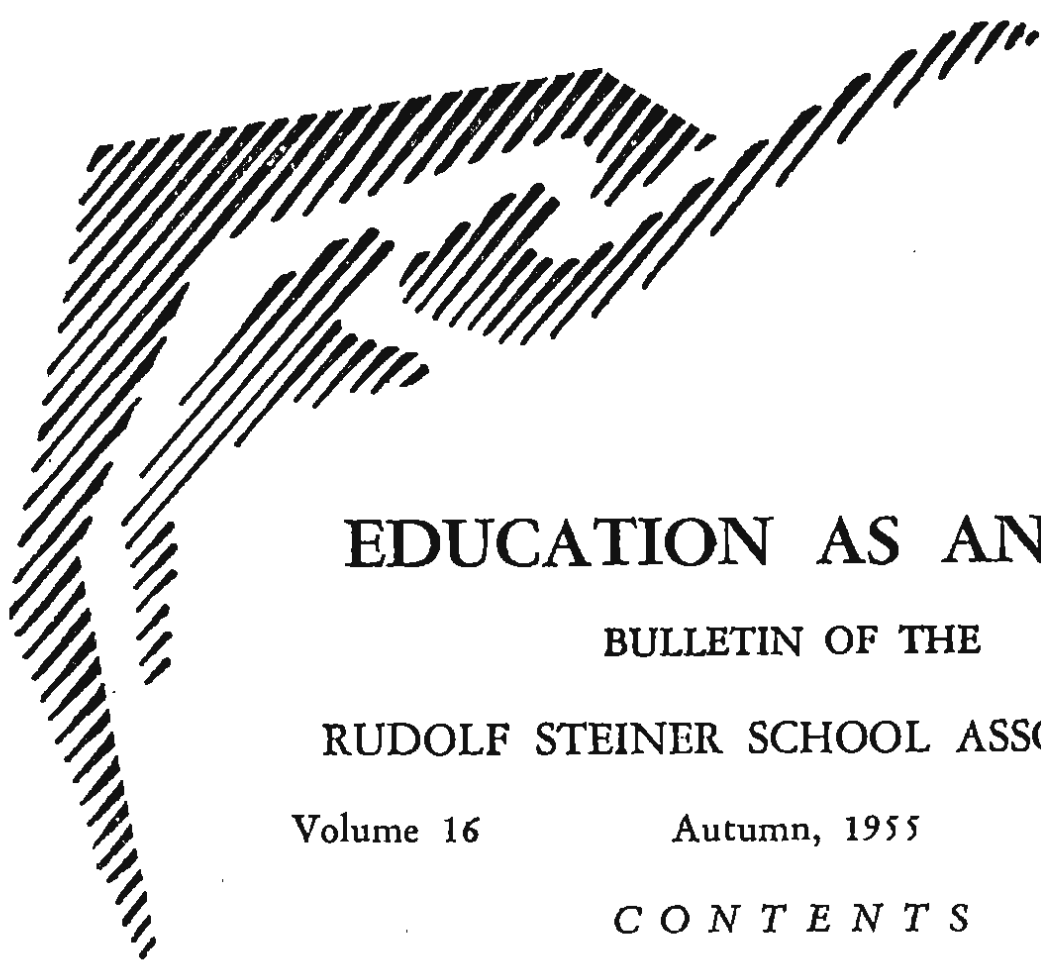




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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FOUR STEPS TO MANHOOD

The child under seven, and especially under five years of age, lives in every gesture of the grown-ups and older children around him—in their laughter, their tone of voice, their manner of speaking—and his own organism responds sympathetically, echoing each movement by an unconscious gesture of its own as if "his whole vocation were endless imitation," as Wordsworth expressed it.

Here we have a most important clue to educational practices in the pre-school years. The role of the adult is to create an environment worthy of the child's unquestioning imitation and the first, and the most important, step is the self-development of the adult. If an atmosphere of serenity in emotional life, of clarity in thought, and of self-control and loving security in deeds can be created, more will have been done for the healthy development of the child than any amount of scientific and expensive care alone could ever provide.

If we can clear a space, physically and psychologically, in which the little child can unfold the free play of his own creative imagination, we will have helped to strengthen his vitality for a lifetime. The child is fortunate who is allowed to overturn chairs in the family living room and set sail in them on the high seas of his imagination, or is allowed to get dirty in the park, digging a hole for himself to sit in. Much better a bent stick which can be an old man, a tree, a bridge, a ship or a donkey than an elaborate doll which wets its pants and must never be broken. For the creative play of the three to five-year-old strengthens the organism and awakens

the inner being of the child to an intense interest in the world about him. This interest, which has its natural expression at this age in imaginative, imitative play, reproducing the life around it in a thousand variations every day, stimulates the circulation of the blood, sharpens the perceptions of the senses, deepens and regulates the rhythm of breathing, and draws the inner being of the child in the right way into connections with his physical body.

On the contrary, every attempt to intellectualize a child of pre-school age means a diversion of his inner forces from the vital work on his organism into a premature awakening of self-consciousness. As adults we are predominantly intellectuals today and we are guilty of endless mistakes in this regard. When we reason with a little child, hoping to appeal to his intellectual judgment, we little realize that we are undermining his vitality for later life. Looking back, we can thank God that our children paid so little attention to us! It was just at those times when we apparently succeeded in getting a "reasonable" response, that the greatest damage was probably done. When we consulted children, and offered a variety of choice, anxiously hoping to please them; when we gave them logical, abstract explanations in answer to their questions: Why?; when we gave them mechanical toys instead of simple, imaginative playthings; when we exposed them to radio, television, movies, over-stimulating their senses and estranging them from the simple experiences of sight and sound—at all times, we unwittingly were educating them to become nervous, restless, dissatisfied grown-ups and we were robbing their developing bodies of much-needed vitality and their awakening souls of the imitative, imaginative play which is the natural nourishment of childhood.

Body, soul and spirit are united in a young child in a manner not found again in later life. The body of a very young child is a sponge, saturated by the activity of soul and spirit. His inner being is immersed in the activity of transforming the physical organism which he inherits from his parents into the instrument for his own, individual expression. To accomplish this task the help of cosmic, spiritual forces is needed, forces beyond the grasp of our ordinary consciousness. Think only of the physical energy and will force required to enable a one-year-old to lift himself against the power of gravity, to stand erect and to walk! Never again as adults can we consciously summon such will forces. If we could, we could move mountains.

These will forces of early childhood are active in the organism almost wholly outside the sphere of consciousness. We have no memory whatsoever of our earliest years when they are most potent. Inner being and physical body are then so united that every sense impression permeates the whole organism and every soul experience has immediate and far-reaching physical consequences. Watch a baby drinking his milk! Doesn't he taste the goodness of the milk right into his toes? Observe the physical repercussions of adult anger, joy, serenity or worry in the organic life of a tiny child. The child's consciousness is not centralized in his brain, but appears spread out over his whole environment. One four-year-old girl, when asked where her brains were, tugged stoutly at her braids! After entering the first grade she pointed significantly at her forehead when asked the same question.

When a child loses his baby teeth and sets his own, individual teeth in their place, he is marking the completion of this first phase of intensive preoccupation with the transformation and building up of his organism, and a part of those energies formerly engaged in the organism are freed for activity in a more conscious sphere. The boy or girl is ready to leave kindergarten

and enter first grade. He is able to sit still—for short periods—to listen and learn. But the consciousness which unfolds in the seventh and eighth years is by no means the intellectual consciousness of adulthood. It is the faculty which experiences the world in pictures. If the language of the little child is gesture and movement, that of the elementary school child is the language of imagination. Everything which comes to him in the form of story, of drama, of artistic form, awakens spontaneous interest, everything which comes to him as logical reason creates boredom and awakens spontaneous inattention.

Just as the little child is primarily active in the unconscious sphere of the will, so the older child, after changing his teeth, is to a great extent engaged in exploring and individualizing the world of feeling. He is deeply drawn to everything he loves; anything hateful to him repels him. Individual friendships, quite different from the companionships with earlier playmates, develop at this age. The capacity to enjoy and to dread in retrospect and anticipation is awakened. To look up to someone with the veneration of one's whole heart is one of the most important experiences for a child in these middle years. Physically, it is the rhythmic system, the system of breathing and blood circulation, which is especially developed at this time, and it is at about the ninth year that the adult relationship of pulse to breath is established.

The emancipation of the sexual organs and the maturing into adolescence are the outward signs that the second phase of childhood has been completed and that the individuality is ready to enter into relationship with life in a new way. Again, forces which had previously been engaged in work on the organism are freed for use in a more conscious sphere and we have, beginning around the twelfth year, the dawning capacity for independent, logical thought. All that has been "experienced through doing" in imitation, and has deeply stirred the imagination, is now ready to be understood in thought. No longer is the young person satisfied to look up in reverence and uncritical admiration to a beloved friend. He now begins to scrutinize the human being before him in the cool light of a newly detached intellectual consciousness. At the same time the longing awakens to find the quality of hero worship in the sphere of ideals. The final phase of the transformation and individualization of the organism is entered, in which the arms and legs shoot down to earth, dangling and gawking; noses change their shape; lower jaws grow massive and individual, and hands and feet are man-size before their owners know what to do with them.

Tradition tells us that a man "comes of age" at twenty-one. Spiritual science characterizes this event as the fourth great step in human development when the individuality unites in a more inward way than ever before with the organism, on which it has been at work so long, preparing it to be the instrument through which it can express itself in life.

We can speak of this process of evolution as a fourfold process of human birth. The physical body is freed at birth and is placed, so to speak, at the disposal of the individuality which is to inhabit it. At about the time of the change of teeth the vital forces which have been principally engaged in the organism are freed for use in imaginative learning. At puberty, emotional, sentient and intellectual forces are freed for human intercourse and logical judgment, and at twenty-one the human ego is ready to take the reins of willing, feeling and thinking into its own hands.

Viewed from the standpoint of spiritual science, human development is a process of differentiation, the final product of which is the self-conscious human being, capable of distinguishing good and evil and deciding for himself what path he wishes to follow. Starting from a unity of body, soul and spirit, human evolution can be viewed as a process of separation—the physical body hardens, the soul becomes an independent entity, moved by its own sympathies and antipathies, and the spirit is finally concentrated and fully conscious in the individual's capacity to think for himself. The process is from the unconscious, living unity to its differentiated elements. The gain is: human consciousness; the loss: union with the divine creative forces of the world.

Risking repetition, let us put the same thought in the form of a picture. If we imagine the whole human being, conscious and unconscious, with all his capacities and qualities, as the full rainbow spectrum, we can think of the little child as a radiant chaos of colors, living and interweaving—a luminous cloud glowing in the light of a heavenly world. In the adult these wonderful colors have been, to a very great extent, confined below the threshold of consciousness, from which they only occasionally gleam forth in a burst of temperament or a moment of artistic inspiration. In place of the glowing spectrum, there emerges a single, concentrated beam of clear white light with which man, as with an electric torch, picks out the forms and meanings of the objects in the world around him.

Our task as educators is to guide the development of the first twenty-one years so that each man may find within himself the power to use the light of his conscious intelligence in such a way that he can again discover the hidden colors in the objects of the world and in himself, and never lose the freedom of his own self-conscious ego in doing so.

Henry Barnes

WORDS SPOKEN TO THE NINTH GRADE

at the Opening Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Ninth Grade!

In addressing you thus I am quite serious. I use these words to create an impulse, a goal towards which you should be striving consciously. When, in her speech to her Fifth Grade, Mrs. Harrer spoke about Pythagoras who went to school for thirty-four years, I heard someone whispering, "No, thank you!" But I am now going to say something even much worse, that is that we really have to go to school throughout our whole lifetime. For the level of humanity depends on how much we want to learn in the great school of life, and how much we are willing and able to learn and to develop our true selves throughout our whole lifetime. Indeed, the older we become the more we should have learned how to learn.

As you enter into the first year of High School, you will realize how the whole attitude of the teachers toward you will now be changed. You will no longer be treated as children. In order to characterize this new state I have in mind three words. All of them begin with "self." Nevertheless they are not in any way related to selfishness or egotism. The second part of each of these words shows their real meaning. The words are: self-discipline, self-control, and self-education.

All education which we receive in childhood has to be transformed into self-education through self-guidance. But we shall be able to guide ourselves only if we understand that we have to find the true or higher self of mankind which was and is the teacher of our teachers, and whom you will discover more and more consciously as the educator within yourselves. This higher self stands above all personal emotions, passions and egotistical desires, and wants only to achieve what is true and what is right.

To help you so that your true self may become more and more the conscious leader of your life will from now on be increasingly our common goal.

Karl Ege

A TEACHER TALKS TO HER CHILDREN

During the summer our class has been widely separated. Some of you have traveled thousands of miles from New York, for one was in Europe, another in California and still another in Mexico. Several children escaped the heat by going to the mountains, and at least four of you were swimming in the ocean off Long Island or the Jersey coast. But I stayed right here in New York, and because I was here you were all here with me. Oh, to be sure, I have not seen any of you for a quarter of the year with my real eyes, but here in my mind's eye you have been present many times.

And what did I see when I thought of you? Not the unimportant things, certainly nothing unpleasant which would best be forgotten, but I saw again and again in my mind's eye what I like to think of as the golden moments of our class. I remembered one beautiful spring day in Central Park when all of you played leapfrog together, starting at the top of the hill and going all the way to the bottom. You were all happy and laughing, and when it was time to go back to school, everyone talked about what a wonderful time he had had. Then, there was a day when we were rehearsing for our play and several were absent and we realized we might have to give the play at the big assembly with several of our important grasshoppers and ants missing. And every one of you worked so hard making the last minute changes, and suddenly we realized there was nothing to worry about for each child could be depended upon to do his very best, and that was all that was necessary. Another picture came to my mind, too. A child visited our class and he felt strange and ill at ease, but he was greeted with warmth and friendliness. He was shown where to go and what to do. Supplies were generously given him by his neighbors, and you all tried to make him feel at home so successfully that he begged his mother to let him come to our school, and here he is with us in our new year. I remember a little girl who hurt herself in the park and tried to pretend it was nothing at all. But I thought it was serious enough for us all to go back to school right away so that she could be properly attended to. You immediately understood the emergency and were full of sympathy for the little girl and I heard not one word of complaint that we had to miss half our recess. These are just a few of our golden moments; there are many more.

This gift to remember and relive again and again whatever impresses us is common to all human beings. It is the means by which mankind is able to pass on to future generations the golden moments of the different ages. Long before time was even recorded people told of the great events they

had seen, when good had triumphed over evil, when warm-heartedness had won the prize from cleverness or when courage conquered cowardliness. These happenings were told over and over and they have come down to us in the form of fairy tales with the edge of reality blurred, but the great truths still shining. In first grade we relived these golden moments of so very long ago.

In another civilization, an old Negro slave told stories that so impressed his listeners that they had to repeat them to their families and to all their friends. These tales lived in the minds of many people until at last they were written down, and today, when we hear Aesop's Fables, we recapture with inner vision the same pictures the Greeks formed in their minds.

Many years ago, before tales were written down, a small group of people living in a tiny corner of the world felt such deep reverence for the great men among them that they had to tell about them and their deeds to all they knew. Around their fires at night they told their sons about the nobleness of their leaders and these sons told their sons in turn. They spoke with such vigor and enthusiasm that vivid, dramatic, colorful pictures formed in the minds of all who heard. At last, when the stories were already ancient, they were written down and became the Old Testament of the Bible, for these people were the ancient Hebrews. Their golden moments have become one of the world's greatest treasures. In Third Grade we shall share this treasure.

I doubt very much if old Aesop and his Greek listeners, or the ancient Hebrews were in the least bit aware that they were preparing a treasure for mankind. They were merely keeping alive in their minds' eyes those events, those people, those stories which meant a great deal to them. It makes us realize how important this gift of having inner pictures is. The way we think of our friends, the stories we repeat, the moments in our lives that we think of over and over again are very significant. For each one of us in this way is helping to prepare our gift for mankind. It is up to all of us to see that our gift is a treasure worth having.

Virginia Paulsen

MAN AND ANIMAL

An Introductory Lesson in the Fourth Grade

Last year we learned about the story of the creation of the world as it is told in the Bible. The first book in the Bible begins, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". In seven great periods of time which are called days, the earth and all that lives upon it was created.

We can see the world that God created wherever we look. Below our feet lies the earth. From it spring the plants. Over it move the animals. Above us curves the heaven where shine the sun, moon and stars. And we live in the midst of all this wonderfully created universe and can learn how it is that we belong to it.

If we hold a stone in our hand and then let go of it, it will fall back to the earth of which it is a part. It is heavy. It lies still and never changes its shape unless it is worn away by wind and waves and rain. The highest mountains, with steep sides and cliffs, are heavy and still just like this stone. They lie down and pile up. No life dwells in the rocks of earth. But that life which forms the rocks is all around them, outside of them. When we stand out in the open country and look over the earth, we see the line where

earth and sky meet, and it lies so—a horizontal line. This we draw in our pictures too.

When we look at a small seed beside a small pebble, they seem alike. They both fall to earth and lie still. Yet they are different, for after lying still in the earth through the winter, the seed opens and lets out two sprouts. One always reaches down, the other reaches upward—and they never make a mistake. Once the sprouting begins one sees the difference between stone and seed. The plants do not lie down heavily as the earth does. Something lives in them that does not live in the rocks. This life in the plant takes another direction. It reaches downward and upward. The roots of the plant are always searching for the center of the earth. The stem, leaves and blossoms grow upward toward the sun. From out the stem spring leaves and blossoms as if from nowhere, yet we know that they spring from the life within in the plant.

The plant, though alive, is happy to grow in one place so long as it is in company of earth and sun, so long as it has air and space to grow in, and water to drink. It is firm like earth, but also filled with life which wants to grow outward.

When we look at the animals, we see that they too have what earth and plants have. As the plants have inner life which makes them grow and take various shapes, so the animals do. As the earth has weight, so does the animal. Except for the birds and insects, all animals stay close to the earth and always fall downward if they jump or fall.

But the animals have another kind of life in addition to the plant, and this life is such that animals have feeling in them. If you step on a plant, it makes no sound. If you step on a kitten's tail, it yowls and runs away. If a plant gets no food or water, it just stays where it is and dies. An animal can hunt for food, and creep around looking for it. Most of an animal's life is spent going after food and water. An animal can bring food to its babies, can fight other animals who have food, to take it away from them. But in all its running about the animal has its head to the earth. Sometimes a mouse, or rabbit, or a monkey can sit up or even stand up—for a while, but if it wants to go from one place to another, it has to drop down on all four limbs and use them all to creep, run, jump or climb. The animal, then, takes the same horizontal direction as the earth.

We who are human beings have in us the weight of rocks which lives in our feet. They bind us to the earth, and the more firmly we learn to stand and walk, the more upright we can stand. The little, human baby can't put his feet upon the earth at first. They have no weight. He uses them rather by kicking in the air. His head is the heavy part of him. He can lift his feet and kick. But he can't lift his head for several months. Then something wonderful happens. The day comes when he tries to lift his head. Then he likes to lie on his stomach—looking around. After a little time he tries to sit up. He gets stronger and can sit up by himself. All the heaviness goes out from his head down into his feet, until one day, with great joy, he can stand up! How he loves that moment. He will bounce up and down and take steps, and show how his feet have at last come down to earth. Then he will grow. His legs and arms lengthen out. He lifts his head higher and higher above the earth. Like the sprout he pushes both upward and downward. Like the plant he grows, like an animal he can

move in all directions and feel hungry, and try to take things away from other children who have what he wants.

But he has something more than an animal. For once he has learned to walk, he begins to talk and to answer those who speak to him because he knows what they mean. The animal can't speak. It can whine, grumble, mew, moo, and chirp and make its own kind of noise when it is hungry, or angry, or afraid. But it can't do what children first do. It can't ask questions. It can't say, "Why? Why does a stone fall down instead of up? Why does a plant grow upward and downward? Why does an animal have to walk on all fours? Why can a human being stand upright on two feet?"

The animal has to use all four limbs to move on. The human being, after he has grown up, never has to use his hands for walking and running. They are free. And because they are not fore-feet, can be used in many ways—to do the most beautiful things. They can also be used to do the most ugly things. They do not have the weight of earth in them as do the feet. With our hands we can carve and model and build and paint. All the beautiful things you see in the Metropolitan Museum have been made by human hands to give joy to others when they see them. Animals can dig and build with their front paws, but only to serve themselves. Human beings can use their hands to help others, or to hurt others. They are free to choose which.

Then, too, the human being can hold his head up, except when he is tired and goes to sleep. The animal's head stretches forward in the same direction as its back. The animal uses his head as if it were a hand, for he carries things in his jaws. He tears them apart, and does all kinds of work with his head. The human head rises toward heaven, and the whole human being stands erect, feet firmly on the earth, two legs to hold the body upright, two hands which can reach out toward the world at every moment, and a head held free, high, and unstooping.

Dorothy Harrer

UNSTOOPING

*Low on his four the lion,
Treads with surly bear;
But men straight upward from the dust
Walk with their heads in air;
The free sweet winds of heaven,
The sunlight from on high,
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and brows
As they go striding by;
The doors of all their houses
They arch so they may go;
Uplifted over the four-foot beasts,
Unstooping, to and fro.*

Walter de la Mare

• THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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