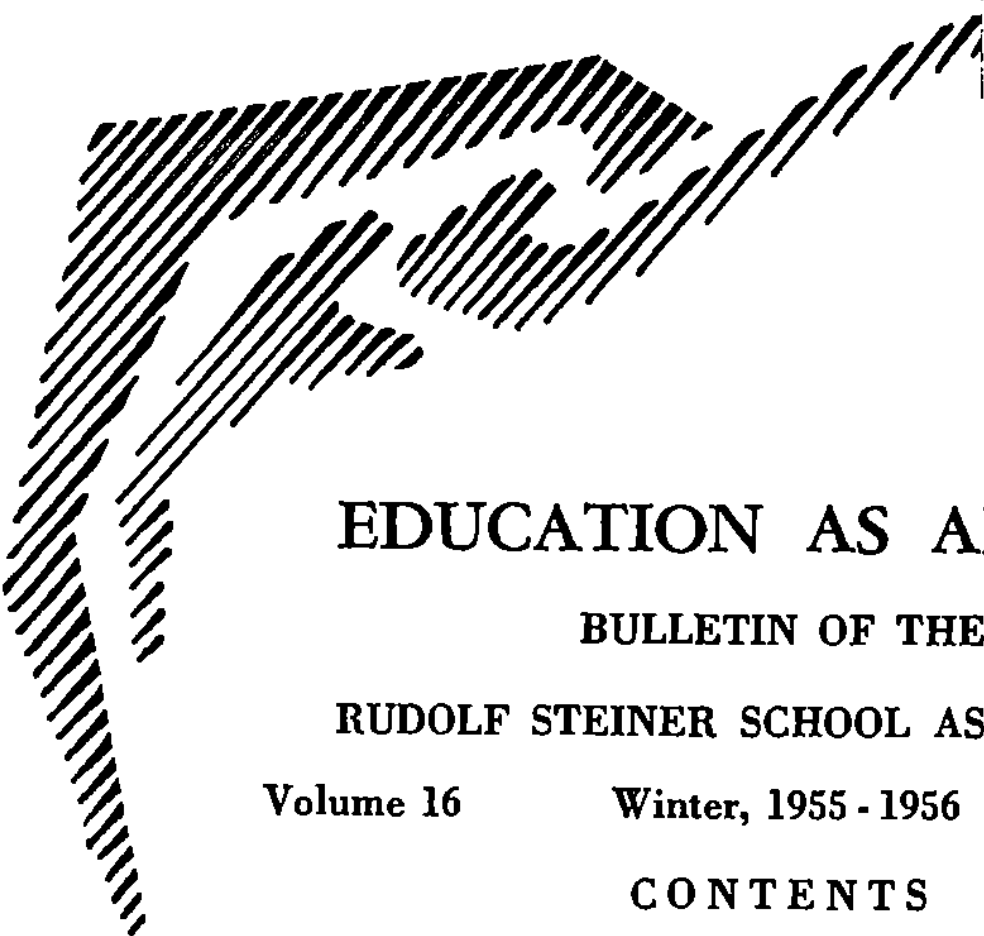




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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CONTENTS

What is the Attitude of the School toward Religion? — Henry Barnes

Evening Prayer — Rudolf Steiner

Why do we Teach Eurythmy in School? — Kari van Oordt

The Snow Man and the Snow Woman — A Story

Punctuation Verses — Dorothy Harrer

*WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL TOWARD RELIGION?

"It is certain that worship stands in some commanding relation to the health of man and to his highest powers, so as to be in some manner the source of intellect. All the ages have been ages of belief. I mean, when there was any extraordinary power of performance, when great national movements began, when arts appeared, when heroes existed, when poems were made, — the human soul was in earnest, and had fixed its thoughts on spiritual verities with as strict a grasp as that of the hands on the sword, or the pencil, or the trowel. It is true that genius takes its rise out of the mountains of rectitude; that all beauty and power which men covet are somehow born out of that alpine district; that any extraordinary degree of beauty in man or woman involves a moral charm."

In quoting these words of Emerson's from his essay on *Worship*, I wish to invoke his aid in speaking of a subject which is both personal and delicate and yet of great importance for us all.

In attempting to answer the question, *What is the Attitude of the Rudolf Steiner School toward Religion?* I can only speak for myself. If the school's attitude toward religion was dogmatic or doctrinaire, it would be a simple matter to repeat our creed of belief. But dogma and doctrine are not the basis for the religious attitude of the school.

* This article was originally given as a talk to the Parent Teachers Meeting of the Rudolf Steiner School as an answer to a question which had been previously submitted for discussion.

It is my conviction, shared, I believe by my colleagues, because it is in keeping with the spirit of the school, that religion is a vital element, that it is an essential element in a full humanity. If religion is lacking in an individual, one of the mainsprings of character is absent. If the religious element is lacking in education, that education is neglecting the development of an essential aspect of human personality and moral character.

The word religion is derived from the Latin, re-ligare, to bind anew, to reunite. We enter life from a world of spiritual existence and spiritual experience. In order to have the possibility of freedom on earth (the possibility of which alone gives meaning to life), we have had to lose our conscious connection with the divine spiritual world of our origin. In learning through experience, to rediscover this connection, to unite ourselves consciously with the divinity in our own being and in the world around us, we are winning our way to a religion in keeping with our times — in keeping with the requirements of a scientific outlook which is the cornerstone of modernity.

Every child enters life with a naive and magnificent piety. The unhesitating certainty with which a new-born child turns to its mother's breast is the expression of its instinctive confidence that the world is good. The devotion with which a child of eighteen months attunes its own speech organism to the speech it hears around it is part of the grand, instinctive religion of early childhood. Our problem, as teachers and as parents, is to guide this natural devotion and reverence for the world around it, into an enthusiasm and love for beauty and, in later years, into a reverence and love for truth.

To succeed in this, we must first recognize that the true soil from which an objective, independent, actively-loving judgment grows is the soil of reverence and devotion for the divine powers which created the world and which are active, or potentially active in man. Rudolf Steiner said that hands which have not been taught to pray in childhood will not easily be able to shed blessing in old age.

Everyone of the great religious teachers have sought to draw man's attention — his heart, and mind and will — to the creative spirit which shines like a radiant sun behind the outer manifestations of nature and within the soul of man, experienced as the divine spark of his higher self. The Indian Vedas address this creator-being as Brahma — the all-sustaining unity. In Persia, this divine unity became a duality of light and darkness; Ahura Mazdao and Ahriman. In Egypt, a trinity emerged out of the polarity; Osiris, Isis and the divine child, Horus. In the Hebrew experience, Jahve spoke to mankind in the elements; out of the burning bush and in the still, small voice in the storm. This creative power — the Word from which the world sprang — drew closer in each succeeding epoch to the earth. Christianity is based on the fact that this divine being united itself for three years with a human personality in a human body and experienced death — an experience to be found only upon earth. St. Paul before Damascus learned that this being could be found in connection with the earth. The Divine Word no longer could be found in cosmic heights because he had united himself in the archetypal deed of human free-

dom with the destiny and being of the earth. St. Paul's experience is the prototype of all modern spiritual religion. This experience has nothing to do with creed, or dogma. It has been misunderstood by many churches. It is a basic human experience through which men and women of every race, creed, and nation can experience their common humanity. There are men and women in many places today who have experienced what St. Paul experienced. They may be Hindus or Jews or Christians — their experience is a re-union with the Divine-Creative spirit with which they were connected in spiritual existence before birth.

What church our children may or may not join as adults is their business, not ours. Our concern is to educate them in such a way that the religious element in their human nature is nourished and supported.

In this sense we are a Christian school which wants to strengthen the individual human being regardless of race or creed or class.

***EVENING PRAYER**

By Rudolf Steiner

This prayer was written for little children to say before they go to sleep at night. The grownups should not try to "teach" it to the child, but speak it for him each evening. Little by little the small child will repeat single words, then whole lines, until he slowly learns the entire prayer.

From my head to my feet
I'm the picture of God.
From my heart into my hands
I feel God's living breath.
When I speak with my mouth
I follow God's own will.
When I gaze on God
In father and mother
In all dear people,
In beast and flower,
In tree and stone,
No fear can come near,
Only love
For all that's around me here.

—Translated by A. M. and C. B.

* From *Gebete für Mütter und Kinder*, Rudolf Steiner.

WHY DO WE TEACH EURYTHMY IN SCHOOL?

"There is no profession or form of employment in which eurythmy is required. I cannot see that eurythmy is necessary for life, so why do you devote so much time and energy to it in your school?" This is a question often asked. Yes, as a subject, eurythmy is not necessary for life. We do not teach eurythmy because we think it is a subject which every child ought to know. Just as we do not teach painting in order to create artists or painters, so neither do we teach eurythmy in order to create eurythmists or dancers.

The background for all teaching in a Rudolf Steiner School is the striving to bring the child into harmony with himself, to bring harmony between the child and his own body so that as an individual he develops its best faculties. The child needs help in taking hold of his own body in the right way. Here eurythmy can be of great help. Through this kind of movement the child can learn to control his activities and doings.

Movement plays a very important part indeed in a child's life. As we watch a baby in his cradle, we can almost guess what kind of a person he is going to be merely by watching the movement of his arms and legs. His whole being is expressed through movement, — through the way in which he beats his arms and legs like drumsticks in the air when he rejoices, or the way in which he plants his feet firmly against the bottom of the cradle when he is annoyed.

Later, when the child starts to walk or run, we can observe how his gestures are reflections of impressions that come to him from outside. The small child's being is immersed in all that surrounds him and what he sees is re-expressed in bodily motion. How different is the child who is watching a swiftly jumping squirrel from the one who is absorbed in watching a spitting cat with its rounded back, or the little dreamy boy who stands on the pier for hours, peacefully gazing at the rocking boat on the water. His whole body sways back and forth with the waves. From the tip of his toes to the top of his head he is watching the rocking boat. All his experiences are taken in through his body and expressed through gesture.

When we grow up these movements are withheld more and more and we end up by reflecting the world with our head only — with the intellect. Our body grows heavy and plump or it hardens more and more and becomes stiff and tense. In both cases we try to repair the damage through sports and all kinds of bodily movement. These, however are constructed out of the intellect and have no connection with creative, nature forces as is the case with the gestures of a small child. If we could keep alive this stream of natural life through our body and let it enliven us again and again, we would be able to stand more firmly in life, would be able to bring our intellectual knowledge, what we learn in our heads, into the limbs, into our will and into our actions. That is what we want to achieve when we do eurythmy with the children.

When the small child stands up for the first time, when he rises from a crawling to an upright position, that is the moment when the individuality first awakens in the child. From now on the human being really stands above the other kingdoms of nature. He has them all within himself: substantially we draw all the elements of which we are made from nature. We are built up of the same substances and the same forces which build up nature. Now the child itself awakens. The higher self within the child awakens in order to take hold of that part of nature which is his body, to use it for his purposes and bring it under his control.

Not only the substances but also the movements of nature are contained in the human body. As we grow out of babyhood these movements concentrate more and more in the region of the larynx and the speech organs. Instead of expressing ourselves through gestures of the body as the small child does, we now learn to express ourselves through human speech. From these concentrated movements in the larynx speech arises. It actually comes into existence through this meeting and combining of the child's individuality with the nature forces in his body. This interpenetration of the two is concentrated in the larynx.

We can clearly see these two different elements in our speech: first, the vowels which sound out, expressing something of a mood of the soul: Ah! oh! eh! etc.; and, second, the consonants which are expressive of the more physical element, the forces of nature: K — F — S etc. With the consonants we try to model and paint, to picture something or other in nature. In them what has become form in nature is still a living force. For instance, if I say that a chain "rattles", you can hear the character of the sound through the combination of the consonants in the word "rattle". To "slide" is different from to "tumble" and again the consonants create a picture; or when I tell you that something is "crisp" you can hear the crispness through the combination of the consonants. So we see that when vowels and consonants sound together in speech we are involved with our body as well as with our soul and the whole human being is in activity. Speech is formed and sounded in the region around, in and by the larynx. It becomes what we call eurythmy if we do not let the vowels and consonants be formed and sounded through the activity of the larynx, mouth, etc., but if instead we transform them into movement with our whole body. In a way we go back to the source of speech as it is expressed in the gestures of a small child before it speaks, only now we form it consciously. Thereby we reawaken the creative forces which are present in the tiny child.

It was Rudolf Steiner who called our attention to these connections between speech and the movements in the speech organs. He showed how these can be transformed into movements of the whole body and be what he called *visible speech* — *eurythmy*.

In this way we can allow nature forces — living, growing life forces, — to stream freely and unhindered through our body — not wildly and chaotically, but consciously guided by the personality which abides in the body, by our real selves.

The vowels and consonants as we use them today in our every-day speech would not have much of this enlivening quality when transformed into bodily movement. We have lost the sense of quality in speech and we use our language with negligence forming the sounds in a flabby and careless manner. There are, however, poets and writers who still can experience the life of the background of our speech. Observe Swinburne's use of vowels and consonants in his little poem describing the butterfly: *Fly white butterflies, out to sea* in comparison with the vowels and consonants Tennyson uses to describe the eagle: *He clasps the crags with crooked hands*, or listen to the sounds and rhythm in this lines from a poem by William Watson: *Wave and wind and willow tree*. When we let the children move to such poems, expressing in movement the life and action of the vowels and consonants we can awaken the creative forces in the child in a healing and harmonizing way.

Kari van Oordt

An article in the next issue will deal with the rhythmical element as a mediator between thinking and the will.

THE SNOW MAN AND THE SNOW WOMAN

A wanderer stopped to rest on a mountain road. He was clad in bright garments; an empty horn hung at his side, and his head was decked with a garland of red and gold leaves. He gazed intently at the woods and valley below him, at the hills crowned with grape vines and at the bright play of color in the falling leaves.

Suddenly there came a rough blast of wind from the North, lifting the garland off his head and scattering the leaves in all directions. The wanderer shivered with the cold. Once more he looked over the wide land, motioned as if in farewell, then went further on his way and was seen no more.

Suddenly there came from the North a band of men with long white beards and white mantles. In front of them rode their king clad in a white fur cloak and seated upon a white horse. On his head he wore a crown of sparkling gems and his flowing beard glittered with frozen dewdrops. King Winter made his entry into the land. Autumn with his gorgeous blossoms had been forced to make way for him.

King Winter with his followers spread abroad over the land. He beckoned to his men; they filled their cheeks and blew until everything was frozen with their icy breath. The little brooks were held fast and on the windows wonderful frost flowers appeared. Then they blew the raindrops against the clouds until they stiffened into tiny little stars which fell to earth as snow covering the whole land with a great white blanket. Then the children made merry, rejoicing in the dancing flakes.

Peter and Liesel, a little brother and sister, rushed out of doors and pelted each other with snowballs. Then said Peter: "I'm going to make a snow man; help me with it!" But Liesel replied: "I'm going to make a snow woman myself so let's help each other."

Then the work began. They heaped the snow into great piles, then made balls, rolling them over and over until they were so large

that the two children together could barely lift them. And soon — would you believe it? — under their busy hands gradually appeared a fat, solid Snow Man and a slender, cute little Snow Woman!

At last they were finished, but now they must be fitted out with hats and other decorations. Peter said, "Perhaps we can find some things for them in the store-room!" So they ran quickly into the house to look for things which they could use. Peter found an old, stove-pipe hat for his Snow Man and Liesel discovered a bonnet with a waving feather and a red parasol for her Snow Woman. They also took with them a large badge of gold paper. Overjoyed they hurried out again with their treasures. How grand the Snow Man seemed to be with his stove-pipe hat! And how pleased was the Snow Woman with her feathered bonnet and red parasol which she held opened out in her hand! The pair were well worth seeing. The whole household as well as the school children admired Mr. and Mrs. Snow Man and made a curtsy in passing them.

It was not to be wondered at that the pair became vain! "I would not have thought," said the Snow Man, "that a man here on the earth could be so honored!" And the Snow Woman replied: "I find it a great deal better to have a solid foot hold here than to be driven down through the air in the form of snowflakes."

Every day the children came and brought new ornaments for the snow people. They scattered a carpet of evergreen branches all about them and when Christmastime came the pair actually received a little evergreen branch with candles upon it! On Christmas Eve the candles were lighted. Then tears of joy ran down the cheeks of the pair! It looked as if the snow had melted a little, but they were really tears of joy.

"Now I have indeed experienced something beautiful; I have made up my mind to remain forever upon the earth. Here a man will be honored as he deserves and in such agreeable society . . ." Here the Snow Man made a little bow to the Snow Woman — "it will be doubly pleasant."

The Snow Woman smiled happily at the flattery and blushed for joy. The people thought that a beam of light through the red parasol had fallen on her face, but she knew better. So they stood all winter, admired and wondered at.

But Winter's long reign came to an end. Gentle breezes began to blow; the ice in the brooks thawed and the snow began to melt in the fields.

"I begin to feel so queer," said Mr. Snow Man. "I do not stand quite so firmly any more." "A peculiar weakness is coming over me, too," returned his Snow Woman. Soon the red parasol of which she had been so proud fell from her arms. "Oh, I am losing my hat!" moaned the Snow Man. Then presently his head drooped to one side and tumbled with a light sigh along with the hat.

The Snow Woman was frightened when she saw this. Then her plumed hat also began to sway and flop; her hat and her head and her pretty shoulders tumbled to the earth! Soon the bodies of both began to melt, and when it began to rain, there was an end of the glory of Mr. Snow Man and his Snow Woman.

But the Sun broke through the clouds and gathered the drops of water and the little pools into which the Snow people had melted, and lifted them up to the sky where they were before. Peter and Liesel were sad at first because the Snow people had left nothing on the earth except the crumpled hat and the red parasol. But they were happy again when they saw how their Snow Man and Snow Woman moved along in the sky as cloud forms.

PUNCTUATION VERSES

The following verses are English adaptations from the German. When children act them out, a grammar class is greatly enlivened.

I am the period. I love to rest.
All sentences stop at my request.

?

I want to know
What is your name?
Where do you live?
What is your fame?
What answer will you give?
The question-mark am I,
And can you tell me why?

!

Whoopee! Hooray!
Look out! Make way!
I'm here! I'm there! And everywhere!
Whatever the excitement rare
The exclamation point is there!

,

When the sentences are long,
Running ever on and on,
I run with them, so nimble and merry,
To give you a breathing space, lest you grow weary.
I am the comma, so nimble and busy.
Without me the sentences might make you dizzy.

Dorothy Harrer

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