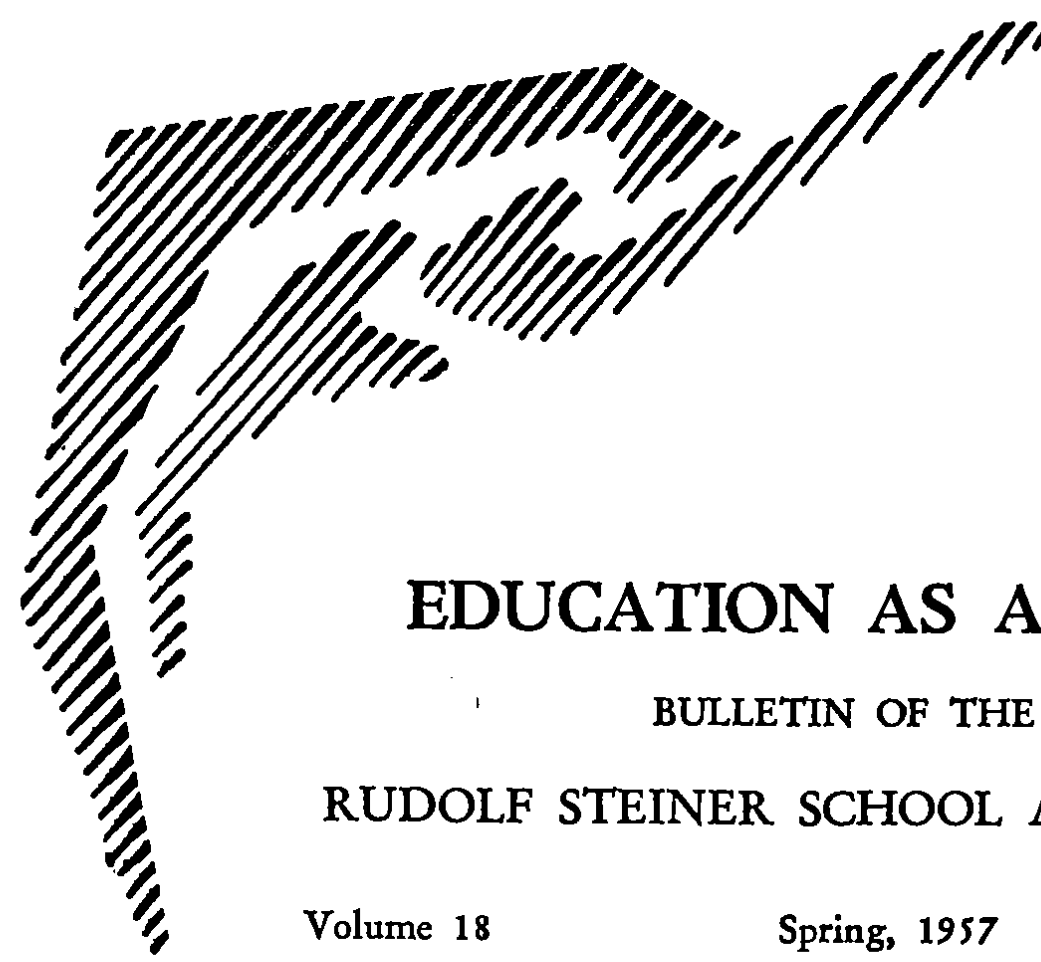




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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HISTORY TEACHING — A DRAMATIC ART

It is to the great dramatists—Moliere, Schiller, Shakespeare—that the teacher of history turns for inspiration in preparing his lessons. They can help him to distinguish the essential pattern from the mass of unrelated facts. Like them, he has to become a master of economy if in his presentation the underlying dramatic movement of history is not to be lost sight of, beneath the shifting surface of events.

Modern historical research has unearthed quantities of facts concerning the life and thought of men in the past but, as happens in some museums, the mind of the student is stifled by sheer accumulation. Only when some thinker possessed of the lightning flash of genuine historical insight and dramatic imagination resolves the mass of facts into meaningful connection, can the ordinary student understand what it is all about. And until he can do this there is no hope of ever arousing his enthusiasm for history. Without this enthusiasm there can be no deeper interest in the destiny of mankind.

The growing materialism of the past centuries has spread its pall over our understanding of history. We have been taught to recognize only the outer shell of human development. We know all about the evolution of tools from the stone age to the modern machine. Transportation, communication, housing, dress, all the techniques of life, have been traced from their most primitive forms. The history of society is evaluated as class struggle; as mere struggle for power; survival of the fittest. All human impulses have come to be derived from the economic and the physical instincts. But what about the spiritual history of man?

In exact proportion to the progress of external research the perception for the spiritual evolution of man has faded. How often it is said that "human nature has never changed". It is also said that, fundamentally, men are the same today as they were under the Pharaohs, only now life is more complicated. A terrible levelling of historical perspective has taken place and we no longer are aware of the differences between one epoch and another. We fail to recognize the gulf which separates the Greek from the Egyptian and the latter from the men of earlier cultures. The idea that each culture had its own task in the development of man; that something entirely new entered into each era and that there is a goal for mankind underlying historical evolution has become unfamiliar to us today. History has become, in the words of Nietzsche, "an endless repetition of the same". If in our schools we want to prepare children for life; if we want to awaken in them a creative idealism which will not flinch at reality, we must find a new understanding and presentation of history.

When a class teacher in a Rudolf Steiner school is preparing his first period of actual history, to be given during a concentrated sequence of five or six weeks sometime during the fifth grade year, he will have to cover much the same ground as does his high school colleague who may be presenting the same material. But the elementary school teacher will use the material in a different way. He must remain within the sphere of the imagination in his way of presentation. He will tell the stories of the past; he will make frequent use of biography and always he will try to recreate the characteristic mood of the historical period with which he is dealing. His lessons, then, will stir the feelings and arouse the slumbering will-power of his pupils, with the result that in their adult years this early experience of history will have been transformed into moral capacities for life.

If, for example, a teacher wants to give children of ten and eleven a feeling for the character of Egyptian and Greek culture, he will treat it as a dramatic problem and will seek opportunities to present certain essential contrasts between the earlier and the later civilizations. The facts of ancient history can be gathered in every good library; the question is, how they can be made to come alive in the mind of the teacher. After the textbook has yielded the necessary information, it will be put aside, for nothing interferes more unhappily between teacher and pupils than the foreign authority of the printed page. The teacher must first master the material and then present it to the children quite spontaneously. Unless he is genuinely enthusiastic about his subject he need never expect to awaken the enthusiasm of his students. What follows here will have the character of marginal notes made during the course of preparation.

In meeting a character in a drama for the first time we turn our interest to his outward appearance: stature, coloring, features. In history we can do this also. Let us look first at the two lands which were to be the homes for the Greek and Egyptian cultures. The geographical facts are familiar to all of us. But how can we get the most out of them?

Will we first hang up a printed page and say: This is Egypt . . . This is Greece? On the contrary, let us sketch their portraits! An hour or two spent in drawing the map of Egypt and of Greece, free-hand and in color, will teach us more than any amount of poring over someone else's work. Like the children, we will be delighted with the forms of the land masses and

our imagination will guide our hand as we fill in the deserts with ochre and sandy yellows, the meadow-lands with green, the rugged mountain spines with brown. The Abyssinian mountains are even capped with snow—on the equator! There is hardly a rounded curve in the whole indented coast of Greece! All the lines are sharp and jagged. Our struggling fingers tell us that these promontories are not sand nor soft stone nor earth, but hard, original rock against which the waves have beaten for centuries.

If we are not fortunate enough to have been to Greece and Egypt ourselves, we will try to see them through the eyes of other travellers. Egypt is almost two-dimensional. It has no breadth. The Nile is all. Should it fail to rise, the desert would complete its victory. Above the cataracts is a land of mystery. There all life begins. There the Nile has its source. To the west of Egypt is death. That is the endless desert. There the Egyptians have always buried their dead, who go, so it was said, to "meet Osiris in the west".

Egypt, in the words of its ancient people, is the body of Osiris. Abydos, his heart. The Delta, his head. The obscure regions beyond the cataracts were felt to be like the lower organism, impenetrable to human consciousness. After death, it was said, the soul must pass through fifteen stations, of which the twelfth corresponded to the cataracts. There the Nile God waited and beside him the crocodile-headed creature who guarded the passage into the realms beyond. The legend says that Osiris' body was torn into fourteen pieces and scattered abroad. Isis, his devoted wife, sought out the fragments and buried them where she found them, erecting a temple at each place. Historically, we know that the government of Egypt was originally divided into fourteen provinces. Every year the festival of the restoration of Osiris was accomplished by the procession of priests who passed, in the footsteps of Isis, from one temple to the other, finally culminating their journey at Abydos where the heart of Osiris was said to lie. Even in the geography of Egypt its mythology is interwoven. Everywhere the presence of Isis, Osiris and Horus can be felt, and they will become as familiar to the teacher preparing this period as the physical profile of the land itself. We will come to recognize in Osiris, as the ancient Egyptian did, the original, divine and kingly being of man who is torn to pieces in entering the world of the senses, and by his passions. In Isis, the Egyptian saw the picture of the human soul on earth, continuously longing and searching for its lost connection with the divine. Horus, their child, born after the death of Osiris, is the individual spirit of man, born out of suffering and isolation. Thus, in mythological pictures the ancient world spoke of the deeper truth which it recognized below the surface of ordinary experience.

And Greece? Everywhere sea and rocky hills. Valleys, isolated from one another, but often giving on the sea and thus connected with all the Mediterranean world. Hundreds of islands. The Greek was as naturally a mariner and merchant-traveller as the Egyptian was preserved from outside contact with the world. Greece faced east toward Persia and the ancient empires as well as north and west toward barbarian Europe. No wonder, therefore, that the culture whose task it was to be the transition from an ancient way of life and thought to that of the modern world should have sought out Greece for its home.

Contrast the olive tree of Greece and the granary of Egypt: the former, growing on poor soil, clinging to the rock, gray-green, gnarled, but yielding

a poor man's harvest: oil, fruit, wood and shade — an independent, but frugal tree; and Egypt, whose ancient name was KAM, meaning the black land. the fruitful sediment of ages — no valleys — but one great horizontal, narrow plane. Every foot of ground was cultivated and all the land was laid out in geometrical design. Every peasant depended upon his neighbor for the flow of water through the irrigation ditches and all depended upon their overlord and he in turn upon the Pharaoh. Egypt—structurally, in the political and economic sense, a pyramid. Greece—an independence of separately centered communities.

In addition, let us compare two moments from the spiritual life of these two great cultures. What a different experience the Egyptian must have had when entering one of the vast temples bordering the Nile, from the Athenian who centuries later climbed the Acropolis to worship at the shrines of Zeus or Athene. Imagine the voyage down the Nile to Abydos or Karnak:—the ascent of the broad steps which led up from the river—the approach to the temple along the paved avenue where from both sides the impassive countenance of many sphinxes gazed down upon the traveller. Standing before the sphinx the Egyptian experienced the riddle of his own being. Proceeding between the rows of sphinxes he approached the obelisk and pylon whose massive walls were covered entirely with hieroglyphs. Passing beneath the heavy flat portal of the pylon, the traveller entered the temple's great court at whose farther end the ponderous forest of pillars, supporting the flat roof, stretched away into darkness. The slant light from the narrow opening below the central roof illuminated the vast columns whose colors must have worked strongly upon him. And every pillar was also a monumental tablet upon which was painted the sacred script telling of Osiris, Horus and Isis, and of the way of the soul through life and after death. The traveller who left the bright courtyard behind him in which the crowds thronged, entered the gathering twilight and deepening silence of the hall of pillars whose lotus bud and lotus flower capitals towered far above him. Beyond this, only the consecrated priest might go.

The innermost sanctuary was entirely cut off from the light of day. Its only illumination was the sacred flame which burned upon the altar. Here, in complete outer darkness, the Egyptian priest worshipped Osiris, the being of light; the same being who was sought by the soul after death. His realm was not a realm of darkness to the Egyptian, but one of light far brighter than the dazzling sun reflected upon the desert outside. The monumental record of the Egyptian conception of life after death, known to us today as the "Book of the Dead" was actually referred to originally as: "Chapters of the Coming Forth by Day"! In Egypt then, the human being left the world of outer, physical light in order to unite himself inwardly with the world of spiritual light. The mighty pyramids themselves are witnesses of this fact. The Great Pyramid of Khufu, for instance, which was built as a tomb and ceremonial chamber for the rites of the dead was known as "The Light".

Now let us go to ancient Athens. The temple of Athene is raised above the city and can be seen from far away. It is in the midst of nature and the wind and sunlight play through it, penetrating even into the presence of the goddess herself. All citizens are free to enter the temple; there are no hidden sanctuaries. Although the Parthenon is large it appears to have no heaviness in it: it is in perfect balance. In Egypt the triangular sides of the

pyramid were perfect in their mathematical accuracy and immense in size and sheer weight. Their forms reflected the cosmic laws of astronomy in the mass of earthly substance. In the Greek temple the triangle is lifted from the earth and is freed from its heaviness. It is no longer merely a form of pure cosmic geometry but an expression of human artistic beauty. The pediment has become an architectural crown in which the free movements of the sculptured figures find measurement and order. The pillars of an Egyptian temple were superhuman in dimensions; the Greek columns are in perfect balance between heaven and earth. They stand like a beautifully proportioned man—free, yet exactly suited to carry the weight required of them. The Egyptian statue also was more than human. The gaze was fixed in other than merely human focus. The inner attitude was one of listening. The body was constrained, the features impassive; the size immense. The effect upon the observer was one of awe—of a sense of mystery—a premonition of a world beyond the senses.

The Greek sculpture is ideal—but ideally human. It moves. Its proportions are the unspoiled proportions of the human body. It is the product of a world of beauty to be found only upon earth. The walls and columns of a Greek temple are not covered over with writing telling of another world. They speak the language of pure art. For the Greek, the temple was actually the dwelling place of the god. The divine had entered fully into the earth and was no longer, as in Egypt, to be sought in a sphere overshadowing the earth. The world beyond the senses had grown dim and gray. The earth and the human body, the life of art and of the mind, preoccupied the Greek. The ancient Egyptian could never have said: "Better to be a beggar in the land of the living than a king in the realm of the shades." To the Greek, however, it exactly expressed his feelings. The Egyptian still dreamed. The Greek was awake to life. It was the task of his philosophy to translate the dreaming world of the Egyptian wisdom into a language which could be grasped by the intellect. Plato, who was a student of the Egyptian mysteries, was one of the great leaders in this work. Aristotle, his pupil, was the father of modern science. Alexander the Great, Aristotle's pupil, carried the philosophy of Greece over all the ancient world. A new age was dawning for mankind.

If the teacher of history will awaken the dramatist within himself he will discover how the mass of historical detail begins to speak another language. Instead of incoherent sounds, words emerge which tell him of a pattern of reality hidden just below the surface of events. Even the present years can be understood against the perspective of world history. Each epoch has its task and its own struggle. If, in their history lessons, children can come to feel this inner movement of development from one age to the next they will gain confidence with which to face the tasks and struggles which await them in their own lives. If they feel that there is sense and meaning in history they will also come to see that their individual contributions, too, can not be meaningless.

Henry Barnes

THE LIVING WORLD OF PLANTS

by Gerbert Grohmann, translated by Virginia Field Birdsall

(continued) *

HOW FLOWERS CAN TRANSFORM THEMSELVES

In many plants the petals are joined together, so that they can not be pulled out singly; the corolla can be plucked only as a whole.

Nevertheless, the actual number of petals can still be seen, for, although they are united, their tips have remained free. In the Bluebell there are always five tips since every Bluebell has five petals.

It can also happen, however, that only the lower halves of the petals are united. In this case there arises first a tube or funnel, through which stamens and pistil stretch. The free part of the petals broadens out like a plate. Primroses and Cowslips have this type of flower.

When such a corolla tips over so that it hangs downward, then a bell results; but when placed horizontally it can change itself in a very peculiar way. It is then no longer in a line directed towards the sun, but is placed parallel to the earth's surface like an animal.

So it happens that many flowers become like little animals or at any rate develop a face — as, for example, the Pansy. But it need not always be a whole face. Many blossoms have only lips or tongues, a throat or a mouth. The Snapdragon has a closed mouth; the Dead Nettle, on the contrary, an open mouth. In this case the palate is very plainly seen to curve upward like a vault, while the underlip hangs down. Many plants, especially fiery in their nature, have flower-mouths widely torn apart, out of which the stamens and pistil spring upward as if in anger.

The flower longs for the butterfly; the butterfly loves the flower — so each one seeks the other. And with the bee the case is similar.

LIKE SEEKS LIKE

*A fair Bell-flower
Sprang up from the ground,
And early its fragrance
It shed around;
A bee came thither
And sipped from its bell;
That they for each other
Were made, we see well.*

—Goethe**

You can plainly see that the flowers and insects understand each other perfectly; you notice this from the likeness of their forms.

The simple crollas or discs lift their nectar and pollen toward the insects as if with outspread hands. The visitors then ascend easily into the dish and lap, lick, or nibble. .

Matters are, however, not always so simply arranged for the insects! Often they must even struggle hard to reach the nectar, for it is hidden in certain special places. There may either be tiny glands, cushions, simples, grooves, or bags — but the insects know how to find them.

*The chapter *How a Flower is Formed* has been omitted here.

**Translated by A. E. Brownrig; published by New York Book Co., 1898

In many flowers — as, for example, in Larkspur or Butter-and-eggs — the nectar is concealed far within a long spur, and the bees must force themselves deep within the blossom in order to get it. Who can ever describe all the wonderful devices of Nature! Scientists who discover these for the first time have been filled with deep awe and the greatest enthusiasm; and so it is even today with each one who becomes acquainted with these mutual dependencies.

Many flowers have such long thin tubes that only moths with their long tongues can reach inside; not insects with short mouth parts like bees, flies, or even bumblebees. The Meadow Pink is such a flower. Its flower parts close up to a narrow tube before they widen out to the beautiful shining red petals. The Meadow Pink is seen at a glance to be akin to the butterflies. It is a five pointed star built of butterfly wings.

If you make careful observations it seems to be true that flowers often admit only quite special insects and exclude others.

The structure of a flower can never be understood without the insects which belong to it. One must always know how the bees, butterflies, bumblebees, beetles or flies behave when they visit the flowers and what movements they make. The forms of the flowers are quite different depending on whether the insects creep into them or only light upon them.

The moths never go down into the blossom when they wish to feed, but sink their long, extended tongues into the flowers as they hover freely above them. In this way they touch the organs of pollination which are pushed forward. Sometimes the mouth of such flowers is extended to form a long tube, which is split in front into lips. No human mouth can imitate such forms. The flower can do this because it stretches itself out to meet the moth's tongue.

Such flowers and insects swing back and forth in their interplay. The careless person notices nothing of this, but to one who looks and listens, many secret marvels reveal themselves.

HOW TREES COME INTO BEING

The tree trunks are formed by the earth-force, and the branches — like plants which otherwise grow on the level earth — are lifted into the air and spread in all directions. A tree *crown* is, in reality, an assembly of numerous single plants, and when a tree bursts into leaf, it is as if plants sprouted overhead in the branches. When a Larch brings forth its foliage, it looks as if grass were sprouting on the boughs.

But the plants which form tree crowns are, to be sure, different from those below on the earth; the former grow out of soil which is already plantlike. If we should remove them to the earth's surface, then each one would have to acquire a root, but as nature made them it is sufficient if all of them together have a root in common.

The sun can work more easily with trees than with earth-plants. For examples, when a tree bursts into leaf it need not form *seed-leaves*, as do radishes, but it can just as well begin with large, fully-formed leaves, and often the flower-buds appear with the leaves.

All this can occur because the leaves and flowers do not arise in the earthly-mineral soil, but on the already plantlike, living tree trunks.

It would otherwise be quite impossible for the foliage to come so quickly. In a short time a tree has its full leaf-dress and its blossoms, while a plant growing from a seed placed in the earth requires a much longer time for its development. First the seed-leaves must appear; then the sun calls forth the small stem-leaves; not until the root has grown sufficiently strong — reaching out into the earth — can the large leaves and blossoms follow.

The sun need not make so great an effort with a tree, for it is not necessary to begin from the starting-point, since the tree trunk is already plantlike.

When one builds an ordinary mound of earth it contains within it more living forces than occur on the level surface of the earth. Plants thrive more luxuriantly upon it; worms and insect larvae which are contained within it feel healthier. But still more life is present when the earth-force rises still farther and builds tree trunks. Air and light can penetrate with much less hindrance and can work with much stronger effect than is possible in the usual earth-plants.

The way in which the earth works when it forms a tree trunk is recognizable as the same process that is present in the roots, for the root-force is identical with the force by means of which the earth calls the tree trunk into being. *Root wood*, too, is peculiarly hard — almost like stone.

You can easily see, especially in hollow tree trunks, how nearly related the wood of the tree is to the soil. When a trunk or an old rootstock rots, it crumbles into a mass, which looks like garden-soil and has the same scent. It is called "*tree-soil*."

Many insects and their larvae live in old tree trunks. They feed upon the rotted wood and go through their development in the passages which they bore, just as other insects develop in the soil. Beetles and their larvae, especially, are often found in dead tree trunks.

Tree trunks may therefore be considered as outgrowths or outcroppings of the earth. Or one might think of tree trunks as *root forms* jutting out over the earth.

THE LIGHT OF SUN

*The light of sun is flooding
The realms of space.
The song of birds re-echoes
Through fields of air
The plants' bright blessing springs forth
From earth's gentle being,
And human children rise up
With grateful hearts to join
The spirits of the world.*

Rudolf Steiner

This poem, translated by Arvia MacKaye Ege, and set to music by Egon Lustgarten, has been for some years the Rudolf Steiner School song.

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