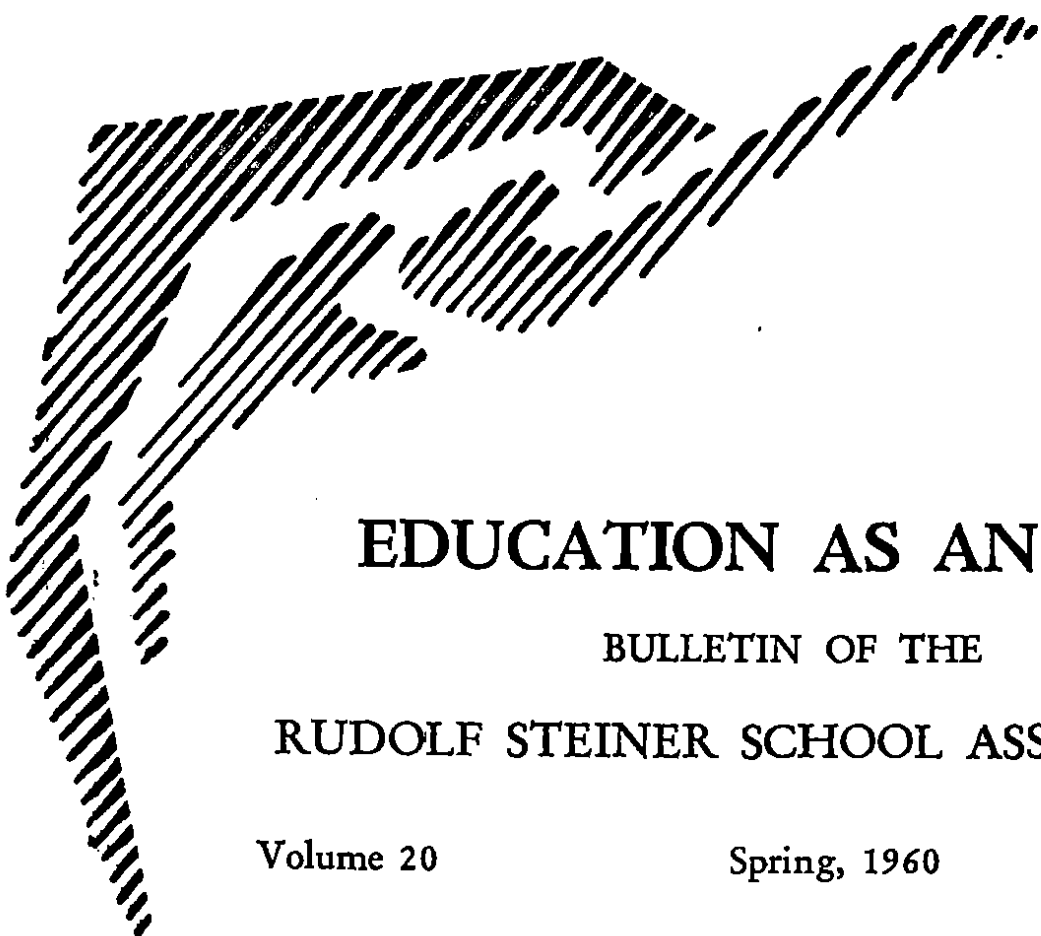




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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THE EDUCATION OF THE WILL IN THE CRAFT'S LESSON

He who has had the opportunity of seeing a class of children aged 9 to 10 tackling the task of driving a row of nails into each side of a wooden frame for the purpose of weaving, has had a living experience of that force we call "the will." It is here the still unspoiled, uncurbed will for the working into matter, activity uninhibited by ideas and reflections, the potentiality of the doing whilst the teacher or adult is naturally expected to give the answers to the "What do I do?" — "How do I do it?" — It is an experience that can make you aware in a rare way of the material the child brings to us to be educated, directed and harmonized until it can become activity in thinking, the most human of our human faculties.

When we begin our woodwork classes in class 6 there is still much of this blind zeal for the mere doing. Yet modelling lessons throughout the previous year have established a first more conscious contact with matter, — though in the much softer material, clay, and in a purely artistic manner, — and have paved the way for a more observant approach to the material, wood, and its shaping.

The first task that may be given in the woodwork lesson is to make a handle for the first woodworking tool laid into the children's hands: the rasp or file. The word "handle" already lets us discover its close connection with the hand: the hand which is the universal tool given to us by nature and whose working capacity we amplify by the use of a specialized tool. Thus we will study our hand, how it closes up and grips the tool that is made for the specialized job of rasping, and each child tries to shape the handle that fits most comfortably in his own hand when doing the movement of rasping. It is quite a long process, an interchange between shaping by rasp and judging the shape by gripping it with one's hand. The children learn to feel where there ought to be a mould for the palm and a support for the thumb until the square piece of wood is transformed into the tool-holder that gives more scope to the hand. Observation and imagination in the child are called up; the shaping has a purpose and a real connection with the doer. Comparing the rasp-handles in their final shape will then lead to discovering characteristic features which all have in common and some of the works might be called good examples for rasp-handles that everyone would be able to use.

The next tasks are simple utensils such as a dibble and letter-opener. Here the handle grows into a tool. Essential still is the handle, — they are, as it were, prolonged handles. Added to the further exploration of the hand in its movement and grip, the negative form of which can be seen in the handle, are experiences of the qualities of wood as such.

A good way to lead on from there is to extend one's observations of the hand and its functions to the arm, and to study the working process of hand and arm when requested to do the following: There is a tin with cold carpenter's glue that must be stirred. You must stir it in such a way that you reach into the corners of the tin. You have no utensil to do it with at your disposal. What are the movements of your hand and arm when you stir the glue? Observe them carefully, translate them into wood and you will create a really good stirring spoon that serves its purpose. The handle will be slightly curved, the spoon shaped so that it will reach into the corners. In this way the children do not make a wooden spoon according to an abstract idea or picture they carry in their memory, but create something that has been taken from the natural movement of hand and arm. And after some time, according to the children's choice, there will be a variety of spoons: flour spoon, tasting spoon, skimmer, measuring spoon, salad spoon and fork, etc., each revealing its purpose through its form.

The next step leads from the element of movement which can be experienced intimately through the functions of hand and arm, into something that has separated from it, i.e. the bowl. The task here is to find forms which have a direct connection with the two factors: the purpose and man. Between those two poles stretches the wide field where artistic creativeness can unfold

without becoming abstract or purely ornamental. The texture of the wood will inspire a multitude of shapes. The previous work has awakened the understanding for living movement which has now to be metamorphosed into the living gesture. The little bowl that keeps your jewelry over night encloses and guards its content, the fruit or bread bowl offers and encourages you to help yourself to what it contains. Here the actual carving work begins; one works into the wood, carves into it, whilst the previous things were worked on with the rasp and file. Handles and other utensils were shaped by slowly peeling off the raw outside of the lump of wood. Feeling and willing are mainly employed when rasp, file and sandpaper are at work; we feel the form and smoothness of it and the sense of touch is the organ of judgment. This work could almost be done blindfolded. Carving the wood means to be fully awake to direct each movement through observation, to be master of the will power that works into the material and directs its strength at any moment. The working process becomes now a rhythmical interchange of the two poles, will-impulse and observation, and between them weave the creative forces of the feeling life, the feeling for form, which we might call the artistic element.

In the course of the 9th and 10th class the craft lessons become Carpentry. The children are now in the upper school. More freedom is granted and more self-control and responsibility demanded. The task given in the craft lesson is outlined precisely and must be carried out precisely with a variety of tools. Exactitude and discipline of all forces engaged are necessary to understand and make the joints that enable us to assemble parts into a firm whole. Thinking is actively engaged in this kind of work, which has to deal with geometrical forms in the three-dimensional and runs parallel to a main lesson period in technical drawing. A small piece of furniture made by the individual child might result from these carpentry lessons, or a larger piece can be planned and carried out as group-work which would carry the endeavour of an education of the will to laying the foundation for a social willing.

Thus in accordance with the natural development of the child and as one part of the whole of our education the craftwork, too, sets out on a path which enables the child, stage by stage, to get hold of this source of activity and become its master. It is a wonderful power and must neither be suppressed nor broken. But the child must awake to it, recognize it, and the developing mind must set it its tasks, or it will turn into a destructive force. The awakening process engages the child's feeling life first before the judgment of the eye and clear observation direct the action. The third step demands of the will activity to serve. In carpentry work it has to shed its selfhood and serve the mind and the world of objective laws.

— Wolfgang Wagner

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FRIEDRICH SCHILLER AND EDUCATION

Rudolf Steiner based many of his endeavors on the world-conception of Goethe, one of the world's great universal men. But Steiner also held up another great figure, a friend and contemporary of Goethe's, as an ideal for those who would think and act on behalf of humanity. The bicentennial of his birth was widely celebrated last year.

Johann Christian Friedrich Schiller, 1759-1805, was born and spent most of his life in south and central Germany. He is known in world literature chiefly for his dramas, each of which centers about a strong individual fighting for inner and outer freedom. But he also wrote ballads, lyrical verse and historical and philosophical treatises. Of the latter the most important include *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man*, an essay in serial form (called letters because addressed to a patron). Written originally in 1793, while the Reign of Terror was raging in Paris, they have the well-earned reputation (though they are little known) of being difficult to read, but highly rewarding to study, and yet the central message is again simply the winning of freedom by and for the human being.

The final version of these twenty seven letters is often divided into three groups. The first nine letters constitute a plea for the educative value of *art*, and point, in a veiled manner, to Goethe as the living embodiment of the artist. The second group deals with the problem of the bad reputation which art and beauty have acquired over the centuries, ever since the ideal classical civilization of ancient Greece went into a decline. The third part deals with problems encountered in the second, as shall be seen. The second part is his defense of Beauty, which, he says, must be organized around an *abstract* consideration of the human being. He goes about it this way: Dividing man into *Person* and *Condition*, or the central, eternal self and the changing world about him, including his own physical nature, Schiller notes the constant tension and interplay between self and environment. This tension he calls necessary to existence as we know it. *Person* is a loftier concept, but cannot attain to absolute perfection without *condition*, which it must either deal with, or else remain merely a disembodied potential. Hence *person* is ideal, *condition* is real. For us *condition* is completely chaotic and meaningless unless brought to order by *form*, by the steadying, "eternalizing" power of the Person, or ideal in man. The tension, however, is very great, and has led at all times to strident discord. As the main theme of the second group of letters, Schiller posits the *form impulse* as the activity of Person, and the *material impulse*, as the activity of condition, our lower, physical nature. Without a proper meeting ground the form impulse degenerates into dry and rigid dogmatism, and the material impulse leads to rampant, unthinking sensuality. Giving the first the upper hand over the second is no solution, nor is weakening the second in favor of the first. A third concept must be developed, where form and matter can work together in harmony and productivity. This is the realm of *beauty*, and the force resulting from a proper meeting between form and material impulses. Schiller calls the *play* impulse, an alchemical union in which neither element is distinguishable. The fact that this play impulse is introduced in the middle

of the letters, in number fourteen of twenty seven, suggests the central place it occupies in Schiller's system. One example of the play impulse is *love* in human relations. Love resolves *respect*, as reflecting the formal impulse, and *desire*, which more than adequately illustrates the material impulse, into something quite different from either, and with a higher character than both.

Developing the second group of letters further, Schiller concentrates on the play impulse and its embodiment, beauty. The object of the play impulse is the esthetic semblance of phenomena, matter endowed with life through artistic treatment. This semblance is never ideal beauty, because the ideal can never remain perfectly pure if in contact with matter. So beauty has to be manifest, and as such can give rise to the *esthetic condition*. Here Schiller embarks on his third group of letters, in which he will establish his right to propose beauty as a justifiable educational force.

It is worthwhile to consider Schiller's repeated shifts in approach. At least twice he brings his argument to a certain conclusion, and as many times begins anew. This fact shows up his fundamental problem. To reconcile practice and theory, or any other pair of polar opposites, is very difficult. First he builds up a discussion to justify art as an ennobling ideal in education. Then, as we have seen, he felt compelled to admit the faults of art as manifest in history, which seems to include the seeds of decadence (indeed, a tremendous body of literature since Schiller's time has been devoted to art and beauty as corrupting forces). Therefore Schiller retrenched himself and evolved abstract principles aimed at defining the human being in relation to absolute beauty, arriving at "play" as the impulse through which person and condition can resolve their mutual tension. With *love* as an example of "play" Schiller was still safe, because love is not fettered to the material. But when he tried to propose beauty as manifested in art as a vehicle for the play impulse, Schiller was astute enough to see a pitfall which might well have claimed a lesser esthetician. He saw that, with *ideal* beauty retired from the discussion, manifest beauty is far from safe and needed a careful going over from a theoretical point of view. This he gives it in the third group of letters. As a good dualist, he first divides manifest beauty into two major categories, an energizing beauty and a dissolving or melting beauty. Since energizing beauty leads away from the esthetic toward the sublime spiritual and is primarily a moral question, Schiller promises to write about the sublime elsewhere, and concentrates here on melting beauty. Melting beauty takes over a general harmonizing function. As *quiet form* she resolves the material impulse, as *living shape* she harmonizes the formal impulse. Melting beauty thus harmonizes thinking and feeling — two polar opposites — but is not a mere half-way mark between them. Neither thinking nor feeling is alone the starting point for understanding beauty, which is all-inclusive and penetrates all reality. In a happy footnote (to letter eighteen) Schiller traces the cycle of cognition, showing how one sees a phenomenon for the first time and takes it all in through perception only and on a level of feeling. One is at that point closer to the truth about the phenomenon than later, when one has cleverly dismantled it with the intellect and has understood only the elements. Not until the last does one complete

the cycle through pure Reason, and recombine the elements comprehended by the intellect, and understand fully the truth of the phenomenon as a whole. The implication is that much time is spent and wasted in the "intellectual" phase.

The two separate poles of earthbound consciousness, one turned toward feeling and one dominated by the intellect, can be resolved into something equivalent to truth through the mediating help of melting beauty. Schiller comes thus to his formula: the esthetic condition. No force will bring it about. It is almost magic, not because it is an act of will or an attempt to exert mental control, but because it destroys the separate activity of mind and feeling, of formal and material impulses. One example of the esthetic condition would be instant pleasure at first sight, provided the pleasure has been evoked by something beautiful. With this basic idea Schiller is actually again at his goal. But again he sees pitfalls, and retrenches his arguments so that he won't shatter in practice what he has built up in theory. It is an education to breathe in and out with Schiller, to realize that when he finally does move in on his subject for the last time he has a responsible proposition. Once the concept of the esthetic condition has been put forward, its obstacles must be identified.

In practice, beauty with any real melting power must be sought — as we know Schiller wants — in art. Raw nature, beautiful to a point of ecstasy for a follower of Rousseau, would for Schiller be horribly one-sided as a source of the esthetic condition. But also the arts, embroiled as they are in the finite world, are one-sided. They are unfortunately forced to specialize. Music appeals to feeling, poetry to the imagination, architecture more to the intellect. Naturally enough Schiller calls for more communication among the arts, and in fact one of the main achievements of early German Romanticism was to give voice to this need and to put it into practice; architecture should be "frozen music," poetry and prose should be combined in literary works, criticism should be an art in itself, and so on. This culminated of course in the Wagnerian opera, not the first, to be sure, to combine art genres, but certainly the first to make a point of not radically subordinating one to another. However, in Schiller's time the very notion was relatively new and untried. For Schiller the venerable principle that art should edify or instruct the mind or feelings is invalid. The esthetic condition must be neutral, transparent, uncommitted. Hence Beauty cannot be made the handmaid of morals, or the result will always be stilted. Ruskin was shocked at the thought that this esthetic condition should be *neutral*. I cannot say whether he ever followed Schiller up further to resolve the problem, but if he did, he soon realized what Schiller meant. Whenever a man is in the esthetic condition he is in a state of complete inner and outer balance for that length of time. The apostle of freedom calls this poise *freedom*. When one is completely free of any compulsion, he says, anything one does is necessarily moral, because an out-of-balance material impulse cannot corrupt it, nor can the formal impulse congeal it to death. Here Schiller is at his final goal, and can responsibly propose the esthetic condition as the goal of education. Not

only is it the goal, but it is also the means of reaching itself. If art can produce objects of comprehensive and universal beauty, then the esthetic condition works as follows: Beauty means that eternal, sublime laws — absolutes, attributes of the highest reason — have become manifest in the finite world in a work of art. The material itself is not beautiful, but the form is, and is rendered visible by the material. What happens? Confronted with such a specimen we cannot see the beauty as *object* without feeling something in response to it; yet we cannot as *subject* respond to the beauty without clearly appreciating the form, on the level of thinking. The result is that we are thinking and feeling at the same time, as a rule extremely unlikely, and indeed we are doing neither one, but rather we are in the “esthetic condition,” a new phase of complete serenity and harmony, of freedom! Anything we do while in that state will tend to be moral, free and good. Beauty, Schiller says, in a sort of climax to this third group of letters, becomes man’s second Creator, Nature being the first.

The postulation of the play impulse would indicate that man must have it in him to produce the kind of art or artistic atmosphere which Schiller has evolved. He certainly thought so, because the whole series of letters is essentially a tribute to Goethe as an ideal specimen of the artist-educator type.

Rudolf Steiner did not base his pedagogy on Schiller. The prototype Waldorf pedagogy is original; there has not been much to resemble it in the entire history of education. But it is reasonable to propose that Steiner’s concept of art in education is consistent with Schiller’s in depth and scope, and that the “art” behind the whole program in the Waldorf Schools has the goal of fostering in the growing human being the capacity for inner and outer balance as the basis for the freedom of person within condition.

— John Gower Root

THE MAGIC PAINT BRUSH

(A story told to Grade One on the day before the first painting lesson.)

Do you know who paints the flowers in the spring and summer? Do you know who paints the leaves of the trees red and yellow in the fall? It is done by a million fairies and elves, who go about with tiny paint brushes when no one is watching; and they paint the flowers red and yellow, blue and purple and orange.

One day a very young elf came to the Queen of the Fairies and said, May I help to paint flowers with the other elves and fairies? The Queen of the Fairies looked at him for a long time and thought that he was really too young to paint flowers but there was so much work to be done that she said, Yes, you may help to paint flowers but you must watch the other elves and fairies, for they have been painting a long time, and they know how it must be done.

The little elf was so happy that he quickly said, Thank you, and ran to get a paint brush and a little bucket of paint. He was so enthusiastic about

painting that he held the brush upside down and the paint ran down the brush handle and up his arm. He splashed paint over his jacket and shoes so that soon one could hardly recognize him. He forgot which colors to use and he painted a dandelion red. He painted a rose blue and put so much paint on the rose that it dripped off on the leaves, and the leaves were colored half blue and half green. All the other elves and fairies were so busy that they did not notice what a dreadful mess the little elf was making. But then a Bumble Bee saw the red dandelion and said in a loud voice, By my bumble, there's something wrong here! The other elves looked around and saw that the little elf was doing everything wrong.

Little elf, they said, you must watch what we do and listen to us tell you how to paint. They set him up on a stone where he could look all around. He saw the red dandelion and the blue rose and the green and blue leaves and he saw the angry bumble bee. The little elf was ashamed and promised to do what the other elves told him. They taught him how to hold the brush, and how much paint to put on the brush and they taught him how to paint the most complicated flowers. The little elf paid attention and carefully did what he was told. He worked so carefully that soon he could paint as well as the other elves.

One day the Queen of the Fairies, who was going for a walk in the flower garden, said, Who has painted this Sweet Pea? The little elf trembled. He was afraid that he had made another mistake, but he stood forth and said, I did, your Majesty. The Queen of the Fairies replied, Come with me, for you have painted the most beautiful Sweet Pea in the garden.

The little elf followed the Queen of the Fairies to her royal palace. She sat on her throne and called her royal minister who came in holding a purple cushion; and on the cushion lay the magic paint brush of the Queen of the Fairies. She gave him the magic paint brush and told him that the most beautiful flowers in the world could be painted with the magic paint brush. These were flowers of such beauty that no one has been able to copy them.

If you should ever see a flower so beautiful that no one could possibly copy it, the flower will surely have been painted by the little elf with the magic paint brush.

— *Harry Kretz*

REMINDER: The Rudolf Steiner School Scholarship Fund depends largely on the proceeds of the Christmas Fair. Please mail us now the saleable items you make or pick up during vacation!

THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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