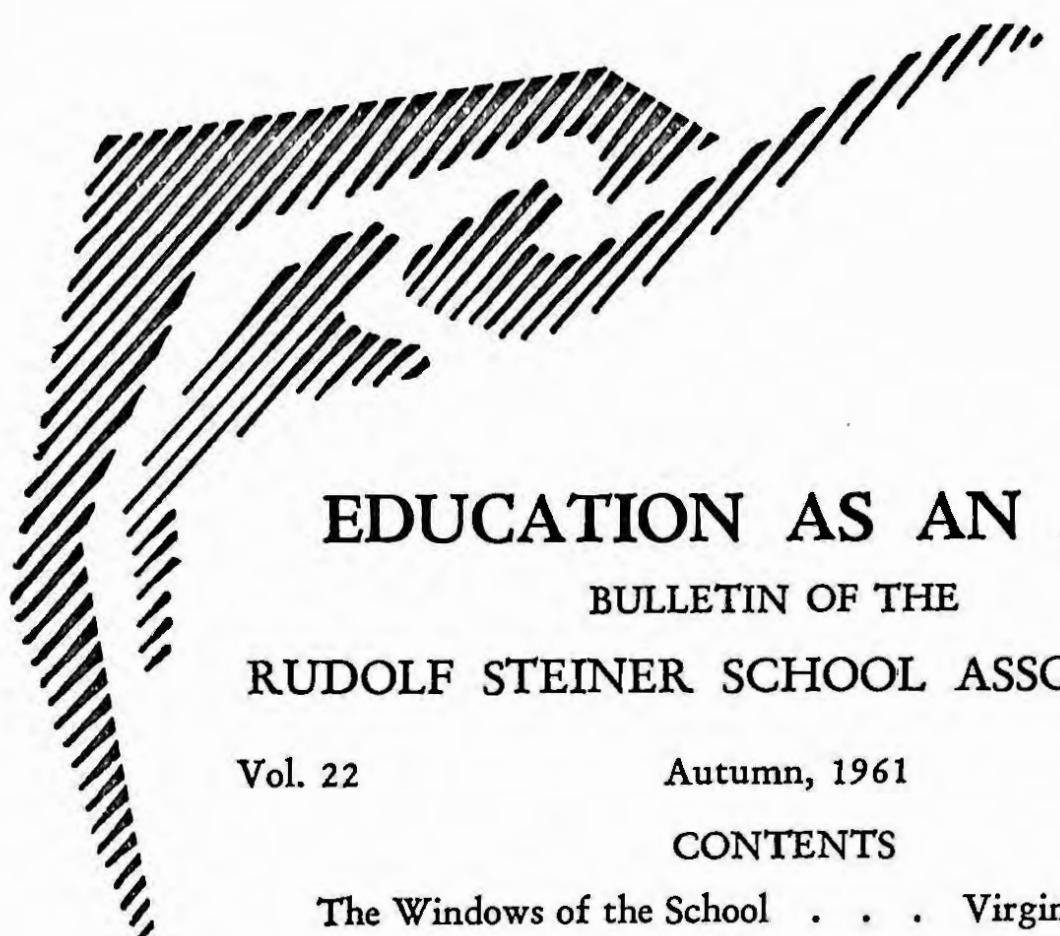




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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THE WINDOWS OF THE SCHOOL

*A report of the Elementary School,
written for the 1960 Year Book, The Spectrum*

The building at 15 East 79th Street appears to the average New Yorker as an ordinary, grey sandstone structure, having its counterpart throughout the neighborhood. The teachers who work within and the children who have attended the Rudolf Steiner School for a number of years know that this is not so, for our school is unique. It glows and sparkles from within and without with many worlds.

Look at the school with the imaginative eye of the teacher. First, there is a garden in which the littlest children play. Castles are in this garden for the small princesses and princes. There are forests with dragons that must be slain and giants which are to be outwitted. There are houses in which children can sweep and clean, where dollies are loved and cared for. Here a child can imitate all the wonderful actions of the adults in the world around him. Everywhere there is an intensity of color: the warm gold of the sun, the pure blue of the sky, the strong red of courage. The children live and breathe in the colors and the colors speak to them.

Look further. Above the garden rises a golden octagonal house and this is the Rudolf Steiner School for children between the ages of six and fourteen. It is a building of many windows, but these are not the windows which one expects to see on 79th Street, windows adorned with curtains and pots of geranium, nor are they the kind which let in the city breezes and noise. They are very special windows. Every day in the eight rooms the teachers build them anew and open them for the children. Each child sees a slightly different

view, depending upon his individual temperament, but each view is carefully directed by the teacher. The windows are never rose colored; they are always crystal clear.

What do the children see? Enter the golden, octagonal house and look with them into the windows. In the first room a fish is seen swimming gaily about. Suddenly it changes from a fish into the picture of the beginning of fish or F. Perhaps a raindrop has fallen from a cloud upon a mountain top and the children watch its adventuresome journey as it finds its way into a brook, a stream, a river and at last into the vast ocean from which the friendly sun lifts it once more up into the heavens.

Before the eyes of the second graders the world of Aesop unfolds. Foolish crows are flattered by sly foxes; flighty hares are beaten by purposeful tortoises. In the Third Grade the great figures of the Old Testament in all their majesty are witnessed. On this day the waters of the Red Sea have parted and Moses is leading the Children of Israel to safety. There are other sights for the third graders, too. Farmers sow their grain, milk the cows, feed their chickens; Indians build wickiups and masons construct a little brick house.

When a child enters the fourth room, he sees the golden city of Asgard as well as forbidding Jotunheim, the land of the giants. Many members of the animal kingdom appear and the child can look with awe right into all four stomachs of the cow. One day when the teacher opens the window, the Fourth Grade sees Manhattan, perhaps even 79th Street, as it appeared 300 years ago, and watches it develop up to the present day.

In the Fifth Grade the children's eyes are filled with tears, for Socrates is bidding his friends farewell and is preparing to drink the hemlock poison. Next month they will be able to relax as they watch a tulip grow and gaze with wonder at the star in its blossom. The children in the sixth room are stirred by the military tactics of the Roman Legions. Soon they will be horrified at the cruelty of the Roman games and the persecution of the Christians and Jews. At another time they will see the tremendous mouth of the Amazon and trace it through the dense Brazilian jungles to its source in the high Andes. The Seventh Grade watches in fascination as Martin Luther hurls an ink pot at the devil. Their blood is chilled by the evil cleverness of the Medici, but during another lesson they will be thrilled by the sight of Norway's glaciers and fjords. The Eighth Grade gazes into all four corners of the world and they see what is happening right at the moment. Perhaps their teacher has guided their vision to the miseries of the homeless in Hong Kong where whole families sleep in the streets. They have watched Abraham Lincoln pace up and down, his shoulders bowed with the tragic burden of a whole nation.

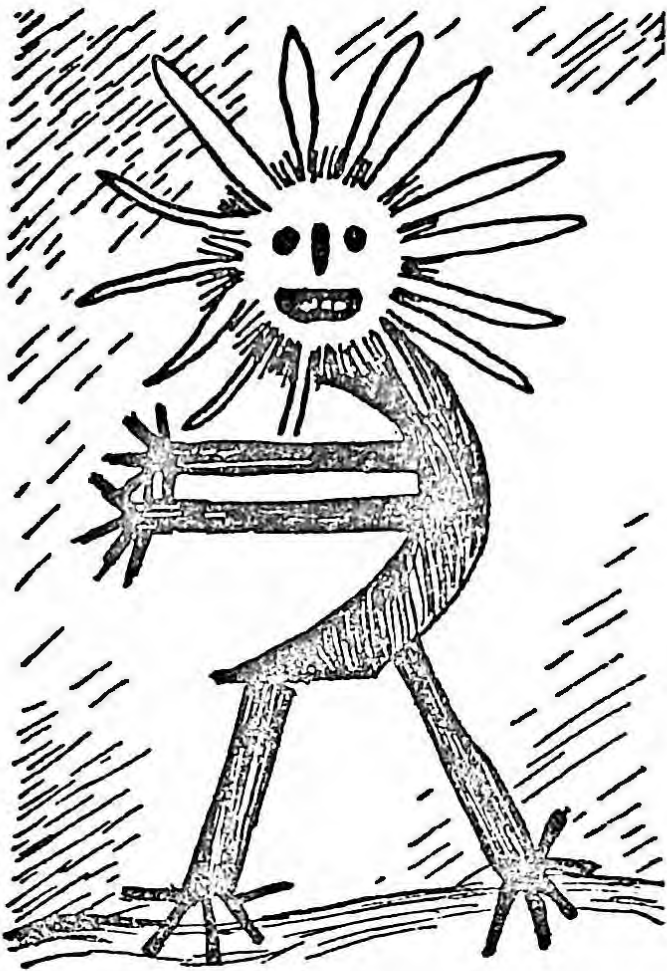
These are fragmentary glimpses of what might be seen in the wonderful windows found in the golden, octagonal house which is the Rudolf Steiner School. It is not the handsome, grey stone building; it is not the fine white marble staircase, nor the new stage with its red curtains; it is not the wooden desks and chairs, the library or the efficient lunchroom; it is not the special equipment, the latest textbooks, the many degrees of its faculty. None of these is of special value. It is, however, the opened, light-filled windows which make our school unique — the windows of the mind, of the heart and of the spirit. When the children have passed through all the eight grades and prepare to enter the High School, they take, as a special gift, these opened windows with them.

— *Virginia E. Paulsen*

CHILDREN'S QUARRELS

It is often said that children reveal a great deal of their inner nature through their drawings and paintings. Some time ago, a boy in my class — Wolfgang — provided a picture of himself in one of his drawings that was more convincing than any photograph could have been. It was drawn at the beginning of our study of Man and Animal in the Fourth Grade, when the children were between nine and ten.

At that time the human being was described according to function, as consisting of head, trunk and limbs, in order to show, as we approached zoology, that man — as far as his *form* is concerned — is the focal-point of the animal kingdom. His head, in which the senses are concentrated, is a sphere. The breast bones are shaped like a basket or barrel, an enclosure. But the limbs are like radiating, branching, outgoing rays.



Wolfgang waved his hand vigorously as the children had made these discoveries together.

"I've found something else", he said. "You can see it plainly: what streams into the head at the top radiates out again," and he pointed to his hands and feet.

This was immediately "enlightening" to the other children, and they began to make drawings of it. Wolfgang drew himself in his picture.

After several years and many experiences together, the class reached pre-adolescence and the Seventh Grade. At this time, a very serious division came about in the class. The children had been allowed to build themselves a "den", something that comes up as a necessity at this age. It was in the cellar of one of the boys' houses, and there they carried on their secret club business. Two boys, particularly, were leaders in the class. One was Wolfgang, wild, imaginative, full of ideas and mischief, a natural extrovert of sanguine-choleric temperament. His absolute opposite was John, a very gifted boy, dark, melancholy-choleric, easily hurt, often reserved but with a richly glowing inner life. It was John's parents who had provided the cellar.

In my class diary I find characteristic remarks from both boys. In the Second Grade I had told a kind of fable about sulfur and coal. Sulfur had turned up as a boaster, who then in the course of the story had been pathetically crushed by an earthquake. Modest Coal, however, had been pressed by the great force of the earthquake and transformed into a diamond.

"When people talk too much," I told them at the end, "we get to be like Sulfur. It goes to our heads and then we can be called 'hotheads'. And there is," I added very slowly, "just such a 'hothead' in this class."

Wolfgang, who was the one I meant, wagged his head around, looking at everyone else in the class. "Which one is the hothead, I'd like to know!" he shouted.

In the Sixth Grade, John had read Felix Dahn's *Struggle for Rome* with great enthusiasm. "My favorite story is about the defeat of the Goths," he told me, "and the hero I love the best is that brave, dark-haired Teia."

And now in the Seventh Grade, the children were often in their den, and it was over this club room that their quarrels arose. Some of them suddenly found the place "not good enough" and they began to make fun of it. This was for John a personal insult, and so the first battle came about. After that, John and those in the class who took his side no longer allowed the others to enter the den, and these others missed the games there badly.

For four weeks there was a complete state of war. It made itself felt in all the lessons and recess-times, but one could do nothing about it. If there were no battles at school, they were raging on the street or in front of the cellar. John's parents — his father was a professor in the Academy of Art — very wisely took no part in the affair. Wolfgang was the active, passionate attacker; John ever more doggedly held the defense.

Everyone who has to do with young people knows that such quarrels *have* to arise at this age. If the fights had not been provoked in one way, they would have come about in another, and probably with the same two groups taking sides. In such a situation to try to do anything with moral admonitions would be like trying to put out a fire with them. Volcanoes are there and have to burst forth in order to become quiet; otherwise they will continue to rumble beneath the surface. The dramatic knot has to be fully played out. Words cannot help at all. But an objective, strong, true picture can bring alleviation.

At this time we were studying European geography. With Germany as the center, the East and the West had been treated, and now came the contrast of North and South, as exemplified by the Scandinavian countries and Italy.

The hot, white chalk cliffs of Italy and Dalmatia with their intricate shapes and forms were described, and then the nature of limestone in particular. Limestone soaks up water. On the inside, it forms itself to stalagmites in caves of fantastic beauty. Outside, on higher ground, the land is dry and arid. But in a chalk soil, created by the prehistoric ocean and its myriad living creatures, there flourish especially sumptuous plants: orchids, wisteria, acacia and many other varieties. In this hot country there are active volcanoes and it has to do with this that the chief source of phosphorus in Europe is at Girgenti in Sicily. I showed them phosphorus with its light-filled, golden yellow crystals, and demonstrated how easily it burns and how the stone dissolves into smoke.

The Italians living in this land, who are outwardly of dark complexion, actually have phosphorus-like natures: they are fiery and easily excited. They accompany their words with a rich variety of gestures. Art has been their special contribution, particularly in painting and architecture.

The very opposite of all of this is found in the Scandinavian countries, with their granite and ages-old earth. Majestic, calmly layered are the forms of the northern mountains, mightier in their silent monotony than the jagged points of limestone ranges. In the North is little blossoming flora; instead, many tiny spore-plants, ferns and moss in pinewoods and heath. Granite does not let water through, and everywhere there are springs and brooks, called

"Elves" in Sweden. The earth is steeped in moisture and in connection with the granite, one finds the presence of metal ores. The south of Italy is the chief source of phosphorus in Europe; here in the lonely North is the largest source of iron, at the Iron Mountain near Kiruna in Sweden.

Farmers and hunters in northern Sweden and fisherman in Norway are, like their landscape, big, calm and silent. A girl wrote about this in her composition book: An Italian often speaks *with* hand and foot, but the few words the Scandinavian says *have* hand and foot; they are handfast.

These peoples are not so famous for their sculpture as for their poets and thinkers. It is in the North that the great sagas and epics have been handed on the longest, the *Edda* in Iceland and the *Kalevala* in Finland.

By describing these two different landscapes as sources of phosphorus and iron, I wanted to appeal to the two contrasting groups in the class, without mentioning them, of course.

And now came a third mineral substance to the light-filled phosphorus and the dark iron: pyrite, which takes such beautiful crystalline forms, and which shines so brightly that ignorant people sometimes think it must be gold.

"Here you can see the finest of all," I told the children. "In this mineral, pyrite or sulfur-iron, the two mighty opposites have joined forces. Iron contributes its heaviness and strength; phosphorus gives its radiance . . . The world would be far less beautiful if there were not such contrasts in it, as phosphorus and iron. But the greatest and most wonderful thing on earth is when opposites join hands to form something new."

John wrote at that time a particularly good essay about granite and the Iron Mountain. The picture had brought him serenity, and the whole class gave him respectful acclaim for his achievement. Here in such efforts one can observe how education has united itself with ordinary learning.

I visited John's mother on the next afternoon and heard loud, cheerful noises coming up from the cellar.

"They are all friends again," said the mother happily.

After most of the children had gone home, I went down to the den in the cellar and found John and Wolfgang there with a few others. I was told that in recess-time at school that day, Wolfgang had said very loudly so that everyone could hear, "John's club room is *really* fine!"

"And then we celebrated with a war dance," said Wolfgang gleefully.

There slumbers in every class some sort of drama, waiting to awaken and come to life. But intellectual learning is a kind of narcotic: it benumbs the children. Artistic learning is more strenuous. When the underlying drama is aroused, all sorts of dramatic things take place, including even battles. At no other time, however, has the teacher a better chance to take part actively, in order to build up moral forces, to forge character in her children.

In every family, too, some kind of drama slumbers among sisters and brothers, and we parents must let it find its way to the surface. But it requires our help and understanding; then the tensions can be allowed to reach their end by means of a truly curative process.

—*Elisabeth Klein*
(Translated by Ruth Pusch)

Dr. Klein is a class teacher at the Waldorf School in Hanover. Her article is reprinted with the kind permission of Die Kommenden.

Reports from schools in other countries, omitted from
the preceding Bulletin

I. AUSTRALIA

Glenaeon Middlecove, N.S.W. Our school was founded (as Dalcross) in February, 1957, on my return from Edinburgh where I had been on the staff of the Rudolf Steiner School. We began with 3 three-year-olds and from then to December, 1960, extended our premises to accommodate our 70-80 children.

In February of this year we opened the first of our school buildings on the main block of land — 11½ acres in a beautiful part of Sydney — to provide for our Third and Fourth Grades. This is Glenaeon, our main school. We have now 90 pupils, 4 full time teachers and 3 part time, an enthusiastic group of parents and good prospects.

—*Sylvia Brose*
for the College of Teachers

II. GERMANY

Freie Waldorfschule Benefeld Our school began its work 13 years ago at Benefeld, which lies in the rural loneliness of the Luneburg heath country near the center of the triangle formed by the three big cities: Hamburg, Bremen and Hanover.

Ours is first of all a boarding school, with classes from the first grade up to the preparation for the university. About ⅔ of our 430 pupils are boarders; the others come from Benefeld and the immediate neighborhood. The boarding students come from every part of Germany, mostly however from the northwestern part; some have parents in foreign countries (South America, Africa, India).

As is usual in most home-schools, our beginning classes are very small, and grades I to IV are combined into two classes. The largest numbers of children come into the middle grades, beginning with the Fifth, and most of these are conducted in parallel classes. We have therefore sixteen classes, with an average of 27 in each class. There are 36 teachers, and the boarding pupils are cared for by twenty other persons.

Our contacts with the parents are limited chiefly to the days when they bring their children back from a holiday or come to get them. And so in order to enrichen these contacts and to encourage a livelier participation in the work we are doing, we schedule our school assemblies on just those departure-days. However, we do manage to arrange Parent Days for single classes at other times, and these the parents attend gladly.

We publish our own paper, "Newsletter for Our Parents", which is sent out quarterly by the faculty of the school. Its aim is not only to acquaint people with what we are doing, but also to let them know more about the pedagogical methods of the Waldorf School.

The work in such a home boarding-school is extremely complicated: full of problems of the most various kind, but also full of the finest and most satisfying possibilities!

Freie Waldorfschule Rendsburg Our school was founded in April, 1950, and has at present about 400 children. The teaching staff consists of 34 teachers. We have 13 classes, the highest one being the so-called Abitur class. Our fourth Abitur, at Easter, 1960, was so successful that nobody failed.

The relationship with our parents is very good, and we have found a rather good understanding for the way of our teaching and our educational aims in the offices of our government in Kiel, capital of our country, Schleswig-Holstein.
—H. Kuhnitz

Freie Waldorfschule Bremen After the first attempts to establish a Waldorf School in Bremen, the second largest seaport of Germany, with a population of about 600,000, had led to no success in the late 'Twenties, the *Freie Waldorfschule Bremen* was founded in 1949, within the frame of the Bremen public school system, as an experimental school. After a few years, however, this proved to be impossible, and so the civic authorities and the school faculty agreed upon transforming it into an independent school. A big apartment house was bought by the School Association, and the rooms altered into classrooms. The number of pupils and classes grew slowly but steadily. Therefore a second house of the same type had to be bought near the first one, in 1958. Today there are 340 pupils in 13 classes attending the school, with about 20 teachers. It is to be hoped that a new school house, better suited to the tasks of our pedagogy, can be built in the not too far future.
—Dr. Ernst Betz (for the Faculty)

Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart-Kräberwald After the original Waldorf School reopened in Stuttgart after the war, in 1945, it was soon obvious that one school could not cope with the great number of applications from parents wishing to send their children to the Waldorf School. Twelve hundred seemed the limit for a school with 26 classes, i.e. two sets of parallel classes from 1 to 13. Dr. Gabert, a member of the Faculty of Teachers since 1923, who had taken a very active part in the reopening, decided to look for a suitable building on the other side of town, and to open a branch school there. In 1948 we started a small school, with 260 children in 6 classes, with 12 teachers, in a large private house in the northern part of the city.

We now have 590 pupils in 18 classes, with 36 teachers on the staff. It will be of interest to hear that 20 of these teachers are former Waldorf students. We have now a fine new school building into which we moved last year.

We try to limit our classes to 36 pupils. A special feature of the school is the "praktischer Zug"; that is, a group made up of all those from the High School who drop French and Latin, in order to work eight hours a week in practical subjects: carpentry, pottery, metal, forging; for the girls, dressmaking. Thus we hope to keep more students until the end of the Twelfth Grade who otherwise are not sufficiently occupied and interested, if their talent lies more in the practical sphere than the intellectual. This seems to us more and more necessary and important for the future.

We have a regular study group for the parents, and parents' meetings for the various classes. Class displays on Saturday afternoons, with refreshments, always attract many parents. Outings, play-acting, festivals, Christmas plays: the life of a Waldorf school as we all know it, and besides, we have as our aim good learning as one vital factor in Waldorf education.

—Audrey Berger

III. FRANCE

Ecole Perceval

Paris-Chatou

Ecole Perceval nestles in lush greenness along the banks of the river Seine, close to nature and yet within easy reach of Paris. The school has just completed its fourth year of existence and is now sheltering 150 children, day students as well as boarders, and 20 teachers. The children are accepted from Kindergarten up to the Tenth Grade, although at present the Seventh and Ninth are missing.

The school has grown steadily; the main problem is to get enough children for the Kindergarten and lower classes. Parents tend to bring older children to us who have encountered difficulties in other schools, so that we find ourselves refusing children for the upper grades and wishing for more in the younger groups.

—Albert Payot, for the Faculty

IV. SWITZERLAND

Montolieu

Chamby-Montreux

Above Montreux, at a height of over 2500 feet, sheltered in the back by deep forests which climb up to Mont-Cubly, cradled by the gigantic mountains of this region, Montolieu commands a majestic view of the Alps and the beautiful Lake of Geneva below. The Villa Montolieu was originally a hotel and was completely renovated for a school building before we moved in, in 1959. But in spite of the tremendous size of the building, the school has been able to preserve a home atmosphere for its 50 to 60 boys and girls. The children are grouped in small units with the families of members of the staff. This makes it possible to give the children more intensive and personal care, especially necessary for children lacking family life, or for those who have difficulty in keeping up with the large scale systems of state schools, or those who need a helpful change of environment.

Great care is taken in school to present subjects in a manner suitable to the mental age of each child, so as to make it possible for the mind to expand naturally, as it learns. The school is fortunate to be allowed to follow the Waldorf curriculum with true freedom, without the pressure imposed by state examinations. Thus we can place more emphasis on art, crafts and handwork and this leads to a true education of head, heart and hand. There is an opportunity for students in the 10th and 11th grades to work more intensively in arts and crafts, in addition to their regular studies, and ultimately work towards a definite profession, such as wood carving, pottery, metal work, spinning and weaving, book binding, home economics, gardening, etc.

THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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