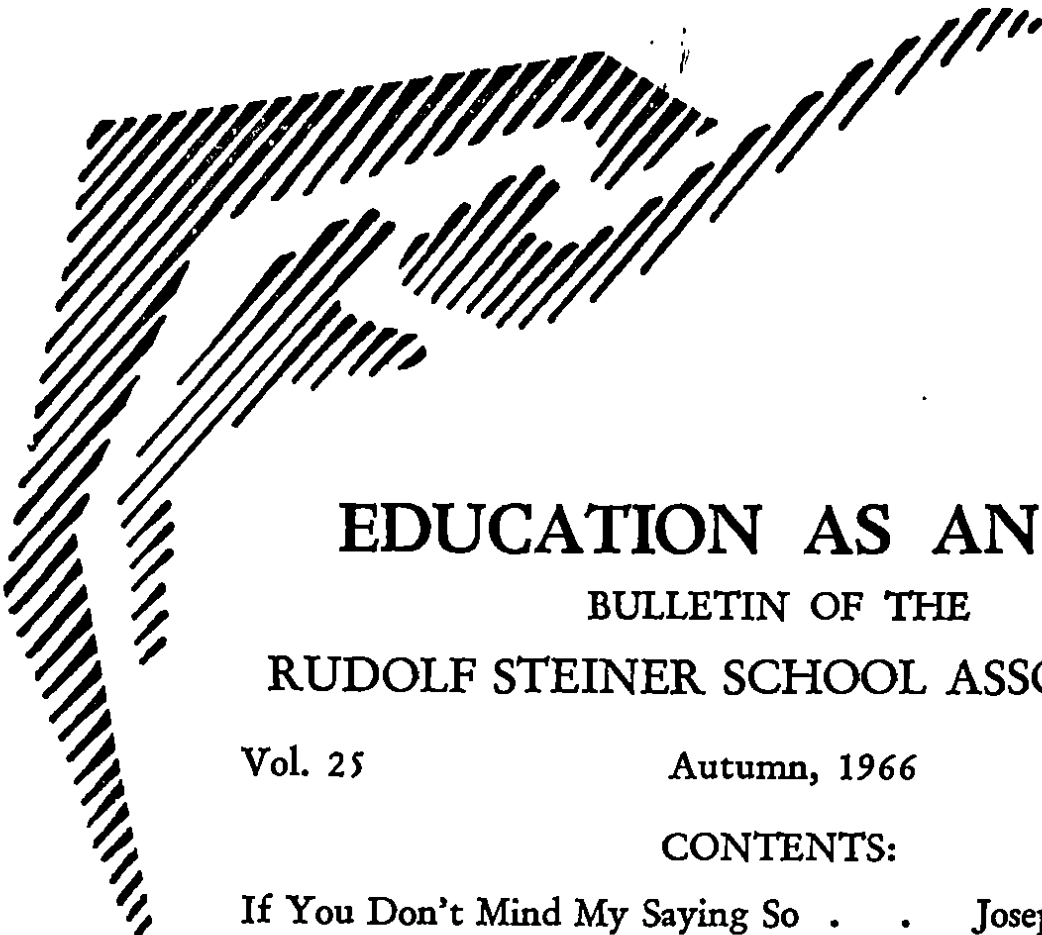




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with delight and satisfaction that we look forward to a changed Bulletin for 1967, beginning with the next issue. Five of the Waldorf schools in this country have agreed to join together to bring out EDUCATION AS AN ART on a co-operative basis. The format will remain for the time being unchanged. But in the somewhat enlarged numbers of 1967, we can expect to be brought up to date on each school: its size and present state of health, its successes and difficulties, its hopes, its plans; and each school will provide one or more articles describing classroom experience and discovery.

All this should bring to a wider audience the lively, vigorous immediacy of Rudolf Steiner's education. For the teachers and parents of each school there will be the added satisfaction of recognizing mutual efforts in many distant sections of the country. We may hope that all the Waldorf Schools — even the tiny beginnings of schools — will gather some strength by this co-operative venture.

—RUTH PUSCH

IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO . . .

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It wouldn't be quite true to say that "some of my best friends are hunters." Still, I do number among my respected acquaintances some who not only kill for the sake of killing but count it among their keenest pleasures. And I can think of no better illustration of the fact that men may be separated at some point by a fathomless abyss yet share elsewhere much common ground. To me, it is inconceivable that anyone can think an animal more

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interesting dead than alive. I can also easily prove, to my own satisfaction, that killing "for sport" is the perfect type of that pure evil for which metaphysicians have sometimes sought.

Most wicked deeds are done because the doer proposes some good for himself. The liar lies to gain some end; the swindler and the thief want things which, if honestly got, might be good in themselves. Even the murderer is usually removing some impediment to normal desires. Though all of these are selfish or unscrupulous, their deeds are not gratuitously evil. But the killer for sport seems to have no such excusable motive. He seems merely to prefer death to life, darkness to light. He seems to get nothing other than the satisfaction of saying: "Something which wanted to live is dead. Because I can bring terror and agony, I assure myself that I have power. Because of me there is that much less vitality, consciousness and perhaps joy in the universe. I am the spirit that denies." When a man wantonly destroys one of the works of man, we call him "Vandal." When he wantonly destroys one of the works of God, we call him "Sportsman."

The hunter-for-food may be as wicked and as misguided as vegetarians sometimes say, but he does not kill for the sake of killing. The ranchers and the farmer who exterminate all living things not immediately profitable to them may sometimes be working against their own best interests; but whether they are or are not, they hope to achieve some supposed good by the exterminations. If to do evil, not in the hope of gain but for evil's sake, involves the deepest guilt by which man can be stained, then killing for killing's sake is a terrifying phenomenon and as strong a proof as we could have of that "reality of evil" with which present-day theologians are again concerned. . .

In the spring of 1955, a magazine called *Sports Illustrated* distributed a questionnaire intended to determine the public attitude toward hunting. One answer received from a woman in Tampa read: "I am not the sloppy, sentimental type that thinks it's terrible to shoot birds or animals. What else are they good for?" The *New Yorker*, which reprinted her reply, answered: "Bulls can be baited by fierce dogs, and horses sometimes pay money."

Two other quotations culled from recent magazines are even more instructive because they come from more sophisticated people. The first is copied from *Time*, which ran an article about how duck hunters near Utah's Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge [sic] "could hardly shoot fast enough to bring down the ducks," heading the article with a quotation from Hemingway's "Fathers and Sons." "When you have shot one bird flying you have shot all birds flying, they are all different and they fly different ways but the sensation is the same and the last one is as good as the first." The other quotation is again from the *New Yorker*, which reported without comment part of an interview with Sir Pierson Dixon, the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. "I like this shooting thing, stalking some relatively large animal or, even more enjoyable, shooting birds. It's like the pleasure of hitting a ball."

The difference between the two attitudes is interesting. To Hemingway, the realization that you are killing something that is alive seems to be the essence of the pleasure. Sir Pierson, on the other hand, is neither looking for madder music and stronger wine nor, like the lady from Tampa, attempting to struggle with the theological question of what animals are "for." His is simply that uncomprehending innocence sometimes said to be most frequently met with in the English gentleman to whom it has never occurred that the

creatures he pursues are alive at all — as his phrase “like the pleasure of hitting a ball” reveals. Birds are merely livelier, less predictable clay pigeons. And it is in exactly the same light that those of his class have sometimes regarded the lesser breeds without the law or even the nearly inanimate members of all social classes below them.

Albert Schweitzer, with his “reverence for life,” represents the attitude furthest removed from this, and he has been made quite a hero. But for all that and for all the fact that ruthlessness and cruelty are more often frowned upon now than at most periods of the world’s history, it is not easy to be sure in what direction we are now tending. In fact, there is no prettier example of what the Marxists call the inner contradictions of capitalist culture.

When Thoreau allowed himself to be persuaded to send a turtle as a specimen to the zoologists at Harvard, he felt that he had had “a murderer’s experience in a degree” and that however his specimen might serve science, his relation to nature would be the worse for what he had done. “I pray,” he wrote in his journal, “that I may walk more innocently and serenely through nature. No reasoning whatsoever reconciles me to this act.” . . .

Teddy Roosevelt, himself a mighty hunter, was more responsible than any other one man for the establishment of the finest system of national parks in the world. At the moment they are more seriously threatened than at any other moment in their history, but I shall not go into that. But I do want to note a fact relevant to the whole question of “reverence for life,” namely the near disappearance from the liberal arts curriculum of natural history as a cultural subject. From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, some familiarity with plants, animals and birds was one of the recognized elements in “The Education of a Gentleman.” Now, except in isolated and more or less accidental cases, even the biological courses, which have replaced the natural history American colleges used to offer, are intended for and taken only by students headed toward medicine or some scientific specialty. They are likely to begin with the dissection of the earthworm or cockroach and then go on to the dissection of cats. But they rarely have anything to offer the student of, say, literature, who might like to know something about what the nature poets he does study seemed so strangely concerned with.

Not long ago I spent a week on the campus of one of the older colleges of the Eastern Seaboard which prides itself upon being a liberal arts college and nothing else. Adjoining the campus is a fine stretch of woodland presented by an alumnus and planted with a beautiful array of native and exotic flowering shrubs and trees. When no student or faculty member I had met could tell me the name of one of the most striking, I sought out the one and only member of the botany department. He smiled condescendingly. “I,” he said, “am a cytologist. Doubt if I know a dozen plants by sight.” Now cytology is a very important subject. But are the secrets of the cell as essential a part of a liberal education as some nodding acquaintance with plants and animals? Perhaps it was this very college which produced the immortal student of romantic and Victorian literature who thought the “pimpernel dozing by the lea” was some sort of furry quadruped taking a nap.

“Nature study” is now usually relegated to the kindergarten or the elementary grades, and even there it is tending to become more and more a laboratory science. I myself have seen a “progressive” school where the pupils were being introduced to nature through the old dismal process of worm dissection, probably because that was all the instructor had been trained in. And

that is by no means an extreme case. A leading biological supply house boasts of the wide increase in the use of "nutrition experiments" (grandly so called) in schools, and it offers eight different deficient diets conveniently packaged, as well as the animals whose malnutrition when fed any one of these diets may be observed by the curious. Very recently the head of the National Cancer Institute has urged high-school teachers to teach their pupils how to produce cancer in mice by the transplantation of tumors and in chicks by the injection of enzymes.

Is it sentimental to ask whether anyone not preparing for the serious study of anatomy is likely to be any the better for the dissecting of a cat or whether anyone, no matter what career he is preparing for, is any the better for having starved a rat or induced cancer in a mouse? However completely experiments up to and including vivisection may justify themselves when there is actually something to be learned from them, is there any possible excuse for repeating them merely by way of a spectacle?

Forget, if you like, the rights of the mouse — if any. Think only of the attitudes developed in the human child. In his cradle, we read to him of Peter Rabbit. We "assign" Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Thoreau in college. But what is the use of asking him to explicate "He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small" if his only contact with either the great or the small is going to be a demonstration that what Shylock said about Jews is true of animals also — if you prick them they bleed and if you poison them they die.

—JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

"BUT WICKEDNESS HAS TO BE IN IT TOO!"

The children were playing gleefully with some puppets they had received for Christmas. What they played was naturally an echo of past experience. Both 7-year-olds had seen a Punch and Judy show, and both knew the story of the Garden of Eden. From these memories their play was formed. The Devil was an important member of the cast, and since there was no puppet for the part, another figure substituted for him. But soon the tussles with the Devil became loud and vehement. The grown-up nearby, wishing to curtail just this element, suggested that they rehearse more peaceful, pleasant scenes. And then there rang out a cheerful and absolutely carefree chorus: "Oh, but there has to be some wickedness in it, too!"

In the child's second 7 years there begins a perceptive-emotional attempt to come to terms with evil. It is still very much on the surface and not wholly conscious — a meeting on the outside, often accompanied by that good companion, Humor.

In his book, *The Education of the Child*, Rudolf Steiner describes three 'births' of the human being. At different epochs of growth the child liberates himself step by step from enveloping sheaths and gradually forms body, soul and spirit according to his own individuality. First, from the physical body of his mother, which for nine months was a protecting sheath, the child frees his physical body. But his growth- and life-forces are still joined to the protecting sheath of his environment. Through the magic power of imitation he entrusts himself completely to what surrounds him. In this period, up to the age of 7 or thereabouts, he is forming and moulding his body, developing habits, and shaping his memory and thought-processes. At the end of this important epoch, signalled by the change of teeth, the life-force organism is

liberated, completely his own. Now the way is opened up to begin to shape the child's soul-organism through his feelings.

Up to about 14, the child is joined to his emotional environment as though it were a cloak or envelope surrounding him. Slowly his own soul-being condenses from the larger whole and becomes an integral part of himself. It is at this decisive time of life — which constitutes, after all, the main part of school time — that all emotional, psychological problems and pre-eminently all the valuable solutions to such problems achieved through the course of human evolution, can be brought to the child in immense pictures. From outside, the seeds are planted which in later years will provide him with the right government of his inner life.

Before he is seven, the problem of evil will not touch the child. Even when he sees the Devil in a play or in a picture — and this should not happen too early — the young child will probably be only amused by the creature's wild jumping or beautiful tail. After fourteen the maturing young person will begin to experience evil as part of his own being, and will therefore keep silent about it; it will become the object of intense and secret inner debate.

Before this, in the happy time from seven on, the child begins to be interested in the dynamics of evil. But it has still the distance of a picture, and does not lie heavy within. At this stage of life the child can still find out how to overcome wickedness, and moreover he has confidence in the wisdom of the grownups around him. So at the beginning, he can shout with merriment and curiosity, "But Wickedness has to be in it, too!" He is sure that Punch will triumph over the Devil.

However, before the threshold to adolescence, the child's experience changes. He meets evil, or the possibility of evil, in a totally different sphere: in the realm of natural science. Now the child comes to realize that only the moral attitude of man determines whether inventions and discoveries shall be for the good or for the harm of mankind. In the last few years children have had quite concrete evidence of this, — have had to have it.

Therefore, to the joyous play of the early years, around seven, let us add quite a different kind of proceeding in class, as contrast, at the end of this epoch, shortly before the 14th year. This antithesis suggests the wide range of feelings and sensitiveness to which the child is exposed at this time.

Whatever the facts of science that are given to the child, he will find the entrance to his understanding first of all through his feelings. He will sense, for instance, that light and air are elements related to his own soul-organism. The feelings that agitate his breast are expressed in the flow of air taken in from the outside as breath and given out again. It is the feelings that determine and regulate the breathing and heart-beat.

Light and shadow, too, are not yet separated from his feelings about good and evil. Therefore, before the child frees himself altogether from the soul-sheaths that surround him, we can introduce him — towards the end of the second seven years — to those phenomena of physics that can be taken up by the feelings. Particularly in acoustics and optics can we make a start from the child's soul-world itself and progress gradually towards the objective laws. This is valid and necessary, in order not to harm the child's development through too abrupt or too early an externalization.

A conversation in our Sixth Grade will illustrate this. In such a class there are always a few children who have crossed the threshold of maturity too

early. Therefore we can observe clearly the difference in the way of perceiving and understanding before and after the age-change.

First of all in acoustics, with no special explanations, the children are led to experience how an audible tone arises when two objects are struck together. Now, when a whip cuts through the air, there is a whistling sound. Are there two objects, in that case, that strike together? Immediately the question springs up, whether the air is an object. A lively discussion begins. Air can't be an object because we simply can't shovel it together into a heap! Still — the defenders of the 'object' return — we can very well pump it into and out of a tube. "Of course we can," say the others, "but air can't be left to itself. It always needs something or other around it, a boundary or vessel, or else it escapes into space."

Strangely enough, no child hit on the liquefaction of air, even though most of them knew of this possibility. After various pros and cons, a boy finally brought out: "Air can't possibly be an object, for I'm in it altogether, and it goes right through me." Now just this boy showed in other things a certain prematurity and had an acquaintance with much that was not fully suitable for his age. But here in this remark he showed how young he really was. He still experienced the enveloping quality of air. With the conviction, too, with which it was spoken, the remark points distinctly to the part that the soul and also the understanding play at this stage of life. The child's world of feeling is not yet abstracted out of its protecting sheath. The air is sensed as an element closely allied to the life of feeling. The child does not yet separate his own being from the air — it is not yet an 'object' for him.

It seems a long way from the discovery with the puppet theatre to the beginning of physics, but it is hurried along in the relatively short space of a few years. An inner thread binds together the two seemingly unrelated happenings. In both, the child illustrates his relationship to a sheltering soul-sheath. Earlier, this shows itself in the complete trust that the child feels in his environment. Later, it is the sensitivity to the natural element of air, that with light seems to stand closest to the feelings (as earth is close to the physical body and water to the growth- and life-forces).

The task of the teacher is not to keep the child sheltered within this soul-sheath, but rather to assist in the process of emancipation and the forming of an individual soul-world within. Towards the end of the second seven years, these steps are taken faster and faster, with ever-increasing consciousness, at moments quite perceptibly. It is in the study of science especially that the child has to develop his capacity for thinking. It is here that he must experience the transformation of soul-dependence into thoughtful knowledge, a change which does not always take place without pain.

It was necessary, for example, after the above-mentioned discussion, for the teacher to bring the children to the realization that air in the physical sense *is* an object. With this knowledge, however, the child falls inwardly out of his soul-shelter and finds himself in an objective world which exists without any emotional connections. A bond is ripped asunder — and an intellectual interest in the object is awakened.

With the greatest possible care the teacher has to direct these processes, for it is just at this point that the very foundations of human morality are approached. As long as the child feels sheltered and a part of the unity of the world which arises before him in the colorful pictures of stories, he is satisfied by the facts themselves and does not inquire into their purpose. But when he

separates himself from the objects and confronts them, there appears not only an intellectual interest but also the curiosity as to what one can do with them all.

A further question will arise. There now will come — precisely in connection with natural science — the question about evil, in a new form: Why do men use scientific knowledge for so much destruction? This is spoken about with reserve and with some anxiety by the children, many of whom are remembering their own experiences (*the bombing of Germany, etc. Ed. note*). Now they no longer can shout, with gleeful conviction, "There has to be some wickedness in it, too!" — but rather, "Oh, if only wickedness were not in it at all!" Can the grownups really be trusted to know that Punch will triumph over the Devil?

Our science teaching is concerned not only with the objective world of matter; a strong moral impulse must be contained in it. Therefore it is important to bring science to the child at a time when it can be taken up by the child's feeling-life, — when it can *still* be taken up by the feeling-life. The teacher must draw from his own living core for inner certainty in answering questions. Decisive will be the teacher's insight as to the meaning of human evolution and the deed of the Saviour of humanity. For even into the study of science an ethical-Christian impulse can shine. If the teacher can bring this impulse, without a trace of dogma or of his own world-conception into all his teaching material, right up to the sciences, so that it meets the feelings of the child, he will be giving the child an inner support in his soul nature. This support will not save the young person from inevitable inward encounters with evil, but it will be of the greatest help when this occurs.

With this support, the young person with his more and more critical intelligence can now transform his sensitiveness to the meaning of evil into true knowledge. Then he will find direction and strength in his inner development for a courageous coming to grips with the force of wickedness.

—GEORG STARKE
Translated by R. P.

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THOUGHTS AT SCHOOL OPENING

*A Greeting from the Chairman of the Rudolf Steiner School Faculty,
September, 1964*

Dear Parents:

In welcoming you and the children at the start of this new school year, I wonder to what degree the events of the past summer weigh upon us all. They certainly give rise to disturbing questions. Where are we headed? What can we do?

Redouble our efforts, we may well say, to make the education of our children effective in terms of character and inner strength as well as outer values. But how? We all know that this is far more easily said than done.

Those of you who have been with us for some time know that these are questions with which we have long wrestled and you know, I feel sure, that Rudolf Steiner's philosophy of education offers many a practical clue. Let us take stock for a moment and see in what direction we can best make our efforts count.

For example, the relationship between the children and their class teacher puts down deep roots just at the age when personal authority is so very important. This is the authority, at the elementary school level, which is the foundation for independence and inner security in later life. Can we as parents and teachers support each other more actively, knowing that this is one of the children's deepest needs? Or again, a teacher who prepares his lessons in such a way that he seeks the key which can unlock a child's heart and mind creates the kind of learning which matures at last into the faculty of imaginative intelligence, distinguishing the creative, genuinely educated adult. A parent's interest in and appreciation for the quality of the work which the children bring home and for their experiences in the classroom — an interest which goes beyond whether or not Johnny got the right answer and enters in to the child's own experience — is an immeasurable help in keeping the whole learning process alive. And a third instance. We put stress on teaching the children to move harmoniously in eurythmy and in gym and how to use their hands with skill in order to make beautiful and useful things. Here we are aiming to unite mental activity and enthusiasm with the mastery of their bodily functions. If we succeed, the children will eventually be able to take their places in life as integrated rather than as divided beings. Recognition by their parents that these practical, non-academic lessons are as important as their math and English goes a very long way to make the children open and responsive in class.

These are merely examples taken at random from the life of the school. No one of them is infallible, no single effort can be effective alone. Imbuing and supporting them there is the need for a central, underlying concern — the concern for man. This is the yeast which makes the bread rise. If children sense that their parents and their teachers are united in the striving toward a conception of man which recognizes him to be potentially a creative, self-directed, loving being — no matter how contradictory surface appearances may often be — a being who seeks meaning in life, they will gain confidence and out of confidence come strength and courage and affirmation for life.

This, it would seem, is where the most essential realm of parent-teacher co-operation lies. If, together, we can make even the smallest beginning in transforming into human values the purposelessness, the indifference, the uncertainty, the self-centeredness, the brutality which pervade so much of the world in which our children live, we will have accomplished more than we can calculate. Is there any more urgent task for us as parents and teachers than to explore practical ways to make this fundamental educational effort work?

With cordial greetings,

HENRY BARNES

(From the School Newsletter)

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