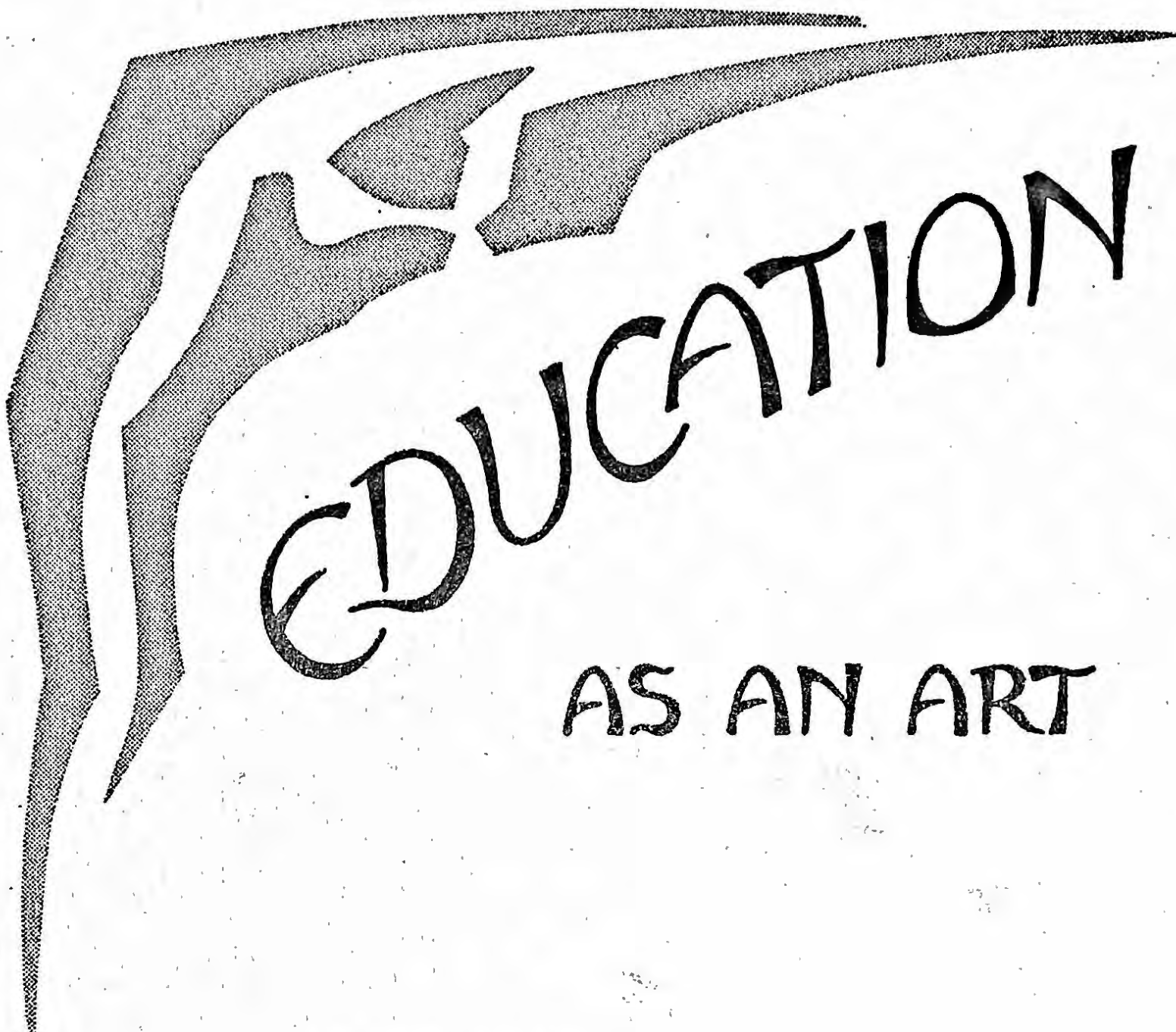




EDUCATION

AS AN ART

Published by the
Waldorf Schools
of North America

FIFTY YEARS WALDORF EDUCATION

*Articles by Alan Howard, Gisela O'Neil,
Henry Barnes and Herbert Hahn*

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THEN AND NOW

Fifty Years of Waldorf Education

When society through its democratically elected governments took over responsibility for education and made it public, it took over at the same time responsibility for the spiritual and cultural welfare of mankind as a whole. Not many people, perhaps, realised it at the time; but certainly people are beginning to realise it now.

In doing this, society wisely ensured that no child should go without any education at all; but because of the very nature of a huge public undertaking of this kind, it also created the possibility of children growing up with a stereotyped pattern of outlook and behaviour. This is a danger we must always be aware of.

From such a danger only two things really protect us: one, which we are already seeing something of today, is that the human mind just will not continue indefinitely to be pressed into a mould, and though it may break out in all kinds of unpleasant social upheavals and disorders, break out it will; the other is the work of devoted and enlightened individuals in the field of education itself.

Such an individual was *Rudolf Steiner**, who established the first Waldorf School fifty years ago.

In 1919, during the social chaos that engulfed Germany as a result of that country's defeat in World War I, a group of Stuttgart business men asked him what they could do to help create a better social future. His reply was unequivocal. You must start, he said, by doing something about education; and when later the leading spirit of that group, Dr. Emil Molt, general manager of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, came to him and offered to make a school possible if he would undertake to direct it, he accepted with enthusiasm.

He recruited a faculty of teachers; gave them a high-pressure course on the basic factors of education; drafted the broad outlines of a program; and in September of that year opened the doors of the school to some two hundred students. Within a short time its enrolment had reached a thousand, and the school itself ran to twelve grades. Apart from a forced closure under Hitler, it has continued to flourish ever since.

At the time of writing there are seventy-eight schools (some are called 'Rudolf Steiner' schools, linking them more directly with the founder) distributed over the free countries of the world. Many of them are in Germany, of course; but there are ten in this country, one in Canada, and others in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Italy, South America and South Africa; and preliminary talks are already in progress about starting one in India.

In other words, not a year has gone by in that time but what in one country or another, at least one Waldorf school has been founded; while the Waldorf 'method' has become increasingly known and esteemed by educators and public alike.

* 1861-1925; Austrian philosopher and writer; author of *TRUTH AND SCIENCE* and *THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY*; editor of the scientific writings of Goethe; founder of Anthroposophy.

What is the reason for such a development — in an age and social environment where education was already fully guaranteed to everybody as a free social service?

The answer lies wholly in Rudolf Steiner's insight into human nature, which gave him the courage and skill to graft into educational philosophy the view of man as an evolving spiritual being. Not only that, but he was able so to communicate his views and methods to others that he could create the like qualities in them. In an age which was already becoming increasingly cynical and materialistic, he was the champion of the individual human spirit. He pointed to its emergence in the stages of childhood growth, and declared simply: You must educate on the basis of that.

If anyone should ask, therefore: What has Waldorf *done* in the last fifty years *more* than any other school? the reply can only be: It has given an object lesson in the ability of schools working on this spiritually oriented philosophy to cope successfully and independently with all the day-to-day demands of education, in a technical materialistic world dominated by large public organisations, of which education is by no means the smallest. This philosophy has stood consistently for a solution of fundamental educational problems on the basis of the human spirit, during a period when any bright idea thrown up by unthinking sentimentality or academic behaviorism might seem — and become — the panacea of educational ills. It has sought to let the child become an active agent, not the passive victim, of the age.

If it should be asked further: What then more precisely is this 'philosophy of the spirit'? that, too, can be answered briefly; so briefly, that one hesitates to do so only out of a fear of seeming superficial. But even that risk can be taken, because behind such a statement lies not only fifty years of successful educational practice in conditions so different, and places so far apart, as Brazil and Bergen, Vienna and Los Angeles; but also because the published work of Rudolf Steiner and others, which elaborates that philosophy, testifies to his place and importance in the spiritual life of our time.

Briefly then: to Rudolf Steiner, every human being is an evolving spiritual individuality whose origin was God, and whose destiny is Freedom. With this potentiality he has existed since the beginning; and in pursuit of an evolution of increasing self-consciousness, he has taken up again and again a physical existence. This was as plain and obvious to Rudolf Steiner as the fact that a man, who works today with a certain skill and experience, first learned that work years ago, and has pursued it day after day in between the temporary interruptions of sleep. It is possible now, said Steiner, for people to know this; and it was his firm conviction that unless they do get to know it, and take it into account, then our social problems will defy solution, and simply escalate until they crush us.

Education therefore has the task of not only making it possible for young people to know the facts of nature and the world, but also to want to search for what is behind the facts. They will only want to do this, however, if those who present the facts believe that there is something worth searching for behind the facts, and who have such a respect, nay, reverence, for the enquiring spirit, that nothing is done which might imprison it in any arbitrary or temporary interpretation.

On this showing, the 'method' of Waldorf education is the observation of how this returning individual spirit gradually emerges into consciousness of itself and the world, and the art of co-operating with it while, in the phenomenon of growth, it reveals on the one hand what has been given to it by heredity, and on the other, what it brings with it as essentially its own. The teacher is, therefore, simply the child's predecessor in maturity and knowledge of the environment into which the child comes. He is the awakener — and should also be the welcomer — of a fellow human spirit during that time in which he *re-collects* himself in growth, and adjusts himself to the changes in an environment to which, by virtue of his identity as human, he cannot be wholly a stranger.

It is doubtful if there is anywhere else in the world today a fellowship of schools, such as the Waldorf schools, operating on the basis of such a conception with so much practical experience and achievement to its credit, *and yet making no attempt to indoctrinate the child with its own or any other philosophy or viewpoint.* This is not said in self-adulation. The very nature of such a conception itself, if one will study it carefully, precludes any possibility of that kind. Indeed, in the context of such a concept the very opposite is the case. The Waldorf teacher is far more aware of what more he might have done, and what he ought to have done, than of what he has done. But the conception continues, nonetheless, to inspire his every effort. At the same time it unites those widely separated and completely autonomous schools into a fellowship of freedom, where each school contributes to the fulfillment, and rejoices in the achievement, of all; and in which every single teaching member can deploy his own initiative and skill, with the full confidence and interest of his colleagues.

We look back, therefore, on fifty years of work with that satisfaction which only is a determination to renew our efforts in the future.

But dare anyone, who takes seriously into consideration all that is happening today, look forward with any confidence at all to the future? Are not the shadows of events that may come already sapping and draining what few forces we have left?

That may well be; thereby making it all the more necessary to renew those forces which Rudolf Steiner once described as 'inexhaustible.' No Waldorf teacher dare, any more than any other, look at our modern world through rose-coloured spectacles; but neither dare he cease to renew that spiritual self-consciousness which alone can carry him into the future. Such renewal will give him the confidence that, even if the holocaust which seems to threaten civilisation should indeed overtake us, reducing our proud artifacts to rubble and our social organisation to chaos, there would still be somewhere on earth those who had preserved the inspiration of the spirit, and would dare to build the world anew — and build it better.

For the human spirit is indestructible.

This is the truth behind Waldorf education. Only the outer achievements, which the human spirit so often mistakenly identifies with its real aims and purposes, perish or are destroyed. The informing spirit, which guided the hand that made them, persists. It can, and will, reassemble its scattered forces again and again to make better; learning, as we see a child learn in school, not only those utilitarian skills and knowledge which all must have, but also the very nature and potential of himself as learner.

So, when one looks at the present, and seems to see nothing but complacency, superficiality, corruption and violence, one also looks beyond — to where the guiding spirit of Man ever beckons, bidding him press forward, even through the failure and ruin of his own half-understood efforts, to what he has yet to achieve.

For Education is just that: Learning, by being and doing, the whole significance of being Man. Education in school is but a special part of that education. This is the only real and proper activity of man, which all our other activities must subserve, or perish; and educational philosophy has no more important task than to keep that ever before our eyes.

This is what Waldorf means now at the end of fifty years of public service; this is also what it meant on that September day in 1919 when the first school was opened; this is what it must mean more and more in the future, and what must be proclaimed far and wide, let that future hold what it may. No sectarian affirmation of faith inspires these words. They are prompted by no 'Better-than-thou' feelings based on any contemporary or other standard. No narrow, competitive ambition to found Waldorf schools at any cost in every corner of the globe lies behind them. This is simply what we believe education to mean, and with this we would wholly identify ourselves.

Compulsory education presupposes no less. Its responsibility for the spiritual and cultural future of man should be obvious to all. Waldorf is our way of becoming more and more conscious of that responsibility. We in the Waldorf movement, therefore, whatever the differences of our present organisational set-up, are not *outside* but *inside* the educational task of society. Many of us, in fact, have been trained and have served our apprenticeship in public education. We know many people working there whose regard for human dignity, and whose selfless devotion to the child, are still an inspiration and conscience to our own efforts. We know that, grim as the world seems now, it would be far grimmer but for them and those like them. Happy as we are in this fiftieth anniversary year in the existence of our own seventy-eight schools and what they are doing, we know this is only a small contribution to the total educational activity which can alone hold back those forces of darkness which could so easily engulf us all.

And so one sees the future of Waldorf not as just the perpetuation of another 'method'. We believe that there is a future for that method, and for our schools as such, but only in so far as they really belong to education as a whole. We could, indeed, well dispense with this overworked word 'method', except in those specific spheres where it properly belongs; for, when all is said and done, the method is the teacher; and the teacher is a human being who believes in the invincible spirit of Man in every man, and who seeks to bring it down from the realm of ideology into the everyday activity of public life, by looking for it and working with it in all those committed to his care.

That, in the final analysis, is what Waldorf education is; what it was; and what it must always be.

—ALAN HOWARD

AT THE BEGINNING

It was the summer of 1919 when, in the words of Rudolf Steiner, "the refreshing breeze of work for the Threefold Social Order was blowing through the streets and alleys of Stuttgart," and preparations for opening the Independent Waldorf School were going forward energetically.

One day Rudolf Steiner decided that since we were not progressing fast enough merely by writing letters, we must have someone travel about from place to place, to search out teachers who might be considered for the new school. And so E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, who was not too busy lecturing at the time, went off on a journey of discovery. He was supposed to gather together the "Stars," as Rudolf Steiner said, jokingly. However, as far as I can remember, the catch was a little meager. Most of the candidates for teaching at the Waldorf School came through a direct call from Dr. Steiner himself.

Stockmeyer's efforts were much more fruitful in connection with the school officials from whom we had to get a license. One must remember that this was a quite unusual situation: we wanted their permission for a new kind of school and their guarantee of complete freedom not only in the organization and administration, but also in every detail of our method.

Perhaps the fact that this new school did not fit into any ordinary category became a kind of protection for it — even a piece of good fortune. Dr. Heymann, the Director of Cultural Activities at that time, took charge of our petition with a surprising amount of good will. Rudolf Steiner had a leading part in all these negotiations, despite the other, truly gigantic demands on him. Later, he often said with evident satisfaction, "Indeed it was our great good luck at the time to slip through a mouse-hole that had been left open in the school laws of Wurttemberg. In this way we could make our entrance into life."

And now, after completing one preliminary after another, Rudolf Steiner could begin the educational course with his first lecture on the Study of Man, August 21, 1919. Everyone who had been invited to the course came together on that sunny August morning at a long table in the small "blue room" where, four months before, the first decision to found a school had been reached. The course participants stood singly or in small groups on both sides of the table, the light dimmed gently by the blue of the walls, tables and chairs. There was no lively conversation. Only the guests who had been invited were acquainted with each other; not many of the prospective teachers had met. Besides, everyone present was far too expectant in these decisive moments to enter into a conversation — or even to walk up and down in the room.

I, too, felt myself turning more towards an inner contemplation than to the outside. Beyond all question this was a moment of destiny to which everything on my path of life had been tending. It had led me to this place and now here, surely, were all those persons I had unconsciously sought. In what way would we be discovering and speaking to one another?

My mind was somewhat eased by the presence of two teachers whom I knew well, Karl Stockmeyer and Paul Baumann. At two others I had looked carefully during the general introductions that day, because Rudolf

Steiner had spoken about them at the small preliminary meetings in the summer. One was Caroline von Heydebrand, of whom he had said humorously, "A tiny, piping voice, but a most gifted mind!" And immediately I recognized the truth of this description on meeting for the first time this small, dainty person with her clear and kindly glance.

The other was the Reverend Johannes Geyer, whose anthroposophical work in Hamburg Dr. Steiner had described to us. Johannes Geyer at that time was no longer the only churchman who found in anthroposophy the richest wellspring for his work. It was noteworthy that Geyer had now decided to come to the Waldorf School as a teacher and particularly that he did not consider this as a break with his former profession. From that time forward he gave himself for many years with great devotion to these new tasks.

Now at last, with the light step which at the same time always seemed consciously to feel the ground, Rudolf Steiner entered, went to his place at the head of the table, and with hardly a pause began his lecture. With him were Marie Steiner, Meta Waller and Dr. Ludwig Noll.

Everyone had taken his place, and now I got my first full view of the man who was to become closest to me, both in life and in the spirit. It was the Austrian, Dr. Walter Johannes Stein, who was moving into the chair on my right with the perceptible vigor of a knight in armor leaping onto his horse. On my left was seated Paul Baumann.

With a few sentences Rudolf Steiner made an introduction in which there came to life a quite unusual, far from conventional festivity. We, the participants, received a welcome that also was completely unconventional and devoid of sentimentality. As he set out to render a general study of man, he welcomed us — I should like to say — by means of the very image of Man himself.

... The Waldorf educational movement has grown and spread out into all the world. For fifty years, searching, inquiring men and women have been trying to develop what was contained in that Pedagogical Course of 1919. But continually one is aware that everything as yet is only a beginning.

—HERBERT HAHN

(Dr. Herbert Hahn, who will be 80 in a few months, was born in what is now Esthonia on the Baltic Sea. He has taught in Russia and Holland, has studied at the Universities of Heidelberg, Paris and Berlin, has been a military interpreter in both world wars, has lectured in many cities of the world and has published many books. His autobiography, not yet translated, of which the above is an excerpt, appeared this year.*

As a young man of 29, Dr. Hahn was invited to initiate a new kind of school, a forerunner of adult education, within the cigarette factory of Emil Molt in Stuttgart, for the workmen. Lectures and

* Translated from the original German *Der Weg, Der Mich Fährte*, by kind permission of the publisher: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, Stuttgart.

discussions took place during the work-hours as a gift of the management, but also as the result of a strong wish for further education that had arisen spontaneously from the employees themselves. It was out of this activity that the first thought of a school for the children of the factory workers developed.)

WORK WITH UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN

A Busman's Holiday for a Waldorf Teacher

It began with a conversation at the dinner-table, where a guidance counsellor and a Waldorf teacher had just met. The theme was education, its goals and methods. "Why don't children want to learn?" This weighed heavily on the counsellor's mind. No, she had never heard about Rudolf Steiner's educational ideas. She noted that they were very different from what she was experiencing daily in her school. Were they suitable only for the privileged few in private schools, or would they work also for children from the shadow side of life? . . . A few weeks later she persuaded me, the Waldorf teacher, to try teaching in a school for children from broken homes. I agreed to fill a vacant position until a permanent teacher could be found. It proved to be a twelve-week expedition into the world of the underprivileged child. The equipment I brought was my years of training and experience in Steiner (or Waldorf) education. The age of my charges ranged from ten to twelve.

THE SCENE

"I hate teachers!" "I hate women!" were the welcoming remarks. The atmosphere was filled with hostility. No, they did not want to read. No, they hated arithmetic! Animosity permeated their own relationships to each other. Fistfights and resulting bedlam could break out any moment. When they were finally talked into writing, the first difficulty encountered would call forth: "I quit!" They would tear up the paper, throw it across the room, and sulk. Assertion of authority was hopeless: "Make me!" was the arrogant reply. Once I dared to point out, matter-of-factly, an arithmetic mistake. The girl flew into a rage: "YOU are wrong. YOU are wrong. You are persecuting me!" . . . It was total rejection. How could I win their confidence?

THE FIRST ATTEMPT

"These children are realists" had been the warning of the guidance counsellor. "They have experience, and they know life." Was she right?

A sure way to establish contact with children is to tell stories, and to tell them well, with inner participation and dramatic expression. Children of all ages love good stories. Would this group listen?

Booker T. Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, was my first attempt. I had just read it again, deeply moved by its humanity. What was their reaction to his childhood experiences? They listened quite attentively. Were they moved? No, they were amused. They laughed, made jokes, found it terribly funny. They thought it silly that he yearned to learn to read. At the age of eight his mother gave him his very first book, a speller, bought with painfully saved money. "You mean that's all he got for Christmas, a book?" His longing to go to school, the almost insur-

mountable difficulties and hardships evoked jokes: "What does he want to go to school for?" — "I hate school!" etc. . . . They could not identify either with genuine poverty and hardships or with longing for knowledge. Human striving was beyond their sphere of experience and therefore funny. . . . What could reach them?

THE FIRST HUMAN CONTACT

It was at the end of a long school day. Antipathy and disinterest had been expressed freely toward every subject and activity. The skills were limited. Still forty-five minutes to go. My exhausted mind reached for a dramatic Russian legend for younger children, "The Beggar in Paradise." As long as I live, I shall never forget the change that occurred: the eyes grew wide with wonder, their faces relaxed. They literally drank in this beautiful tale . . . My 'realists' would accept the pictorial idealism of mythology.

HOMER'S ODYSSEY

Greek mythology as story-telling content is Rudolf Steiner's suggestion for this age group. And it was especially the Odyssey, told dramatically and in great detail for an hour each day, that helped to remove some of the barriers of hostility, made human communication possible, and established my position as class teacher. I bribed them! I would tell the story for one hour: they in turn would do their work afterwards. The plan for the day was agreed upon and written out on the blackboard. Everyone promised to stick to the agreement.

Habits of years are difficult to break. "I promise" was still an empty phrase. "I don't care," "I quit," on encountering a difficulty, did not cease. Admonishing or moralizing is practically useless. Far more powerful is a dramatic experience in story form where the emotional life gets involved. The perfect example of broken promises and the dire consequences was provided by *Odysseus' Companions*. They had sworn not to touch the cattle of the Sun God. Their lighthearted, I-don't-care attitude was portrayed dramatically, using classroom language without making it too obvious. My listeners smiled; but some grew pale, when later on Zeus bore down on the Companions with thunder and lightning and destroyed each and every one of them. From that time on, "I promise" took on more meaning, and any attempt by one or the other to take it lightly was not tolerated by the rest of the class.

Another big problem was the tone in the class, the crudeness of language, the name-calling. Here the episode of *the Cyclops* worked therapeutically. In his rudeness, the Cyclops was using the crude sounds of classroom jargon. This was contrasted with the friendliness, the openness, and trust of the Greeks, who called him a *Brute*. My students disliked him vehemently and took sides with the Greeks. From that time on, 'Brute' was taken up into classroom lingo. It was frequently used by students as a reproach against anyone who would behave like the Cyclops . . . The tone began to change.

Elementary courtesy had still to be acquired. How do you communicate in a friendly way? How do you speak when you are in trouble? When you need help? *The Shipwrecked Odysseus* taught the lesson. His garments torn, unkempt, ragged, he met the noble princess Nausicaa. First

her horror at his looks. But when he opened his mouth and spoke softly: "Please would you help me?" her pride and fear vanished. "You look like a beggar, but your courteous speech tells me that you are a nobleman." . . . Next day the librarian sought me out to tell me that one of my roughest boys had addressed her, "Please, would you help me," in asking for a library book. Courtesy became a serious classroom game.

Many other episodes could be told to illustrate the moral power of good stories, well told. For me, their greatest impact was shown later on during the myth of *Jason and the Golden Fleece*. All the heroes were gathered in the good ship Argo. Lots of hardships had already been weathered. More were to come. Jason stopped the boat before the last, most dangerous, most burdensome trial. He gave a realistic picture of the troubles and hardships ahead of them, then offered a choice: "If any one of you wants to quit, then do it now . . ." At this dramatic and tense moment, one of my worst quitters of the past stood up, stretched out his fist and exclaimed triumphantly: "Oh, *not one* of them is going to quit!"

SOME CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The dislike of *Arithmetic* was hard to overcome. Each student had a textbook and was supposed to work at his own speed. This might be reasonable for industrious and eager students — but these students worked with no speed at all! Some could not read the directions, some did not want to work and sulked, some did not care and wrote down as answers any numbers that came to mind. One bright fellow, unskilled with numbers, wrote simply 1 for the first answer, 2 for the second, 3 for the third, etc. Others who worked grudgingly were confused and were lacking in basic skills. There were no right answers! . . . In order to like a subject, you have to meet with some success. We put the textbooks on a shelf. Vigorous number work was taken up as a daily activity, first orally for approximately 45 minutes, then every student working on his own for another period using the material we had just practiced. Colored pencils helped as incentive for careful work. A few weeks later, math had become a favorite subject. Students who formerly would do hardly any work now labored in complete absorption. To get every given problem right was the goal. They would not be satisfied with a mark less than 100 — and their offer to do it all over again when a mistake had occurred was accepted. After all, the goal was motivation, the will to finish a given task and to do it well.

With *Reading* the situation was similar. Except for a very few, no one cared. Some could hardly read, most could not pronounce many of the words encountered, did not know their meaning, did not bother to look them up.

With colored chalk, using different colors for dialogue, I wrote poetry on the blackboard — dramatic poems that could be acted out. We read them in chorus and singly, learned to pronounce unfamiliar words, entered into their meaning. They loved it and vied for their turns. There was drama in the room, action and vigor, and improvement of speech habits. At a morning assembly they recited poetry for the school.

Art: A school day is long; the afternoons can get terribly dull if only mental work is on the program. We illustrated events of the *Odyssey* in crayons and colored pencils. Most students had never done any work

of this kind before. Several showed genuine talent. We also retold the stories, sometimes in writing. After all, they were eventful and there was no lack of material. A big success was some practice in geometric drawing, which I introduced with the use of a simple compass and ruler. The division of a circle by 6, 8, 12, 16, etc. fascinated them. They worked painstakingly, using colored pencils to bring out the star-shapes and to create objects of beauty. — It was Christmas time and we sang in class together daily. Some children had beautiful singing voices and even volunteered as soloists. The "Twelve Days of Christmas" was their favorite.

SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

Instead of everyone doing his own thing, I encouraged them to help each other. Halfway good readers became my assistants and would tutor others regularly. They in turn received help in Math from a Spanish boy who turned out to be brilliant in this subject, although his test scores were very low because he could not read. In helping each other, they overcame to a large degree the animosities that were festering. Encouragement had to be given continuously. The 'assistants' were praised highly for every success of their charges.

SOME COMMENTS

... A new art teacher, who had this group once a week for 45 minutes, showed me their art work with the gratifying but erroneous remark that this was a selected, courteous, and cooperative group, while other teachers had to cope with difficult children.

... James, who up till now had been spending most of his school years in the halls or in the principal's office, and whose former teacher had declared him unteachable, once met the principal in the hall. He went up to him with the statement, "Dr. X., you haven't seen me in your office for a long time, have you?" The principal called him in and inquired what had happened to him. Why, after all the former difficulties, would he now work for this one teacher? "She tells such interesting stories," was one comment, the other, "I love to learn from her, but I hate to have to learn from a book."

... On the last day, Toni, the former woman-hater, shyly made a beautiful card. It read, "Good-bye to the nicest teacher I've ever had." The compliment was accepted as a tribute to the educational ideas, to the teaching methods that worked.

EPILOGUE

A one-hour documentary film, called "The Way It Is," on the plight of the city school was shown two years ago over educational television. It received nation-wide attention. A second showing, half a year later, was followed by a two-hour dialogue between leading educators of the East Coast area. Then a hard diagnosis was made: the present curriculum is irrelevant, today's teaching methods don't reach the child, don't stimulate his interests, don't channel his energies. The call was made for "new methods, new insights, new ways to read and to reach the child."

The new methods, the new insights, the new ways to read and to reach the child do exist! And it is the tragedy of our time that while every new educational theory is given the headlines, heavily funded, experimented

with and eventually discarded, Rudolf Steiner's educational methods are practically unknown in this country.

Why is the search always toward easier absorption of crude information, better and more materials, and now the latest cry: ever earlier beginning of intellectual learning? Is it not always in the direction of greater impersonalization of the learning process, thus ever widening the gulf between the generations?

Rudolf Steiner points in the opposite direction. He calls for the humanization of the learning process with a minimum of selected materials. He starts with reorientation in the training of teachers. The teacher is to become an artist who works with the most pliable of all art materials, the growing child! Poetry, stories, literature, art, music are to be transmitted in an atmosphere of sympathy by a teacher with capacities, one who lives in these elements. The result is an education of the emotional life, and of motivation, as well as of the mind.

The hope of society in the decades past has been education. But now we are not sure. It is evidently the *kind* of education that is the crux. Bruno Bettelheim, the psychiatrist, has formulated this only too well in speaking of the noisy leaders of the radical left: "Intellect was developed at much too early an age, and at the expense of their emotional development. Although exceedingly bright, some remained emotionally fixated at the age of the temper tantrum." (*Time*, Sept. 5, 1969)

Lest this be the fate of our future, what we need is a learning process that establishes a firm basis of emotion and character on which to build a healthy intellectual life.

—GISELA THOMAS O'NEIL

BRONSON ALCOTT AND RUDOLF STEINER: EDUCATORS OF THE WHOLE MAN

An article by Nathan Lyons appeared under this title in Volume 57 of the Emerson Society Quarterly: *Journal of the American Renaissance*, published during the past summer. It is certainly not without significance that the discovery of the relatedness of the prophetic and innovative spirit of Bronson Alcott in the Concord of Emerson and Thoreau with the systematic and practical achievements of Rudolf Steiner as an educator on a worldwide scale in this century should be pointed out for the first time in an organ devoted to developing an on-going dialogue on the relevance of Transcendentalism to the problems of our time. And it may well be a matter of pride to the friends of the Rudolf Steiner School that it was Nathan Lyons who is to be credited with this insight.

Edwin Gittleman, Dartmouth College, in his Introduction to the special number of the Quarterly, speaks of the eagerness with which young minds today are seeking the transcendental aspects of experience, but often in such a way that the original spirit of Transcendentalism is reduced to a dangerous caricature of the deeply human and responsible search for reality as it lived in the great men of Concord and Salem.

Prof. Lyons in his article briefly sketches the essential character of Alcott, the educator, the "American Pestalozzi," of whom Emerson said, he is "the most refined and advanced soul we have had in New England."

Lyons points out that in a time when education was largely a "Calvinist habit" Alcott's pedagogy, "with its inherent respect for the spiritual integrity of the child, was the more radical." Alcott knew that education must concern itself with the whole man, "it must not make him parochially bound to his trade or to his religion but open to the entire world — both within and without." The Rev. Samuel J. May, Alcott's future brother-in-law, described what he experienced in Alcott's classroom as having the goal to "invite rather than to compel attention; to awaken thought rather than to load the memory; and in one word to develop the whole mind and heart, rather than a few properties of either."

Nathan Lyons allows us to glimpse the varied activities that called forth the spontaneous response of the children to a curriculum which sought to draw on life experience rather than an enforced rote learning, which included the arts and stressed the pictorial and concrete. The child's imagination and active interest was caught when, as Lyons quotes Dorothy McCuskey (*Bronson Alcott, Teacher*), "the alphabet was dramatized by the tall father standing stiff and straight for "I," arms and legs spread out for "X," or bent into odd curves for the goose, "S," accompanied by a delightful hissing sound." With rapid strokes we are introduced to a way of teaching that sought to speak directly to the child's experience, to engage his feelings and to rouse his will, striving to present facts in their relationships, not as isolated information, and always to awaken the understanding for their meaning, to challenge and exercise the child's dawning capacity to think for himself.

Where, however, as Prof. Lyons points out, "Alcott is random and even arbitrary, where he is of necessity patently experimental, Steiner begins with the whole and descends in his pedagogy into the innumerable particulars that must compose the spirit and fabric of every moment in a school." A telling sketch of the essential characteristics of Steiner's education then follows which supports the conclusion that "what Alcott saw and began to develop was true and quintessential to a genuine education of the whole child; he simply could not carry his perceptions through to a full pedagogy. Steiner did." Lyons draws attention to the fact that critics like Edgar Friedenberg, Paul Goodman, and John Holt have clearly demonstrated the failures of so much of so-called education in this country today, but that they have been conspicuously silent in bringing forward concrete proposals for genuine, radical reform, urging rather "innumerable half-measures, innovations, experiments, fragmentary antidotes." "What the children learn must be whole, it must be dramatic, and it must become part of the very fabric of their feelings. Alcott knew this, along with Pestalozzi, Froebel, Piaget — who also stressed the use of the inductive method, the use of motion, the use of the concrete and the pictorial; but he also knew, uniquely like Steiner, that sense was not the end: it was the portal to a spiritual pedagogy that would affect the child's entire life." In closing, Professor Lyons says: "Rudolf Steiner was not a latter-day Transcendentalist — though he deeply admired, and felt a spiritual affinity with, Emerson; but Alcott's pedagogy, stressing that which is whole and that which will touch the very marrow-bone of the child, lives deeply in the Waldorf impulse — metamorphosed, refined and formed, concretized . . . Alcott would have approved."

One wishes that Nathan Lyons' article might serve to wake the professional educator, as well as the layman, and that the study of Steiner might, as a result, be placed on the agenda of every teacher training institution in this country. Unfortunately, the *Emerson Society Quarterly* is a journal which speaks primarily to a rather particular circle of scholars and is unlikely to reach the quarters where it might do most good. However, the significant fact is that the article is in itself a milestone and will be there as a point of reference for scholars and writers on education for years to come.

—HENRY BARNES

Dr. Lyons, whose children have been in the Rudolf Steiner School for eight years, is Professor of English and American Literature at Hunter College and a senior editor at Crown Publishers. He edited, with an introduction, the recent Jones Very: Selected Poems (Rutgers University Press, 1966). Mr. Barnes' article is reprinted with permission of the Rudolf Steiner School parents' newsletter.

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