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Too Much Like Work?

The worst enemy mankind ever had was the dastard who persuaded it that work, which might be the dearest joy we have, was . . . well, . . . work. As a result of that crime, almost the whole population of the world rises up o' mornings groaning like slaves at the prospect of a day of work ahead.

A debasing state of affairs, and we should not put up with it another minute! But what can be done to root out this evil that has eaten so long and deeply into men's souls?

It was claimed above that "*almost* the whole population" groans. Who are the exceptions? What makes them such? Perhaps there is a clue here that could guide everyone to freedom from his sour slavery.

The exceptions are children and the craftsman-artist. To these, each new day, far from being shadowed by depression, holds out the promise of fulfillment; their only worry is whether it will be long enough to accomplish all they have in mind to do. They live in the light of a vision so dynamic that it can literally lift them out of bed. Their hearts tingle with warmth towards their projects. So they set to work with a will sparked, as all free activity must be, by an idea, a mental image enriched and made rainbow-colorful by caring.

Let us watch them at work. Are they taking the easy way out, or quickly growing tired or cold or hungry? Not a bit of it! These little boys who have been dragging boards up a ladder all the morning to build a tree house, hammering their thumbs black and blue as they nailed them, growl with frustration when summoned in to lunch. Smaller ones nearby, wet to the gills, are assiduously draining puddles in the driveway. A homesteader slogs out through February snows to prune his orchard, aglow with dreams of trees, open to the light, hanging red and gold with fruit in autumn. The home-loving housewife scrubs up her kitchen, rejoicing in the emerging godly order. Someone else is tenderly carrying the care of a beloved invalid without feeling it a burden. A cabinet-maker puts the final polish on a piece of furniture while, above, his small daughter rearranges

her doll-house, admonishes its occupants and irons their clothes with a miniscule iron. There a writer paces up and down sweating out a search for the exactly right word or phrase or picture. An instrumentalist runs over and over a passage, his attention sharpening with each repeat. An athlete drives himself mercilessly to achieve better form, greater endurance.

Are these various laborers finding their efforts "too much like work"? No, they are glorying in their activity. It is, they feel each moment, "what they came for."

Is there anything more to be desired than this?

Yet we see little children, who start out loving work, being taught to hate it. And where does this first happen? Usually in the schoolroom! That is where slavery is bred and why so few escape it. In a universe where all life is in movement, where every fact seen in perspective is totally engaging, we impose stillness on lively young bodies, distort reality to dullness, make action drudgery. Those who submit—as the majority does—are conditioned to a life lived without their human birthright: work done with the joy and creativity of love.

But what are schools there for if not to make every child fall so deeply in love with the world that he really wants to learn about it? That is their true business. And if they succeed in it, all other desirable developments follow of themselves.

In a proper school, no fact would ever be presented as a soulless one, for the simple reason that there is no such thing. Every facet of reality, discovered where it lives, startles with its wonder, beauty, meaning. It is the great strength of Rudolf Steiner schools that they know and do this. So, for example, where in other schools little scholars slavishly copy the skeletal figures known as the alphabet, Steiner school beginners first hear and then paint and act out a fairy tale about each letter that reveals the enchanting life hidden in both sound and symbol. "S" may be a serpent sinuous and subtle, "W" a wave, "M" the magic mountain into which "P" the Pied Piper vanishes. Those bugbears of childhood, the multiplication tables, being in fact all rhythm and dramatic progression and design, are invitations to dance and make up plays and start geometric

drawing. And every other piece of subject matter is approached in a way that allows it to yield up its soul-satisfying life.

Children heart-nourished by their learning remain heart-involved in their activities. They do not balk at even the least interesting housekeeping chores of home or schoolroom, but do them freely, from within, vigorously meeting the challenge of necessity.

Is it not to such as these that we may look for a heartfelt renewal of the social impulse that would let us do our work in life with love's enjoyment?

—MARJORIE SPOCK

Children Are Not Small

Three years ago, when I began my apprenticeship in the Waldorf School kindergarten, young children all seemed small to me: small not only in size, which they demonstrably were, but small also in character, in determination, in initiative, in ability to cope, in consideration of others, in wisdom. I had come from a background of teaching English in high school, and of working with graduate students in the Waldorf Institute. Not having any children of my own, I had very little practical experience to draw on. It seemed to me necessary to make a conscious effort to communicate with the children in my new class at their own level: just as I had to get down on my knees to tie their shoes, so, I felt, I would have to reach down to them in other ways.

I can't point to any particular events in those first few weeks that might have given rise to the change in my attitude. But that a profound change had indeed come about was brought home dramatically to me on the morning of the first school assembly four weeks after opening day. We led our kindergarten class into the gymnasium and shepherded them to their seats in front of the first grade. Then everyone rose. How small our children looked in comparison with the older grades! Could those tiny creatures really be the same personages with whom we had been dealing in the classroom? I realized then that, for me, the kindergarteners had grown in stature until they were every bit as tall as I was. There was really *nothing* small about them! After the assembly I was relieved and delighted to discover that they quickly and miraculously recovered from their diminished state: by the time we returned to the classroom, every one of them had regained his proper stature. From that moment on I began to study the mystery of the bigness of the pre-school child.

Little children are far from being characterless and alike. They are strong and definite personalities even at the age of four or five. It is not difficult to single out the unusually artistic child; he reveals himself in the way he colors or paints a picture; builds a castle with

blocks and decorates it with plants, stones, and other treasures; or dresses up in capes and veils. Then there is the child who loves to help others. He rushes to comfort a friend in tears, to escort him to the nurse, or to tie his shoes for him. Another thrives on practical work; he gardens, sweeps, and digs as though it were his second nature; he is full of initiative and volunteers for jobs without being asked.

Each child brings with him qualities that are uniquely his own. It is simply not true that young children are undifferentiated, waiting for life to make its impression on them. And frequently, I believe, those early qualities remain distinguishing characteristics all through life. Recently one of our high school teachers was asked to write a college recommendation for a senior who had been in our school since kindergarten. The teacher dug through the files, all the way back to the pre-school reports. And there, in a kindergarten report, he found a true description of the present senior. There were all of his essential qualities, not as fully unfolded as now, but unmistakably his, nonetheless.

It is often astonishing how decisively the pre-school child directs his own affairs. Our school discourages television watching, and avails itself of any suitable occasion to bring the point home to the parents and to the children themselves. During the last year the message has struck a responsive chord in at least two pre-schoolers. One boy in the nursery—a television addict before he came to our school—took the issue so much to heart that he now not only refuses to watch himself, but has adopted the cause as his own and tries to convert his friends when he goes visiting. Another little boy, also a faithful abstainer, was recently taken seriously ill and confined to an oxygen tent for several days. When the nurses tried to cheer him up by bringing television into his room, he protested so vehemently that the set was promptly removed: his school did not want him to look at television, and that held true in the hospital just as much as at home.

I still am amazed at how capable four- and five-year-olds can be, and how much they like to work. Now one might suppose that "work" at that age means playing with a toy broom, or splashing

busily in the sink. But our children sweep and dust their own classroom, and fold and put away all the doll clothes and dress-ups that they use in their play. They often bake bread or prepare other good things for mid-morning snack time, and they wash the dishes that they use in the process. Of course not all children take to work with equal gusto but, for some, real work is a favorite occupation. One little girl in particular comes to mind: she is happiest of all when she is working, and she pursues her task with a will of iron. When I need to get a job done quickly and well, it is usually she whom I put in charge. On one morning the doll corner looked as though a cyclone had hit it. The many doll clothes were scattered far and wide in the room, the dress-ups were all on the floor, the dishes and pots were sitting on a table, and the wooden stove stood in disarray. First my little worker systematically gathered the doll clothes and put them away on the appointed shelves; then she patiently folded many skirts and scarves, and neatly arranged a shelf of high-heeled shoes. Without being asked, she went right on to put away the dishes, and would not go outside to play until she had made the dolls' beds. When she had finished the entire, monumental task she came running to me and, with a big smile on her face, said: "Teacher, I love to work!" The doll corner was in perfect order.

These tiny children are far from being weak and defenseless. If a child receives unfair treatment from a friend, there is one young knight who rides into the fray to defend the one under attack. Although he is small in size, he is a mighty warrior when his sense of justice is aroused and not afraid to deliver blows. Often he will help to settle some dispute between others by offering a good suggestion as to how the difficulty can be overcome.

The young child often is astonishingly considerate and helpful. One boy in my class is especially sensitive to the feelings of others. One morning, when the three-year-old daughter of one of the teachers visited us, he immediately took her under his protection. On his own he got crayons and paper for her and sat down beside her to make a picture. When she began to take all of the crayons out of the basket and drop them one by one on the floor, he merely smiled and good-naturedly picked them up again.

Not only are children considerate of each other and of adults, but this consideration extends to nature, with which they feel a close kinship. One little girl is deeply interested in and concerned with any small creature she meets in our garden. Whenever she finds an ant or worm, she holds it gently in her hand and fondly calls it "my little friend". If she had her way, she would take all these 'friends' home with her, but she has come to accept that the play-yard is their home and that they are happiest there.

Above all, one must never for a moment think that children of this age are unwise. They have a wisdom that adults long for but must acknowledge they have lost. One often hears children talking about God and angels, and they speak with absolute certainty and warmth. I remember last spring when the nursery children and I were watching the tulips and daffodils come out in our garden. One little boy went running up to a beautiful red tulip, looked inside its cup for a moment and then, with a radiant face, said: "When flowers smile, it's the smile of God."

In the past three years I have come to realize how profound the mystery of the pre-school child truly is. Certainly I am still far from fully understanding it, but perhaps I can offer a picture that has helped me on my way. In early spring we not only see new life sprouting forth from the earth in the form of delicate shoots, we also feel the forces of life all around us, those powerful forces that draw the plants from the earth and cause the sap to rise in the trees. Everything is teeming with life. Yet outwardly all is still. This teeming of life makes no impression on our senses, but still we know unmistakably that it is there. It fills us with excitement and expectancy: what we experience is the intangible promise of nature, the promise of summer's fulfillment to come. The young child is like the spring. How small and delicate is his form, and yet what mighty forces are at work in him! The promise of what he is to become surrounds him, and we are allowed to experience it through our hearts.

— JANICE KREITNER

Choral Recitation

"Why is there so much choral recitation in the Rudolf Steiner School?" parents often ask. "Isn't it rather monotonous? Is it good to sacrifice the individual nuances of a single voice in this way? What do the children gain from it? Isn't it a waste of valuable time in which they should be learning?"

The children should and do, of course, recite individually in the classroom. They all sharpen their tongues on tongue-twisters and fill out their voices and lungs on exercises that have sonorous, rolling vowels. But they need more than this. The ten-year-old boy who still speaks in the high tones of a six-year-old, who does not yet place his heel firmly on the ground and whose thoughts wander off into space, like his voice, needs some individual work. The teacher encourages him to speak with the decisiveness and strength of a king or a general. She tries to get his voice to follow the imperious, downward gesture of command or she may have him stamp his foot as he speaks, for speech tends to follow the line and direction of a physical gesture. She may give him alliterations based on the strong, guttural sounds G and K to recite. As the boy works in this way over a period of time, you may gradually notice a new firmness and confidence begin to take hold of his whole nature. The girl who has a tendency to stutter needs harmonious, rhythmical verse to speak, for the rhythmical quality of her breathing is impaired. She needs, too, the kind of exercises that will help her to breathe out fully before she gasps too quickly for the next breath. The boy with the strident voice and the all-too-ready fists can be led to speak with a more relaxed fullness, to become sensitive to the modulations of his voice and the subtleties of the consonants spoken exactly and clearly in the foremost part of the mouth. Thus, through individual speech work the teacher becomes aware of the way in which each child is related to his speech organism, and the child's speech may be one avenue, and a very important one, for understanding, diagnosing his difficulties and helping his development. By guiding his speech, she is provided with one means of leading him to become more daring or gentler, less

heavy and insensitive or more down-to-earth, as the case may be. She can help him to breathe more deeply and freely and to become more harmonious in himself and in relation to the world.

If the pupils spoke only in chorus, minor speech defects might pass unnoticed or would not be sufficiently remedied. However, almost every speech difficulty is benefitted to no small degree by good choral speaking.

The day in the Rudolf Steiner School begins with speech exercises or poems recited in unison, for speaking awakens the one who speaks. Listening tends to make us sleepy. After concentrating on a long lesson, the class can be brought fresh and alive again by standing up and reciting a poem.

All this, however, is not so easy as it sounds. One boy yawns out loud and half collapses against his desk, a little girl fiddles with her neighbor's skirt. It takes experience, imagination and vitality to get the children to stand up straight and speak out with strength, clarity and enthusiasm. Once they come into the full swing of the recitation, color begins to rise in their cheeks and their eyes brighten. The teacher has attained her goal. Or, let us say, she has passed Scylla. Now she must beware her Charybdis; for once stimulated by this exciting element, the boys and girls—like wild horses—are apt to take the bits into their teeth and tear off into a chaos of galloping sound. To prevent disaster, the newly unleashed energy must immediately be guided into the exacting demands of sharply-formed consonants, of a particular phrasing of thought, of a deliberate change of rhythm. In concluding the recitation the teacher must bring it over into a self-contained quiet so that the children sit down again not only awakened but self-possessed and concentrated.

The poems which they learn are usually chosen because they express a highlight or epitomize the mood or content of their main lesson work. The teacher speaks to the class, before presenting the poem, in such a way as to develop an understanding for its thoughts and to create an atmosphere out of which it is to be spoken. She, of course, knows it by heart and has already worked out most of the changes and phrasing implicit in its form before she speaks it for them. They learn it entirely by ear. Only the older children some-

times learn poems cold from the printed page. Each day the class works together on one or the other element in the poem. One day the rhythm is stressed, another day the dynamic motion of certain lines or the quality of the consonants that color a verse. Gradually the poem emerges into greater fullness, contrasts and clarity. When it is finally recited in an assembly the teacher, alas, is almost always disappointed. The children have been sitting quietly for a long time; they are anxious to "be good" and she misses something of the joy, vitality and spontaneity which rang out when they were alone together in the classroom.

Speech chorus is actually a highly economic means of teaching, for through it, in a short time, a teacher can refresh, enliven and train each child in a large group and bring to each one simultaneously a variety of valuable experiences.

The pictures in a poem fill a child's imagination; through them his sympathy for the world and his enthusiasm for beauty are awakened. His ear learns to follow the melody of the vowels and the sculpture of the consonants. He breathes deep with the wonderful surge, swing, skip and ripple of the rhythm. And these things he learns to appreciate not just with an aesthetic passivity but with active artistry. As the poem moves from enthusiasm to defeat, from bitterness to joy, his whole inward being becomes more agile, pliable and lively. The boys soon learn that this is no idle "playing around," but that often every bit of their strength is not enough to fulfill the demands of a powerful passage, and that they must be every bit as active and skillful as on the baseball field if they are to cut the consonants sharply enough and throw them home in just the right dramatic slice or curve.

They learn, too, that art is practice and has definite laws of clarity, rhythm, phrasing and gesture. They learn that the speaking of a poem is new each time and each time requires new effort and new awareness. So they become a little less apt to expect life to be "easy," to expect things to turn out "right" at the first try, a little less apt to despair when efforts fail and to become interested not only in the final result but in the *processes* of achievement as well. Like the violinist they learn the difficulty and delight of disciplined tempo-

change and of dramatic crescendo that mounts like a wave, mounts, waits, and then—just at the right moment—breaks with full decisive force.

As the children work over and over again to form the consonants exactly and livingly, they grow more alert. As they speak with fuller power and carry a long thought through on one long breath, the diaphragm grows stronger and the circulation stirs. Indeed good, vigorous recitation constitutes one of the best possible physical "breathing exercises," for it requires a natural deep breathing which strengthens the diaphragm muscles. When the children speak out fully in reciting a poem, not only do their lungs grow strong through exercise and fill with freshness, but the soul, too, "breathes," so to speak, expanding in wonder and courage, contracting in concentrated thought or earnestness; and the "in-spired", ideal element of the poem acts as a kind of inner oxygen that quickens their thoughts with life and eagerness.

In this way they learn a good many poems by heart and these become a part of themselves. Because of them they look at the world with new eyes, with new sympathy and appreciation. Poems learned early in life mean something to us in a way that no other poems quite can. They belong to us and rise up in us at odd or at critical moments to comfort or to help us see the world in its full color and subtlety.

It is true that a poem recited in chorus may often seem monotonous, but if you listen carefully you will be able to hear that the children are learning certain basic laws of phrasing, of projecting the voice and are gaining a sense of dramatic direction quickly and intelligently.

There is still another important aspect of choral speaking. Under cover of the sound of the many voices, the timid children forget themselves or summon up the courage to speak out as they never would otherwise; the leaders take pride in helping carry the weaker voices, but as soon as they become over-ambitious or show off, it becomes quite objectively obvious that they "stick out" and spoil the chorus. Each child depends upon and must adapt himself

to the others, and this educates him to be an active, adaptable part of a social entity.

This is one of the times when a class is active as a whole. They all work together on shaping one and the same creation. They feel, at least at moments, the warmth, joy and thrill of this selfless companionship and are united by a common, ideal goal to which each one contributes his particular individual note. As a teacher works in this way with a group of children and experiences the concentrated, musical, sometimes lofty mood that is brought about in a classroom, she may well be reminded of how effective an instrument the ancient Greek chorus became in the days when the theater was a great educative force in the world.

— CHRISTY BARNES

The Mystery of Birth

The two mightiest happenings in all our lives—death and birth—we do not experience consciously. At birth we have not yet an earthly awareness; at death we have lost it. And it is because we cannot enter into these two moments with our full consciousness that they remain riddles to us. Only in other human beings can we observe them and come to any sort of knowledge. But even that is difficult. Many of us have watched over a friend or relative at his death; every mother is present at the coming of her child. To those assembled at a death-bed or at a birthing, the departure or the advent is intensely moving. Hope, sorrow, compassion, an intuition of the working of a heavenly destiny—all these, and more, are alive in their minds and hearts. But what is going on in the soul of him who is dying can only be guessed at, while what is present in the soul of him who is coming into the world is rarely considered. Everyone is happy that after the painful hours of labor the child is here, that he has sounded forth his first cry and that ready hands have welcomed him into their care. After that, life settles down again and few of us consider the real meaning of what has happened.

* * *

The general opinion seems to be that what occurs at the beginning of life—far more than at death—is a completely natural process, which one can understand quite well by means of scientific facts. To a certain extent this is true—but there are also contained in it wonders and riddles not exhausted by the ordinary concepts of biology and physiology. What happens at birth? An unknown being, never seen before, never here before, steps out of the darkness of the mother's body into the light of the world. After long waiting and enormous suspense—is it a boy or a girl, blonde or dark, well- or mal-formed?—all this is now revealed. The one who has been growing in secret for ten moon-months makes its appearance. But at the same time it undergoes a profound transformation. It becomes a creature of the earth. How does it do this—and wasn't it that before?

It was fully developed in the womb, had its arms and legs, eyes and ears, its heart was beating, it could move itself. But nevertheless it was not a creature of the earth. The body swimming in its embryonic fluid was not subject to gravity; the earth's coldness had not touched it; the mouth had not taken in nourishment; more than that, it had not breathed earthly air into itself. From this the unborn child had been protected by its mother's body. But at birth he is exposed to all this at once. Now he needs earthly air and food. He weighs ten pounds and will soon gain more, and he has to learn to hold up his small, heavy head, later his whole body, has to learn to stand and walk, to move freely within the field of the earth's gravity. He has to learn to withstand both the heat and the cold of earthly atmosphere, learn to find his own nourishment— and much more besides. What gives the child the possibility to do all this? Is it perhaps that which is hidden as a secret behind the first breath and cry?

The air that surrounds us is common to all men. Through it, all men are united in a very particular way, though we are not often conscious of the fact. Think of a schoolroom, a church, an office, even of a battlefield: each person assembled there has his own head, body and space—but each one breathes the air that is common to all, takes it into himself, breathes it out again. We all depend on and belong to the air around us; it gives us life and health. And only as breathing beings are we earth creatures; as children of our great foster-mother Air, all of us, we are bound to other men as brothers.

Into this family, then, the newborn child enters with his first breath, becoming with it an integral part of the brotherhood of man, to which he will belong until he draws his last breath. The first gasp of air brings about in the baby tremendous changes. The lungs expand; the opening between the ventricles of the heart closes up, separating from then on the red and the blue blood. The blood begins to flow through the lungs, to absorb the oxygen out of the air, to carry it to all parts of the body.

* * *

Science explains the first breath according to the natural, physiological needs of the body and finds it no different from all the other breaths men take during their life, except for the changes just

mentioned. But men in earlier times thought otherwise. The men of wisdom of long ago considered the first breath to be a unique and creative happening. Genesis describes how "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This is a picture whose reality we can understand when we look at everything brought about by that beginning intake of air beyond the physiological effects alone. When the mother and her doctor, nurse or anyone present, after the agony of labor, hear the first cry of the child, it releases in their souls a depth of feeling for the new earth-creature, who—with the help of his breath of earth-air—is now able to reveal his inner nature with this first utterance. An inside and an outside have come about, and these did not exist while the child was in the womb. This inside and outside will now remain throughout his lifetime and will develop. Out of the breathing and crying will come speech and through speech, just as through the air, a second, clearer bond between him and other men will arise. Speech, then, the transformed breath, is the path by which what is alive within us can be revealed. What is alive within? We know quite well: joy and sorrow, foolishness and wisdom, love and hate, everything that can be expressed through speaking, singing, rejoicing, weeping. And speech is also the bearer of thought and so can reveal what lives as spirit in our soul. We can feel our soul within us—could it have been drawn in with our first breath, as the words of creation imply?

The soul is not visible. It can not be weighed, measured, looked at, touched—and yet it is there. Many people today cannot say that they have a soul, not only because they don't feel it within them but even more, because they do not feel themselves as soul. They have not inwardly perceived that the soul and the body are two different members of their whole being, nor have they experienced their differences. Science, too, speaks of a body-mind unit. But that is a sign of weakness. With definite practice and some effort, it is possible for me to recognize the fact with certainty that I am a soul, that I live as soul within my body. Modern man is not often able to do this without help, and here the writings of Rudolf Steiner can show the way to strengthen the inner life and come to this recognition. As soon as one

begins to differentiate between body and soul, questions arise which ordinarily do not occur to people: Where did my soul come from? What is my relation as a spiritual being to my parents? How does a child's ego or individuality originate? How does the child come to his parents?

It is always amazing how seldom these questions arise or with how little persistence they are pursued. Even though, for the ordinary senses, the soul is imperceptible, it can definitely be surmised by a healthy intuition. In special circumstances—for instance, for someone present at an actual birth—this intuition can be so strong that it becomes a certainty, which will lead then to deeper understanding.

* * *

What happens so swiftly with the first breath, the entrance of the soul into the body, can gradually be guessed at, if not fully grasped. Many mothers have perhaps had the following experience: children often show something very special in the first hours of their life. It seems as if their inner being were to normal perception more open, more accessible; however, this soon disappears, when the baby grows gradually into a fat, contented infant. Throughout its whole childhood it must wait until its body develops into the instrument through which the Self can come into appearance and express its full nature. The child's body that develops within the mother is created in the first place through the forces of inheritance in father and mother. But from the very beginning, the soul of the future child is at work on this body. It is active, one can say, from the outside. It is not until the baby escapes from the embryonic membranes and leaves the mother's body that the soul induces the first breath, enters the child's body with that inspiration of earthly air, and from then on is active from inside. Birth is thus not only a natural process but it is also, in the highest sense, a mystery, a spiritual happening.

—DR. ERNST MARTI, M.D.

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Teaching Medieval Romances

In an era when all curriculum is being examined for its "relevance," Waldorf school teachers must often explain why they include *Parsifal* and other medieval literature in the third year of the high school curriculum. The following comments, based on my own experience in teaching these stories, may therefore be of some use to those who wish to consider this question.

It's quite true that young people like the stories uncommonly well and that not a few prefer them to current fiction. It may be the forthright and youthful style, or the appeal of the high and noble adventure, or perhaps the remoteness in time that pleases so greatly. And there may be deeper reasons, though these are not always appreciated at a first reading—not by the young or even the old.

The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, of *Tristan and Isolt*, and of *Parsifal*,¹ are accounts of the trials to be endured and the achievement to be won by all who seek the Ideal. This quest is timeless, of course, and perhaps more actively sought by the youth of today than outer evidence would indicate. Rudolf Steiner, founder of the first Waldorf school, suggested in several of his lectures and books that *Parsifal* was, in fact, a story of the future development of mankind, and no doubt Richard Wagner was moved by the same conviction in composing his opera.²

Another reason for teaching *Parsifal* to sixteen-or seventeen-year-old students is that the study of a great quest seems to lead young people toward a quest of their own. It is no news that sixteen-year-olds want to understand themselves and to get some hint of their future. But it is news that today's sophisticated youth should find inspiration in a 12th Century romance, at least it was to me. I

1. The text used is *Medieval Romances*, ed. Loomis (New York, The Modern Library, 1957). Unfortunately, this book is out of print. A replacement has not yet been found.

2. For a fine study of this work, see Dr. Franz E. Winkler's article on *Parsifal* in *Proceedings* No. 21, Myrin Institute, 1968.

made this discovery when I first asked each student to write a story in the spirit of a medieval quest, as part of a three-week course. To my astonishment, students produced in a few days readable, interesting stories, some more than twenty pages in length, that seemed to flow from eager pens. These adventure tales about knights and ladies were written with varying degrees of earnestness, of imaginative power, and of insight—a few, of course, with tongue-in-cheek. Yet almost all the stories contained some clue of self-recognition, magically released by the medieval spirit and especially, I believe, by the study of *Parsifal*.

A few thoughts as to why students succeed in this venture: First, the well-established symbols, adventures, settings, and themes provide forms into which personal experiences can be readily translated. These forms satisfactorily camouflage the writer's own personality, yet provide the much desired clarification, the transcendence of life's perplexities, and even the humor with which to deal with them. In medieval stories 'shortcomings' such as jealousy, fear, pride, and laziness appear in brilliant dress. Yet they are set forth matter-of-factly, without censoriousness, and without psychological probing. Most young people find it is just the right tone, and one that is not difficult to imitate. The foolish questions and social blunders of Perceval in Chretien de Troyes' story, the flinching of Gawain before the Green Knight's blade, the evasions of Tristan, are viewed with sympathy by most high school students. Though they may be awakened to similar shortcomings of their own, the knowledge of them becomes less painful, and the hope of overcoming them becomes somewhat brighter.

While the medieval romances serve to turn one's glance inward, they can also open a way outward. Parsifal's bold undertaking of a mighty task speaks to all who would undertake their own life-tasks and responsibilities. The stories of the Grail knights, of their ideal of sacrifice and service, may actually be understood better by youth than by age. The Middle Ages have sometimes been pictured as the youthful period of Western man's development, before he achieved his full manhood in the Renaissance. It is certainly evident that medieval men, like the young, were all too heavily burdened by the

demands of the flesh. Yet they understood the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God with a particular purity and clarity never since equalled. In medieval romances these ideals shine as light through a stained glass window, now blue, now red or gold—depending on the position of the viewer. A fresh glimpse of them may make us feel as Perceval felt, when he first encountered knights in armor:

When he saw them clearly as they appeared out of the wood and observed the jingling coats of mail and the bright, gleaming helmets and the lances and the shields, such as he had never seen before, and when he described the green and the vermillion catching the light of the sun, and the gold, blue, and silver, he was so delighted that he exclaimed: "Ah, Lord God, have mercy! These are angels that I see."

Under such inspiration, a first step toward placing one's own talents at the service of others can be readily made. I like to think of the writing of a story as a symbolic act in this direction.

— JEAN HAMSHAW

BOOK REVIEW: *HUMAN VALUES IN EDUCATION*; Rudolf Steiner. Ten lectures given in Arnheim, Holland, in 1924; translation by Vera Compton-Burnett; London, Rudolf Steiner Press, 1971.

There is a common, generally-voiced complaint that life today is a "rat race", an impersonal system whose problems escalate beyond the control of the individual. Sometimes the mechanical quality of our society seems almost to have a life of its own, and an ability to run away with us. Those who feel it so, will find that Rudolf Steiner, almost 50 years ago, voiced the same concern. Steiner saw a real crisis developing in man—a kind of spiritual sclerosis; and he fixed the roots of this problem in education.

The lecture cycle *Human Values in Education* establishes that the quality of an adult's life is either hampered or enhanced by his early education. If his head has been stuffed with facts, if his training has been analytical and theoretical, he will be unable to work usefully and practically in the world—and worse still, unable to love whatever work he must do. He will always figure out in his head how life could be better arranged, but the workaday details of living will escape his observation. This undermines his humanity and dims his sense of personal involvement. If he becomes an educator, the intellectual will educate by theories, moulding children of widely different gifts and temperaments according to a plan deemed best for all. In this way, Steiner points out, education becomes ever less practical, less human, less child-centered and more topic-centered.

Human Values in Education is rich in specific recommendations for a creative curriculum, and they make fascinating reading. But, lest the reader become entrapped by "methods", Rudolf Steiner returns again and again to the teacher as a perceptive individual. To observe accurately is the primary responsibility of every teacher in a Waldorf school. Education must grow from love. To love a child is to take an interest in his whole life and to observe those outward details that are the windows to his inner life. For this purpose, school is inseparable from home, and learning from physical well-being.

The book is full of suggestions for health and diet—not blanket rules applied to all children of a certain height and weight, but adjusted according to individual temperament. Many people are unaccustomed to the idea of connecting the food a child eats with his emotional or psychological behavior. Steiner shows how necessary and reasonable this is. Each child must be regarded as a whole person. In another chapter, he applies this same principle to peoples of different nationalities and occupations, whose temperamental traits are evident in the variety of their food and drink.

Those who know little of Waldorf education will find the general curriculum summarized in many vivid details. There are illuminating sections on the teaching of writing followed by reading, on history, botany, and music. General guidelines are given, based upon penetrating observation and thorough knowledge of the various periods of childhood. But in each subject, the initiative rests with the teacher to bring a fresh, living experience to the children, to touch their hearts, and above all, to make them active. Everything worth learning has some practical connection with modern life; the teacher's task is to find and use it.

This emphasis upon the practical, this urgency to reconnect the broken threads between education and life, is the central theme of the book. The task of Waldorf education, Steiner makes clear, is to initiate a new kind of thinking that will restore the *human* quality of life.

— CORNELIA SCHWARTZ

News of the Schools

KIMBERTON FARMS SCHOOL

Now more than ever we are aware of what's happening across the road at the farm, for as of this year the farm belongs to us. We are now really Kimberton *Farms* School. The little children have always enjoyed a trip to the barn to see the calves. Now the high school classes also make trips to the barn to gain new understanding and appreciation of what goes on there. They are learning how our Mr. Ford has built up, over the years, the herd of nearly 90 milkers, and how the whole farm is organized around their care and feeding. Mr. Ford, they have discovered, knows every cow by name! As a part of the new experience of dairying, the students are fathoming to some extent the secrets of cheese- and yoghurt-making.

We also have now a beautiful vegetable garden, laid out in three graceful terraces. The children have helped here, too, especially in building up the neat compost mounds lining one side of the garden.

A three-room ceramics workshop has been installed, an old root cellar the perfect holding place for work in progress: it is always damp.

N.D.

GREEN MEADOW SCHOOL

The school was an elementary grade school for sixteen years. In September, 1972, it made the leap into high school with a ninth grade. Let no one think this is an easy thing to do, in terms of teachers, equipment, buildings, money, or even ninth graders. The high school calls for something new and different in each of these areas. A gymnasium was essential and indeed stood there, newly erected six months earlier for the opening of school in September. Architect Walter Leicht had achieved a handsome, well-appointed building. Now, with the approach of the first tenth grade, the building problem becomes acute again. A building fund drive is in progress, building plans are being submitted so that before summer is here, ground can be broken for the building that will house new classrooms.

Interest and anticipation run high: a Eurythmy room, a music room, adequate lab rooms, curative eurythmy rooms, adequate office space. The needs will be met!

Perhaps it should be said that Green Meadow School is unique among Waldorf schools in the fact that it is part of the Threefold Foundation and School and as such enjoys the support and interest of a large and growing community. This means that the high school can draw upon teaching talents of community members from time to time, or even community facilities such as the kitchens of the guest house for domestic science courses or the farming know-how for the gardening classes.

* * *

As a newcomer to Waldorf education and to the Green Meadow School, as a former public school teacher and one who has taught in U.S. Army Dependents' Schools, I speak of an initial shock and feeling of disorientation. This is not a "free school" or an offshoot of the counterculture. It is a well-established, structured form of learning within a warm, humane and humanistic environment.

The students and teachers, happy participants in a unique community, are imaginative, creative and dedicated. The child is viewed in an essentially phenomenological manner, as an individual whose interests and needs are to be met thoughtfully and carefully and whose problems are dealt with in ways best for the child, considering present and possible future growth situations. The children come to school with joy and generally feel deprived and dismayed when illness compels them to remain at home for a time. The parents, children, faculty form one vibrant force that makes the school truly a living, growing part of everyone. Involvement with this force adds an unimaginable dimension to our lives. It cannot be described in any way that would be wholly comprehensible. You have to be here.
M.F.

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL, NEW YORK

For many years the school has sent its third grade pupils for a week to a farm in Massachusetts, for its main lesson study of farming and of the interdependence of earth, plants, animals, and man. We have long wished to extend this program to include annual visits to

a working farm by all classes from the third grade up. Our newly established Farm School in the hamlet of Harlemville, near Hillsdale, N.Y. is the answer to this long felt need. It will have a permanent staff (this year, five) and hostel facilities for 25-30 children or young people.

In direct and practical connection with the land, the community and the environment, such subjects as botany, earth science, surveying, astronomy, man and animal, American history and government will assume vital meaning. The relationship of teacher and student who live, work, learn and play together will be deepened.

The establishment, at the same time, of a school to serve the children of the area was begun with the founding of the Rudolf Steiner Country School in Camphill Village, Copake (a few miles south of Harlemville), in 1971. Next September it is planned that this school will transfer its classes (Grades one through four) to the Farm School. Further grades will gradually be added until a full school is achieved.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, SWITZERLAND

The Senior Slump is a phenomenon familiar to most high school teachers. With college acceptances in pocket, grades no longer matter—what else is there to work for?

Among the attempts to fill the vacuum are productions of plays, tutoring younger children in the school, neighborhood projects of clean-up, building, and beautifying, and individual senior projects.

European seniors may work under somewhat different conditions: their Waldorf schools do not usually give graded reports, and a smaller percentage of graduating seniors is headed for college. Those who do intend to go on to universities usually stay on for a "thirteenth year," specifically designed to prepare them for college entrance. Yet there, too, the need is felt for seniors to prove their mettle, to spend the last part of their school year at work on an individually chosen task. From a recent Bulletin of the Rudolf Steiner School in Basel, Switzerland, we quote a selection from a listing of last year's Senior Projects:

Three Stages in the Life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
The Indians of Bolivia and Peru
Continuing Transformations of Envelopes
Sculpture (Uprising Form)
The Evolution of Man and Humanity
Social Problems in Modern Music
Sir Francis Drake, Pirate Par Excellence
Description of and worked pieces in Seven Kinds of Wood
The Hobby (Building of a Glider)
Guilt, Conscience, and Redemption in Works of World Literature

S.B.

Advice on TV

The most important thing we've learned
 So far as children are concerned,
 Is never, never, NEVER let
 Them near your television set
 Or better yet, just don't install
 The idiotic thing at all.
 In almost every house we've been,
 We've watched them gaping at the screen.
 They loll and slop and lounge about
 And stare until their eyes pop out . . .
 O did you ever stop to think,
 To wonder just exactly what
 This does to your beloved tot?
*It rots the senses in the head;
 It kills imagination dead;
 It clogs and clutters up the mind;
 It makes a child so dull and blind
 He can no longer understand
 A fantasy, a fairyland.
 His brain becomes as soft as cheese;
 His powers of thinking rust and freeze;
 He cannot think — he only sees.*
 "All right!" you'll cry. "All right," you'll say,
 "But if we take the set away,
 What shall we do to entertain
 Our darling children? Please explain."
 We'll answer this by asking you,
 What used the darling ones to do?
 How did they keep themselves contented
 Before this monster was invented?
 Have you forgotten? Don't you know?
 We'll say it very loud and slow:

THEY . . . USED . . . TO . . . READ. They'd READ and
READ AND READ AND READ, and then proceed
To READ some more. Great Scott! Gadzooks!
One half their lives was reading books.
The nursery shelves held books galore!
Books cluttered up the nursery floor!
And in the bedroom, by the bed,
More books were waiting to be read.
Such wondrous, fine, fantastic tales
Of dragons, gypsies, queens and whales
And treasure isles, and distant shores
Where smugglers rowed with muffled oars,
And pirates wearing purple pants,
And sailing ships and elephants,
And cannibals crouching round the pot,
Stirring away at something hot . . .
The younger ones had Beatrix Potter
With Mr. Toad, the dirty rotter,
And Squirrel Nutkin, Pigling Bland,
And Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and—
Just how the Camel Got His Hump
And How the Monkey Lost His Rump,
And Mr. Toad, and bless my soul,
There's Mr. Rat and Mr. Mole —
Oh, books, what books they used to know,
Those children living long ago.

So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,
Go throw your TV set away
And in its place you can install
A lovely bookshelf on the wall.
Then fill the shelves with lots of books,
Ignoring all the dirty looks,
The screams, the yells, the bites and kicks
And children hitting you with sticks—
Fear not, because we promise you
That in about a week or two
Of really nothing else to do,
They'll now begin to feel the need
Of having something good to read.
And once they start — oh boy, oh boy —
You watch the slowly growing joy
That fills their hearts. They'll grow so keen
They'll wonder what they'd ever seen
In that ridiculous machine,
That nauseating, foul, unclean,
Repulsive television screen.
And later, each and every kid
Will love you more for what you did.

RONALD DAHL

(From Charlie and the Chocolate Factory)

BOOKS ON EDUCATION BY RUDOLF STEINER

Essentials of Education
The Roots of Education
The Education of the Child
The Four Temperaments
Discussions with Teachers
The Study of Man
Education as a Social Problem
The Younger Generation
Human Values in Education
A Modern Art of Education

BY OTHER AUTHORS

Eva Frommer, Voyage through Childhood
John F. Gardner, The Experience of Knowledge
A. C. Harwood, The Way of a Child
A. C. Harwood, The Recovery of Man in Childhood
Elisabeth Grunelius, Early Childhood Education and the
Waldorf School Plan
Karl König, The First Three Years of Childhood
H. von Baravalle, Rudolf Steiner as Educator; Geometric Drawing
C. von Heydebrand, Childhood, a Study of the Growing Soul

* * *

Please ask for further information

THE WALDORF SCHOOLS OF NORTH AMERICA

Detroit Waldorf School

2555 Burns Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48214

Green Meadow School

Hungry Hollow Road, Spring Valley, New York 10977

High Mowing School

Wilton, New Hampshire 03086

Highland Hall

17100 Superior Street, Northridge, California 91324

Kimberton Farms School

Phoenixville, R.D. # 2, Pennsylvania 19460

Mohala Pua School

Niu Estates, 350 Ulua Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96821

Rudolf Steiner Country School

Copake, New York 12516

Rudolf Steiner School

15 East 79th Street, New York City, New York 10021

Rudolf Steiner School

3241 Brush Drive, Falls Church, Virginia 22042

Toronto Waldorf School

1087 Lillian Street, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada

Sacramento Waldorf School

3750 Bannister Road, Sacramento, California 95628

Vancouver Waldorf School

2260 Philip Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Waldorf School, Adelphi University

Cambridge Avenue, Garden City, New York 11530

Washington Waldorf School

Hearst Hall, Wisconsin Avenue and Woodley Road, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20016

