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Child and Man

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CHILD AND MAN

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WINTER 1965

VOL. II, No. 2

Editorial Board

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CHILD AND MACHINE

"MAN," said Carlyle, "is a tool-using animal." If this is a true description, then today—in so far as a machine is merely a more complicated tool—man might conceivably be styled a machine-using animal.

The difference lies only in how far man and the activity are connected. To strike a blow with a hammer is something in which man and hammer are completely identified. To pull a lever or press a switch which operates a machine is something quite different. Between him and the effect he produces lie all kinds of technical and mathematical processes which no one person can know all about, or needs to know.

Everyman is a magician nowadays, who just waves a magic wand and things happen. Invisible giants in the shape of natural forces fly to do his bidding. We are all kings and emperors now, commanding vast hordes of mechanical and automatic slaves to do our work for us.

How far will it go? Rather, how far should it go? Or are we, like the sorcerer's apprentice, unable to stop what we have so enthusiastically started?

The machine age has already caught up with teaching, for instance. The possibility of machines taking over our teaching is already imminent, and programmed instruction from some master mind with electronic minions to do the chores of marking and checking is already on the drawing board. "Teaching machine" is a term heard almost as often as "teacher" these days. If teachers as we know them are needed at all in the future, it may be only in their original capacity as Greek pedagogues—just somebody to take a child to school and carry his books (or, more likely, his computer) for him.

But what sort of child will result from all this? It is pretty certain he will be more intellectually brilliant. But will he be as human as he should be?

We shall have to see, and that is the really dreadful thing about it. For if this teaching machine business really gets going we shall not know until several generations have passed just what the ultimate effect will be. That is always the problem when a gigantic experiment of this nature is being carried out.

We believe that extreme caution should be used in applying mechanical techniques to the upbringing of children. Our technical civilization is only the end product of some centuries of development; in spite of its fascinating advantages, it is not yet the goal of human existence. Though our children certainly have ultimately to live in it all, they should be allowed while they are young to grow into it. It should not be thrust upon them.

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That "growing into it" is what we believe education to be; and the best means of helping the child to grow is to have those who have grown—in the fullest sense of the word—around him. This is why in all Steiner schools all teaching aids—even those beautifully elaborate textbooks and "Books of Knowledge" that pour from our publishing houses—are suspect.

The essence of human life is ultimately human contacts, human understanding, living together humanly, actual human relationships. All children need a long and thorough contact with human beings—parents, teachers, neighbours, relatives, their own friends—before they come under the conditioning of technology. The school as a social unit is our greatest hope for the future, irrespective of how efficiently it implants knowledge in the child for subsequent scientific and technical progress.

Anything therefore which comes between the world of the person as teacher and that of the child, anything which makes a mere thing more important and fascinating to a child than man himself, must inevitably and perhaps irrevocably dehumanize him.

LAST-MINUTE pressures have led to unavoidable changes in the plan for this winter issue of *Child and Man*. The reader will note that, apart from the above editorial, only one of the three announced articles on the machine in education has emerged. But in their place appears a comparison of Steiner and Piaget, and a plea for renewed respect for a child's play.

STEINER AND PIAGET

R. Lissau

HAVE you ever tried to visualise what, for instance, a tree is to a blind person? You will need to have had long contact with blind people, to make a great effort of will and imagination, and even then you will be aware of the tentative nature of your concept.

Almost equally difficult is the question of what a tree is to a five-year-old. But here we are helped by the descriptions of the psychological and intellectual development of the child which Steiner and others have given us. The teacher finds in his day-to-day practice the confirmation of what at first sight may seem a theory, and as his experience grows he deepens and widens his imaginative understanding of the ages of childhood.

If the stages in the development of the child as described by Steiner are facts, it is reasonable to assume that one day child psychology must stumble across them, confirm them, and modify or reject their interpretation. However, so great is the gap between Steiner's insight into the developing personality, and the narrow questions which child psychology asks and endeavours to answer by experimental and statistical methods, that for years there was simply no point of contact whatever.

This changed, however, with the coming into prominence of the Geneva school of psychologists which was started by Professor Piaget. His appearance in, and effect on the field of child psychology can be compared to that of Freud a generation earlier regarding general psychology. His findings and methods are attacked as vague and unscientific by those who, themselves without any comprehensive ideas, are engaged in the routine of scientific investigation.

Piaget finds in the child three stages of intellectual development. Their sequence is constant, and the differences between them of a qualitative nature. His work is centred on only one aspect of the development of the child, though a most important one, the development of concept formation, while Steiner describes significant stages and critical changes concerning the whole child's body, soul and mind.

Nevertheless there is agreement between Steiner and Piaget on what for the former are the two most important crises in intellectual development. According to Piaget the child at seven has attained the ability to perform mental operations concerning concrete objects, and begins at about twelve to think formally and abstractly. There is further agreement between the two men about puberty not being just a biological change, but much wider adjustment of the child to the adult world.

To judge the impact which Piaget's ideas have made on contemporary psychology it is good to turn to a recently published book* by J. G. Wallace, *Concept Growth and the Education of the Child*. Wallace reviews research on conceptualisation, particularly that of the last 10 years. He first deals with work done by the behaviourists and then gives the major part of his attention to ontogenetic studies. He reviews about 500 different studies, reports their contents, compares their findings and suggests further lines of research. There is no sign of a theoretical bias, and anybody who wants to find out facts for himself can surely do no better than turn to this conscientious book.

What we can do here is to weigh up the facts and consider their relevance for actual teaching in general, and for that of a Steiner school in particular. In general, the huge effort described in the book seems to be singularly irrelevant. "After some 80 years of psychological investigation and a discontinuous history of 40 years of laboratory experiments," Wallace writes, "our fund of accepted knowledge on the subject of conceptualisation comprises so little of consequence that it is hardly worth compiling."

Nor is the practical aspect much more promising. If (a big "if" indeed) results can be obtained, it might be possible to accelerate the process of logical abstraction and thus to train a greater number of mathematicians and scientists. At present it seems that this will remain mere wishful thinking.

Further, the particular position of the behaviourists stands out. They who treat man as an animal or a biological machine have had apparently a striking success with teaching machines and programmed learning, but the effect (calculated?) is the loss of man in the act of learning. They have been barren in increasing our understanding of the development of the child. Faced with Piaget's findings, they have usually preferred studied neglect to a revision of their learning theory.

Those who teach in Steiner schools get some supporting evidence for their practical work in Wallace's book. Nativism, the view that all processes of thought are present already in young children, has been found to have no factual basis (page 233). Experiments have also shown that there is no basis for rational explanation and causal thinking before the age of 12 and therefore all efforts in this direction are a waste of time (page 155). There are indications that Piaget-type concepts (i.e. essential, qualitative changes occurring at definite ages) can be found over a wider range of concepts than at first thought.

*National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1965.

THE MACHINE AS TEACHER

Sylvia Eckersley

AMONG the ever-growing list of audiovisual aids and mechanical devices now used in schools—films, radio, television, closed-circuit television, language records, tapes, duplicating machines—two are generally unfamiliar outside the world of education, and claim to be unique. One of these is the overhead projector. The other is the teaching machine.

Of the overhead projector it is claimed that it is the only kind of visual apparatus which does not impose restrictions on the teachers; of the teaching machine that it is the only teaching aid which inculcates a definite content of knowledge, and which therefore, for a time at least, dispenses with the teacher entirely. Here we have two opposites, which it may be interesting to look at more closely.

The overhead projector allows a teacher, sitting at his desk and facing his class in an undarkened room, to make a small quick sketch which is instantly visible to everyone. It is projected on to a screen above and behind him, in brilliant illumination. The teacher may choose a slide, a map, a page of a book, and project it in the same way. This device does not take the place of a blackboard, but is found by more and more teachers to be an invaluable adjunct to it. Perhaps because it does not invite argument, it receives relatively little publicity.

The teaching machine allows a child or an adult sitting alone to be given a lesson. The term teaching machine is usually applied to a metal box which displays a "programme". It may be extended to include a book which does the same.

In either case, the programme is the essential part. This is a series of simple statements and questions which lead the pupil in small graded steps through a given area of subject matter. There are two kinds of programme, the linear and the branching.

In a linear programme each question leads straight to the next, and all pupils follow the same path. Spaces or holes in the text are left for answers. In a branching programme a pupil may be faced with multiple-choice answers. If he chooses the wrong answer he may be sent back to think again, or pushed round a longer way, with extra help and hints, to rejoin the main path later.

A teaching machine has been compared to a kind of textbook in which each page only becomes visible when the one before it has been mastered. It sets out to elicit some kind of "active response" from the pupil at every step, and to make things so easy for him that he rarely gives a wrong answer, and is therefore continually encouraged.

The idea behind programmed learning was developed by an American Harvard professor, Dr. B. S. Skinner. He made experiments with pigeons, extending Pavlov's methods to condition them in minute sequential steps towards desired movements. Eventually he persuaded them to play table tennis. Later Dr. Skinner's discoveries were applied to the education, or rather the training, of human beings.

The inventors of programmed learning do not deny that it involves a species of conditioning. They argue that every learning process does so, and that a programme merely performs this function quickly and efficiently. It can leave the teacher free, they say, for his true role in leading discussions and helping individual pupils.

Extraordinary achievements are claimed for the machine. A bright child gets through a term's maths course in two weeks; a slow child who has spent years at school unable to read, suddenly catches up with his class; a child who has been away ill, has no trouble at all in bridging the gap.

About the future of the teaching machine there is wide divergence of opinion. Conservatives in the movement will say, "Of course all this talk about teachers or machines is sheer nonsense. The teaching machine is simply a new kind of textbook, one teaching aid among many which the teacher has at his disposal."

Yet the "either-or" talk continues; enthusiasts see the machine as the ideal solution to the teacher shortage, and extremists imagine a future in which teachers and schools become redundant and all pupils learn at home on their own machine, linked to a central educational institute.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of teachers remain either against the machine or very doubtful about them. They have been accused of ignorance and prejudice, but the doubts have not been dispelled.

Will not a child, it is asked, who works alone at a teaching machine, become cut off from his fellow pupils and from his teacher? When the first charm of the new toy has worn off, will he not become bored with the endless facile questions? If he is an inventive or "divergent" child, will he not find it intolerable that every question has one right answer, and that he can contribute nothing?

All these difficulties are admitted, but cheerfully, as things which research will conquer. "There will certainly remain a pupil-teacher relationship," says the French journal *l'Education Nationale*. "but entirely disincarnated, almost purely intellectual."

Many people believe that programmed learning is suitable for "tool" subjects, like mathematics or mechanics, but not for subjects such as literature. To repudiate this a recent book devoted a sample programme to the sonnet.

Yet all the time one feels that this division of children into "divergent" and "convergent", of subjects into "tool" and "non-tool", is arbitrary, and that it misses the point.

Everywhere interest concentrates on intellectual achievement—how quickly a child can absorb a subject—rarely on the whole child. Boredom is often discussed, but that there is, for instance, a serious problem of fatigue, only emerges on reading between the lines, taking to eye-witnesses, or making simple experiments oneself.

Again, interest concentrates on the psychology of learning, rarely on the nature of knowledge. As long as a programme is ably written, up-to-date, logically arranged and aimed at the right mental age-group it is regarded as satisfactory; and the idea of a child learning something on his own at a machine first, and then joining a class discussion about it afterwards is found acceptable too.

But the paradox here is that precisely because the machine's emphasis on learning is too early and too continuous. ("Am I getting it right? Am I being clever?"), the child misses the vital learning experience—the moment of wonder in which a new fact is revealed.

The teacher's role is not simply to discuss facts after the event, pouring personal interest on to something intrinsically rather dull. His role is to create the moment of wonder, and to choose, as an artist in a unique situation, which of the myriad facts of a phenomenon he will present; the instrument he uses for this (an instrument often abused) is his voice. "When I go to school, I want a teacher, not this machine," said a little girl of five who had been taught to read on one. "A teacher can talk to you."

Many of the arguments in favour of teaching machines are simply arguments against bad teaching. Machines do not get impatient or angry; they respond to what you do; you can always understand them. It almost seems as if the machine parodied what the good teacher ought to be doing anyway; as in closed-circuit television, which shows him his lesson when it is over.

APPRENTICES TO CULTURE

Alan Howard

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IT is not altogether impossible these days to build a complete school—architecturally speaking—from the top downwards. To do this, however, with its educational programme and activities is another matter. Yet something like this has been done in the Hiberniaschule in the Ruhr, whose new building at Wanne-Eickel comprises classrooms and workshops for the education of the children who live—and who are for the most part destined to work—in this heavily industrialized district of west Germany.

It all started in 1945 when Dr. Emil Kühn began the education of apprentices in the furniture industry. He was president of the industry's institute (Fachverband der Möbelindustrie) in west Germany, and a member of the executive council of the Union of Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner) Schools (Bund der Waldorfschulen).

Dr. Kühn was convinced of the need to integrate education for culture for a chosen few—a survival from the past—with education for the modern world, which must be something for all. It has taken mankind hundreds of years, he argued, to arrive at the highly technical civilization of today, and young people must not be indiscriminately thrown into it, but educated for it. He, and later, Mr. Reinhold Börner of the firm Hibernia-Chemie, enlisted the help of a resourceful and courageous educationist, Dr. Klaus Fintelmann, and started apprentice courses on these lines.

It was soon discovered that it was possible to decrease the hours spent on training, so that the apprentices could be given something of a general cultural and aesthetic education as well. Before long neighbouring firms became interested and joined in, particularly Hibernia-Chemie from which the school derives its name.

At first the school was for boy apprentices only. Then, women being also part of modern industrial life, girl workers and trainees were included. By 1960 it had become an independent school, under Dr. Fintelmann, comprising what corresponded to classes 9 to 12 of an ordinary Waldorf (Steiner) school.

From the first, however, it was obvious that if the school was really going to fulfil the ideas of its founders it had to do something about the education of its pupils before they took up their apprenticeship. The integration of a young person into the world of modern industry from 14 onwards cannot really be done properly if before that time he has been starved of imagination and art. So ultimately eight classes were added to the school, for children from six-plus to 14, together with a kindergarten.



"Water", one of four windows at the Hiberniaschule illustrating the elements earth, water, air and fire. These and other windows at the school were designed and made in cut glass by Messrs. W. Roggenkamp at Stuttgart-Schönberg.



"Fire", another of the four windows at the Hiberniaschule illustrating the elements earth, water, air and fire.

Inspired as it was by the spirit and aims of Steiner's original Waldorfschule in Stuttgart (a project, incidentally, which was also promoted by a group of industrialists), the founders of the Hiberniaschule found the Waldorf school pattern the most suitable for their purpose. Its humanistic approach to all objects of study gave them the prototype for integrating the specific demands of practical training with an effective general education.

So, in the Hiberniaschule, after the usual period in the kindergarten, the children enter the primary school where for six years, under the same class teacher, they learn the basic skills and associated subjects with the usual artistic-imaginative emphasis common to all Waldorf schools.

For the first four years, with specialist teachers, they also learn English and Russian. In the fifth and sixth years Russian is dropped in order to get in some Latin and Greek as a cultural amplification of what they will be doing in history and the general growth of civilization, in those years. English is kept up till the twelfth year. During this primary period all children learn to sing and to play an instrument, and they have regular painting, drawing and handwork lessons, and do creative work in clay and wood in classes 5 and 6.

The middle school begins with class 7 and ends with class 10. Here practical and theoretical work begin to be more sharply divided. The children's attention is drawn more directly and separately to observation, so that the faculty of judgment can begin to grow out of the more spontaneous responses of earlier years. Gardening, carpentry, and blacksmith and locksmith work begin, together with, in classes 9 and 10, machine construction and practical electrical and chemical work.

A greater distinction is now made between the sexes, and at this stage the girls turn more to practical work in housecraft, nursing, domestic science and the care of young children. It is during this period, too, that the pupils are encouraged to think about their future, so that by the end of this time they have more or less decided on it.

This enables the boys and girls in the upper school—classes 11 and 12—to concentrate more on the practical work connected with their chosen occupation: gardener, joiner, fitter, turner, mechanic, electrician, laboratory assistant, child welfare, catering, &c. The timetable and the curriculum are adjusted accordingly.

In both the middle and the upper school departments the Hiberniaschule is nevertheless a *school*, full-time and day.

Theoretical and cultural work and language, religion, music and eurhythmy are done by everybody in the morning in the middle school. In the afternoon the pupils separate for practical workshop activities and artistic work in modelling, painting and carving. This procedure is reversed in the upper school, where practical instruc-

tion—now completely aligned with the pupil's chosen careers—takes place in the morning, in school, on the factory floor and in the training centres of neighbouring firms; in the afternoon the pupils continue their theoretical cultural work in the usual way.

The Hiberniaschule workshops form one half of the school building. They are joined to the classrooms which form the other half by a foyer, which is the main entrance to both, and which is artistically decorated to symbolize the ideals of the school.

These workshops are real workshops, just as the school is a real school, turning out first-class products needed for the upkeep of the school. The school garden supplies vegetables for the school kitchen and the midday meal, the carpenter's shop furniture and apparatus, the machine shop appliances for us in the school.

When the new building was opened in May last year the whole electrical installation had been put in as part of the practical work of the trainee-electricians, who also maintain it. In a similar way the school nursery, cookery and laundry are looked after by the girls who work in this line.

Tremendous reality and vitality are also given to the school from the fact that here the college of teachers (which in a Waldorf or Steiner school takes the place of the head) had to be expanded to include persons who, while not teachers in the strict sense, none the less impinge somewhere or other on the life and work of the school. At the college's weekly meetings and Easter conferences these persons make their contributions no less than the teachers, and education in theory and practice is placed in its widest possible context.

"One of the main tasks of education", writes Dr. Fintelmann * "is to transform a child's play into capacity to work."

It would appear that the Hiberniaschule is receiving what many feel must come in the school of the future. The conviction is practically worldwide that the concepts "school" and "education" must be completely rethought. The whole pattern of social and economic life has changed since the time when grammar schools and universities became the arbiters of culture. The purely academic criterion must expand into something wider.

*In one of the eight articles on the Hiberniaschule in the August, 1964, number of *Erziehungskunst* (published by the Bund der Waldorfschulen at 44 Haussmannstrasse, Stuttgart, West Germany).

SUN AND MOON

Roland Everett

A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD boy once wrote this little verse to his teacher who happened to be absent because of illness:

And the sun does rise
for you and me
And I do die like you.
The sun does set
for you and me
And you do live like me.

Are these enigmatic lines written merely out of a childish feeling for sound and rhythm, or do they perhaps allow us a direct glimpse into the life of a young child? Do they not tell us that the inner world of dreams has to die when the first morning sunrays awaken us to this world?

Whatever interpretation one may wish to give to the above words, the transition from a world of phantasy to a world of outer reality nevertheless must take place and it is just this passing from the golden lands of childhood to the other shore of earthly reality which forms the basis of education. The teaching approach therefore has to take its cue from the child's particular stage of development.

Thus, using the picture language of fairy tales and ancient legends, the teacher is able to talk to the young in their own language. During the stormy passage of puberty he will endeavour to give the adolescents a feeling of security and steadfastness so that they can find their bearing and take over their own leadership once the shore of adulthood has been reached.

If one can accept this view of education, it becomes clear that teaching does not mean merely the imparting of knowledge, however important this may be. The choice of a subject and, above all, the way in which it is introduced, can either help or hinder the development of a child, it can unravel psychological knots or it can cause them because, owing to their not yet awakened consciousness, children are very sensitive and vulnerable.

At a certain stage in Steiner schools the pupils love to hear the Theseus story in which a vicious robber captured travellers to offer them a bed for the night. If his victims happened to be rather small, they were tied to the bedposts and stretched until they fitted the bed, but if they were too tall, they were cruelly cut to size. How often do we grown-ups submit children to a similar kind of procedure, simply because we approach them from our own grown-up point of view.

Now let us imagine quite a different picture, that of a newly born baby peacefully yet vigorously sucking its mother's milk. We know that nature has wisely ordained that the only kind of food substance which can be assimilated at this stage flows directly

through the mother. Rudolf Steiner tells us how in our teaching we, too, must so prepare, mould and "warm" our substance for learning that it becomes good nourishment for the child. This is the "milk of human kindness," which should flow from education. One so often can trace disturbances, maladjustment and delinquency to the lack of just this kind of milk, however much money or material comfort may have been available in the home, because love and understanding of the child are its absolutely essential ingredients.

There is no need to fear that teachers who are striving towards such a way of teaching may become personally too involved in their charges. Just as a patient will feel that his doctor really understands him personally, if the doctor has made the right diagnosis and given the proper treatment, so will the child feel that his teacher really understands and cares for him, even if the teacher has remained objective.

By now the reader may wish to know where or how to find the recipe for such an apparent panacea. It is available in the many lectures and books on education by Steiner and his followers but inquirers should remember that a recipe does not provide ready-made articles like a slot-machine, but that a great deal of devoted study and child observation is necessary before this kind of soul nourishment can be served.

Steiner somewhere speaks of the teacher as the awakener of the child, and compares him with a humble servant in a house who may be called upon to wake up a very important personality in the morning. We know from Roman history that even a gaggle of geese could awake the Romans to save their city from the enemy.

In conclusion one small example from an astronomy period may be briefly outlined to illustrate how a subject can be presented to 12-year-old pupils.

When hearing or reading about the vast empty spaces of the universe in which our earth revolves like a speck of dust around a small and comparatively insignificant sun, one could easily feel that nothing matters much in our lives. But such a feeling would discourage initiative, it could even lead to nervous tendencies because of lack of security, especially if such a feeling remained hidden within the subconscious. In Steiner schools we therefore base a great deal of our teaching of astronomy on direct observations of the sun, moon, planets and the fixed stars.

For instance, the children were asked to compare the sun with the moon and soon the following contrasts were described:

SUN	MOON
warm	cold
day	night
awake	dreamy
golden light	silver light
flower-like	watery
giver of life	appears dead

feels near
active light

feels distant
passive (reflected) light

Two poems which were recited brought these contrasts further down into the will life of the children. The first one was the opening lines from Goethe's *Faust*, beginning with "The Sun makes music as of old/Amid the brother spheres of Heaven". The second one was *Silver* by W. de la Mare: "Slowly, silently, now the Moon/Walks the night in her silver shoon".

Note how in the first example the verb, always the most active part of speech, directly follows the noun, whereas in *Silver* it is held back right into the second line. The rhythm of the Goethe lines accentuates the quality of will, but in the second poem the rhythm has the opposite effect.

The children then made imaginary trips to the moon, describing in their compositions the dead, silent and desiccated landscape there, which they also illustrated with coloured pencils. Most of the boys gave technical details of their moon rocket, whereas the girls generally found more direct access to the moon via imaginary dreams.

Finally the vital question arose: if the moon is dead, is there any sense in its existence? It was reassuring to hear loud protests over such a "stupid" question and the effects of the moon on our earth were discovered in the tides of the seas, the germinating power of seeds, the rising of plant sap (fortunately a farmer teacher from Brazil could furnish us with his own direct experience), the embryonic period of nine lunar months, and even the moon's unbalancing influence upon some "lunatics", i.e. "moon-struck" people.

FIRST VISIT

Ruth Crandell

WHAT you see when you first look at a rose depends as much upon you as it does the rose. And so it is with a Steiner school, whether it be in Europe, America, Africa or Australia.

What does it mean—no headmaster? A class teacher through eight years? Eurythmy? Arithmetic taught from the whole to the part? The main lesson with a three-day rhythm? Fairy tales, myths, legends, Norse, Greek and Roman history taught developmentally? Foreign languages from the nursery class through class 12? A college of teachers?

The Steiner school I visited, I saw with the eyes of a teacher who had watched many children pass through the school years into adulthood in one community. I had seen the look of lustre

that curiosity gives, and change in teenagers to defiance or defeat.

I had also questioned and studied in five universities. I had read research papers to fill shelves. The words of intelligent social scientists haunted me. I was familiar with the warnings of psychiatrists and psychologists. (Our alienated society. . . .) I was urged on by the search for values in education, for truly human relations.

The day I came to look at Steiner education I was looking for a way to educate that restored the dignity of man to man. But I was filled with doubts. It won't be real, as it's too idealistic, it exists only on paper. If it *is* as good as it looks on paper, why have I never heard of it before?

A Mr. Smith, a class teacher, took me into my first main lesson. Time to shake hands with 20 children? Could I do that? What would children think? But wait. What did these children's faces reveal?

A whole class stood, each awaiting a turn to shake hands and share a direct look with his class teacher. A child near me was looking eager, yet uncomfortable. When her turn came, she told of an accident the night before; she had fallen from her bicycle, and her leg was stiff. In a few minutes Mr. Smith knew the state of mind, heart and body of each child.

Another shock—prayer. I bowed my head. But no. "Excuse me class," said Mr. Smith and, then turning to me, "We are going through the vowels." As I watched the movements of the children and listened to the voice of the teacher, I remembered eurythmy described as the visible expression of the word through movement of the limbs. "Ah," said Mr. Smith and I thought. "Wonder at the creation? A blue egg in a small child's hand."

The main lesson began. The subject was "Jason and the Golden Fleece." I knew the story and was allowing my mind to wander to what Mr. Smith had told me about the school's college of teachers. "There is no head master," he had said. "The key to our education is a college of individuals who have the child as a common goal. Things aren't always sweetness and light. But we've chosen this responsibility—growth together." I remembered much that I had read of group dynamics and leaderless group experiments. Here it was in action.

Suddenly I was drawn back to the story and realized I didn't know it so well after all. "And Jason and his companions," Mr. Smith was saying, "met an old woman. Her body was withered and bent, but there was wisdom deep in her eyes."

Mr. Smith stopped, looked at the class in a quizzical way and asked, "Now wisdom? You hear a lot about knowledge these days. Is it the same as wisdom?" Voices answered, "No." Finally one child said, "Well, when you're little you know things, just know them all by yourself. Then you begin to grow and read lots of books and get lots of facts and knowledge, but you forget

all that you *just knew*. Now you have knowledge, but you don't have wisdom."

Lunch, in an open-air court together with the children, was happy and relaxed. I compared the atmosphere with that of the efficient school of 1,000 youngsters where I taught. I recalled the 1,000 children rushed through a lunch line, scolded into silence, tense and restless. Here teachers sat with their class.

"It is just time," said Mr. Smith after lunch, "for the 7th class science—they're rehearsing a play for astronomy." What a strange thought! Science? A play?

I watched Kepler writing a letter to Galileo. The instructor interrupted, "No, do it again. Think what you are writing. Remember how Kepler feels—he is disturbed at what Galileo has done—and said."

The players began again, and again the instructor interrupted. "Remember, Kepler, Galileo is your friend. You are torn because you love him and yet are deeply concerned with his statements." Tension mounted in the players. All of them were living the moment. Science and dramatics evidently *did* go together.

Such experiences were everyday experiences in a Steiner school, but to me it was a day filled with the newness of a curriculum to guide children to true manhood. Is that too much to ask?

THE RIGHT TO PLAY

Josephine Spence

MUCH has been written to try and define play. Perhaps it is best to think of the value of play at the same time. There are several interesting early references to play, which show how highly it was held in respect.

Plato says, "Let early education be a sort of amusement; for that will better enable you to find out the natural bent of a child", and, "If children are not surrounded from their earliest years with an atmosphere of lawful play, they can never grow up to be well conducted and virtuous citizens." Aristotle says, "Play should be introduced under proper regulation as a medicine."

Much later, Froebel writes of the pure and spiritual activity which holds the sources of all that is good: "A child who plays zealously, with initiative, fully engrossed, until he is exhausted will surely become an efficient, serious, persevering and dedicated person." "Play is not trivial but highly serious and of deep significance." All this puts it at a very high level of importance indeed.

On the other hand, reports of psychiatrists tell us that a child who for some reason does not play, is a deeply disturbed child; something drastic must have happened. Many factors are given that lead to the discouragement of play: lack of space, intolerance

of adults, lack of understanding in parents, too much television sapping the will. It all boils down to one reason: children stop playing because no value is placed on their play by the adult world. Work is considered more valuable.

Let me repeat: something drastic must have happened for a child to cease to have any impulse to play. For play is the bubbling up of a creative force that renews itself in each child that is born. It is very strong, very absorbing and it is by means of it that the young child experiences the world around him.

Play certainly is not the opposite of work. It can be the most serious and hard work. I have known children be offended at the idea that what they were doing was play. No, they said, it was work. To my mind there is not much difference in quality between a child playing wholeheartedly and someone working on a job they care about deeply and want to do well.

Anyone who has young children knows what a wealth of imagination they have, and how active they are. They imitate and they experiment. A baby learns an enormous amount about the world around him even before he is a year old. He experiments, but very soon he wants to imitate, and is it not this imitation that helps a child to absorb his impressions?

In these early years a child is occupied in growing and in getting to know the world, and he is specially interested in the activities—"the doing"—the cranes that lift, the bulldozers that shove, the lorries that carry bricks, the laying of pipes.

His participation in all this through play is quite remarkable. While he is busy digging up the orchard he takes on the stance of a workman, the rolling gait, the hand on hip—he *is* a workman. My little boy went through an objectionable phase of eating with his mouth open because "that is how workmen eat."

For a child to be able to imitate is, in a sense, his way of understanding and making his own the world in which he is born. Growing and play are the main activities of early childhood and they are interrelated. A child who cannot play happily and satisfy a creative need is frustrated.

One of the problems that face modern children is too little recognised, namely that the structure of society and the pattern of life is often far removed from one in which children absorb the laws that govern nature. Often, also, the activities and interests of the parents are not comprehensible to the child, he cannot relate himself to them.

Imagine the town child living in a block of flats. Father goes to work in some distant office or factory and what he does is remote and incomprehensible. Bread arrives cut and wrapped, delivered at the door. Milk appears in bottles. Water comes from the tap and the child does not understand the sources of warmth for cooking. The landlord is remote and unknown.

Contrast this situation with that in earlier times. Then there were smaller communities and the social pattern was easy to grasp. Father perhaps worked in a nearby workshop, the child could visit him and knew what he was doing. Mother worked in the home doing comprehensible things like baking bread. Cows were seen being milked. The landlord was a man one knew.

If parents and teachers are not aware of the existence of this barren prospect for children, the children grow up strangers in the world. The important things of life are hidden. What shall they play at? What is there true to imitate? The child is not involved in life in the right way, nor is he involved in the life of the community. He may become a detached personality unable to grow up through his playing. Cars and television are not sufficient or right food for his hungry personality to feed on.

A teacher in an urban district of Birmingham, in teaching English history, discovered that a startling percentage of his pupils thought that bread was a manufactured product. Further investigation revealed an almost complete lack of understanding and knowledge of the rhythm of the seasons.

What can be done to help to give children the right things to imitate and the right toys to play with? For the young child the importance of sand and water cannot be overestimated. They can be managed even in an urban flat. Playing with them is enormously satisfying to children.

To quote Paul Abbatt, "Perhaps it is the primitive and elemental qualities of sand and water which help children by reuniting them with nature. Sand is an ancient and weather-worn substance, part and parcel of the earth itself, yet susceptible to the child's smallest touch or whim. It is vast and yet tiny, hard and yet soft, simple but obscure. There is such a large and satisfying quantity of it, even in a limited sand pit. Water is the universal, which makes life possible, from which life first arose."

Children should visit farms and the seaside, climb trees, and make fires from twigs, explore all the natural materials of the countryside. And it is often the adult who must be the guide. On a bare windswept beach in Wales when bathing was out of the question and even a driftwood fire too smokey to be endured, my husband and I have been as absorbed as the children in hunting coloured pebbles—quartz, basalt, serpentine and many others. We have washed them in the sea to bring up their glistening colours and, finally, we have lugged them up the cliff path to home, where they became "toys".

Walls for little farms were built with them and they were used in endless games of counting and sorting. In themselves they were varied and often beautiful and in addition they had the different qualities of the rocks of which the earth is made.

Is not the strong creative spirit of play the same spirit that occasionally survives "education" and inspires the research worker, the artist, or the creative man or woman in any field? For such people no effort is too much to complete a job, to find a solution.

It is the task of the educationist and the parent to preserve this spirit unbroken. The reverse is all too common—a rather dreary conformity to the existing need for qualifications, a feeling that something must be done but devoid of the interest that would spark it into life.

COMMENTS

JUST a year ago *The Observer* published two articles on education by the author of *A Ring of Bright Water*, Mr. Gavin Maxwell. The argument: the present system is apt to hand on meaningless information and thereby breeds boredom, restlessness and contempt of learning.

The remedy: scrap all examinations; spend at least one month a year in the country in near-camping conditions and so stimulate interest in nature, initiative and self reliance; retrain teachers so that they are able to teach knowledge relevant to our present situation, use films and television, let the pupils build additional rooms and amenities to their present school buildings and transform their old ones; direct as little as possible, and create situations which call for initiative, imagination and responsibility.

A timely call, but there has been precious little echo in the year since these articles were written. Our whole attitude to education is still too much rooted in medieval assumptions, the wise teacher, the passive and docile pupil, a traditional body of knowledge which has to be handed to the next generation, and that intellect is best trained by continuous application in solving abstract problems.

ALTHOUGH no pitched battles between police and juveniles were reported during the summer holidays this year (better preventive methods on the part of the police?), we should be surprised if they were ended. Two factors combine to make further outbreaks likely: the psychology of the adolescent and the boredom bred by our society.

Every child has a longing for authority as he has for love. For together these give him a sense of security which can last a lifetime. If then one does not meet with natural authority within the family, if later his teacher also fails him in this respect, in adolescence he will provoke into action the last form of authority remaining, that of the state. In more religious times he might have challenged the wrath of God.

Only face to face with a challenge can the young man feel his own worth, and our society offers few such challenges. During the Industrial Revolution survival was in itself an achievement for the young worker, in Victorian times he could go to the colonies to test himself. Today, in an age of security, pursuits like sailing, pot-holing and climbing have a great appeal to adolescents. More such fields will have to be opened up, gliding and canoeing among them, and opened up to many more people.

THEATRE and cinema gave us this year two views of childhood and adolescence. The Royal Court showed Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, 75 years after the play was written. The cinema gave us its version of Richard Hughes' *A High Wind in Jamaica*. Wedekind deals only with one facet of puberty—the sexual. Hughes gives us an unusual description of the state of childhood. It is a one-sided and therefore exaggerated view, as much a description of what the author wishes childhood were, as of what he thinks it actually is.

The adult—the teacher perhaps in particular—lives in the naive belief that the child is in constant rapport with him, whereas in reality the child lives in the world of his own phantasy, and invests the objects of the adult world with a significance and values entirely his own. The total lack of communication which Hughes describes is, however, abnormal. Does his preoccupation with the difference between the adult and the infantile consciousness arise from nostalgia for the paradisaical state of childhood, in spite of the fact that the children he describes are anything but innocent?

BOOK REVIEWS

Education and Contemporary Society. By H. L. Elvin, Watts. 15s.

MR. Elvin, Director of the University of London Institute of Education, here surveys the present set-up of education in Britain, and suggests certain changes. More clearly than most people he realizes that the most promising and probably also the gentlest means of changing our society is changing our education.

Just as the traditional English school is the outcome of a particular social ideal and is based on a great number of value judgments concerning man and society, so every move towards a new type of education, be it comprehensive schools, Summerhill, or Steiner schools, presupposes a certain image of man and of society. In this age we must not proceed simply according to hunches, likes and philosophical speculations, but must base action on ascertained facts. So Dr. Elvin surveys some of the data which contemporary sociology, psychology and anthropology can supply, and borrows some of the methods of contemporary philosophy.

But, rightly, he insists that none of these disciplines can solve our problems in education. Their abstract and quantitative approach is only of limited help in education, which needs purposeful action with regard to the individual child and to children in general. The educationist has the special responsibility of looking after the interests of the younger generation.

"The economy," Mr. Elvin writes, "may 'demand' that this or that subject be studied, that training be given for this or the other vocation; but those whose responsibility is the education of the young will reply that this may be all very well but they have something else to consider. They are concerned not only with supplying the economy with producers, or even with furnishing

citizens to the state, but with educating men and women."

Mr. Elvin is what today is called a humanist, and a socialist. There is nothing aggressive in his attitude, his reasoning is gentle. He is in favour of greater equality in education and shows how this could be achieved. There are few points with which a teacher in a Steiner school would quarrel. He might, however, feel that he could argue Mr. Elvin's case at greater depth and with greater force.

R.L.

Letters to My Teacher. By Dagobert D. Runes. Philosophical Library Inc. (15 East 40th Street, New York). \$2.75.

MR. Dagobert D. Runes has a chip on his shoulder—about modern education and his own education in particular. He inveighs against the usual things: competition, the examination race, burdening children with useless information, invidious distinctions between dull and clever, compulsory games—the lot. One comes to feel a little sorry for "my teacher" who has somehow been the arch-perpetrator of it all.

Nonetheless Mr. Runes is also right. One just has to agree with him. The illogicality, inhumanity or plain insanity of the world overcome us all at times, and we all can and do trace it to our favourite cause—communism, capitalism, education, religion, godlessness, etc. We still have, of course, to answer the perennial question, "What do I do about it?"

At all events, what Mr. Runes has chosen to do is a pointed, readable and necessary analysis of the evils of our times, which he lays at the door of us teachers. As I slowly recovered from the shattering effect of this indictment, I noticed under "Books by the Same Author" that Mr. Runes had also written a volume of *Letters to My God*. A.H.

Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria. By H. W. F. Saggs. Batsford. 21s.

THOUGH written by a professor (of London University), this well illustrated book is meant for the nonspecialist. After a short account of the history of Babylonia and Assyria from 3000 to 300 B.C., Dr. Saggs describes various aspects of life in those times—at the Amorite court, in official circles, in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, etc. The chapter on religion is somewhat coloured by the modern attitude towards "superstition". But the book contains a wealth of material for lessons on this period.

M.H.

Everyday Life in Egypt. By John Manchip White. Batsford. 21s.

ORDINARY life in Egypt between 3000 and 330 B.C. is described in detail in this attractively written and well illustrated and documented book. In the most lively way the reader is taken on a tour of the cities, pyramids and temples, and sees all the bustle, magnificence and cheerfulness of those times. The religious beliefs of the Egyptians are treated sympathetically, and one has not the feeling that these people are simply men of today dressed up. The book could be valuable to a teacher of younger children (class 5 in a Steiner school) as a background to Egyptian legends, or could be read by upper school children.

M.H.

NOTES ON OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Ruth Crandell is an American teacher who met Rudolf Steiner education several years ago. She describes her first encounter with it in her article. It seems to her to contain answers to many of the problems she has encountered in public education in the United States. After a year studying at Emerson College in Sussex, she has now returned to continue her work in America.

Roland Everett joined Elmfield School, Stourbridge, in 1946, and has been teaching there ever since. Apart from class teaching, he also teaches German in the middle and upper school, and music.

Sylvia Eckersley, one of those rare persons who are both literate and (to borrow Sir Charles Snow's term) numerate, has taught in a number of Steiner schools. One of her hobbies is (briefly and inadequately put) the musico-mathematical facets of Shakespeare's verse. At present she is doing editorial work with the Royal Society of Health.

Josephine Spence is the daughter of E. L. Grant Watson, zoologist and author. Trained at the Slade School of Art. Taught at Elmfield School, Stourbridge, for five years and then went with her husband to Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, a home and school for maladjusted children. Together they studied children's needs with regard to toys and, back at Elmfield, established with some friends "Woodpecker Toys", and a small independent industry based on craftsmanship. One son.

VISIONS OF INNOCENCE

[We are indebted to a reader—who for obvious reasons wishes to remain anonymous—for the following conversations with her little boy. She wrote them down at the time they took place, and she was led to send them to us after reading "Mummy, who made God?" in our last issue. --Ed.]

THE question about God didn't actually come till one evening in Tim's sixth year, as I was putting him to bed. I do not remember what led up to it or the exact form it took, but I know I answered on the spur of the moment that God was wherever people loved one another. After a minute I remembered my long-thought-out answer, and added (trying to be comprehensive and yet as simple and as truthful as possible all in one), "It's God who makes *you* grow and people love each other." "Well" said Tim, "I think God is here," and kissed me.

A few nights later (perhaps some echo of this conversation still lingering with him) Tim launched into his own panegyric: "When the sun's shining in the sky, and when the wind's blowing, and when there's rain on the spiders' webs, and when the birds are singing, and when the flowers are all waving about in the garden, and when your hair's golden, and when the polly parrot's whistling downstairs in his cage, and my canary's twittering, and Puck's a happy little dog running about the house, and the pussy cat catches the mice—then I say, that's *God*!"

This came out in a kind of crescendo, very gay and rushing and ended with great emphasis.

One day in March, Tim, still in his seventh year, ran in from the garden looking very gay and animated. We met in the porch.

"Mummy!" he exclaimed, "I've made an experiment. Such a nice one. I've just seen God."

"That was nice. What did he look like?"

"Oh, just dark and big. About twelve feet high."

"Where did you see him?"

"Striding across the top of the holly bush."

"How did you know it was God?"

"He was so big, much bigger than an ordinary person; and there was a flash of light. Besides, I felt so jolly I knew it was God."

"Did you see him clearly? How was he dressed?"

"Oh, sort of—black, rather like a uniform."

Later in the day I heard Tim telling my husband exactly the same details. He plunged straight into his story—"Daddy, I saw God today." After some conversation which I couldn't hear I caught my husband's final comment, "Well, old chap, I expect it was a sort of imagination; don't you?"

Tim answered, "Yes, I expect so Daddy. But I think it's a *true* one, don't you? I don't think ghost imaginations are true; but ones about God are different, aren't they?"

Once I was called upstairs by Tim who should have been asleep. "I'm rather frightened," he said as I came in at the door. "I've just seen an angel."—"Where?"

"Outside the window." I had left the curtains undrawn, and as I went across to draw them I saw the cherry tree in full bloom not far from the window.

"I expect it was a branch of the cherry tree, really," I said. "Don't you?"

"No. It was white and transparent and not quite as high as the window. How high do you think the window is?"

"Oh, about three feet I suppose."

"Well, then it wasn't quite three feet. I thought it was a ghost at first."—"But you knew it wasn't. How did you know?"

"Well, I knew it couldn't be a ghost because ghosts aren't real. So I knew it must be an angel."—"What did it seem to be doing out there?"

"Sort of guarding the window."—"Then that makes it certain to have been an angel. But I wonder why it shouldn't have made you feel happy, like the time you saw God?"

"It was a different colour."—"What colour?"

"White; and God was black."—"And it wasn't nearly as big as God, was it?"

"No; God was about twelve feet high." Then he went on, laughing as he spoke, "Directly I saw him over the top of that holly bush I knew it must be God. You see, the holly bush came up to here" (touching his chest) "on him. And you could see him over the top of it, with one foot in the meadow and the other on our little path. And then he went so quick—like that" (making a sharp downward movement with his finger, and laughing again) "just like that."

"Too quick for you to see what he was really like?"

"Well, I saw just a bit of his face."—"What was it like?"

"Well, it was rather like mine, and rather like yours; but much bigger. About as big as a full moon. And it was very *real*—and very *un-real*. I can't exactly describe it."

"I think you've described it very well."

"It was an awfully nice face; nice and manly."—"What?"

"A nice manly face. And he had silver hair."

I never talked to him about these things afterwards, or spoke of them in his hearing. But Tim himself, speaking to me one day of his vision of God, when he had evidently begun to realize that such things were off the beaten track of every day happenings, added anxiously, "I really did see him. You do believe me, don't you?"

I assured him I did, and he ran happily off to play.

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD ?

READERS may remember a correspondent from New Zealand asking a few issues back what was the policy and practice about ball-pens in the Steiner schools. We threw the question back to our readers. Nobody, however, has taken it up except a parent of Wynstone's School (Glos.), Lieutenant P. A. Grant. In an interesting letter (unfortunately too long to publish) he goes into the history of ball-pens and the pros and cons of other writing instruments, but still leaves the question open in the end.

Lieut. Grant reduces the issue to two alternatives. If writing is to be taught (and, presumably, subsequently practised) as an art in itself, then the ball-pen is "out"; it eliminates "character" in writing because it is impossible to vary the stroke. But if writing is simply a means of expression and of coping with all that has to be taken down in study, then the ball-pen is the most efficient instrument to use, for obvious reasons.

As a parting shot he points out that you rarely see an advertisement for a job these days telling the applicant to "apply in your own handwriting", and leaves you to draw your own conclusions about the status of writing nowadays.

For our own part, what the child eventually writes with is his business, of course. But we cannot help feeling that as education in general is largely a matter of acquainting him with what man has "been up to" for the last few thousand years, and the discovery and development of writing is part of it all, it would not be a bad idea to let him write at some stage with all kinds of writing instruments in turn—from the stylus on clay, through the brush, the quill, and the steel, fountain and, finally, ball-pen.

Meanwhile, children (who are always in the avant-grade of technical development) tell us that there is yet another kind of pen coming out soon.

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