

Education as an Art

Published by the Waldorf Schools of North America
Vol. 33, No. 1 – Fall/Winter 1974/75

To Become A Teacher

By Henry Barnes

Where is that book to be found in which the teacher can read what teaching is? The children themselves are this book! We should not learn to teach out of any other book than the one lying before us and consisting of the children themselves; but in order to read in this book, we need the widest possible interest in each individual child. (3) RUDOLF STEINER

Who is a Waldorf teacher? What distinguishes this education? How often have we asked ourselves this question! Is it teaching in blocks? Organizing the day around a main lesson? Continuing as a class teacher from year to year with the same group of children? Teaching in pictures? Knowing about reincarnation and karma? Teaching woodwork, painting, bookbinding, recorder, and eurythmy?

Rudolf Steiner says that "what is of most importance for the teacher is his conception of life and of the world The inspiration that flows to the teacher from a world conception inwardly and ever newly experienced is carried over into the soul constitution of the children entrusted to him." In other words, this means, he says, that we should learn to "read" the world and to "read" the riddle of man's being in quite new ways. "There must arise in the whole human nature of the teacher an intensive impression of the child, again as one whole being, and what is perceived in the child must awaken joy and vitality. This same spirit-awakening joy and vitality in the teacher must be able to grow and develop, till it becomes immediate inspiration, answering the question, 'What am I to do with this child or with that?'

We must pass from the reading of human nature in general to the reading of the individual human being."

This conception of what constitutes the central life force in education should pervade the training of teachers from beginning to end-or, better said, from the beginning on, for there is actually no end. The older a teacher gets, the more he knows that he is only at the beginning!

In the extraordinary little book which we know in English translation as *The Essentials of Education* (1) from which we have already twice quoted, Rudolf Steiner devotes a brief passage in the central lecture to the possibilities inherent in a whole new approach to the education of teachers. His few remarks open up perspectives for a lifetime of endeavor. There he points to a fourfold penetration into man's full human being. Describing these, as he has done again and again in other educational and related lectures, he points to the fact that we are not only the human being whom we observe with our ordinary senses, but that this physical organism is imbued with life, that it is further permeated by consciousness and that physical body, life body and consciousness are all in their turn penetrated and organized by the individuality itself, working spiritually into the members of its total being. To the trained investigator each of these four realms of forces is perceptible to the appropriate organs of perception. Just as our physical senses observe the physical, so other senses, not dependent on the physical organism, can be developed to perceive the realms of living processes, of consciousness, and of the activity of the ego. Our effectiveness as teachers depends on the ability to experience these four realms in man and in the worlds to which he belongs and on our ability to learn to see how they unfold from one stage to the next in the development of each child. Learning to "read" the nature of these forces, how they reveal themselves in the bodily organism, and how they

develop throughout the first twenty-one years of life is basic education for the teacher. The burning question is: how can I school these faculties of perception and learn to read in a new way the language of a child's development?

In the third lecture of Essentials Rudolf Steiner hints how this might be done. Fundamental is a thorough knowledge of the child's physical being and of the physiological changes which are the outer milestones of his inner development. Beyond this, the teacher should learn to experience those forces of growth and vitality, which mould and differentiate and organize the physical, working like an invisible sculptor during the earliest years of life to shape the child's organism in the image of his own individual blueprint of development. To this field of vital, sculptural, image-forming powers, Rudolf Steiner gives the term "etheric-formative forces". We come to know this realm, he says, "when we live into the formative, moulding process, when we come to know how a curve or an angle grows through the shaping power of inner forces We cannot understand the etheric body with the ordinary laws of nature, but with what we experience in the hand, the spirit-permeated hand. Hence there ought to be no training of teachers without activity in the sphere of plastic art, of sculpture, an activity proceeding from the inner being of man himself ... It is not at all necessary to know masses of modern examination matter. There is no harm in referring to an encyclopedia. No encyclopedia, however, can give us that. mobility, that *able knowledge* and *knowing ableness*, necessary for an understanding of the etheric body, because the etheric body does not proceed according to the laws of nature; it permeates the human being in formative, sculptural activity."

If with the help of the "spirit-permeated hand" we gain a feeling for the quality of the etheric-formative forces, even though we may yet be a long way from experiencing them in full awareness, we find that we can teach the elementary school child in quite a new way. For these are the forces which worked invisibly as image-making powers within his physical organism during the imitative years and which are now partially liberated after the change of teeth as the powers of imagination with which the child learns to divine the hidden meanings within and behind the pictures in which the world presents itself to his awakening consciousness.

But we must also be well aware that the spirit-permeated hand has itself been intensively trained and educated. It is no longer the hand which is limited to the shaping of the merely useful or practical, important as these are; nor the skillful hand which can reproduce outer likenesses, or the talented hand which creates interesting abstract three-dimensional forms. The hand to which Rudolf Steiner refers is the one which can penetrate to the shaping, mobile powers which have created the crystal and the plant, the animal bodies and the dynamic symmetries of man. To reveal these powers is the goal toward which the great sculptors of our time are striving and the teacher must awaken kindred powers in himself if he wishes to know "how a curve or an angle grows through the shaping power of inner forces". He will not be satisfied merely to know about these sculptural forces which have built the collarbone and shaped the pelvis and the skull but will long to experience them in the disciplined work of his own hands. Therefore he will seek out teachers who have themselves gone a certain distance along the path toward a new sculptor's art, such as practiced, for instance, in the School of Sculpture at the Goetheanum, part of the School of Spiritual Science arising out of Anthroposophy.

And if the teacher wishes to know something of the reality of those powers set free for the use of the soul at puberty he must strive to discover what lives in the whole dynamic world of musical experience. He must learn to hear through the acoustical sounds the inner movement of the intervals, to move from tone to tone in the scale. This body of forces which is the bearer of consciousness, of sentience, of feeling in the animal and in man, Rudolf Steiner designates as the astral member of man's being. It is, he says, "not natural history, natural science, or physics; it is music A man who studies the outer human organization in so far as it is dependent on the astral body must concern himself with physiology not as a physicist, but as a musician. He must know the inner, formative music within the human organism." And again, the teacher who wishes to gain access to this realm will turn to those who have preceded him along the road toward mastership in the art which Bruno Walter spoke of as "intrinsic musicianship" which opens to us "that vast, transcendental realm of the

soul that harbors the springs from which music flows." (2) And in this effort he will soon discover that he has an invaluable guide in the study of musical eurythmy where the intervals, tones, rhythms, beat come to visible expression in movement.

But the teacher who intends to work in the spirit of Waldorf education knows that he cannot stop with an understanding of the physical, etheric and astral realms. Without the individuality there is no capacity for memory, conscience, thought, motive, speech. The single animal is the expression of his species. Man transcends his species and becomes the bearer of that indivisible entity which alone can take responsibility for what he thinks, for what and how he feels, and for what he does. It is this fourth member of man's being which Rudolf Steiner means when he speaks of the human ego. To arrive at experienced knowledge of the ego, Steiner says that we must learn to understand the inner structure of speech. Not speech merely as conveyor of meaning, but the formative power of the sounds and rhythms of language as creative activity of the spirit in man. In this sphere, eurythmy is again of invaluable assistance, when the vowels and consonants, the grammatical structure, as well as the elements of rhythm, picture and meaning unite in the language of visible speech.

In these brief indications of Rudolf Steiner lies the seed for a radical re-orientation of all teacher training, not only for those studying to become teachers, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, for those who are already teachers and who wish to grow and to deepen their capacities. As one works with the ideas Steiner sketched out for us fifty years ago one comes to realize that behind them stands the world conception which places man as a being of body, soul and spirit in living relation with the spiritual background of the cosmos and of world evolution. One comes to realize that it is indeed this world conception, "inwardly and ever newly experienced", which becomes the source of inspiration for the teacher and gradually, over many years, awakens in him the creative capacity to know what he has to do in a given moment with a certain child.

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It was these and similar considerations which gave rise in the summer of 1973 to an experimental effort to establish a workshop which would devote itself over many years to pursuing the path of experience according to the method suggested by Rudolf Steiner in the context which we have briefly tried to describe. Such an effort, it was felt, could supplement the study which is already part of the work of every Waldorf school faculty during the regular course of the school year. It could eventually bring together teachers from many schools in an intensive work of a strongly artistic character, whose goal would be to develop capacities through practical doing, to work for experience rather than information, at a time of the year when they are not burdened with daily preparation and teaching. The first such workshop was held at the Rudolf Steiner Farm School in Harlemville in July, '73, over a period of thirteen days. The group consisted of about twenty teachers recruited largely from the Rudolf Steiner School, N.Y., the Pumpkin Hollow School, Great Barrington, Mass. and the Hawthorne Valley School, then about to come into existence in Harlemville. The workshop took as its theme the understanding of the etheric-formative forces in man and the world around him, as experienced in eurythmy, modeling and in the plant kingdom and the study of the four ethers. The success of the first effort encouraged a second which was again held at the Farm School, this year for eight days in late August. The theme was the experience of the nature of the astral forces through music and, again, eurythmy was a mainstay, with excellent practical courses devoted to a new approach to singing, to the music of the lyre, to improvisation, and to basic musical exercises. A very special pleasure for the participants was the presence of a number of musicians who shared their talents generously with those who were not so gifted. Almost double the number of teachers took part and among them nine Waldorf schools and two Camphill centers were represented. The response this year was again such to encourage us to continue, and plans are already underway for a third workshop in the third week of August '75, with the understanding of the ego organization through speech and drama as the central theme. Eurythmy and speech formation should provide the practical artistic basis for study.

What can be accomplished in a few days each year is, of course, very little, nor is such an effort unique or entirely new. But it is equally clear that if the effort is not made and consistently supported, little progress in this direction can be expected, and after ten years one will still have to make a beginning, outer circumstances may be very much more difficult and the intervening years will have been lost. It is the purpose of this report, therefore, to draw attention to a method inherent in the training of teachers who seek to work out of a spiritual-scientific view of the world and to make even a beginning toward the new capacities for which mankind today stands in such desperate need.

-HENRY BARNES

(1) Five lectures, Stuttgart, April, 1924), London, 1968, out of print at the moment

(2) R. Steiner, Human Values in Education. Ten lectures given at Arnhem, Holland, 1924. London, Rudolf Steiner Press, 1971.

*Of Music and Music-Making, W. W. Norton, 1961, New York.