



WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE NEWSLETTER

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From Jünemann and Weitmann: Die künstlerische Unterricht
in der Waldorfschule (Art Teaching.)
Helen St. John: The Princess and the Woodcutter

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PRACTICAL AND ARTISTIC INSTRUCTION FROM CLASS 9 TO CLASS 12. F. WEITMANN.

(The authors speak of the present state of the teaching of art.) Those few examples are enough to show in what situation the art teacher finds himself. Scientific theory lacks and indeed rejects a unified picture of man and the nature of art has largely taken the place of educational and artistic traditions. Thus the completely opposite is possible. G. Weber in his analysis of the situation notes how the very existence of art education is threatened as never before at its very roots.

In this situation the Waldorf school goes its own different way. Let us consider the problem from the point of view of the media art has at its disposal. The expansion of art production has spread out limitlessly the range of potential media. This expansion has carried over inevitably into art education. The existing relationship between art and art education easily seduces us into adopting trends and materials uncritically. What matters however is what serves the child in his total development and these are only the methods and materials selected from the point of view of quality. We may appear to be returning to the original, old-fashioned media, but it can be a step forward if we take them up in a form which is appropriate to the state of modern consciousness. We shall limit ourselves, to begin with, to the following four pure elements:

LINE, BLACK/WHITE, SCULPTURED SURFACE, COLOUR.

It is of deepest educational effect to let the pupils become active in using them if they are used exclusively. The inner qualitative aspect of the world expresses itself in the artistic process and the completed work of art. The developing child has an inborn relationship to this. Artistic activity links the child to those same forces which are also creative in the world. The artistic media thus begin to mediate an objective world of formative forces.

THE LINE is a print a movement leaves behind. It can be in two ways: straight and curved. In drawing the child experiences the characteristic difference between the two possibilities. The unequivocal direction of the straight line requires concentration, will directed by thought. The indefinite crooked line leaves space for the individual; feeling determines the will. Form drawing is primarily will activity, while geometric drawing reproduces thought forms. Language also indicates that the line originates from thought. In fairy tales the thought element is represented by the spinning of a thread, and we speak of a train or line of thought (e.g. losing the thread of one's thought - translator). It is easy to see that working with lines leads to getting stuck in fixed concepts of form. Art teaching in the Waldorf school therefore makes distinction between form produced by drawing and form produced out of colour.

If we thicken the lines we draw to cover an area, then something new arises: LIGHT AND DARK.

We have passed over from one dimension into two. Here we find ourselves in a field of tension which arises from the contrast of light and darkness. In this world of contrasts we are involved in a different way than by linear form.

Pure black/white surfaces are, however, an abstraction. The contrast between light and dark is so absolute that no life is possible. Life arises only when the opposite poles interact. Between black and white there are manifold penetrations and variations, all shades of light and dark are possible as stages of balance. Outer as well as inner experiences of light and darkness may be produced through surfaces of light and dark. Through the choice of material and technique a great variety of effects can be produced. With charcoal, using small pieces sideways on the paper one achieves soft shading in tones which foretell colour. Indian ink or very black chalk arouse awareness if firm strokes are used. Sharp black and white contrasts can sometimes seem above the picture surface like flashes of lightning. The element of contrast emerges in the artistic process. In it the black/white surface effect is overcome and a spatial element is introduced.

SCULPTURED SURFACES: We experience a similar corresponding development when we have to do with the denser three dimensional material of the sculptor. An invisible world of forces behind the realm of space should enter into the sphere of experience as the artist sculpts. Modern sculpture has occupied itself in many ways with this problem. The sculptor wants to fill the dead material with life. In nature this process can be studied in the plant. In its development it moves from space into planar form. Goethe described this change of form in the concept of metamorphosis, observing it in his investigations in the realm of the organic. The sculptor should immerse himself in this growth process if he is to understand Goethe's demand: "to create as nature creates". He must come to feel the forces which form surfaces in space. He must feel them as the forming principle, giving expression to it in his own activity.

Forces from within, from outside, of levity and gravity produce their effects. Forces radiating from a point produce vaults, sucking in produces troughs, the sculptor moulds them into concave and convex surfaces. He takes up the spiral tendency in the plant if he bends the bent surfaces in upon itself again. Rudolf Steiner has drawn attention emphatically to this principle of the doubly bent surface. Even the simple forming process in the lessons relates the student to the world processes of becoming and will create for him a sensitive relationship to the laws of form pertaining in the world.

From forms in soft clay one passes to working with harder materials, to the living structures of wood and stone.

CREATING FORM WITH COLOUR.

Creating form with colour leads directly into the realm of the soul-life. Kandinsky in his boyhood memories described the rich variety of impressions when he opened the tubes of the paintbox which he had slowly saved for and set out the colours on his palette. "One squeeze of the fingers - and rejoicingly, solemnly, reflectively, dreamily, deep in oneself, with deep seriousness, with bubbling rascality, with a sigh of freedom, with the deep tones of sadness, with defiant power and resistance, with yielding softness and dedication, with hard

self-control, in sensitive, constantly changing balance there came forth one after the other these strange entities which one calls colour ..."

Creating form with colours, one experiences soul processes as one paints. Colour drama becomes soul drama, contrasts of the most different kinds: complementary contrasts, warm and cold, active and passive, light and dark, make themselves felt. Every colour has its particular form of expression, every relationship of colours has a different tone. The relationships of the colours among one another are as many sided as people: activity and passivity, happiness and sadness, sympathy and antipathy express themselves. With an utter lack of inhibition the children paint this world of colour in the lessons. They not only increase their sensitivity to colour, but also enrich and make more subtle their own inner faculties.

If one considers with a view to art education a modern painting or an artwork painted in crude striking colours which are in fashion one will find that it is not suitable to aid the development of colour sense and soul qualities. The effects produced must lead to a coarsening in the sphere of the senses and of the soul. The technical experiment and playing around with collages which many art teachers demand does not have its right place in art lessons. The interest in technology which the students doubtless have can be met with more purpose in technological and workshop instruction, setting up the school stage, building scenery and other decorative activities. The purity of the media must be firmly maintained, as distinct from experimenting with materials, because it can reveal the world qualitatively to the growing human being. The technical game may satisfy the intellect, but it does not reach the needs which rest at the basis of the human soul. So the choice of artistic media cannot be freely left to the student. It must arise from the insight into what is objectively given in an assignment. This connection leads the fantasy to a goal, in the specific task creative forces awaken. To school these forces methodically, to form capacities is the meaning behind these exercises.

THE VARIETY IN THE ARTISTIC AND CRAFT ACTIVITIES IN THE 9TH CLASS.

In Class 9 a new form of art teaching begins. It is taught by a specialist teacher in blocks, i.e. in whole afternoon periods, so that work can continue over an extended period. A creative artistic process cannot be broken up into single periods. This change is required by the new situation of pupils who have now entered fully into the maturation period. They must now become capable of independent thinking and judgement. The time of the class teacher's authority is over. The student wants to do what is asked of him out of his own insight. The teacher must make the content of the instruction transparent to the students so that they learn to form their own judgment. They should be led from Kenntnis (knowledge) to Erkenntnis (Cognition).

The situation of young people of this age is not an easy one. The natural powers of imagination which the child brought with him and which he was still able to use till the approach of puberty have dried up.

At this step of development new powers of heart and mind arise. New powers of imagination must be developed so that the intellect which is now stirring can be penetrated with feeling. Art can truly help in this, being the "gentle law".

One question that immediately concerns the art teacher is that of the powers of imagination at this stage of development. The power to form images in imagination dwindles in relation to the awakening intellectuality. This is a situation well known to every art teacher, a point giving rise to discussion among art teachers right to the present day. The loss of childhood fantasy is frequently regretted and an attempt to hold it back is made. But this progress of development is necessary so that new forces can come to unfold. The beautifully balanced form of the child's body, still to some extent free from gravity and care, gives way to the unbalanced, ungainly appearance of the growing adolescent. It has become earthly; the mechanical and dynamic forces of the skeleton become effective. These are the laws of the outer world. Beside the rhythmical living forces the mechanical dead forces are gaining influence. Forces of gravity dominate. Rudolf Steiner calls it the time of maturing into earth. It is not easy for a young person to cope with this development in the soul realm. He experienced childhood mostly in his feelings, now he has to grasp the world with his thoughts. It appears alien and soulless to him because he still has no experience of it. This scarcely conscious background feeling is the cause of inner tumult and many a rebellion. The young person faces the necessity of setting himself in relation to this world. School can give him a great deal of help as he enters now into the third seven-year period.

The introduction to practical life is a guiding principle for education in puberty. Regardless of later vocations, a human being faces the necessity of finding his way into a world artificially created by man. Many practical activities are therefore added to other instruction which, serving as models, have a direct relationship to modern culture, and which will create a transition to the work-world of the adult. Practical insight into the complex situations to be found in the world around us will establish confidence. In the Waldorf school a basic knowledge of the different types of jobs is practically conveyed through practical work experience. In this the artistic point of view is never given up. For healthy survival in this critical phase it is of enormous benefit to develop an artistic sense as nurturing the religious, moral element. The young person is best prepared for the transition if in his earlier school years he has experienced in all its beauty the world which he must now get to know in thought. In seeing the world aesthetically, and through artistic activity, one becomes a free individual, and at the same time one's own body can develop. The human being is not thus compelled by his body.

In a 9th class the subject teacher must reckon with a phenomenon that is determined by the transition from the class teacher to the class advisor (guardian teacher/sponsor). The individual likes to hide himself behind the group at this time, he wants to remain anonymous. The individual who is not yet fully developed feels himself strengthened in the "We". If one wishes to be fair as a teacher of this age group then one must try to feel and grasp the developing individual person in the group context of the class. Such an understanding and realization will in an

imponderable way form a bond between teacher and students, which will not be broken even when there are tensions. In dealing with this difficult age much understanding humour is demanded of the teacher which he must regard as his best helper and which he must awaken in himself.

PRACTICAL CRAFT INSTRUCTION

The conditions prevailing in puberty correspond to a number of craft subjects demanding strength, skill, thought and planning. The needlework and crafts of the lower school give way to more serious instruction and practice. The emphasis is on working in wood. This living material which differs according to the tree and origin in grain, colour, smell, hardness, makes the lessons at the same time a study of nature and life. From the Fifth and Sixth grade on they have sawn, carved, filed, making simple things for the kitchen and garden, like wooden spoons, dibbers. Later bowls and other simple useful articles, animals and above all moving toys were made. Such activities are used to show that the ideas of the children can be transformed into reality.

Now in the Ninth class planing is to be learned in the proper fashion. It produces lots of shavings and much sweat. When the first object has been produced, perhaps a chopping board for mother or a simple tool box for one's own use, no one would have dreamed before starting, what pains would have to be taken. With this board or box or the later projects, a stool or a bookshelf, or something similar, the young person has made part of the world of work his own, his work being a model of it. In addition to the real usefulness of these objects a bridge has been built to the whole branch of the woodworking industry, especially the furniture industry. Impressions of these practical exercises that have entered deeply into the life of feeling are: the smell of the resin from the shavings and the hiss of the sliding plane; these and others will be remembered for ever. Visiting a factory where such work is done, the students can see the same work steps in machine production.

Where possible, blacksmithing and locksmithing workshops will also be set up. This is the germ of the world of machinery spread over the whole civilized world and without which no branch of modern industry can be imagined. For a young person, handling the heavy tools in the smithy, working with fire and iron, signify a world of romance. As blacksmith's apprentices (translator's note: this is an allusion to Goethe's poem) they stand before the anvil, the pincers with the red-hot iron in the left hand, the right hand swinging the heavy hammer. The blows must hit the iron exactly. It is hard work, a training of will which penetrates deeply into the sphere of experience. The objects produced under expert guidance in the smithy, like chisels, pitons, pokers, can then be made into simple tools in a vise and again put to practical use. All the practice given rests on a basic educational principle, that all practice pieces should as far as possible be destined for practical use. Students should experience that what I am doing will also serve a useful purpose. These elementary practical exercises again serve to relate to the surrounding world with one's will. The blazing smithy fire

the glowing iron, the smell of coal and the metal clang of the hammer blows have a lasting effect on the human soul.

Forming metal in heat is complemented by forming metal in the cold, by beating, which goes more in the arts and crafts direction. This is mostly begun in Class Ten.

In the Eighth Class the student learned to make simple clothes with sewing machines, making them for themselves or for younger brothers and sisters. When in the Ninth class the practical subjects are taught in different groups, dressmaking is often developed for the girls. It is not only a question of careful and exact work but also of forming good taste. These skills can also have a direct value in daily life. Knowledge of textiles and technology in the wider sense also form part of this subject. Exercises in spinning and weaving follow in Class Ten. One sees boys and girls spinning raw wool into yarn at purring spinning wheels. It will later be woven on a frame or even a model or real loom. Visits to spinning and weaving mills and plants of the clothing industry give them a glimpse into this sphere, one they only too easily are concerned with rather for reasons of fashion.

A further basic craft of which the students learn the basic elements at this age is pottery. Making vessels of clay is an event which has direct significance for the human being. All the terms for the single parts of the vessel, like foot, belly, shoulder, collar, neck are characteristic indications for this. The purpose of a vessel must determine its form. It is to be of service. For some students it is an achievement just to learn to handle the soft clay in building up the form of a vessel that does not always keep collapsing. A discerning feel for materials must be cultivated. As a form is made to come upright, one's own inner forces of uprightness are also strengthened. The final stage of firing and glazing will make the cups, plates, vases, jugs and large and small bowls practical and useful.

Basket weaving requires a sensitivity for the materials of willow and cane; it requires also skilful and nimble fingers and careful pre-planning of the work stages. Bread, shopping and waste baskets are taken home.

Again a piece of real, original life is brought by the natural product into a world of synthetics.

Practical exercises in surveying take the Tenth Class further afield, into the country which the students measure with all the necessary apparatus. Individual measurements are brought together into a whole in an accurate map. Here working together cooperatively plays an important role and needs to be learned.

The Eleventh and Twelfth Class are introduced also to bookbinding. From simple binding in paper boards, the steps lead to artistically designed bindings. Rudolf Steiner was of the opinion that actually each student leaving the school should be in the position to bind his own books himself. It was to him a matter of great concern that in all

areas of trade and crafts a well-founded technical ability should be linked with artistic design. He himself gave many indications for it. He would have liked to have had a cobbler on the faculty, but to date only a slight beginning has been made in this.

More important than one or another special facility is the basic concern to lay the foundations for understanding the world through meaningful activity and self-confidence in the adolescent.

ART APPRECIATION (HISTORY THROUGH ART).

In this Ninth Class, the first class of the High School, lessons begin in a new subject, Art Appreciation.

"At the same age as the child must learn to understand" nature is ordered according to abstract laws that can be grasped by the intellect, at that same age we must introduce an understanding of art as a counter-balance, we must guide the students to see how the individual arts have developed in the different epochs of human history, how one theme during one era or another came into play in art. This will truly stimulate in the child the faculties a human being needs to achieve all-round development of his true nature." From the first class onwards the children have been active in practical art and crafts; now they get to know the great works of art and through this come to grasp the concept of beauty and the metamorphosis of the beautiful during different historical epochs. In the 9th Class the fine arts from Egypt to Rembrandt are studied. In the 10th Class the emphasis is on language and poetry. The elements of poetry, the differences of the literary genres are explored in conjunction with Recitation and Declamation. In the 11th Class the Aesthetics of Music is added, styles of Northern and Southern art, Western and Eastern forms are demonstrated by means of highly typical examples. The 12th Class and final class brings a survey of the development of architecture up to the present age. An awareness of the fact that all the arts belong together, the inter-connection of all the arts, the spiritual and historical laws behind them, should awaken in a young person the feeling that he shares in the responsibility for shaping the face of the earth.

Future issues of the Clearing House will contain a continuation of this translation, dealing with Sculpture in 9th Grade, Black and White drawing in 9th Grade and Black and White Drawing in 11th Grade. The German publishers of this book would like to see it published in the English-speaking world and are willing to give the beautiful plates for the printing of an English edition. If those of you who read these extracts would like to see the whole book in print we must begin to explore the possibilities.