

EDUCATION AND HEALING

A short excerpt from a lecture by Rudolf

Steiner

In the autumn of 1923, Rudolf Steiner gave a lecture at the Waldorf School concerning the forces which lead to health and to illness in education. He raised the question: What forces do we really use in pedagogical work? and continued as follows:

"Fundamentally, this question cannot be answered from the usual present day point of view. We can indeed say that the outer life in which we stand demands of man that he do something which as a child he could not do by himself and which must be taught him. It demands, perhaps, also the attitude which we must take as adults in order to help the child accomplish through education those things which he could not achieve alone. The answer to the question, however: 'Why do we educate—remains to a large degree external today because as grown-ups we do not find such great value in what we ourselves have become through our own education. We do not look back with deep gratitude on what we received through instruction and education. Ask your own heart whether this gratitude is always alive. Surely single instances will be found, it is true, but on the whole we do not think with deep gratitude about our own education, about our own instruction, because we do not fully grasp the importance of what education truly is, what instruction truly means, what forces of man's nature must truly be made active. For this reason it is so difficult today to arouse pedagogical enthusiasm in people. Basically, all our methods in education, even the most ingenious and thoroughly elaborated methods, have for this reason only a limited value. For the answers to the questions: 'How do we do this? — How do we do that? —have only a limited value. What is of the greatest value, however, is that we have enthusiasm in our activity, and can also fully develop this enthusiasm in our work, if we wish to be true teachers. This enthusiasm has a contagious power and it is this alone that works wonders in teaching. The child follows willingly this enthusiasm, and if he does not follow the teacher, it is usually an indication that this enthusiasm is lacking.

"Often in classes, or the whole work of a school, one sees a certain heaviness, and this heaviness must be overcome. Such heaviness can also express itself in an artificial enthusiasm. Yet this can never accomplish what is needed, but only that kind of enthusiasm which is kindled out of the way in which we ourselves enter into the material we are dealing with in the classes. And here it is necessary that we work toward the development of a special kind of consciousness. . . . This we can do only if, deeply in our own hearts and not merely in external phrases, we come directly to a true experience of spiritual values in the field of pedagogy. . . . Yet again we shall only be capable of this if we have a clear understanding of what has been lost in the education of the present time, has been lost for the past three or four hundred years, and must be found again.

"What has been lost is the knowledge that in reality man, when he comes into the world, is essentially a being who needs to be healed. It is this connection between education and healing which has been lost. . .

Throughout the middle ages there was indeed a radical belief that man, as earthly man, is ill and that he must be made healthy. . . that something must be done to make man truly man. This is subsequently discussed today, but in much too conventional a manner. There is much talk about raising man to a higher niveau, but it is abstractly and not concretely dealt with. To be concrete means actually to bring the activity of teaching into direct connection with the activity of healing. When a sick person is healed, we know that something has been accomplished. When a person is made well, he is raised to a higher niveau, to that of a normal, healthy human being. . . . It may sound unreasonable to say that from the point of view of the higher nature of man there is something of the nature of illness in the fact that we have continually to battle with the forces of the body until death. But without such a radical conception, we cannot find our way through to the reality of what education means. In education there must be an element of healing."