

Education and Social Reality

Austrian Experience

Rudolf Steiner

By great difficulty as an audience of English teachers in Austria in connection to Social reality that it is like trying to solve an equation with two unknowns, besides being ^{unaware} of one's mathematics.

Unfortunately, it is the most important part of this social reality which is most difficult to present to a non-Central European audience. It is the great change that has taken place in Austria since the War in the forms of life -- the cultural, intellectual and moral standards -- of the working class population.

The old type of life ^{was} not essentially different from that you know from your own country, ^{perhaps} with the one difference that it lived on a lower income level, a just a few stages nearer to the ghastly stage of early capitalism ~~as seen in~~ in Dicken's descriptions of London slum conditions a century ago.

A generation of ^{drinking} drunkards, gambling, races, ^{with} low amusements, street fights, gangsterism, with the pub's and the gambling places as the ^{dull, dreary and} centres of this debased life.

The change. DRINKING gone. A few stragglers, a ^{small} percentage of the young, -- that's all. From 1928-1932 the alcoholic content of the liquor consumed fell by 50% (after a strong reduction between 1913 and 1928)

Gambling, carousing, night life, late hours -- gone. SMOKING rapidly falling off.

Very great variety of activities have taken their place: study of languages, travel, good books, good music, handicrafts, interest in archeological, folk lore, hobbies of all kinds and descriptions, of a technological, etc kind, the education of the young, the endless outdoor activities,

study, culture study

Behaviour is such that on the Danube beach where pretty near ten
twenty thousand persons might sunbathe and swim and play on a sun-
day, never in one single instance have I known ~~anybody~~ ~~to~~ ~~hear~~ ~~a~~ ~~loud~~ ~~word~~, even less a ~~single~~ ~~inter~~ ~~com~~ ~~muni~~ ~~ca~~ ~~tion~~. A ~~young~~ ~~girl~~
would be entirely sure not to be molested by any body. ~~They~~ ~~take~~ ~~their~~ ~~skis~~ ~~and~~ ~~go~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~sur~~ ~~round~~ ~~ing~~ ~~mount~~ ~~ains~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~day~~ ~~on~~ ~~a~~ ~~pie~~ ~~ce~~ ~~of~~ ~~cheese~~ ~~or~~ ~~bacon~~.

NO LITTER

Not a match

Not more than a twig broken from a tree.

1/ Cultural level detached from money incomes.

To be, not to have.

To BE what your personality calls you to be.

To HAVE only what every member of a given society could actually possess.

an English friend

As ~~my~~ /rightly put it;

" The rejection of money- values-
and property standards;

the fullest freedom of development for the individual
~~responsibility~~ together with a strong sense
community responsibility;

the removal of the commercial element from sex,
amusement;

a direct contact with, and respect for, natural
environment

etc., etc.

2/ Open air life--

a shifting of the balance of existence away from urban
industrial-artificial surroundings and values, and
to more natural surroundings this including the concept
of universality commonhood.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REALITY:

"Experiences in Vienna and America"

(Notes on an Address delivered by Karl Polanyi at the Friends' Teachers Guild Conference at the Downs School, Colwall.)

I. Austria.

Socialist educationalists on the Continent had two traditional aims:

- a/ to free education from the control of the Roman Catholic Church, which gave to their efforts a distinct libre penseur and agnostic touch;
- b/ to instill Socialist ideas and ideals into the minds of the young;

The Vienna School Reform aimed at neither of the two. If only for political reasons

- a/ it dropped anti-Clericalism, or laicity i.e. the separation of Church and State from its programme and
- b/ it relinquished the idea of a Socialist education as e.g. practiced in Soviet Russia.

Indeed, it accepted the more than a half century old Empire School Law as the constitutional basis of the educational system, of school discipline and school life. This so-called Reichsschulgesetz dated from 1867. It originated with a liberal period of school politics and established strictly obligatory elementary education for the whole of the Empire. ~~the~~ ~~state~~ ~~school~~ ~~became~~ ~~the~~ ~~universal~~ ~~type~~ ~~of~~ ~~school~~; ~~religious~~ ~~instruction~~ ~~was~~ ~~made~~ ~~obligatory~~, but the church ~~was~~ ~~deprived~~ ~~of~~ ~~its~~ ~~rights~~ ~~of~~ ~~control~~ ~~and~~ ~~interference~~ ~~with~~ ~~teaching~~. This school law was retained by the Socialists as the framework of the Reform.

~~(legal)~~

The School Reform thus dealt only with the reform of the methods of tuition.

In spite of this ~~very~~ narrow scope, it proved to be one of the most important single factors in the Socialist transformation of Vienna i.e. the establishment of that type of life and general working class culture that made the New Vienna into ~~one~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~most~~ ~~vital~~ forces in the Socialist movement in the world.

HERE WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF A PURELY EDUCATIONAL REFORM WITH FAR REACHING EFFECTS ON THE FORCES WORKING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION;

Naturally two questions arise

- 1/ what were the main principles of this reform?
- 2/ what ~~was~~ made their application so potent an influence in the formation of a new culture?

*Dear Kenneth
please return this
and enjoy it!
with love
Karl*

Part I. The main principles of the Austrian School Reform.

These principles were:

- a/ Joint instruction in the different subjects (i.e. no different courses for different subjects in the lower junior elementary classes); (Gesamtunterricht)
- b/ derivation of all knowledge from the natural surroundings of the child, its home and regional environment; (Bodenständigkeit -keit)
- c/ knowledge and understanding to be the result of the child's own exertion rather than of any ready-made academic or practical instruction. (Arbeitsprinzip).

Of these three principles it is the second that needs some elucidation. The environmental principle implies that all tuition should start from the environmental surroundings of the child; environment in this sense includes local colour, idiomatic speech, regional history, folk lore etc, starting from the child's every day experience and ending up with the regional history of economic and cultural life.

The way in which this environmental principle was made ^{effective} ~~more~~ ^{more} clearly understood when we proceed to discuss four characteristic features of school life and organization under the reform.

- a/ the systematic use of definite contents to which all the different tutorial subjects are related, especially in the lower junior classes where the teaching of the different subjects is carried on conjointly. But the principle is not restricted to the lower forms;
- b/ frequent school excursions, visits "on the spot" e.g. the Docks or the ~~power station~~ ^{power station}, a building site, the woods ~~in the~~ ^{in the} park or an exhibition;
- c/ techniques of all kinds introduced into schools; "plastelline" cuttings of all kinds, pasting, sticking, etc used to ^{with} ~~great~~ ^{great} extent in order to encourage the self-expression of the child and to educate its taste;
- d/ close organisational and institutional contact of the parents of the children with the school.

The systematic use of definite contents as the centre of tuition (Sachgebiete), coupled with frequent excursions and rambles, ^{supplemented} ~~supplemented~~ by the introduction of manual techniques, often offering local or regional characteristics -- all ~~these~~ ^{these} ~~emphasise~~ ^{emphasise} and enhance the importance of the principle of environmental

in relating tuition to a concrete reality,

like math, grammar etc

If this leads to

3. " Experiences in Vienna and America " (cont).

all tend to enhance the great effectiveness
~~superior experiential~~ ~~fundamental~~ importance of the principle of environmental rootedness. ~~regenter with the methodical use of definite topical subjects as the centre of tuition the principle of "rootedness" could not only lead to a concrete reality.~~
~~rather~~ *in reality tuition to*

- a/ the home surroundings of the majority of the children ~~was~~ the measure and standard of everyday experience;
- b/ it fostered and developed the use of the language of the common people and set a premium on its correct use (this needs explanation from the point of view of English and French linguistic development).
- c/ the physical wants and needs of ~~the~~ the great majority ^{were} accepted as ^a the standard.

As a result THE POOR MAN BECOMES THE IMAGE OF MAN. The working man is ^{viewed} regarded as the typical ~~human~~ ~~being~~ being. Wealth becomes an anomaly. Danger of isolation to the children of the rich. Discouragement of all signs, symptoms of ~~paranormalia~~ ~~of~~ upper-class existence. The ~~working man~~ ~~under~~ wealthy under the pressure of " psychological insecurity."

be realised *had*
d/ history made to ~~be~~ as the common ~~achievement~~ ~~of~~ of the people, the use of ~~historical~~ landmarks, ruins, local traditions, customs, social and ~~other~~ architectural monuments, ~~etc.~~ ~~etc.~~ ~~etc.~~ culturally interesting relics and ~~descriptions~~ ~~to~~ ~~democratize~~ the experience of history i.e. to develop a sense of rootedness in time and space, which makes history ~~the~~ the common achievement of the people, ~~instead~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ pageantry of the privileged. The role of the common people who built the cathedrals, the roads and moles and walls, ~~and~~ who fought the battles, cooked the food in the medieval monasteries and abbeys, performed the old crafts, worked the mines or burned the charcoal ^{is equated to that of the} are set on an equal footing with the aristocracy (who are by the way not entirely acquitted of the charge of having made a living on highway robbery and blackmail.)

Purely ~~pedagogic~~ pedagogic reforms were thus instrumental in bringing about
1/ a changed outlook and attitude towards life, society, nature, history, craft;
2/ a changed relationship between the school and family.

Actually being
and 7 even more

This latter point must be regarded under the double aspect of 1/ the participation of the parents in school life ^{which} was encouraged by various means (~~Eltern~~ Eltern-gemeinschaft etc) 2/ under the guise of allowing the parents to influence the school, the parents were ~~educated~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~school~~, but ~~drastically~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~children~~ to whose tender mercies they were committed. ^A

through
unconsciously

The children were indirectly made to educate their parents by a subtle propaganda

1/ against drink;

2/ for a right behaviour in and towards nature' (protection of wild preservation of the country side, no litter etc.)

3/ for good taste; the acceptance

4/ middle class homes ~~overlapped~~ into of common humanity as the only standard of valuation; a thorough "inferiority complex" being developed in the rich, as far as the school was concerned.

their relationships to /

~~What made these pedagogic reforms into so potent a factor in the development of a new culture?~~

Clearly, the general and obligatory character of elementary education was the precondition of this system. Only because all classes of society had to send their children to ~~school~~ the state school, could the school develop into a formative force in ~~the~~ society to such a degree.

Without overrating the measure of social democracy that was achieved in this manner, it must be ~~definitely~~ definitely acknowledged that this as between the different classes of society,

the influence of the school system was a ~~very~~ potent factor in forming that new culture of the working classes ~~which~~ is a so distinctive a feature of the New Vienna.

adequate transformation it is impossible to give here anything like ~~an~~ adequate picture of the ~~changes~~ changes that came about in the lives of the workers during this period. But it is necessary to point out that the change came overwhelmingly ~~from~~ from on the part of the youth. Thus it is understandable that the reform of school life, extending as it did, also to the senior elementary schools (the so-called Bürgerschule), should in its 15 years of existence, ~~have~~ decisively influenced the forms of lives of the younger generation, and thus of the working class as a whole. Certainly other factors must have worked in a parallel ~~direction~~ direction to bring about that general change in working class life that has rightly been attributed to this period. For the purposes of this analysis however it suffices ~~to say~~ to say that there was a very great change indeed, and that this change was ~~strongly~~ strongly due to the School Reform.

to a not inconsiderable degree

Thus we come to our second question:

B/ What made these pedagogic reforms into so potent a factor in the development of a new culture?

"Experiences in Vienna and America" (cont).

5/;

we must distinguish between two groups of Here circumstances.

- 1/ Those which were due to the Social-democratic political régime in Vienna, and
- 2/ those that were independent of this fact and were due to Austrian conditions in general.

1/ The circumstances which made the School reform into an effective factor of change, and were due to the Vienna régime

can be summed up as follows:

financial

a/ the social welfare policy of the Federal Government as well as the Vienna Municipality; it was due to this policy that the Austrian worker developed a feeling of security which alone was capable of releasing the energies that flowed into the channels of new kinds of activities;

b/ housing policy, which created in the Vienna tenement houses a new kind of environment for hundreds of thousands of working class people. They found in these houses a privacy which they did not enjoy in the type of Vienna prewar slums and at the same time collective facilities for their homes, children which made a life according to their own real needs possible, thereby raising very much the all round standard of existence without any advance in income.

c/ the municipal support to the cultural and recreational forms of the working class movement. A policy, a public baths policy, an open space policy, a general financial policy, a real estate policy aimed at these activities. Vienna thus encouraging became a city, in which every aspect of public administration is carried on in such a way as to make it a city of the working people. Incidentally, the lower middle class followed suit and joined in with the activities of the working class using the facilities afforded by them to indulge in sports etc, the costs of which would have been prohibitive if carried on on any other basis than that of the working class and its extremely low material standards.

All these factors depend upon the possession of ^{actual} political power by the S.D. party.

actual
with the character of.

Without power, moreover, the working class cannot develop that mentality of responsibility and leadership which ~~makes~~ ^{enables} all its activities, ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ preparation for assuming still greater responsibilities in the future.

2/ The circumstances favorable to the ^{social} effectiveness of the School Reform ~~was~~ ^{is} not due, to the Social Democratic régime but to the general Austrian ^{however,} conditions.

By far the most important of these was the obligatory system of elementary education inherited from pre-War Austria. Only because all classes of society had to send their children to the state school, could the school develop into a formative force ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ society. In ^{general} fact, without some knowledge of the institutional background of the former Austria it is hardly possible to understand ~~the~~ ^{the} preconditions of the effectiveness of some of the ~~most~~ ^{most} essential the School Reform.

what was by an

only racism

The democratic element in the social structure of Austria was very pronounced. Historically it was due to the Josephinean era, i.e. the Austrian complement to the ~~the~~ ^{the} Frederician and the Catherinean epochs in Prussia and Russia respectively. ^{Volterianism of} the expulsion of the Jesuits under Joseph II. (1780-1790) ~~is~~ ^{is} only a characteristic detail in one of the greatest efforts of enlightened absolutism to democratise a great empire ever made by ~~the~~ ^{the} means of a centralized bureaucracy. The idea of complete equality between the ~~the~~ ^{the} religions and races of the Empire was indoctrinated into manifold the Church, the Army and the Civil service, the three great civilising ~~the~~ ^{the} centripetal forces in the old Dual Monarchy. The very idea of religious or racial discrimination was regarded as a failure to the duties of a Civil servant, an Army officer, ~~the~~ ^{the} a prelate of the Church. This attitude was not always easy to reconcile with the ~~the~~ ^{the} prerogatives of the German race in Austria and the Magyars in Hungary. In consequence the Dynasty preferred to recruit its Civil service, its clergy, its Army officers from the non-privileged races like the Czech, ~~the~~ ^{the} the Roumanians, the Croats, the Slovaks, the Slovenes, the Serbs, etc. This ^{involved} a very great degree of social democratisation, for these ~~weaker~~ ^{weaker} racial nationalities or racial minorities as they were also called, did not possess a ~~the~~ ^{the} noble or upper nobility of their own or an upper class. Thus the great mass of the civil servants, officers, clergy did not belong to the ~~the~~ ^{the} privileged class, but to the peasant ^{or} lower middle class. In Austria the majority of the Generals of the Army, ~~the~~ ^{the} the majority of the highest Church dignitaries, including the Cardinal Archbishop and Primate of Hungary ~~the~~ ^{the} were sons of poor peasants or of lower middle class parents. The same applies to the civil service. Thus ~~the~~ ^{the} apart from the aristocracy and (in Hungary) of a part of the nobility, which really belonged to the ~~the~~ ^{the}

upper

polit bourgeois

7. "Experiences in Vienna and America" (cont).

Power recruited,

two
court, society was divided into ~~two~~ classes only : the class of the "Educated" people from which the officers, civil servants, clergy ~~etc~~ belonged together with all the middle class and lower nobles, and the "un-educated" i.e. the ~~poor~~ class consisting of peasants, labourers, etc. But the communication between these two classes was so ~~constant~~ frequent and intimate that a ~~very~~ great percentage of the highest educated class came from "uneducated" parents.

always/excepting the aristocracy

This had two important consequences:

1/ That social origin was ~~not~~ disregarded in the Army, the clergy and the civil service. i.e. in the three socially decisive categories.

if

(but they were turbulent)

(the)

very

SE

h

The ~~main~~ charge against a ~~higher~~ higher officer, a bishop, or a high civil servant that he had differentiated ~~himself~~ on ~~racial, or national or social~~ grounds, ~~was~~ was regarded as a ~~very~~ serious one. Every officer what ever his family or social ~~origin~~ origin "wore His Majesty's porte epee", was official to court and thus ~~socially~~ socially the equal of His Majesty. The ~~same~~ same hold good of the ~~Church and the higher Civil~~ Church and the higher Civil Service. (Such ~~generalisations~~ generalisations must of course be ~~qualified~~ qualified in many ways to be strictly true; thus the diplomatic service was reserved to the aristocracy, ~~who~~ who had manyfold social ~~prerogatives~~ prerogatives.) But the valid code of social prestige, and intercourse strictly excluded the notion of lesser or higher -up families, in the essential hierarchies of this great Empire. Even the social disabilities of the Jews were subordinated to the general rule. No religious ~~differentiation~~ differentiation was ~~countenanced~~ countenanced in the Army e.g.

2/ That the social osmosis between the "educated" and the non-educated" was very lively indeed. The group of the educated was very broad and inclusive, it contained a very high percentage of people with ~~low~~ ^{very} incomes, who could not in anyway be thought of as belonging to the upper classes. Thus all the professionals irrespective of their incomes, the secondary school teachers, the journalists, writers and artists of all kind, ~~were~~ were on an entirely equal social footing with the members of the lower clergy, ~~SE~~ the army officers of all grades, the upper class, in fact they belonged to the ~~same~~ ^{same} class with ~~the~~ ~~full~~ ~~membership~~ membership

social appartences ~~of~~ of full membership.

The reason ~~for the fact that~~ ^{why} this important characteristic of Central European social existence ~~is~~ ^{has remained} practically unknown to ~~the~~ ^{the} is probably ~~due to~~ the extreme snobbery of the English upper class (the only one in practice to visit these countries in former times), who ~~had~~ ^{had} exclusively ~~interest~~ interest was with the aristocracy ~~which~~ ^{which} indeed is more numerous in those parts than in England) thus entirely missing the point. For while in England the social hierarchy ~~leads~~ leads up to the aristocracy with a ~~great~~ ^{great} number of distinct ~~social~~ social strata beneath it, in Central Europe ~~the~~ ^{the} aristocracy is part of court society, ~~titles~~ titles are ~~inherited~~ inherited by all the descendants, thus ~~excluding~~ excluding the aristocracy from the ~~upper~~ upper classes.

separating distinctly

(rest of the)

8 "Experiences in Vienna and America" (cont.)

The "rest of the upper class" however is socially homogenous, and differs only in educational standards ~~from~~ from the "uneducated". ~~The homogeneity of these educational standards~~ This explains why the homogeneity of educational standards had so great a social importance. These being the only social characteristics, it was of decisive importance that elementary education was one and the same for all classes and that the higher secondary education ~~was~~ was again the same for everybody. Thus a/ both the educated and the uneducated had had the same basic schooling and the uneducated could, in principle always go on to higher education, becoming the social equal of the upper class, ~~and~~

b/ the educated had the same education; a higher education consisted in privately acquired knowledge, which however was rather ~~more~~ after the privilege of the intellectual than of the wealthy.

stoi's

(De Amicis: "Il Cuore") To ~~the~~ praise of this book. Italy the weakest of the Central European countries, still passionately addicted to the code of social equality. Examples of the degree to which this idea was made the one and all of middle class education at secondary schools (starting with the elementary, however).

(Unity of speech and manners, of course the consequence, not the cause of this. Clothes different, not manners. The latter entirely depending upon the family. How ~~could~~ ^{an} else could a boy decide at 14 whether he wished to become an officer, a clergyman, a civil servant ~~entering~~ ^{entering} a claim to the highest dignities in the state, if his manners would have precluded him from taking up such a career?).

STATE

THE OBLIGATORY, GRATUITOUS elementary schools were the precondition ~~of~~ of the effectiveness of the School Reform in Austria as a social formative force.

This ~~and~~ ^{rather?} the POLITICAL POWER of the working class ~~allowed~~ allowed to relate education to the social ideals of the working class.

Obligatory elementary schools coupled with the ~~working~~ ^{working} class movement to which it was silently related, made the School Reform effective.

No ~~socially~~ effective education ~~is~~ possible without definite social ideals and environmental preconditions in the social reality.
