

# ANDRAGOGY - 1925

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Translated 1992 by Raymond Huessy

Feringer notes

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## Contents

- **I. Theory & Practice**
- **II. The School of Wisdom**
- **III. The Workers' Council School**
- **IV. The School of Law**

The context of this essay was the tragic situation of Germany after WW I. Rosenstock-Huessy was raising the question, "How has the German education system been faulty to not have prepared its citizens to see, and understand and respond more appropriately to their experience?" Apparently the German citizens did not see the pickle they were in. Rosenstock-Huessy writes as though he is offering the German people a method to better prepare themselves for the future, to rise up from the "dead," in this essay.

### **I. Theory & Practice**

a. "Schooling" is defined as the educational method for youth. Its characteristics are: 1) transmission of information, as contrasted with need for an adult education that would transform the students. Transmission is, by definition, oriented toward the past, with no admonition to act. 2) Teaching is teacher-centered. Transmission also negates the role of the teacher, because the teacher is primarily an instrument, analogous to a tape player or video today. 3) The primary activity of the student is to memorize, a situation that does not require leadership, but mere formal authority over the students.

b. True "education," for any age, by contrast is much more than mere "schooling." Adult education, in particular, is oriented toward solving community problems as a step toward a better future. This requires a curriculum that prepares the student to see, understand and deal with problems at hand. In the process the adult is transformed into a new being, because creating a future always demands a new type of person to evolve with changed times. The difference in age, in adult learning situations, between teacher and student is much less, and therefore the teacher

needs to lead, at first. The authority relationship between student and teacher may shift back and forth.

c. Of course, these definitions are not pure, as all levels of learning involve passing on information from the past. However, the solving of problems, where the answers are not known beforehand, new information to be created and tested - a very subtle and demanding process. Furthermore, since the curriculum arises from community need, adult students have the power to evaluate its relevance and participate in its formulation.

d. Two "curious" types of adult schools arose in Germany after WW I, one based on humanistic idealism and the other on "realpolitik." The purpose and philosophy of these schools could not have been more different. The "Keyserling" school in 1923 reflected idealism and the "Speidel Workers Council Schools," represented the latter. One represented theory (idealism), and the other, practice. These orientations existed previously, but between 1500 and 1900 they grew more and more apart, and finally evolved into isolation and incompatibility. They became two poles of philosophy, each giving lip-service to the importance of the other, but in reality they ignored each other.

e. Rosenstock-Huessy despaired of the educational institutions for adults in Germany at this time, not only the Keyserling and Speidel schools, but also the university and the church, as offering inadequate and disconnected teaching:

Until now we have in a spiritual sense known only the conscious misleading of adults: demagogy. But now we attempt conscious spiritual leadership: "andragogy"...So andragogy is the name under which we can group all school-bound teaching of adults. In any case the rise of andragogy as a renunciation of both mere pedagogy and demagogy is significant. (p.3)

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## II. The School of Wisdom

a. The essential characteristics of the Keyserling school were: 1) well-to-do people who wished to improve their minds, but, 2) with no motive to put this learning into practice. Adults entered to "become wise," to know themselves, to become "grown-up." Entry into the school was voluntary, motivated by a personal desire for enlightenment.

b. The opposite of this characterized the Speidel school. Here adults were driven by some community need, by a higher call to "duty," not something they arbitrarily chose, and not for their personal ends, but for group ends. *The problem of "andragogy" is to resolve these two opposing forces.*

c. The existence of the Keyserling school represented a recognition of the failure of both the university and the church. The university had become "soulless," and the church "deadly to the spirit."

The Keyserling school employed unconventional and perfectly valid methods for teaching, but, like the university and the church, failed to connect learning with action. The validity of the curriculum and teaching methods did not make up for a failure in philosophy and this turned out to be a fatal flaw.

d. The notion that knowledge studied out of the context of practice could have power was fallacious, in Rosenstock-Huessy's view.

Whoever pretends to believe in the lack of preconditions in the social sciences, exaggerates the weight of his little bit of personal morality and good behavior. It is nice, of course, not to lie consciously. But it is much worse for the spirit and truth and science, to lie without being aware of it. ....Keyserling's new approach has little prospect of ending anywhere different than where Plato's, Marsilio Ficino's, Richelieu's, or Leibnitz's academic life ended: in the highest personal truthfulness, in institutional unreality and ambiguity! (p.7)

Knowledge studied out of the context of use, out of the stream of history, knowledge taught as a bundle of abstractions only, isolates people and constrains them from connecting with others, because it offers no basis for commonly agreed-upon validation of the usefulness of the knowledge. Nor does it allow any learning from other generations.

Keyserling does not differentiate between "his" truth for himself and responsible "teachable" truth for others. Without such a filter, such a spiritual self-purification from the fetters of individuality, one graduating class, one generation, can never connect to another. (p.8)

e. True teaching means preparing the student to validate the relevance of past knowledge, add to it the knowledge of some present situation, then find a method for solving the problem at hand. All of this requires some common agreement as to the facts and the effectiveness of possible solutions (which is to say, testing them). "The problem of continuity, inheritance, transmission, is the problem which causes our existing institutions to wither away." (p.8) Another way of putting this is to say that this form of idealism tries to drive out the devil with the devil, subjectivity with subjectivity, individualism with individualism, just as does the university. What if the professor lacks knowledge, or is biased, how are his pronouncements of the truth to be validated? In a "pedagogical" system the student is stuck with accepting the knowledge uncritically. How can such a method prepare a community member participating in community affairs to respond to community problems fruitfully?

Adult experience should move one toward being a wiser and self-assured personality. Today university students are self assured because Western Culture and its traditional universities emphasize science, which requires only memory, but not social wisdom and a call to action.

f. The vitality of the society is at stake here. Any community requires vital leadership, which is to say, outstanding persons, what Rosenstock-Huessy calls "a personality." The idea, established in the 16th century "Humanist" movement, meant that anyone could do anything. The fallacy of this notion lies in the fact that, when everyone believes they can become a "personality" (great

person), then no one can. Where, then, is the leadership? Even if a leader is present, he/she is not accepted, or worse, not even recognized. Such is the result of the cult of individualism (humanism)! [RF - In my own experience I have many times been confronted with groups who had little or no knowledge of some issue, but claimed the right to have an opinion and an influence equal to that of the expert.]

g. Another concern Rosenstock-Huessy raises with traditional adult educational institutions is that of homogeneity, of the lack of representation in planning bodies of many group members. Examples of this phenomenon are too numerous to list. Police departments, political parties, universities, churches, labor unions - in short all institutions - have failed to reform themselves. No homogeneous group can change itself, because to do so transforms it into something else:

Whenever members of a homogeneous social group whose inner attitudes are well-known and well-established, makes use of educational institutions as adults, any attempt to effect essential change in the group must end in failure....This is also why all party activity is immune to improvement. And that is why any homogeneity among students sets narrow limits on the art of the teacher. (pp.10,11)

### **III. The Workers' Council School**

a. The context of the "workers" situation was the need to re-establish a movement, originated in the past, but which had faded out. In the past peasants needed to defend themselves against the powerful. The first step in this process was to know the rule of law, to know one's rights as well as responsibilities. With the rise of capitalism and the humanistic notion of individual worth, the new peasants, the workers, became the "soil" for entrepreneurship. There were schools established in the 19th century for the peasants to study such subjects as marriage contracts and other aspects of contract law, in addition to some general education. The present need in post WW I Germany was for the modern peasants (workers) to protect their rights by re-establishing the dissemination of this type of knowledge. The movements of the 19th century were characterized by political activists for the purpose of raising the economic status of workers and for protection against exploitation.

b. There was an important distinction to be made, between the study of rules and the rights they bequeathed, on the one hand, and political action on the other. Law is, by definition, oriented toward the past, and changing the law is directed toward the future. This new popular adult education, as represented by the Speidel school, was oriented toward political action. However, the orientation was insufficient because it became manifest in a form that was narrow and idealistic. Rosenstock-Huessy explains in some detail the evolution of this phenomenon. In a nut-shell, it amounted to Speidel concentrating on political forms, i.e. how to obtain workers rights. They learned to stop certain types of practices through the courts, but in the meantime the economic disaster of the country made such political concern irrelevant. The workers could not see that the larger picture was that their economic problems were tied to those of the rest of the country, and single issue political action then took on a bad smell.

"Politics today is filth," a businessman wrote recently. He meant that idealistic political thinking which stares fixedly at Berlin, equating politics with government policy, law with state regulation, public life with the life of the state. (p.11)

The failure of law was that cases came to be decided on the basis of a technicality. This distorted the spirit of the law.

c. The workers were mainly interested in learning 1) their rights and how to defend them, 2) law to become equipped to prosecute a lawsuit, and 3) arbitration processes. Trials were seen as the scene of the real context between labor and management. Distinctions between individual legal rights and public rights were important to understand, i.e. those established by legal procedure on the one hand, and those "...shunted off into politics, campaigns, parties, and parliaments," on the other hand.

d. In practice, the Workers' Council Schools failed 1) because their membership was too homogeneous, and 2) because they allowed themselves to become too fragmented into a narrow, specialized approach to solving their problems, as described (in b, & c) above. This is to say, because of a failure to identify the larger context of their society into which their movement fitted. Also, 3) they failed because they saw their situation as a microcosm of all social activity.

Do not underestimate the danger of this situation! It is the last bit of "soil" in society which is being consumed....True teaching is, and must be lacking, because it is borrowed, and borrowed from a world divided into theories and practices. The incest in these schools, that in them the workers are only among themselves, we can only take for the second impediment to the schools' coming to spiritual independence. But this impediment has a greater importance now than ever before. Because in our fundamentally weakened people, each individual group is incapable of regenerating the spiritual life, even of its own environment. (pp.16,17)

e. "How can we understand the prospects for these two types of schools, "wisdom and law," and what should we hope for?" (p.17)

editorial comments:

Up to this point the author speaks of the degeneration of Germany in 1925, exacerbated by improper teaching of adults. The failure of both schools was in being incapable of counter-balancing the corrupted institutions. Therefore the need for a new type of teaching, which Rosenstock-Huessy dubs "andragogy." Andragogy was conceived to sensitize adults to the meaning (spirit) of their times, to awaken the spirit and motivate action on the part of the citizenry to improve the community. It would be entirely appropriate to call this new teaching, "a higher form" of teaching. It exactly parallels the relationship of his new form of grammar that ERH called, "The Grammatical Method." This new grammar goes beyond Alexandrian Grammar, which we all learned. And in a like way, "Andragogy" goes beyond traditional teaching.

The distinction between pedagogy, demagogy, and andragogy is important, because each has a different but justifiable purpose. Each calls for a different methodology. It is equally true that, in reality, these types can never become isolated and followed in a "pure" form, because there is always overlap at every level. Each type either calls for or anticipates the next step. For instance, all learning requires memory, vocabulary, sequence, logic, and so forth. And even with andragogy, in certain situations the purpose and methodology of pedagogy and demagogy would be subsumed as part of the teaching process. This is to say, in some situations with adults, where the students are new to a subject, and the teacher is an expert, the students are hardly in a position to determine goals or participate equally with the teacher. Contrarily, in elementary school part, of the preparation must anticipate andragogy.

[RF - Having said this, I would hope the reader can better understand the full implications of the final section.]

#### **IV. The School of Law**

Rosenstock-Huessy points out that the time to create new institutions is in the time of need. In this case in Germany, he points out how the lost war reflected a number of social breakdowns, deeply divided social classes, deeply divided specialized professions, a demoralized citizenry in which self-confidence, a vision for a future, and hope were at the lowest point, and finally, serious divisions as to teaching methods and curricular theories.

A school for adults, which would produce individuals prepared to face problems and create new forms to deal with new problems, what ERH calls in this essay "Schools for men" (p.19), must break new ground. The needs (goals) were clear: 1) to unite deeply divided social classes, 2) to create some commonality of interest between the most deeply divided specialized professions, 3) to also take into account both individual and group needs, and finally 4) "...to melt down the isolated specialized teachers into one teaching community." Another way of generalizing this concept is that the educational system must be based upon the experience of the country, an experience where failed institutions and much suffering was rampant. What was needed was:

...a School of Events, and a school for those who have undergone those events. The mere man of knowledge, the dogmatist, the professional man, the philosopher, the rationalist, all those who neither can, nor will let their knowledge be changed by events, have no place in andragogy. The priest and the Levite pass by: only the Samaritan is ready to think and act anew! (p.19)

Demagogy: The state is interested in promoting its own survival, which means that there must be some modicum, some minimum common spirit by which unity and public order could be maintained. The state there has a primary interest in maintaining an educational system that will sustain this common spirit. Examples are given: Germany in 1810 and France 1871 were both defeated in war, and each country started new schools. However, for the reasons stated above, these new schools failed to appropriately prepare adults. The new concept must recognize and subsume the justifiable need for the state to create unity among its citizens.

Andragogy: The context in which the need for a new approach to the educational system that would go beyond "Demagogy" was the degenerated, dispirited state of Germany in 1918. He raises the question, "How are individuals and groups to regenerate themselves and their country?"

It is not only a question of preserving our state, but of barbarization of Europe. It is not only a question of inspecting politics in the capital, but of ordering life in all parts and places of the country. It is not a question of teaching a homogeneous student body, but of bringing a disparate population together.

All adult education, if it is to achieve anything original, anything that shapes men, anything that arises from the depths of time, will have to proceed from the suffering which the lost war has brought each of us... (p. 18)

The basis for a new power of teaching must arise from the shared experience of both student and teacher. Where that experience was catastrophic, it heralded the need for a new type thinking and of a new type of adult. With andragogy, not only was this experience to be shared in the sense that the background of students was to be a constant source of data in the teaching process, but the age of student and teacher is shared as well, as the teacher's age was typically close to that of the student.

1. The difference between adult and elementary education:

a. A child, by definition, has not yet the capability of taking on responsibility in the community. He/she learns to develop skills, follow curiosity, and is allowed to play and enjoy and follow natural inclinations along these pathways.

b. The adult is one who has taken responsibility, who has entered the life and history of the community, who suffers from the failed processes in the community as well as having enjoyed its benefits. The mature adult, in order to heal the wounds of failed processes ..."must build on the graveyard of dreams and of withered blossoms, if they mean to rescue what can be rescued." (p.21)

c. "Nationalism and Naturalism" are the enemies of adult education, negating the need for adult education. The focus of nationalism is on the past, and the principle direction is toward solving economic problems. The narrowly-oriented nationalist tends to be relieved of re-examining present conditions, of freeing the citizen from having to strive for change that is, in fact, needed. An example is the tendency of nations to go to war over past grievances, rather than finding solutions based upon present conditions.

"Naturalism," as the name implies, is following natural tendencies; it is natural for workers, according to Rosenstock-Huessy, to study events of the past that may be interesting, but with no conclusion as to what wisdom these events might offer in the present, sparing them the need to act on that knowledge. As historian Page Smith put it, "...sparing them the need to attend to what

must be learned, rather than merely what might be interesting to learn." Growth and change at once oppose natural tendencies, growth and change that are essential for survival from one generation to the next, for creating a more viable future.

d. Historical thinking is a fundamental dimension of andragogy, in that past events are to be analyzed for what can be learned from them so that past failures might not be repeated. In this way the past becomes unified with the present and future. Adult education must rise above natural tendencies. Knowledge is never settled for long. [RF - One is reminded of a well-known aphorism of Alfred North Whitehead, "Knowledge keeps like fish!" Knowledge must be validated by being acted upon. Since action takes place only in the present, time is unified completely (past-present-future). What is most likely to draw people together is a common recognition that dreams must be achieved, or at least movement toward them.

e. Consistent with these principles, theory and practice are to become unified in the method of andragogy. Only thus is any knowledge validated, and at the same time that knowledge is re-invented and renewed. It then becomes alive, filled with meaning.

In andragogy, theory becomes practical deed, in the responsible word; in the crucible of necessity, however, practical deeds become the stuff of theory. (p.23)

f. Synonyms for andragogy would be "adult education" or the "school of events."

g. Andragogy is not merely "better" as an education method for this purpose, it is a necessity:

The decision whether we want to continue in the old division of pedagogy and demagoguery is no longer ours to make. For our childish dreams are played out, and the demagogical arts of seduction are no longer of any use. Dreams and arts have been smashed by a ghastly reality. We can either do nothing, which is to say, remain dead, or we can say "yes" to the School of Law, speak as men from the grave of our hopes, and so come to life once more. (p.25)

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