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The Classroom as an Extension of the Home in the Spirit of Pestalozzi 73

by Benedikt Huber

Our last issue devoted to schools was mainly concerned with the relations of the latter to their surroundings and the structure of an urban district as a whole. The present issue, however, deals with the classroom, that essential feature in any school building. In Switzerland today it is generally recognized that a square classroom lit from two sides and supplemented by a fair-sized hobby room is best suited to teaching from the points of view of educational theory and hygiene. Nevertheless it would be erroneous and even dangerous to attempt to codify and erect fixed rules regarding the results of present-day development on the basis of statistics which, when examined more closely, are anything but conclusive. There is much talk of Pestalozzi but this is not always a sign that he has been fully understood. A number of our modern classrooms, even though their advantages cannot be questioned, strike one as being more like laboratories with every rational factor catered for, whereas Pestalozzi's real ideas on the subject should lead us to try and make each class a place where the child feels so at home that his steady development seems as natural to him as his life at home. Looked at from this angle, our square, bilaterally illuminated classrooms can be considered as only preliminary survey markers in a process of evolution that cannot be limited to the merely functional. The most important feature, the essential one, in any form of teaching is to be found in the behaviour of the teacher. It would be wrong to assume that architecture by itself can solve the specific problem of education. The creation of a family atmosphere within a class, to which our architectural views may most certainly make an important contribution, can never be really attained without comparable reforms in the teaching and training of teachers.

"Neubühl" Primary School and Kindergarten at Wollishofen, Zurich 79

Architect: Prof. W. Custer FAS/SIA, Zurich, in collaboration with G. Crespo, architect SIA, Zurich

The school has been constructed in a beautiful green setting and on a comparatively large plot of land, which has made the demarcation of the areas of noise and silence possible. The complex as a whole comprises: a kindergarten made up of two units; an elementary school (1st, 2nd and 3rd classes) of 6 classes on the ground floor set in pairs in pavilions; six classes (for the 4th, 5th and 6th) on the first floor of the main building. In addition, there is a music room, masters' rooms, etc., and a workshop under the management of Pro Juventute which is open to district residents in their free time in the evenings and at the weekend. All the classes are square and bilaterally illuminated. There is also a gymnasium. Decoration: a sculpture by Alberto D'Altri (not yet in position), tiles from the workshop of Elizabeth Langsch and, moreover, free paintings by the children on walls set up for this purpose.

"Hinterbühl" School Complex at Wangen near Olten 86

1955-59. Hans Zangger, Zurich

This school complex, which houses the upper forms of the primary school, the secondary school and the so-called district school of the township of about 3500 inhabitants, comprises at the stage now reached 10 classes, 1 handicraft classroom, 1 kitchen with refectory, 1 teachers' room, 1 room for collections and demonstration, 1 gymnasium, caretaker's accommodation, garden walks, a yard, etc. The district school, which is still to be built, will have six classes. All the buildings are grouped round the joint yard, which is enlivened with a fountain. Facing the gymnasium is a raised path, which acts as a gallery for spectators. The corridors and halls do not only contribute to the ease of movement but can be used to enlarge the classrooms themselves. The grounds surrounding the school were laid out by Verena Steiner, landscape gardener SWB, Zurich.

"Auen" School at Linthal 90

1958-59. Architects: J. Zweifel FAS and W. Marti, Glarus. Engineers: W. Böhler SIA, Rapperswil

A single classroom for the eight classes, playground covered with an extremely low-eaved roof similar to those found on houses in Glarus.

School Complex at St-Maurice, Valais

1959-60. Architect: D. Girardet FAS/SIA, Sion

Magnificently sited on a gentle slope facing south with a view along the axis of the valley, this school complex comprises four units linked by covered ways: one building for the six classes of girls, the teachers' room, the building for the boys' classes and accommodation for the caretaker. By leaving the materials (stone, wood, concrete) in their natural state, an attempt has been made to differentiate and to fuse the buildings, as well to harmonize the complex with its environs.

High School at St. Joseph, Michigan, U.S.A. 96

Architects: Eberle M. Smith Associates, Detroit; project and collaboration: T. Gersbach, architect

This school has been thought of as a district centre for sports and cultural activities in line with the tendency that exists in small American agglomerations, where, in point of fact, the school building is more and more playing a part that goes beyond purely educational functions. A clear demarcation has been made, by way of the arrangement of the cubes that form the complex as a whole, of the premises used by the public (a theatre seating a thousand, a gymnasium and a swimming-pool) from the purely educational section, where the cafeteria and library are also to be found.

School Building for the Upper Forms in the Pestalozzi Village at Trogen 100

1960. Architect: Max Graf, St. Gallen

Conceived of during the war, thanks to the initiative of R. W. Corti, as a centre of education for war orphans, the Pestalozzi village has been in operation since 1947. In the elementary classes instruction is given in the various national houses in the children's mother tongues. The higher forms, however, which have hitherto been split up, use German as the main language. These are now grouped together in a single complex. These plans were also accepted by Prof. W. Moser, Zurich, and Prof. G. Wilhelm, Stuttgart. The underlying principle is to be found in the closest possible union of theoretical and practical instruction. The class unit is clearly defined but without any separation of classrooms and workshops, recreation areas and lounges, glazed walls and sliding doors. Similarly mobile furniture also facilitates group instruction.

School Trips in the Puglia

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These trips made by students in the Textile Class of the Zurich Kunstgewerbeschule have been repeatedly organized during the past few years, the students taking part on successive occasions. The choice fell on the Puglia for the reason that so much in the customs and the world of forms, as well as those found in the regional handicrafts, makes an immediate impression on the modern mind by virtue of its balance and the noble simplicity of the way of life. The opportunity offered to students to rediscover what they have already found on their first visit induces them to go beyond a faithful reproduction of things seen to a spare intensification in design, which is then of advantage in their professional work.