

Book review

“Images of Education”

by Tankred Schaer



Jochen Krautz. (Photo ts)

Jochen Krautz is an art educator at the University in Wuppertal and has become known by the educational political congresses he initiated. He is president of the Society for Education and Knowledge.

Now Krautz has published this wonderful book, “Images of Education”. Individual beautiful artworks by his students and pupils, artworks by well-known artists and photographs by the author himself are shown on the left-hand pages of the book with a corresponding text on the right-hand pages. In the pictures and texts there arises an overdue and at the same time effective renewed reflection of what has been forgotten in our times: A good school does not teach knowledge data, but enables a doorway to understanding.

The book begins with a picture: a book lying on a bare concrete floor. The parquet and the screed have been removed as a result of the flooding in the Ahr valley [Germany]. We are on the very bottom of the room – once the study of Jochen Krautz. While salvaging his books, the volume “Krise und neuer Anfang” [Crisis and New Beginning] by the well-known pedagogue Otto Friedrich Bollnow falls into his hands. This is the first picture of the book “Images of Education”.

More than a scientific text can evoke, the combination of pictures together with the author’s explanations encourages us to think more deeply. We should get to the bottom of things and explore the core and the origin of the matter. According to Bollnow, it is “about uncovering the buried foundation”: what is the essence of education? In view of the crisis of school education and pedagogical thinking, Krautz demands a new beginning, a reconsideration of fundamental principles – a renaissance of the school, as the subtitle of the book reads.

Krautz approaches this question with numerous pictures that are didactically charged as it were, because they call for interpretation and contextualisation. For example, the observer casts a glance at an elaborately and carefully prepared experiment in a biology lesson with Petri dishes and cotton pads, nutrient solution and seeds, everything labelled and carefully arranged. The chapter is titled “Love for the subject”. Krautz asks, “Does this effort now testify to a blinkered specialist who is indifferent to children? Or is the commitment to the subject not at the same time an expression of love for children and young people?” In another place, the reader is confronted with yet a different aspect of teaching. The picture in the book depicts a portrait of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, painted by Albert Anker. Krautz has titled this chapter “Pedagogical Love,” meaning “the loving devotion to children and young people for their own sake.” Without this, pedagogy becomes a social technology, as it is often propagated today. The teacher uses methods and techniques inwardly distanced to make the children do what ever, in order to meet “any standards and comparative tests”.

It becomes understandable that good teaching must contain both: A human approach to children and young people, a genuine relationship, but at the same time also the love for the subject, the professional knowledge of the subject-matter.

In the various texts on community, consequence, homework, emancipation, ... Professor Krautz vividly and highly understandably demonstrates the foundation of a genuine and that means humane education for our time.

While looking at the pictures and capturing the texts, page after page, the reader gets closer to an answer to the question of the core of education. This happens rationally and – due to the en-



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gaging and easy-to-read, understandable and moving text – also emotionally.

The author concludes his book with the chapter “Hope”. And this is written so beautifully and so touchingly that everyone should read it for themselves. Hope for a better future, for a more humane humanity, remains “at the foundation of every pedagogical act.” And he then poses the question: Whose hope is it? Who does need

whom the most? The children us or we them? Krautz writes, “In the end, we cannot answer this question. This is precisely where the inseparable mutuality of a pedagogical relationship lies. We need each other in order not to lose hope.”

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