

# On Education (2)



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*Michael Duane*

**The Seeds Of Its Own Destruction  
or  
Education in Capitalist Britain**

‘Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.’

Oscar Wilde  
*‘The Importance of Being Earnest’*

Some years ago after a series of discussions with colleagues in colleges of education throughout England about the criteria on which students were selected as potential teachers, I collected from a dozen of those colleges several hundred copies of reports sent by head teachers, mainly of grammar and comprehensive schools, recommending students for teacher-training and listing the characteristics they thought made them particularly suitable to be teachers. Of those I picked out the qualities mentioned in nearly seventy per cent of the reports. They said that the student:

1. Came from a respectable family; in some reports from ‘a middle-class’ or ‘professional’ family.
2. Had been a good prefect and identified with the values of the teaching profession.
3. Would never dress or behave in an unseemly manner; using make-up by girls or wearing long hair by boys were mentioned.
4. Would never hold ‘extreme’ political views, a phrase used in a context that clearly indicated ‘left’.
5. Was not an academic ‘high-flyer’ who would go to university and be unlikely to remain in teaching.

Our question was why, in view of its overall failure to raise educational standards to any marked extent during the previous ten years, teacher-training was held to be essential in state schools, whereas this was not so in Public schools. Teachers could not be appointed to any state school

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without such training, except as an emergency and for a very limited time or 'on supply' on a daily appointment when there was a grave shortage in subjects such as maths or science. Further, even when teachers had successfully undergone teacher-training they then had to be 'on probation' for at least a year. I have discussed 'the probationary year' in another paper. The only conclusion that can be drawn from what happens during that year is that it is intended to ensure that the teacher will keep his pupils under control and teach them useful habits that will benefit their future employers.

The failure to affect standards was not confined to literacy; it extended throughout the whole of human behaviour. At no time since the introduction of compulsory education, and certainly at no time since the systematic recording of crime, had the level of crime dropped in Britain. Since 1870, when education was first made compulsory and financed from the public purse, crime and delinquency have increased at a rate in excess of what could be expected simply from the increase in population. After both world wars the increase rose much more sharply. In the ten years from 1979 to 1989 the number of offences recorded by the police rose from 2.5 million to 3.9 million, and with a planned increase of 20,000 prison places over the fifteen years from 1990 at a cost of over £1000 million, it looks as if the Conservative government, elected on a programme of 'Law and Order' is itself not confident that crime will diminish.<sup>1</sup> Nor has crime been confined to the lower classes. In 1959 Barbara, later Lady, Wootton wrote:

'Nevertheless, it can confidently be said that the upper social classes are much under-represented in prison. But whether this is the result of the nature or the gravity of their offences, or whether it is merely a reflection of the tendency of judges to regard prison as a more suitable environment for the lower than for the upper classes, no-one can tell.'<sup>2</sup>

It would appear, as a result of a long series of massive fraud and theft in high places, culminating in 'the Guinness affair' of 1990 and the BCCI affair of 1991, that the pattern has not changed over the last half-century, either in terms of the incidence of crime among the upper strata or in terms of the attitudes of judges to such crime.

Further, if to the increase in crime we add: widespread ignorance about the operation of ordinary institutions among those for whose benefit the institutions were intended, e.g. the social services designed for those in great need; the mass purchase of newspapers and journals that systematically distort news, select and promulgate views acceptable to the owners and suppress contrary views; the gullibility that accepts at face value aggressive and misleading advertisements and political propaganda . . . it can hardly be claimed that universal education for

a hundred and twenty years has made for intelligent and independent thought, or that religious instruction – the one compulsory subject on the curriculum of all schools since 1944 – has led to a drop in the rate of crime. Indeed it could well be claimed that it has had quite the opposite effect, since the greatest increase in the rate of crime, as recorded, has actually taken place since 1944 when religious instruction was made compulsory.

An annual investment, since the last war, of £5 billion rising to £20 billion, it might be thought, would produce dramatic returns in both literacy and virtuous living. Returns for investment in business and industry comparable to those in education would speedily bankrupt the investors. How can crime, alcoholism, drug addiction that includes tobacco and the vast consumption of alcohol at just below addictive levels that causes injury and death by reckless driving, be classed as other than a massive failure to live rationally and in accordance with our education? How can the fouling of our own nest, the earth, be categorised as other than selfish stupidity? How can the insanity of war, even so-called ‘defensive’ war, not fall under the heading ‘criminal’ when armed forces, distant and unknown to the victims, and having no personal reasons for animosity towards those whom they kill, massacre people by the hundreds of thousands, using impersonal and indiscriminate because uncontrollable, mechanical violence. The problem we have not yet solved is why crime increases at a geometric rate. Those who believe that man is evil by nature are not surprised. For them the problem is simply one of containment and effective deterrence. Those who do not think in this way tend to see crime as a manifestation of individual and social frustration caused by complex inequalities and systems of oppression and exploitation endemic to our particular social system.

### **Why teacher-training?**

Teacher-training is not held to be necessary in Public schools for a number of reasons, of which the following are crucial:

1. Teachers come from the same social background as the pupils – the upper professional, managerial and land-owning classes drawn from less than seven percent of the population.
2. A high proportion of the teachers appointed to Public schools, especially to one of the more famous schools such as Eton or Harrow, have been educated in that same school.
3. They come predominantly from Oxford and Cambridge with good degrees.

They are therefore well equipped both to produce a high standard of literacy and to promote the moral and social standards subscribed to by the parents of their pupils. Teachers and pupils share a common culture and common values.

Historically teachers in Public schools came from the 'servant class' and were treated as servants; hence the tradition that boys in Public schools can only be beaten by their peers: to be beaten by servants would be a humiliation. Something of the same feeling that teachers are of a lower social rank persists even today. I was told by a Cambridge don in the School of Education that they encourage their brightest graduates in the school to go straight for posts in the Department of Education and Science and 'not to waste time in teaching'. It was only with the increasing competition to enter the better known universities and to secure the qualifications that, in an increasingly technical world, became more and more necessary for senior positions in the professions, industry, commerce, management, including estate management and the city, that the well-qualified teacher gained some status in the outside world. The days when a retired drill-sergeant was responsible for giving the boys exercise in Public schools have long gone.

### **Schools and social-class background**

Because the range of social background in Public and Prep (Preparatory) schools is much more narrow than that in state schools the appointment of teachers and the educational objectives are simpler. A glance at some of the findings of Royston Lambert and his colleagues in their sociological study of 66 boarding schools<sup>3</sup> makes it clear why this should be so. He found that a total of twenty-eight factors operated in all boarding schools, but so strongly in the Public schools as to give them their distinctive character. Among other factors the Public schools:

- a. were denominational
- b. emphasised the 'Arnold tradition' of intellectual competence, physical fitness and training for leadership
- c. maintained strong associations of former pupils who stressed tradition and who penetrated universities and local authorities on behalf of the schools
- d. used the Head Masters' Conference to keep up standards and to maintain goals
- e. secured favoured relationships with Oxbridge and supplied a far greater proportion of its scholars than their numbers would warrant
- f. supplied the bulk of senior officers in the services, the diplomatic corps, the civil service, the Church, the Law and the City

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- g. drew their staffs from the higher socioeconomic groups
  - h. had a higher degree of staff stability than other schools
  - i. promoted self-reliance, but within a framework of deference to established authority
  - j. drew from politically right-wing families
  - k. tended to render boys uneasy with girls and in some schools not only tolerated but approved homosexuality
  - l. regarded parents as 'a nuisance created by the motor car'
  - m. discouraged affective relationships even with parents.

Thus the close identity of social background between staff and pupils and between home and school, about career and social objectives, creates a rapport that, in effect, makes the training of teachers unnecessary. Indeed, such training, by introducing them to broader concepts of democracy in the work of philosophers such as John Dewey, could well run counter to the otherwise clear objective of equipping their pupils to use wealth and power in preserving the status quo.

After a series of discussions with the Remove at Westminster School about Royston Lambert's researches, and about the effects on intelligence and motivation, of differences in social background such as existed between Westminster boys and pupils at Risinghill school, one of the boys (the highly intelligent and politically well-informed son of a London surgeon) asked me whether I was aware of a growing hostility towards me among some of the Remove, and why that should be. I suggested that it might arise from their discovery of facts about discrepancies between our public profession of 'democracy' and the actual facts of our society, facts from which they were normally protected; and that some of them obviously found it easier to reject the facts and me than to have to change long-established habits of thought that were of the very fabric of their own family and cultural assumptions.

### **Local Authority or 'State' Schools**

State schools have to cover a much wider spectrum of socioeconomic background than do fee-paying schools so they have greater difficulty in formulating clear educational objectives that apply to all types of schools and to children from a wide range of social backgrounds. Under the old tripartite system of separate Grammar, Technical and Secondary Modern schools, the new generation of Grammar schools took over many of the traditions from the Public schools when, after the 1902 Act, in the absence of suitable candidates from the old Board schools and Elementary schools, headmasters were appointed from the staffs of some of the minor Public schools at levels of salary that were better

than they had been receiving, and without the burden of supervising pupils after school hours and during weekends.

The tasks of this new flight of Grammar or 'Secondary Schools' as they were called at the time, were to fill the ranks of the expanding professions by preparing their pupils for public examinations and the universities, and by training for leadership in the middle ranges of the professions and the civil service, so far as that could be done in day schools and with some pupils 'elevated' by success in the 'scholarship'. In these new Grammar schools it was always the pupils in the lowest stream who were the most difficult to teach, not because they were dull, but because they had not had in their families previous experience of the rigours of academic work in terms of unremitting application, regular attendance at school and long hours of homework without the help from parents that the professional family could supply at need. Such parents were not often driven by the ambition of their children to succeed in competition, and they could not train them to tolerate, because they had not experienced it themselves, what we now call 'deferred gratification' – the fortitude to put off until later the pleasure we would like to have here and now, for the sake of completing the difficult, unpleasant or boring tasks that have to be done to succeed at school.

Between the wars some local education authorities (LEA's), sought to provide a better education for those children who had just missed getting a place in a secondary, or as they were coming to be known, 'Grammar' school. They set up 'Central' schools for parents who wanted their children to stay beyond the age of thirteen or fourteen. (See the Introduction to The Hadow Report, 'The Education of the Adolescent', 1926) Many of these schools included technical and commercial subjects. Some changed their name to become Technical schools with a greater emphasis on typing, business studies, art, dressmaking and domestic subjects for girls and engineering, draughtsmanship, building, woodwork and other craft subjects for boys. For a long time they remained a small minority in the old system, staffed by technicians and aiming at technical careers for their pupils through City and Guild examinations, student apprenticeships and personal contacts with industry and business. Their aims were clear and they succeeded well even if their concept of education was narrow.

The Secondary Modern schools were created after the last war by splitting off the senior pupils from the old all-age or Elementary schools to form Modern schools whose entrants ranged from the 'failed 11 plus' children of professional families at the one end of their social spectrum to the children of the very poorest and most neglected sections of our society at the other. They sought desperately to formulate educational and social aims they would apply to all. Their difficulties were exacer-



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bated by the fact that more than nine-tenths of or even all their pupils – depending on the social composition of their catchment areas – had to leave school as soon as possible because their families could not afford to keep them at school longer.

Further, the resources of money, teaching staff and equipment allocated to these schools were calculated *not* on the number of pupils in the school but on the number of 'Burnham Units' accumulated by the pupils – a system long ago agreed between local education authorities and the teachers' unions. Under this system the youngest pupils at entry to secondary school counted as one unit. As they grew older they counted as more than one until, at the age of sixteen, they each counted as ten units. The rationale for this device was the need for more money to buy more expensive equipment and books for older pupils and to pay for the smaller teacher/pupil ratio needed to take more advanced studies. The effect, however, was that Grammar schools had twice the number of staff for a given number of pupils and so a much better teacher/pupil ratio; an average level of pay (through the system of 'special responsibility allowances') of more than forty percent higher; and equipment that no Modern school could match. And all this simply because, since professional or better-off families keep their children longer at school than poor families, the Grammar school accumulated many more Burnham Units; dramatically more at the age when Modern school children have left school and especially so when the Grammar school has a high proportion of professional or wealthy people in its catchment area.

It followed that the staff turnover was much lower in Grammar schools than in Modern schools, and because the staff was therefore not only more stable but more highly qualified to teach their subjects (about 75 percent were university graduates as against the fewer than 15 percent in the Modern schools), they continued to attract professional parents by their good examination results. The non-graduate teachers in Grammar schools were those who taught cookery, needlework, craft or games and had been trained in colleges of education. Their 'responsibility allowances' when they held them were the lowest.

The Modern schools, in a desperate effort to win academic respectability by starting courses for O-level examinations, had to cram the younger and less academic children into larger classes in order to release staff for the smaller groups required to ensure some success in examination work. Sadly, too many parents, even those without the slightest pretension to more than basic literacy from their own schooling, still wanted academic success for their children for the very simple reason that they equated academic qualifications with good jobs, better pay and a life for their children freed from the anxiety of frequent unemploy-

ment. And how many Secondary Modern heads or staff could, with conviction, argue to the contrary?

The inevitable result of such misguided ambition on the part of Modern school heads, i.e. to pursue O-level courses without enough candidates, properly qualified staff and a generous supply of suitable books, was that the burden of teaching and maintaining good discipline was heavily increased for the rest of the staff, since the possibility of giving the more personal teaching that their pupils needed was removed even further from them by the redistribution of the staff to favour the examination groups. The driving force behind the urge to start O-level courses in the Modern schools was reinforced, in addition, by the fact that more pupils staying longer at school and piling up a few more Burnham Units would mean a little more salary for the head and a few staff.

Some heads, on the other hand, sought to place their suitable pupils in the local Grammar school and were very occasionally successful. Too many Grammar school heads, however, put a quite unwarranted faith in the infallibility of the 11-plus and refused to have Modern pupils however good the quality of their work. Other Modern school heads believed that it was better to provide a good education for the majority of their pupils, with a well-balanced curriculum of practical work and its closely related academic counterpart that would give them both confidence and pleasure, as did Bob Mackenzie of Braehead School<sup>4</sup>, with immense satisfaction for his pupils, but with complete misunderstanding on the part of some of his staff and the majority of his dour, examination-obsessed education committee. In a deeply depressed mining area with high unemployment the value of examinations for such children as he had was very dubious, but the Scottish tradition took little note of the social background of children in assessing the function of the local school. Elsewhere I have looked at an experiment, The Terrace, designed for pupils in a deprived area of Yorkshire, that was brilliantly successful; it was an experiment begun by Royston Lambert, then head of Dartington Hall school, and Alec Clegg, Education Officer of the West Riding.<sup>5</sup>

So, for the majority of the Secondary Modern schools, as later for the large proportion of Comprehensive schools that were merely re-named Modern schools, foggy concepts such as 'Education for Work' were succeeded by 'Education for Life' and finally, with a bitter overtone as unemployment became a permanent feature of industrial society, 'Education for Leisure'. The woman who sweeps the office or the man who pushes a button or pulls a lever to make bottle tops, needs little education for work. Courses in personal relationships are well-intentioned but may be misdirected in poor and overcrowded areas where traditional mores are likely to be overriding. Local authorities

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started a wide variety of leisure activities – golf, pony trekking, rock climbing, games of all kinds – but the facts of land shortage had already turned us into a nation of spectators; the sea and the countryside are hours away from most city dwellers and the boy or girl who has been inspired to learn the trumpet too often finds that practice disturbs his neighbour who is on a night-shift. The riots in Bristol, Brixton and elsewhere in the early eighties exposed not so much the teachers' failures and intentions as government failure to back up those intentions with realistic provision for creative outlets for the young.

### **Some experiments by LEA's**

Following the 1944 Education Act, with the freedom to build a system of education to suit their special needs some LEA's experimented with combinations of separate schools on the same site and called them 'Bilateral' (Grammar plus Technical; Grammar plus Modern or Technical plus Modern), or 'Multilateral' (containing all three types of school). They believed that these groupings offered more flexibility in the use of teachers, and especially of teachers who, like music specialists, could only be employed part-time in smaller schools. They also thought that such close siting, with interchange of some staff could enable pupils to be transferred more easily at need. Some LEA's plumped directly for Comprehensive schools, defined during the debates leading up to the Act as 'schools catering for all the educational needs of their neighbourhoods', a definition that was later to be used as a term of abuse in the phrase 'neighbourhood schools' by right-wing writers about Comprehensive schools in working-class areas.<sup>6</sup>

The movement towards the 'unification' of all secondary schools was inherent in the abolition in 1922 of the separate divisions into Elementary, Secondary and Technical Education of the old Board of Education, so forward-thinking authorities were already preparing for the unification. They had not yet seen an important snag. When Comprehensive schools came to be sited in areas such as Notting Hill in west London they contained a broad spectrum of social backgrounds and therefore of conventional forms of intelligence as assessed by intelligence tests. The pressure of middle-class parents to have high quality academic teaching compelled heads to continue with academic streaming to which virtually all of them had been long accustomed, however subtly it had been disguised, so that the schools became what Brian Jackson<sup>7</sup> called 'an education system in miniature' because the composition of the different streams mirrored the social-class structure in the neighbourhood, with the children of the white professionals at the top and the children of the black, coloured and white lower working class at the bottom,

with a corresponding disposition of well- and poorly-qualified teachers.

The danger threatening comprehensive schools in areas dominated by one sector of the social-class spectrum was recognised, rather late, by the DES in 1965 when it issued Circular 10/65 which stated specifically that steps should be taken to guard against such one-sided development. That Circular was to the credit of the Department, even though within the same month – July 1965 – they were to be part of the operation, initiated by the Inner London Education Authority, that was to close Risinghill, itself a victim of the very danger against which Circular 10/65 was warning, namely the preponderance in its catchment area of one social class.

From the very beginning of its existence Risinghill, as against the 'ideal' spread of ability (as measured by intelligence tests and tests of aptitude in English and Maths) never had more than 0.1 of 1 percent in the top band of five equal bands of twenty percent; 7 percent in the second; twenty-three percent in the third; thirty percent in the fourth and never less than forty percent in the bottom band, representing a massive skewing of ability to the lowest band. The skew occurred, not because the population was distorted to that extent, but because the old Risinghill Street school, having been branded as the 'sink school' for the area, all children from problem homes, all illiterate children and all children who had been in serious trouble with the police were sent there by the heads of the primary schools in order to allow the other secondary schools in the area to live a relatively peaceful life. This policy was 'normal' throughout London in all 'difficult' areas and accounted, as I later discovered, for the dearth of candidates for the headship of Risinghill, other than the token 'deadbeats' put up to make a show of 'competition'. It had been decided, even before the school was opened, that it should be closed as soon as possible after a 'decent' interval. Hence no money was spent on an 'official' opening. The 'sink school' policy was well known in those areas but there was a tacit agreement between the teachers' unions and the administration never to discuss it openly. So when I applied from outside the London area it was a safe bet that I knew nothing about this policy.

The reason for the closure of Risinghill lay in a quarrel that occurred, before the school was built, between the Education Officer, Houghton, and his Deputy, Briault, on the one side, and the representatives of the Labour Party on the other, about where the school should be located. The Labour Party wanted the school to be built on the site of the old Risinghill Street school, for reasons of economy, since the ILEA already owned the site. The officials, knowing that the old school had been one of the 'sink' schools knew quite well that the fate of the new school would be prejudiced by the association with the old school and opposed

the suggestion. The Labour Party persisted and forced through the decision against the advice of the officials, who, to teach the elected members the lesson that it is the officials who are paid to make policy, effectively blocked all measures that would make the new school a success and so undermined the confidence of the Governors of the school and the Education Committee in the Head.

The 'sink school' policy operated as follows. In 'difficult' areas, i.e. those with a preponderance of lower working-class families and with widespread illiteracy, delinquency and a tradition of leaving school as soon as possible, out of every group of five or six secondary schools one would be selected by tacit agreement among heads and officials, as the school to which the most troublesome or ineducable children would be sent so that the other schools could be free to pursue a normal life, as far as possible in such areas. Hence the term 'sink' school, the one into which the 'unusable material' could be dumped.

Circular 10/65 was the very first document that ever came close to opening up the problems raised by the age-old policy of housing the very poorest in one-class ghettos, a policy dating back to the early nineteenth century, as noted by Walvin<sup>8</sup>. The Circular stated:

'(v) The school community

36. A comprehensive school aims to establish a school community in which pupils over the whole ability range and with differing interests and backgrounds can be encouraged to mix with each other, gaining stimulus from the contacts and learning tolerance and understanding in the process. But particular comprehensive schools will reflect the characteristics of the neighbourhood in which they are situated; if their community is less varied and fewer of the pupils come from homes which encourage educational interests, schools may lack the stimulus and vitality which schools in other areas enjoy. The Secretary of State therefore urges authorities to ensure, when determining catchment areas, that schools are as socially and intellectually comprehensive as practicable. In a two-tier system it may be possible to link two differing districts so that all pupils from both areas go to the same junior and then to the same senior comprehensive schools.'

— a sentiment that, at least on paper, showed some concern for structuring a more democratic Britain on the part of some senior civil servants, but, having named the Secretary of State directly (at that time Anthony Crosland), put a time bomb with a very short fuse under his reputation as a 'democratic' Cabinet Minister in the Labour Government of the day.

### **The virus of the Burnham Unit**

After I had discovered, in the early seventies, just how the system of

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Burnham Units operated as an inbuilt bias to favour schools in the middle-class areas, I continued to be invited to lecture on problems of education in Britain to training colleges and schools of education in universities throughout Britain. As the proportion of comprehensive schools increased I was assured by education officers and politicians of all parties that social-class bias was steadily being removed from the state system of schools. Facts and figures were hard to come by since sociological research was being squeezed out by growing monetary constraints on the universities. Eventually I received a letter from the DES in reply to some direct questions about whether or not the Burnham Unit system was still in operation or had been discarded or modified. The reply, dated 20 November 1990 is worth quoting:

'The system of calculating Unit Totals which determines the salary of head-teachers and deputies and the number of incentives allowances available to teachers still operates.

'At present schools are assigned to one of fourteen groups according to their *age-weighted unit total*, heads and deputies paid the 'spot salary' appropriate to the school group. The relevant body may however pay a head or deputy 'such higher salary as they consider appropriate' having regard to the individual's duties and responsibilities or to the circumstances of the school.

'From January 1991 new arrangements will apply. Six new school groups calculated *on the basis of the present unit totals* will replace the existing fourteen groups. Heads will then be paid on the basis of six 'normal ranges' but on the same unified spine.' (my italics. M.D.)

The problem of social-class bias was not, of course, confined to Risinghill school and to the Finsbury and Islington boroughs that made up the catchment area of the school, but in none of the single-class ghettos dotted all over London was any attempt made to shape the catchment areas or design the Comprehensive schools on the lines suggested. The reasons were many, partly that the Labour government was existing on a majority that was often down to one but principally because the ILEA with a 'socialist' majority, was in fact run by the Bloomsbury/Hampstead clique, many of whom were Public school products, and all deeply saturated with the 'breeding produces brains' myth that was to bedevil the Labour Party to this day, so that their thinking on the nature of democracy and therefore of a democratic system of education is still fatally flawed.

It was the few socialists like Jenny Lee who understood the problem, but she was not allowed to continue as a Governor of Risinghill, though she was on the provisional Advisory Committee which, normally, when the school opened, would continue, as the Governing Body. Had she continued the ILEA would never have got away with the sordid little plots it engineered to discredit the people in the Finsbury and Islington

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Labour groups who had forced the Education Officer, Houghton, and his deputy, Briault, to build the school on the site of the old 'sink school', Risinghill Street, (the Labour Group at that time professed not to know of the 'sink school' policy and continues, if I am to judge by the continued silence that has met my letters to Neil Fletcher and his predecessor, not to know of the policy). The County Hall administrators knew that the primary heads would continue to treat the new school as they had done the old one, but they were determined not to come straight and admit to the 'sink school' policy because in their view that was the only policy that would work in poor areas. It was a policy that, in the last resort, relied on brutality: 'Six of the best will cure most disciplinary problems', as my District Inspector, Mr Macgowan, so often insisted – despite an 'enlightened' booklet called 'Discipline in Schools' published by the ILEA itself.

The affront to their dignity caused by the local Labour party – 'We, the Officers, make policy. The elected members have to be brought back to heel!' – caused the Education Officer and his Deputy to mount the campaign that in the end caused the school to be closed. People like Mrs. Irene Chaplin, a rabid hard-liner who tried to stuff her communist theories down my throat on the few occasions I had the bad luck to be cornered by her, disgraced the name of 'left intellectual' by her overbearing and discourteous behaviour to minor officials from the local education office and to the schoolkeepers or caretakers to whom she made complaints whenever she turned up for Governors' meetings without ever taking the trouble to understand the difficulties our excellent Schoolkeeper, Bert Pratt, an ex-Durham miner of immense strength, had in keeping the school spotless at the end of Chapel Market. Never once did she sit down with me or with any of my staff to understand why we were in such bad odour with the senior officials (not, to their credit, with the more junior ones who were closer to the facts of life). There is a long tale to be told about the mischief that was done to socialism in London by the many people of her ilk who infested the Labour Party from the late fifties onwards, with a number of them seconded from the Communist Party of Great Britain to infiltrate the Labour Party. In those days the Communist Party was almost entirely Stalinist; it was the era of 'Uncle Joe'; it was also still the era when the nascent democracy, born of the comradeships formed during the war, was being forced back by determined reactionaries to the 'two nation' state of the pre-war era lest property rights, the basis of their power, should be eroded by Attlee's 'socialists'. The communists wanted to destroy property rights too, but they wanted to do it *their* way, not through the Labour Party. It was the hard-line Communist group on

the Risinghill staff who voted, against the rest of the staff, to have the school closed.

The failure to achieve common educational aims for all children in the majority of the big London Comprehensives was betrayed in the physical separation of the staff into groups (graduate and non-graduate) within the same staffroom or over several staffrooms – by their own choice! Yet a handful of schools like Countesthorpe in Leicestershire made brave efforts to make good mixed provision for all and to break down the deadly stranglehold of streaming. It brought an enthusiastic response from the pupils and from many parents, but a sustained barrage of hostility from the better-off middle-class who were well entrenched within the education committee and the governing body. The reaction of people of this kind to any attempt to introduce democratic procedures in education was so prompt, so united and so vicious that it was like an animal at bay, driven by instinct. The Great Education Debate – more aptly called The Great Education Debacle – floated under the Labour government of James Callaghan to stimulate thought among teachers, parents, employers, politicians and members of the educational administration, was a vivid illustration of the massive blind spot in middle-class thinking about education. The Debate fell like a stone because it never dared to examine and make public the relationships between the structure of our society and the functions of its stratified education system; never dared to expose the links between the different occupational groups and their educational counterparts; never examined the incentives sustaining our various social groups and the different levels of opportunity, educational and occupational, available to them. Above all it never dared (perhaps nobody in the Labour Party had had the time) to read the results of research during the previous twenty years that might have helped them to understand that all systems of education perpetuate the basic forms and structures of values of their own parent societies. The ineptitude of that exercise in bogus enquiry by a Labour government raised doubts among many of their own political supporters about the seriousness of their intention to reform education on more democratic lines. The doubts have in no way been diminished during the period leading up to 1979, nor by the coy utterances emanating from the Labour Party's recent policy re-think.

The educational thinking of the Labour Party is a compound of the self-styled 'Left-wing intelligentsia' who think they are bringing enlightenment to the working classes; power hungry trade-unionists who cannot be detached from their addiction to the block vote; the mass of ordinary mild-mannered, fair-minded but poorly-educated people who do not make every second of their lives a political 'Speakers' Corner'; hard-working local Party members who do the donkey-work of canvas-



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sing, leafletting and genuinely listening to other opinions; a small number of deeply-literate but undemonstrative men and women whose belief in socialism is founded on their own experience and their critique of the theory so often parroted by those who hunger for publicity; and the chapel-saturated, ignorant fundamentalists, strong in voice and weak in brain, who use oratory as alcoholics use booze, to insulate them from cold reality.

Clear thought about education comes not from some dreadful amalgam of the desires of all these strands. That can only produce fudge upon fudge, wheeling and dealing and the traditional smoke-filled haze that communicates itself to the brain. It comes from an analysis of the needs of people – men, women and children – needs at all levels of body, mind and spirit; an analysis of the resources we already possess, and above all an analysis of our direction for the future, worked out, not solely in terms of the Common Market, technology or the assumption that, whatever we do it has to be better than what the others do. That way lies confusion. Of course we have to plan for our physical needs and that implies trade since we are not self-sufficient, modernisation and training.

During the war we found a new spirit from a common purpose that we had been persuaded was noble. That spirit haunted many of those who survived the war because, for the first time, they had experienced something that transcended their daily struggles to make ends meet. People who had been together in the forces or in some form of public service and met after many years greeted each other with what can only be called love. They looked back with deep nostalgia on a comradeship that rested on their qualities as people not as owners of possessions. Most had never experienced any sense of community and bloomed in health and confidence as they served a common cause that lifted them above the miseries, discomforts and even tragedies of war; and back in civilian life they missed that community though they might not have been able to work out why they had felt a kind of joy in what they did. I recall, seven years after the war had ended, meeting outside my small school, Howe Dell, near Hatfield, the driver of a delivery van who had been a member of my tank squadron. We threw our arms round each other and spent a long time over tea and buns in my study talking with great nostalgia about our friends and what they were doing now. In some sense we were looking back on a Golden Age – that was certainly how it felt to have experienced such comradeship.

The core of community is shared purpose and a pervasive sense of joy. That is where we have to start in our analysis of our future life and how we are to educate our children so that they may never fall into the trap of greed, hate-driven rivalry and the death of the spirit induced by our current materialism.

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**Notes**

1. *Prisons and Prison Reform*, by Tessa Blackstone. Chatto 1990.
2. *Social Science and Social Pathology*, by Barbara Wootton. Allen & Unwin 1959.
3. *The Chance of a Lifetime?*, by Royston Lambert. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975.
4. *The Sins of the Children*, by Robert Mackenzie.
5. *The Terrace: An Experiment in Progressive Education in a State School*, by Michael Duane. M.Phil. Thesis, Nottingham University, 1977.
6. *The Black Papers*, by Bantock, Cox, Amis et al.
7. *Education and the Working Class*, by Brian Jackson.
8. *Victorian Values*, by James Walvin. Andre Deutsch.
9. *Sociology and the Education of Teachers*, by William Taylor. Faber, 1969.



*John A. Schumacher*

## **Our Responsibility for the Future in Higher Education**

### 1

Sixteen years ago Vaclav Havel 'wrote a long open letter to Husak,' then President of Czechoslovakia.' Havel no longer 'tried to stifle the truth inside' of him, and instead 'tried to analyze the sad situation' in his country. The letter was 'copied out' by 'all kinds of people,' and was eventually read 'by practically everyone who still cared.' For Havel himself the letter was a kind of 'autotherapy': 'I had no idea what would happen next, but it was worth the risk. I regained my balance and my self-confidence. I felt I could stand up straight again.'

Here Havel represents exactly the sense of responsibility for the future that I would like to see us espouse both individually and collectively in higher education. The situation in our country is indeed sad, in many ways just as sad as it was in Czechoslovakia, and what makes it worse is that, unlike in Czechoslovakia, so few of us realize, or wish to realize, that the situation in our country is so sad. Although I have not taken the kind of risk that Havel took, I do know from my own life that the depression in which he found himself before he achieved the courage to write his letter is always broken by an event that can be seen in retrospect as he has come to see his letter: just then 'things began to happen to me'. Ultimately, of course, he was thrown in jail.

All of us need to be inspired by Havel to take risks so that we can 'breathe more easily,' as he put it. We need to ward off our depression about our country, and enjoy a burst of inspiration and creativity: 'I had stopped waiting for the world to improve and exercised my right to intervene in that world.' Our responsibility for the future in higher education is precisely to help create a new society. This process will include a metamorphosis of higher education along with the rest of our society, and in this article I will explain what I take to be the single most crucial theme for the changes we need to make.

### 2

Almost three years ago now one of the best friends I ever had died.

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Hugh Scott was an African-American, and grew up in the South Bronx during the same period that I grew up in two of the suburbs of Cleveland. The second suburb was about as different from a ghetto as one can get in the United States, though by the time I graduated from Shaker Heights High School – 1962 – the edge of the district closest to Cleveland included some African-American families. The districts on the other side of Shaker Heights and beyond had begun to fill with people who preferred the traditional lack of racial mixing.

Hugh had a great distrust for books, though he had come to realize that they were important, perhaps even to himself. He and I would have arguments about the relative merits of what we can call ‘street learning,’ on the one hand, and of ‘book learning,’ on the other. I did not then have the framework to understand that we were talking past each other. It is now clear to me that, although we were both defensive, I had more difficulty in listening to him than he did in listening to me. In fact he was advocating an example of the kind of ‘hands-on’ learning that I wish to explain here.

Even when schooling in the United States tries to include the life and interests of people like Hugh, it does not tend to foster ‘hands-on’ learning. If debates about the need for cultural diversity in schooling are won by the proponents of cultural diversity – and indeed all too often the debates are lost anyway – the result is typically an additional course, or a revision of courses already in the curriculum. The same goes for debates about the need for gender diversity. This sort of change in the curriculum is also the subject of a great conservative backlash. Philosophers like Allan Bloom have argued that it fosters a kind of relativism – or lack of moral rationality – that undermines quality thinking about ourselves and our society.<sup>2</sup>

Schools in our major cities tend to be segregated: at least 73.7% of black students in Philadelphia, 74.1% in New York, 70% in Los Angeles, 65.7% in Dallas, 81.3% in Chicago, and 96.6% in Newark are enrolled in schools in which ‘blacks and Hispanics comprise 90 to 100% of the enrolment.’<sup>3</sup> The problems of isolation and separatism – you go your way, I’ll go mine – between white and black Americans, if not outright racism, have become all too evident in our universities as well. And what passes for lack of isolation and separatism between men and women is full of its own problems, the leading symptom of which is that women do not feel safe walking alone on our streets or our campuses. The United States ‘rape rate’ is 8 times that of France, 15 times that of England, 23 times that of Italy, and 26 times that of Japan.<sup>4</sup> The associated tension that a woman holds in her body sets her apart from men in an isolation and separatism ever harder to overcome.

Isolation and separatism can take a different kind of toll on our bodies

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as well. For example, as reported by Eric Mann,<sup>5</sup> researchers at the University of Southern California performed autopsies on 100 youths from Los Angeles who had died as a result of nonmedical causes: 80% had 'notable abnormalities in lung tissue'; 27% had 'severe lesions'. The youths were 'running out of lung.' But factors other than the quality of air in Los Angeles, such as 'poor hygiene and poor nutrition,' could have contributed to their condition, because 'most of the youths were from the inner city and more than half were Latino or black.' Even if we need to 'factor out the socioeconomic conditions' so as to develop 'a pure conclusion,' it is, as Mann argued, precisely 'the interaction of injuries of class, race, and toxicity' that makes the issue 'so explosive.'

Average eighth-graders in the United States watch 12 times more television than they read (21.7 to 1.8 hours), and 4 times more than they study (21.7 to 5.6 hours).<sup>6</sup> We know this is bad. We say that the television is active whereas the person is passive, and moreover, that the television is active only in a way that reflects a certain narrow, controlled vision of our society. Closer to my point, however, is that television induces a subtle misunderstanding of being in touch with actual people or events. So too do telephones. People forget that they are perceiving a reproduction of an event, another event altogether.<sup>7</sup>

How much time do our eighth-graders spend in conversation? Not long ago, the primary meaning of the term 'conversation' was to keep company with others in a circle of acquaintances, that is, a community. To keep the conversation going was not, as Richard Rorty would mean it today,<sup>8</sup> a matter of making words for each other, but rather a matter of actually moving in company with each other. Eighth-graders spend nearly 30 hours outside of school keeping company with televisions and books. Do the books, either in school or out, really help us keep company with each other? If conversation occurs in school, it does not do so in the classroom.

In 'Nature and Society', a first-year course in the humanities and social sciences at Rensselaer, we help students recall how it feels to be socialized into the classroom by asking them to read an excerpt from Jules Henry's *Culture Against Man*.<sup>9</sup> It is a story about Boris at the blackboard, trying to reduce a fraction, but only scratching his head, and having much trouble. The teacher is patient only so long, and then turns to the class and says, 'Who will tell us the answer?' – not even 'Who has the answer?' A forest of hands, and Sally is chosen to 'tell' the right answer. No student can escape feeling either failure or success, and the successes come only at the hands of the failures of Boris and any other student who cannot tell the answer.

Henry called this 'the alchemy of the system' – that students learn to dream of failure rather than of success – and compares our system

to that of the native Indians of North America, who would have thought it cruel to succeed at the hands of someone else's failure. But they were still in conversation with each other, and we are schooled into just the opposite. We move to school each day as young people, only to be divided from other by the way we move there. As we all tend to be, Bloom is distracted by what goes on at the level of the authority of the subject matter itself, and cannot see that it does not matter whether or not what passes for success is justifiable as such. At what level does it matter whether or not Sally is right?

### 3

So, let me now explain how to address this question at another level of description from that of the affirmation of denial or relativism. I'll use Gregory Bateson's example of the education of a porpoise held in captivity.<sup>10</sup>

The porpoise lived in a holding tank, and often its trainer opened a gate to allow the porpoise to swim out to a performance tank. The porpoise was trained according to a certain pattern of events and material objects. In other words, it performed in a certain context. Whenever the trainer wanted to designate some example of the porpoise's behaviour, she blew a whistle. The porpoise learned to relate its behaviour to the whistle, because every time it repeated the designated behaviour it was given a fish to eat. After each performance, it returned to the holding tank.

The trainer then changed the pattern of events and material objects. The porpoise returned to the performance tank, repeated the designated behaviour, but did not get a fish. Instead, the next *different* example of conspicuous behaviour was designated by the trainer's whistle, and the porpoise was given a fish. Because the porpoise had been put in the wrong by the trainer, the example turned out to be a flap of its tail, a common way of showing annoyance. Again the porpoise repeated the tail flap and was given a fish before returning to the holding tank.

The next time the porpoise performed, the trainer did not reward the tail flap but instead picked a third different example of conspicuous behaviour, the next time a fourth, and so on. For fourteen performances the porpoise started with a futile repetition of the behaviour that had just earned it a fish in the previous performance. But during the break before the fifteenth performance the porpoise suddenly became quite excited in its holding tank, and as soon as it re-entered the performance tank it performed a series of *eight different conspicuous behaviours*; four of which had never before been seen in this species.

Five points need to be made:

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1. The porpoise is capable of learning more than a first-level pattern of events and material objects. It can learn the difference between two such patterns, patterns that do not both belong to the same class of first-level patterns.
  2. Although the first-level patterns were different in a way that can be learned only at a second level, they were also similar in a way that comes into play only at a third level. The overall relationship between the porpoise and its trainer constituted the larger context in which the porpoise struggled through the first fourteen performances and finally learned at the second level. But because the porpoise did not immediately accomplish the second-level learning, the constancy of its relationship with its trainer could not be evident; it was quite upset all along, often repeating the wrong behaviour and showing annoyance in turn. The trainer decided to give the porpoise many *undeserved fish* so as to maintain their relationship, though she could have decided at any point to alter the larger context in a way that would have come across to the porpoise, at least at first, exactly as the experiment did.<sup>11</sup> Certainly one element of the porpoise's excitement about the fifteenth performance was the relief in finding itself in the same overall relationship with its trainer.
  3. If a porpoise can ward off the anxiety of being put in the wrong at the third level, a burst of creativity occurs at the second level. (I wouldn't try this with a dog, however.)
  4. Although the relationship between the porpoise and its trainer became an issue in the experiment, it could not have become an issue in another, quite crucial way: a porpoise cannot aspire, so to speak, to graduate from a course of training and thereby be prepared to take on the role of its trainer. Evidently a porpoise is sensitive at the third level without yet being able to *learn* there. This lack of ability is precisely what makes the whole experiment so dangerous to the well-being of the porpoise: *it cannot call into question its dependent relationship with its trainer.* (It can only *escape*.) Human beings alone can achieve third-level learning.
  5. We human beings who become trainers, however, may still follow the same overall recipe for behaviour as we followed when we were being trained, thereby failing to *learn on our own* at the third level. It is as if our trainers were still acting through our very bodies. While we are growing up we often say that we will never act toward our own offspring as our fathers and mothers have acted toward us, yet, without extreme vigilance on our part, our fathers and mothers will tend to come out of our bodies, so to speak, when we are acting in the role of a parent.<sup>12</sup> To call our trainers into question in *this* way

is, for all practical purposes, the only way for us to avoid being just like trained porpoises.

Let us now draw the analogy of Boris with the porpoise, and Boris' teacher with the trainer. Boris lives in a holding tank, and moves every day into a performance tank. Boris can learn to relate events and material objects to each other in patterns. He works among many small desks and one large desk; many small, young persons, and one large, older person; a blackboard and chalk; and so on. To describe what goes on in the performance tank at the level of description of the porpoise – that is, at the limit of learning of the porpoise – we cannot allow ourselves to give a normal interpretation of the pattern of events and material objects in the classroom. For example, whatever it is in the speech of the trainer to which the porpoise responds, *that* is what we pay attention to in the classroom. Or again, we pay attention *only to the actual movement of the speech*, as if we were to pay attention to the marks on the page of a book without *reading* those marks.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, we may compare giving grades to blowing the whistle, if to anything at all. Perhaps a porpoise could even be trained to use light as well as it uses sound: the trainer flashes an 'A' card whenever she wishes to designate an example of conspicuous behaviour that will earn a fish, and an 'F' card for behaviour that will not. The level at which the porpoise performs, however, is not separable from the level at which it eats a fish. Imagine trying to wean the porpoise from the fish so that it cares only about the flash cards or whistles. Well, isn't that what we are trying to do to Boris and Sally? And then, after we succeed, do we let ourselves remember what really happened to them at the level of description of the porpoise?

We should also try to imagine that a porpoise is being asked to reduce a fraction. The porpoise offers various wrong numbers for fourteen performances, and then gets excited in its holding tank before it tries the right number. Yes, hard to imagine. We resist believing that porpoises can do mathematics, exactly as we resist believing that porpoises can be weaned from fish. Mathematics and delayed gratification – fish later, whistles now – are matters of third-level learning.<sup>14</sup> We tend to forget, no doubt on purpose, what it must be like for Boris and Sally to confront both matters at once, to be put in the wrong between second-level and third-level learning *for the first time*.

Grades are arbitrary in a way that whistles are not; they work at a very different level of pattern of events and material objects. They are like proxies for fish and, as such, cannot be perceived at all: they are *invisible*. Boris may well be entirely mystified by the fraction on the blackboard and, in turn, by the level of learning associated with *reading numbers and grades*. The crucial difference here is between the level of



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the marks on a blackboard or a report card, and the level of the meaning of those marks. In the grey area at the end of the porpoise stage of schooling, Boris is unlikely even to have glimmers of what it means eventually to graduate from this course of training and thereby be prepared to take on the role of his trainer. Nor is he likely to experience trying to take on this role in the classroom, though no doubt such an experience would be a lot closer to fish than grades are. How *does* he hold out hope for eventual fish?

Moreover, grades *must* be scarce, not only in a way that fish cannot be, but also in a way that whistles cannot be. The trainer can give the porpoise as many fish and whistles as she needs to do in order to maintain her relationship with the porpoise, though in the latter case she will abandon the context of performance in a way that teachers are not free to do by giving good grades. What *can* Boris' teacher do to help him ward off the anxiety of being put in the wrong? What makes this question even more difficult for the teacher is that it needs to be understood at the level of description of a porpoise – it is about *undeserved fish*. Even though Boris' being put in the wrong cannot be understood entirely at the level of description of a porpoise, his original fear of failure must be understood there, because Boris is still trying to get beyond the porpoise stage of schooling.

Whether or not Boris eventually learns anything at the third level, it is the very pattern of movement in the classroom that he wishes to avoid in the future: Boris stands silently at the blackboard, the teacher speaks, many hands are raised, the teacher points to Sally, Sally speaks, the teacher smiles, Sally smiles, and Boris, looking sad, returns to his seat. The wrong answer – or the right answer inappropriately determined, say, by cheating – will be successful provided that everyone else goes along with it in the pattern of movement. We understand Boris' failure without knowing whether or not Sally is right. Unlike Bloom, we must draw a clear distinction between a final authority of mathematics (or rationality), should there be one, and a final authority of *power*. *Authority of power must work at the level of movement.*

Boris moves back and forth from his holding tank to his performance tank, and eventually it is possible that the performance tank will change, say, from a first-grade classroom to a second-grade classroom. The arena may change, but the pattern of movement will not. It is the same context at the level of movement. I can remember my first experience of this context, as final grades were passed out at the end of second grade. One person burst out crying, and the others, who had perhaps been smiling, turned to look at him. I did, for sure, though at first I could not quite grasp what had happened. We found out in words that meant very little to us, if anything at all, at this point in getting beyond the

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porpoise stage of schooling. But at the level of movement what happened was that this person's performance tank did not change the following year.

Each of us must find, so to speak, our own hole in the porpoise net. In the typical classroom each of us moves in an overall pattern that induces us to *separate* our own movement from others. Sally, just as much as Boris, *performs alone*. We are not aspects of one whole movement of students towards the next performance tank. This is the level of filtering – as if each student were, or were not, able to pass through a hole in the porpoise net – that continues throughout schooling, into higher education, and even into one's future job. Each of our separate movements is added to the others in order to construct the overall pattern of movement. We are especially not aspects of any whole movement that includes our teachers or future employers.

Many other features of the typical pattern of movement in our classrooms deserve our attention, though I will give only one example here, about gender diversity<sup>15</sup>, before I turn again to the issue of cultural diversity. In typical classrooms young men speak more often than young women speak. Teachers tend to pay more attention to young men, even tolerating another phenomenon of movement, their interruption of teachers themselves, not to mention their interruption of other young people, most often, again, of young women. I must stress that this is a matter of movement *alone*, and it flows smoothly together with the developing tension in young women's bodies as they walk alone outside of the classroom.

One more point before moving on: it must be noted that teachers may well be depressed at the discovery that they need not find themselves to be part of a different overall pattern of movement just because they have finally taken on the opposite role in the pattern. It is precisely this discovery – whether or not it reaches the teacher's explicit awareness – that accounts for much of what we call 'teacher burn-out'. Teachers tend not to be able to get their own training out of their bodies, to call their own trainers into question, and to boot they are just as isolated from their own students as they were isolated from their own teachers: *no-one* moves toward each other at the level at which the trainer moves toward the porpoise with undeserved fish. *No conversation in classrooms, please!*

#### 4

Hugh and I had very different movements in the same overall pattern of movement of our holding and performance tanks. As we tend to say, Hugh and I came from opposite sides of the tracks in *both* tanks. In terms of movement, the extension of the tracks of holding tanks into

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performance tracks in schooling is by no means an accident. All along in schooling young people gradually find themselves moving in two very different subpatterns of the same overall pattern, one of which could eventually lead back to the movement of the teacher, and one of which could not. In the later subpattern, a person tends to remain at the level of a trained porpoise (illiterate, for example<sup>16</sup>).

No matter what the difference between our holding tanks was, moreover, Hugh and I ended up in essentially the same performance tanks, at least at the level of movement. Although it is true that certain material objects in performance tanks – books, for example – could have tried to describe the difference between our holding tanks, how they could have helped us to adjust to the overall pattern of movement in our lives? Not only do books work at a distance from what they are about (the problem of *reading*, again), but they are also not about performance tanks themselves. The first lack was still being expressed by Hugh some thirty years later: as a young person I would have needed help in learning how to move *with* Hugh rather than, so to speak, to read him at a distance. As for the second lack, Hugh would have needed help in understanding the price I was paying in getting beyond the porpoise stage of schooling: he was experiencing a fully porpoise-like anxiety, whereas I was smoothly extending my familial pattern of movement into the classroom. Who had the advantage? Well, which way do you want to look at it? When I was already performing for what amounted to proxies for fish in my family, Hugh was out stealing fish.<sup>17</sup>

Liberal support for courses on cultural diversity, according to Andrew Hacker,<sup>18</sup> may well fail to earn the applause of the actual members of the cultures in question, who 'do not want the diverse heritages subjected to the analytical study advanced by professional historians,' that is, by 'whites.' Even if the actual members of the cultures write the books for the courses, some more direct contact with their cultures is necessary, though how this contact could be a part of schooling is certainly not very clear. Hacker criticized certain native Indians of North America who had enacted 'educational codes that include the ability to daydream as a criterion for identifying gifted and talented students,' but he did not recognise that this identification process, despite the good intentions of the Indians, includes an overall pattern of movement like the one we already have. Instead he claimed that these codes 'would also hasten the decline in our living standards, since we are already short on the skills needed to produce the goods and services that even today's Chipewas and Utes expect in their lives.'

Sad to say, here Hacker made the same kind of mistake I made in arguing with Hugh many years ago. Even though the Indians should have thought more clearly about the very process of identifying gifted

and talented students in schools, their additional educational codes did reach beyond the classroom, into the holding tanks of their families and culture. Why, after all, are these codes in competition with acquiring the skills needed to produce goods? The way of life assumed by the living standards Hacker made so much of is itself an aspect of the overall pattern of movement that excludes the ability to daydream from the talents recognized in young people in the United States. Daydreaming, like night-dreaming, represents a mode of connection, rather than of separation, in native cultures.

The separation that is the hallmark of the pattern of movement *in* our performance tanks extends to the overall pattern of movement of our society. The movement of performance pulls us away from each other, and does not work in and through our holding tanks, that is, should we still have lives that have not become purely performance. (Here the crucial encroachment is that of public into private, extending surveillance and eliminating aleatory spaces.) After graduation from schools we still perform for proxies for fish, namely, dollars, which are more immediate proxies than grades are, but proxies nonetheless: they too are *invisible*. The third-level learning we do to *read* grades is all too easily extended to dollars. (The crucial difference here is between the marks on a dollar bill and the meaning of those marks.) And *do* our employers give us any more undeserved fish than our teachers do?

I think here of the recent film 'Roger and Me' made by Michael Moore, a freelance journalist who grew up in Flint, Michigan, and witnessed the devastation wrought by General Motors when it closed its factory there so that it could open one in Mexico instead. The theme of the film, really a kind of documentary, is that Moore is trying to get Roger Smith, the head of General Motors, to come to Flint to see for himself what happened to his former employees. Roger never comes to Flint, but the argument on Roger's behalf by a General Motors spokesperson is at least honest: "The point of the business", he says, "is to make a profit, not to get involved in the lives of the workers in the way you request". He talks about *proxies* for fish, when the people are talking about *fish*.

Are we continuing a theme here? Does Roger need to move toward workers any more than a teacher needs to move toward students? The overall pattern of movement is indeed the same. General Motors justifies its moves from the perspective of third-level learning, in the invisible terms of profit, while the devastation is wrought at the level of movement itself, of keeping company.<sup>19</sup> It is ever so clear in the film that no more conversation goes on in the performance tanks of General Motors than in the performance tanks of school. Roger does not move *with* the people he employs, or rather exploits, as we know how much he pays his

workers in Mexico: they are lucky to gain enough proxies for fish as well.

The difference between porpoises and human beings is deceptive. It certainly allows us to do things that porpoises cannot even dream of doing, if they can dream at all. But it also allows us to function at such a remove from the level of movement that we can try to justify our whole existence in terms of our third-level learning. Hence, we can obscure the actual movement in which we lead lesser and lesser lives: about one half of all African-American children, as well as of all children in female-headed households, grow up in poverty in the United States, and the split between the top and the bottom echelons of wealth continues to grow larger, with the top 1% after taxes now equalling the bottom 40%.<sup>20</sup> New York City police estimate, to take another example, that every other one of the same students who watch so much television carries a gun.<sup>21</sup> As our society grows ever more sad, more and more holding tanks like the one Hugh grew up in lead to the inability to believe that grades are proxies for anything at all. We cannot address this problem without addressing the overall pattern of movement in our society, yet we tend to apply the same third-level learning that drove us into tracks of isolated movement in the first place. If we do not start moving *with* each other again, our lives will only get lesser and lesser.

## 5

In his recent entry into the debate about higher education,<sup>22</sup> John Searle exhibited an admirable level-headedness, though he came no closer than Bloom did to appreciating the crucial difference between a final authority of 'first-order subject matter,' as Searle called it, and a final authority of power at the level of movement: the debate was carried out once again in terms of the choice of subject matter, not in terms of the pattern of movement that forms the context of study. Perhaps the culprit here is the debate's focus on higher education, which occurs in a person's life, if it occurs at all, long enough after the porpoise stage of learning to allow a certain forgetting, or should I say, repressing to occur as well; the pattern of movement, reinforced at every stage of schooling, is automatically taken for granted. The debate over the canon is simply wrong-headed even when it is level-headed.

I should hasten to add that I have a great deal of sympathy for the participants in the debate who try to get thinkers like Searle to give more weight to political and social history, not as subject matter, which Searle himself advocated, but rather as providing an insight into the context of the construction of the authority of rationality he holds so dear. If we stress the term 'construction' in the previous sentence, we threaten to undermine Searle's objection: 'Universities at their best often

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achieve social transformations because knowledge can transform people and institutions. But the aim should always be knowledge, not transformation.' Well, yes, if a successful case can be made that knowledge itself is not a transformation wrought by people and institutions.

Consider as well Searle's response to the suggestion that contemporary debates about what to include in the canon should be a central feature of the university curriculum: 'The issue has been made into something political in the wrong sense of "political". That is, for the most part the issues are not about deep and permanent problems in political philosophy but about the immediate political demands of certain special interest groups that are influential in some humanities departments.' But could it be the case, on the other hand, that the long tradition of the canon in our culture is mistakenly thought to be grounded on something 'deep and permanent' rather than on the authority of power constituted by the pattern of movement of our culture? Exactly how does Searle plan to keep these two senses of 'political' from overlapping in just the way that his detractors tend to argue?<sup>23</sup>

The debate about the canon is certainly interesting in its own right, but so far it has shown no signs of carrying us into what I see as the more important debate about the pattern of movement of schooling and higher education. I can all too easily imagine any one of the participants in the debate waiting patiently as Boris, now a university student, scratches his head, trying in vain to 'tell' the right answer to the question at issue. (Apparently, in some university classes the answer need not be 'right,' but rather 'politically correct.') And then, as the professor loses patience, the forest of eager hands, all indicating a readiness to turn Boris' failure into their own successes. Yes, the classroom of higher education could just as well serve as the one we have been characterising all along. After all, what undeserved fish *do* we give university students who fail in movement as Boris does?

The problem of cheating, now thought of as an epidemic in universities, results primarily from long participation in an overall pattern of movement that draws enthusiasm only from those whose own movement is along the success track. As soon as success is threatened – if only from outside of the university by a tough economy that in turn leads to stiffer competition for already scarce proxies for fish – students tend to try to preserve success in any way they can. Who can blame them, after all? (Witness Senator Alan Cranston's defence of his work on behalf of Charles Keating: we all needed to do it to survive as senators.) Again, what is crucial in the end is not what method is right, but what method succeeds in the pattern of movement. The pattern of movement is precisely not one in which the participants accord each other mutual respect by the way they move toward each other. In far too many cases,

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I fear, we hardly have a relationship we could preserve by giving out undeserved fish.

Because we are typically not able to be critical in terms of patterns of movement, we tend to promote separation at every turn. The pattern of movement that comes out of our bodies, so to speak, without extreme vigilance on our part, is the pattern of movement reinforced at every stage of schooling. After three decades of widely applauded additions to the physical facilities of my own campus at Rensselaer, for example, the new holding tanks are even more separated from the performance tanks, the student Union is now located among the holding tanks rather than among the performance tanks, and the students no longer feel that it is theirs: it is, so to speak, a large-scale service now. (Services work at the third-level of learning, as they are based on how so-called experts *read* our behaviour, thereby knowing at a distance what we need – again the crucial difference is between the level of our actual movement and the level of the meaning of that movement.) Little changes have also altered patterns of movement that brought different groups together: the old West Hall cafeteria, which was among the performance tanks, indeed, a part of one near the main administration tank, was just one example of a place that fostered some sense of an educational *community*. No recent building has been designed to bring the members of our university together in a whole movement, not even faculty and students together in classrooms in some cases. Most additions have aimed to enhance a separate sphere of movement, especially among professors.

All told, students tend to feel a coldness at the level of movement in our universities, even just between themselves. As already noted, racial and cultural tensions have been deepening on university campuses nationwide.<sup>24</sup> We professors often say we will care about students, but this care is unlikely to be expressed in movement. (Just think of typical first-year courses. Do we tend to move toward first-year students, especially ones who are performing poorly in their own eyes – even with B's and C's – for the very first time? In the overall pattern of movement, it is as if we were running away from the students; the students tend to feel as if they were playing a game of catch-up.<sup>25</sup>) Nor are we professors likely to move in a way that begins to affect the overall pattern of movement in our society, the pattern that induces the racial and cultural tensions as well. Yet it is only at the level of movement that we can change the atmosphere of our universities – indeed, of our society – and draw or keep students and their tuition dollars. Hence, the real inconsistency between moving toward students and moving toward our other benefactors, who pull us away from students.

Imagine passing a law, or preferably, initiating a practice, according to which it is always wrong not to answer someone else's question.

Turning to the teacher, Boris asks, 'What is *your* answer?' Notice the change in pattern of movement. We professors make our money because we can withhold information, not because we can give it, and we say this withholding is the best practice to find out who will be successful in our society. But, of course, this begs the question in two ways. First, why keep the overall pattern of movement of our society? Second, do we find out any more than who will be successful in this pattern? While we construct what passes for a final authority of rationality, we tend not to notice, following Bloom, the extent to which our final authority is actually one of power, the authority to filter at the level of movement. As soon as we remove the filter at that level, we *all* can begin to negotiate for authority of rationality, whether it be final or not – hence, the conversation of education.<sup>26</sup>

## 6

What is real freedom of movement? Boris is not free to move out of the classroom. A truant officer will bring him back. Hence, he does not have the freedom to move *into* the classroom either. Can the people in Flint move where the work is, especially if they are in poverty or the work is in another country? Can the people in the inner city move where the air is good, especially if they are children? And in what way does one have freedom of movement in becoming, say, a member of a profession? Think about the way professional accreditation ties our own feet as much as it does our students' feet. We beat a path to a very special drummer, and the tune is a third-level phenomenon, of licensing to make proxies for fish. We have selective freedom of movement, at best.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was eventually assassinated in El Salvador for acting on the belief that the Catholic Church ought to move with the people at the bottom of society. At one point in coming to realise his mission, so the story goes, he walked in front of the people of the village into a church occupied by the government military forces. As a whole movement, it was successful: kill all of us, or let us in. Even less dangerous whole movements can be successful. Consider, for example, the potential of a whole movement of university students to take leaves of absence: forego our tuition dollars, or allow us the freedom of movement to learn. Faculty too can move as a whole, whether it is to rebel against professional accreditation, or the administration. It is interesting, is it not, that such whole movements have a bad name in the United States?

Alas, on whatever scale we address our society, we find the lack of conversation. As I understand it, politics, real politics, of which no



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tradition exists in the United States, is a matter of conversation.<sup>27</sup> We do not know how to question authority of power, and in turn how to question the overall pattern of movement in our society. But if we begin to realize we have so many troubles, we may well also begin to call our pattern of movement into question. We need to create awareness of real freedom of movement, by building conversation that is rich enough so that people will automatically wish to join in and learn. This ideal is the heart of anarchism, which in the United States is the least well understood approach to society.

Anarchist advice is simple: to care about people, you should not only move toward them with lots of reinforcement at that level – hugs, for example, are like undeserved fish – but also, in every possible way, acknowledge their freedom of movement by abandoning your authority of power, and letting their own wisdom bring them back to you.<sup>28</sup> Even the young people who have been rebellious in the context of your authority of power will tend to be conservative in the context of their own responsibility for their movement. But do we typically let ourselves experience the wisdom of young people? No, we tend to deprive them of their freedom of movement, and expect them to obey us, driving the forbidden movement underground where they cannot turn to us even if they should realize they need our help.

Yes, anarchist advice is simple, but just understanding it will immediately allow us not only to resist making the kind of mistake that I made in arguing with Hugh, but also to take the kind of risk that Havel took. Our responsibility for the future in higher education is openly to call into question the overall pattern of movement in our society and, in turn, the authority of power in our society. To breathe more easily, we need to strive to make our movement more free and mutual, and on this basis we can actually negotiate at the level of the authority of rationality. We may well not find final authority at this level either, but our conversation will not be relative as a result. We can reach a consensus provided that we are not trying to negotiate on the basis of isolated tracks of movement. If we continue to be divided in our movement, however, we will fall victim to the raw alchemy of our system, perhaps literally fighting over everything scarce, and even fish are growing more and more scarce.

## Notes

1. 'History of a Public Enemy,' *The New York Review*, May 31, 1990.
2. *The Closing of the American Mind*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
3. Andrew Hacker, 'Trans-National America,' *The New York Review*, November 22, 1990.

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4. These statistics are available from the Senate Judiciary Committee. See also several excellent articles on violence toward women in *Ms.*, October 1990: every 15 seconds a woman is battered, every 6 minutes a woman is raped.
  5. 'L.A.'s Smogbusters,' *The Nation*, September 17, 1990.
  6. *A Profile of the American Eighth-Grader*, U.S. Department of Education, available from the U.S. Government Printing Office (S/N 065-000-00404-6).
  7. How much have we been led to confuse events? In which arena of events do we live? Think, for example, about recent controversies in the judicial system about the so-called 'original intent' of the framers of the Constitution when it comes to freedom of speech. (See the editorial by Martin Garbus in *The Nation*, November 12, 1990.) As one conservative argument goes, the framers could not have anticipated the nature of modern media, and so the standards of 1789 cannot be applied to freedom of speech today. The new Supreme Court justice, David Souter, for example, held that 'First Amendment rights must give way to the public's right not to be confronted with offensive views.' But, I ask you, what is the arena of these views? They were, in fact, 'signs [placed] on public property espousing the unpopular views of a candidate' (my emphasis).
  8. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
  9. New York: Random House, 1963.
  10. 'Double Bind, 1969,' *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, New York: Chandler, 1972.
  11. See Bateson's 'The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication,' also in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Choices of training style come into play at the third level. For example, the trainer could have decided to be less kind by withholding the undeserved fish all along. She could also have started a process of weaning the porpoise from its implicit trust in her – a choice that might well have come across to the porpoise as a cruel rejection, especially given its inability to call into question its dependent relationship with her. See points (4) and (5).
  12. I recall extremely vividly the very first time I caught myself acting toward my daughter in such a way that I had an uncanny feeling of literally being my father – and my daughter was not yet a year old. If we are not parents exactly like our own parents, we tend to be exactly the opposite, without calling into question the two extremes. We are *able* to learn on our own at the third level, but it is no easy task.
  13. For an extended discussion of the difference between the order of movement and the order of reading, see my *Human Posture: The Nature of Inquiry*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
  14. The learning in question involves the separation of space and time in our experience. It was precisely this separation that made possible our invention of both geometry and history, which are actually orders of reading. The sense of delayed gratification unique to human beings is the ground of our ability to make a promise that the future will be like the past. Try to imagine a porpoise who can make a promise! Because a porpoise lacks this

- ability, it cannot have *options* at the third level of learning, and consequently cannot call into question its dependent relationship with its trainer.
15. 'The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women,' Report of the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1982; and Hilary M. Lips, 'Gender-Role Socialization; Lessons of Femininity,' and Mary Frank Fox, 'Women and Higher Education: Gender Differences in the Status of Students and Scholars,' both in Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 1989.
  16. See Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America*, New York: New American Library, 1985.
  17. As I will suggest again below, it is important to consider reforms that do reach out to involve families in the processes of schooling, even though the overall movement of schooling does not also change in the process. See, for example, James P. Comer, 'Educating Poor Minority Children,' *Scientific American*, November, 1988. It is also important to consider reforms that break the uniformity of performance tanks due largely to the stranglehold of administrative bureaucracy. See, for example, Stan Karp, 'Rethinking Schools,' *Z Magazine*, June 1990; and Deborah M. Meier, 'Schools and Democracy: Choice can Save Public Education,' *The Nation*, March 4, 1991 – both are about actual reform, in Milwaukee and East Harlem, respectively.
  18. *Op. cit.*
  19. In his early work especially, Karl Marx realized this split in levels just as it began to take hold. Consider just one example: private property. The 'sense of having,' as Marx called it, presupposes a certain reading of the world; meant exclusively, mine/not-mine is an ambiguity in the figure of an object of sense, neither side of which is visible. Capitalism, therefore, constitutes a certain reading of the world. On the other hand, the native Indians of North America tended to have what William Cronon called 'usufruct rights,' with respect to which their using a thing was an aspect of a pattern of movement that included other uses by other people at other times (*Changes in the Land*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). Again for an extended discussion of these terms, see my *Human Posture: The Nature of Inquiry*.
  20. The poverty statistics are available from the Children's Defense Fund and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The distribution-of-wealth statistics are available from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.
  21. See the article by Craig Wolff of *The New York Times*, in *The Times Union*, Albany, New York, November 5, 1990.
  22. 'The Storm Over the University,' *The New York Review*, December 6, 1990, as well as his reply to three critical letters in a subsequent issue, February 14, 1991.
  23. It is no accident that we also find Searle defending metaphysical realism, an 'independently existing reality.' It is precisely knowledge about such a reality that may well be thought of as 'deep and permanent,' able 'to transform people and institutions.' Searle argued that, 'if you communicate

with other people in making such claims [that tigers exist in India], you are already committed to metaphysical realism.' Earlier he made a softer claim: 'if we are using words to talk about something, in a way that we expect to be understood by others, then there must be at least the possibility of something those words can be used to talk about.' What our commitment should be taken to amount to is a certain consensus, albeit a tacit one, to use words as we do, and if we put the stress on this consensus rather than on its content, it is perfectly consistent to negotiate with Searle about his extreme interpretation of this content as entailing an independently existing referent as opposed to one just as dependent on us as we are on it. In *Human Posture: The Nature of Inquiry*, I defend the latter, an order of co-making between us and the world.

24. See, for example, the lead article, about the State University of New York, in *The Times Union*, Albany, New York, November 4, 1990.
25. In the most popular majors at Rensselaer, mostly in engineering, students are lucky to meet, let alone move with, a professor before their third year. The study of engineering also tends to involve both the most separation of movement and the least awareness of movement. If the technical skills that Hacker was talking about are not learned in awareness of the level of movement, they can serve only to reinforce the prevailing pattern of movement – hence, our current technology. Or again, in the words that Langdon Winner (*The Whale and the Reactor*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) made famous in the circle of Science and Technology Studies, skills have politics exactly as artifacts have politics. (My favourite example of the latter is also Winner's: a bridge on the way to a recreation area is built so low that it allows only private cars – not buses – to pass under it; people without access to private cars can't get to the area.) Engineering design must be taught in a way that encourages students to think about how to do the technical work of an artifact by altering the pattern of movement of our way of life instead. Portland saved 5% of its energy by promoting the corner grocery store, that is, a way of life with a different pattern of movement. (See David Morris, 'Rootlessness Undermines Our Economy,' *Utne Reader*, May/June, 1990.) We could try to make more efficient centralized stores, which is certainly good in its own right, but we could also try to do the same work with conservation in a different, more decentralized pattern of movement. Recycling, after all, is actually reversing a pattern of movement.
26. When I show up at the favourite night spots of my students, or call my students if I notice, say, that their patterns of attendance have changed, many are shocked. Yet such movement toward students should be the rule, not the exception. We must move toward students, with undeserved fish, to bring them into conversation, into keeping company, with each other and us. Taken as an ideal, this conversation can inspire many classroom techniques without the elimination of the authority of power. The basic principle of these techniques is to find ways to become a facilitator of learning rather than a teacher. For example, I often try to pose questions in class whose alternative answers are generated as much as possible by

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the students themselves. Then each alternative answer is correlated with its own small group of students, or its own set of small groups, as no small group should consist of more than five students. Each small group works alone to justify its position and to anticipate the justification offered by the other small groups. Then we return to a circle in which each group takes a turn to report its work, with me as the facilitator of the ensuing dialogue. My goal is to start a conversation – *between the students*– that carries on outside of the classroom. My students also do all their work in notebooks, in which they are free to show in their own way how and what they have learned from each reading and class. I respond to the notebooks as often as I can during the semester – with practice grades if requested – before they are finally collected and graded. I try to help the students become more effective in what they are trying to do, so as to create openings for them to earn the grades they wish to earn, and only quite rarely does lack of ability stand in the way of success.

27. As Gore Vidal quipped in 'The Tree of Liberty: Notes on Our Patriarchal State' (*The Nation*, August 27/September 3, 1990), 'unlike most First World countries, the United States has elections not politics.' I am also reminded here of the general milieu of early 1930's Paris, represented well in the recent film, 'Henry and June'. In this milieu a pattern of movement brought all segments of the society together in one way or another, even in the very streets. Perhaps it was the last gasp of the old sociability of 'rubbing shoulders' that Philippe Aries described so well in *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Random House, 1962). In *The Uses of Disorder* (New York: Random House, 1970), for example, Richard Sennett recognized the connection between such a sociability and the conversation of real politics.
28. See George Dennison, *The Lives of Children*, New York: Random House, 1969; my *Human Posture: The Nature of Inquiry*; and the comparison of American and Danish adolescents in Eastwood Atwater, *Adolescence*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983.



*Denis Pym*

**The Axe, the Chainsaw and Education**  
 – *an examination of shortcomings in our relations with our artifacts*

*“If knowledge be represented as a set of tools, wisdom becomes  
 the ability to use them”*

**L.T.C. Rolt**

In my efforts to engage the central theme of John Schumacher’s article, I want to broaden its application and explore meanings. This sad state of affairs in education which Schumacher observes and we all know about but cannot yet acknowledge, exists no less in the use of axe and chainsaw. He wants to see educators doing a better job with learning. I just want to stop visitors to ‘Botch-Up’ Farm buggering my tools before they’ve made any impression on the job in hand.

Schumacher concentrates our attention on *movement* as the key to social organisation. He does this by contrasting two approaches to problem-solving. The most widely deployed derives from the principle of divide and rule, it’s about power. In terms of relations between teacher, pupil and technique or operator, wood and axe this approach stresses separation, physical distance and impersonal control. *The pattern of movement is away* and it is the only way the bureaucrat in us knows. This strategy has much in common with the philosophy of ‘mutual struggle’ which thrives off and sustains human anxiety and fear.

The other strategy looks very much like Kropotkin’s ‘mutual aid’ and emphasises *patterns of movement toward and with* in the way we organise our affairs. In this case the focus is on the links between teacher, pupil and technique or operator, wood and tool where we attend to: connections, physical proximity, commonalities, conversation as keeping company with, rewards that sustain the relational, the diminution of teacher and operator egos and the elevation of task. Moving towards and with has the long term effect of reducing anxieties too.

I share Schumacher’s view that we get ourselves stuck an awful lot because of a fixation on the first strategy as *the only way* to get things done. If the original purpose in distinguishing between and separating phenomena was to make them easier to understand and handle, then the effect is frequently the opposite. In our collective desires to flee from natural confusion and uncertainty we have created for ourselves an organized chaos.

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### Getting stuck with 'movement away'

I also share with Schumacher some academic pretensions – the axe, the chainsaw and education will just have to wait. What follows is appropriately heavy going. If the reader can't abide the punishment, he or she could skip through to the bit on The Axe. Personally I would recommend the suffering for this section's very heaviness makes the point, abstracting is just that, part of the 'take-away and turn-off' philosophy we allow to dominate education.

The good, the bad and the ugly of a society are embedded in how its members get things done whether the tools and techniques are for cutting wood or socializing the young into society. This knowledge ought to convince us when we come to address issues that we will *not* get far by blaming the tool or system. Obviously the problem needs to be considered in its social context, within the culture in which use of the artifact is problematic. So why do we seem to be unable to perform this simple operation?

The difficulties are inherent in our very point of departure. Culture shapes how we identify and think about the problem. At a rudimentary level the medium chosen to present the title of this article says it all. Print invites the reader to attend to the three phenomena – axe, chainsaw and education as though each were free standing. The gaps between, which might be expected to embrace the relational elements, are invisible, as are those between these tools and their users. In a materialistic society we ignore and discount the relational. The axe, like the chainsaw and education, is either *the answer or the problem*. But how we use these techniques is not about fixed either/ors. It is not a matter of black or white, not a persistent fact. A lot more than pressing buttons or putting ticks in boxes is involved in making good use of our tools.

The pattern of 'movement away' dominating our public actions, shapes the way we think about things too, and has as its illuminating stars men like Plato, Descartes, Newton and Darwin. In Descartes' writing, for example, we find the germ of a triumphant Promethian humanism to be achieved through (the answer) the use of mathematics, science and technology to conquer (the problem) nature. Being closer in time and space to that 'triumph' not a few of us prefer Blake's description of it as 'single vision and Newton's sleep'. The triumph of reason is based on three assumptions. Every genuine question has but one answer. The answer is to be found by rational processes and the solution is universal and immutable. There are indeed spheres of human activity where such assumptions might make sense, where they enable us to get on with the job in hand and these include in particular man's own inventions – building houses, bridges, towns, languages and the

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mechanisms of machines like the car or the chainsaw. But when such thinking is applied to their applications to life, cutting wood or learning, it is not difficult to see why our problems can become seemingly intractable. By sticking rigidly to this way of thinking sooner or later we find ourselves stuck.

We think of solutions in terms of governments acting on our behalf to, say, ban chemical gases or nuclear weapons in warfare or exclude cars from city centres, though we haven't heard much of people clamouring to ban compulsory schooling or employment, no lesser inventions of the human mind than car, bomb or chemical gas. In the context of personal conduct we expect citizens to exercise their own judgement over how, where and when to deploy a particular artifact. According to our folklore we look for 'reason to prevail' in such matters.

However the call for reason invokes a way of thinking that's limited, not the panacea we think it is. In his efforts to curtail those 'enemies of reason', faith and imagination, industrial man has adopted in rationality a highly constrained version of reason. In practice, intuition, imagination, feeling, experience and the like have been banished from our public considerations. These find their place imprisoned in some division of labour-faith as church on Sundays, drama as a slot in the school time-table – where there is no risk of either playing a part in life or learning.

Though no technique or device holds sway over reason. Rationality has become technically driven, being writ large through literacy, numeracy, programmed machine and all manner of mechanical devices. It is the very heart of the industrial system. Even empiricism, a tradition which begins by elevating human experience and the use of the senses, has been reduced through its associations with rational thinking to represent a line of enquiry giving preeminence to the free-standing fact as literary and numerical detail, i.e. one sense abstracted.

The assumptions underlying the way we think rest on a belief in the one-best-way to get things done. By the same logic these lead us to the closed minded view of this method as *the only way*. When I was doing research in the 1960s on people able to make the most of changing circumstances, I found the rejection of the idea of a one-best-way an excellent indicator of their adaptability. In those days the population was evenly divided in this belief. There is of course no one-best-way because as soon as I proclaim it, your ingenuity will find another. However it is useful as a sop to our anxieties. It provides the illusion of knowing and helps to banish uncertainty and doubt from our public discussions but it can also leave us privately bewildered when it no longer works.

It is adherence to the belief in the one-best-way that confers on



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institutions of employment a monopoly over the creation of wealth, confines learning to schooling and makes money the only currency for value. It equates leisure with TV viewing, movement with cars, the experience of fantasy with holidays, play with electronic gadgets and people with consumers. It perverts, too, the ideal of human equality to the institutional expediency of conceiving all people as interchangeable piece-parts. That is why 'democracy' became so important to capitalism and the 'progress of western civilisation'. In the years to come democracy as putting ticks in boxes will be the legitimising cry for all manner of totalitarian actions.

Our call to *reason* has been over-played for it invokes mind sets which diminish our adaptability in a changing world. It is also inherently political, signalling a move to fudge the issues by those on the side of an unsustainable status-quo. As the ideology of distance, isolation, loneliness and power our pursuit of narrow reason has become central to the disintegration of community and all that is relational. It makes us abusers of axe, chainsaw and educational tool as well.

### **The Axe**

The axe is no longer the significant tool it was to medieval European man, but even as late as the 16th century we find the French renaissance poet, Ronsard, pleading with the woodmen to stop their ravaging of the Forêt de Gastine for much the same reasons ecologists today condemn the felling of rain forests in Latin America with chainsaw and bulldozer. The axe remains a useful if dangerous implement but it is no longer a threat to society or environment in the hands of over zealous users.

It's still a useful tool in the hands of anybody with a modicum of skill on our small holding. However, I've noticed that when the work to be done is advertised the skilled axeman is quiet about it. He's a bit diffident. He waits to be asked. By contrast the greenhorn, usually an educated city dweller, can't wait to be asked. He fancies himself with an axe like he does with a car. He knows the task of splitting logs is rudimentary. He sees it as a chance to demonstrate his manliness. I've noticed he doesn't acknowledge any distinction between recognising a simple activity and the ability to split logs. He confuses parading and posturing with a skill he doesn't possess. But I know from bitter experience splitting logs with an axe is more difficult than a spurt of verbal fluency or pressing buttons.

The bravado which leads everyman to offer his services is somewhat

mitigated by his apprehensions when he faces the log axe in hand. His anxiety, reinforced by his schooling, recommends distancing himself from the unpredictable and unknown. Our 'helper' begins by positioning himself too far away from the log so that the falling axe brings him forward off balance and ends up with the head buried in the log. After several unsuccessful attempts thus, he embarks on a more fatal and final tack. He decides to stand nearer to the log but, still concerned about his own wellbeing, persists with throwing the axe well away from his body. Now the head falls beyond the log with the handle and log taking the full force of the action. This is no way to split a log either but it is a proven method for breaking an axe handle.

For some ten seasons I stood by feebly watching this slaughter. Another decade on and 35+ handles lost, I know exactly what will happen to my axe when everyman offers his services. These days I bore him with a short demo and lecture and offer a prediction. This is Pym's Law . . . "Give 'em the job and they'll finish the tool". I insult my 'helper' further by telling him he won't cut much wood before he's done for my axe. If I'm in a really uncharitable mood I tell him that a new handle costs 8 quid and it takes me a good hour to remove the old handle and shape and set the new one. Whatever I say or do my 'helper' invariably laughs, his bravado still intact. It's a piece of cake, anybody can use an axe. Being a total coward I walk off leaving him to it.

Before he's cut much wood he comes to announce something is wrong with the axe. There is *always* something wrong with the axe. Now *my* ego is aroused. I can't resist telling him how many times I've heard this story. I will also boast this year to having nursed a split handled axe, bequeathed to me by one of last year's 'helpers', through 15 tons of oak, ash and elm logs. If an incompetent like me can do it what the hell is wrong with a smart chap like him?

We, my axe and I, are the victims of a society that reckons knowledge is everything. In an Information Society ignorance is inadmissible, wisdom and experience not worth a fart. All you need to get on are words and a fair whack of phoney confidence. But even a simple task like splitting logs with an axe is not like that. Through an intimacy with axe and wood, loving the feel of the smooth handle in your hands, having an eye for the run of the grain in the log, knowing where to strike the axe on the wood, developing a comfortable rhythm in the chopping action, the confidence and ability necessary to co-ordinate axe, eye, body and log in harmonious movement emerge.

To reiterate. Thanks to their schooling and lack of experience my 'helpers' learn to distance themselves from problems both physically and psychologically by drowning them in the expertise of words and

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numbers. 'Being objective' reinforces a natural response to doubt and fear when what is needed time and again is the courage and humility to get in closer and develop a little empathy with task and tools. I'm not downhearted. When I finally become dictator I'll make it compulsory for every young cock in the land to be able to split a log with an axe.

### Chainsaw

In the cutting of wood and trees, the handsaw has given way to the chainsaw. This is a much more sophisticated tool than the axe. It's a machine which removes the energy for cutting from its user. Rather than extending the operator's arm, the chainsaw replaces it. I wouldn't be without this noisy, dangerous tool but I'm permanently wary about us, particularly when I'm tired. The relationship between tool, environment, task and operator is not what it can be with the axe. The chainsaw operator can never be the master like the axeman.

The chainsaw in action is inextricably linked with corporate capitalism. As everyman knows this machine provides profits for its makers, timber companies, oil and fuel combines and farmers. More significant in the matter of ownership, the chainsaw is also a nice little earner for the manufacturers of safety equipment – hard hats, ear muffers, steel-capped boots, gloves, goggles etc. The astute observer will observe that with all this gear on the operator is less a master more an instrument. Unlike the medieval knight overloaded with armour as protection from his enemies our tilter at forests and trees needs protection from himself. The interested parties above recognise their responsibilities for the operator, whether as employee or urban consumer. It's good for business. In addition the chainsaw operator's efficiency depends on him grafting for long hours without incident in the service of his insatiable machine. Safety is about profit.

The inexperienced operator makes the same kind of errors in his relations with tool and task as he does with the axe, with the possibility of more catastrophic results. At the start his posture and movement with tool, tree and earth are all awry. He's rightfully fearful. He holds his machine stiffly at arms length when he should position his legs close to the tree, tucking his body over the machine. These are difficulties he will sort out in time but they determine a more permanent framework for safety and efficiency. Solutions to these questions are provided by people who live in an abstract world – corporatists, financiers, insurers, design engineers, safety experts. These parties are not much interested in forests, trees or cutting wood nor particularly in the chainsaw as an

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effective tool. Their bread comes from the reports, computer print outs, faxes, TV screens and balance sheets that go with making money.

The safety equipment compounds the operator's isolation from colleague and environment, cutting him off even more from the world around him and seducing him into a false sense of security. While reducing the risk of immediate injury it increases the risk of fatigue, loss of hearing, back strain and muscular disorder. The combination of noisy machine and safety equipment desensitise him to operation and context. When at work he is no more outdoors than the driver of the modern air-conditioned tractor. The variety of tasks he performs contracts. He uses other tools less and less. His interest in flora and fauna atrophy. This, no doubt, is what his masters want as they successfully impose on him their own abstract, unrelating world. They want him to cut trees and wood by the ton and he reciprocates by doing it just for the money.

### **Education and Schumacher**

Education for me as a kid was about teachers, pupils and classrooms. The most visible difference between then and now is the cluttering of the classroom. This paraphernalia is described as aids to education – more and fatter text books, display charts, calculators, tape recorders, films, videos, desk computers, work processors etc. I am struck too by what seems to be an unquestioning acceptance of all this gear by pupils and teachers alike. But then one remembers these are part and parcel of a one-best-way, proof that reason still prevails even if the effect is to reduce teacher pupil interaction and reinforce the notion of education as a solitary, personal struggle. Of course we still know precious little about the circumstances of learning but these aids have helped a lot with pupil control.

To his credit John Schumacher does not blame his tools for the sad state of education save to observe their effects as giving the illusion of learning and distancing, even further, the principal parties from each other. His own idealism is unequivocal, 'our responsibility for the future of higher education is to help create a new society'.

Just what teachers might do to help create a new society is not unfamiliar, but each point embellishes Schumacher's theme of *movement with*. He wants teachers to get closer to their pupils by moving into their space and accepting the students' code of conduct more readily as a basis of exchange. He advocates what Illich would call tools for conviviality in the search for common ground. He suggests using topics of enquiry that are rooted in the meaningful traditions and rituals of the wider community to strengthen connections between school and the rest of

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life. He recommends the use of 'undeserved' rewards to sustain and confirm relationships between teacher and pupil. He wants teachers to abandon their positions of power whenever they can. Hopefully teachers can still be inspired by ideals like autonomy, service and excellence but even when armed with Schumacher's idealism they do not find it easy to ignore the constraints under which they labour. For a start teachers are employees and mostly with one kind of employer. The more government intervenes in their affairs, as it is doing, the more the servility of their role is underlined. In addition they will feel compelled to defend their own ideas of service and excellence against the demands of administrators, parents and employers where these do not concur with their own. It is not easy for those who find their own areas of discretion contracting to move towards the abandonment of powers *vis-à-vis* students. Changing circumstances have made the teacher less of a skilled axeman and more of a chainsaw operator, an instrument of the system. The kinds of constraints teachers face is suggested by listing recent developments in the UK. Though these apply to secondary education, they are typical of the pressures teachers are up against everywhere. Firstly, the onward march of subject specialisation and teaching by subject shows no sign of abatement. 'Newer' subjects like business and office studies, accountancy and information technology emerge in response to the pressure for education to be occupationally relevant. In this trend we discern a shift from schooling to training and the explicit emergence of control as the teacher's primary task. Promotability (excellence?) is more and more equated by heads and administrators with being able to keep control. Even among teachers disdain is shown for the perpetrators of activities that risk getting out of control – those very opportunities for both teachers and students to learn from experience. In spite of denials from government, the performance of schools and headmasters and therefore salaries and budgets, are on the way to being linked with exam grades and levels of truancy.

The obsession with exams and grades, mere proxies for performance and reward Schumacher reminds us, is highlighted by repeated changes in the methods and practice of student assessments. Everybody seems to be involved in the assessment game these days. The scarcity of employment offers personnel men the easy option of setting exam passes as a barrier to entry in almost every job. The proposed new teacher assessment procedures to be linked to pay will be founded on 'successful' practices in employment where research has shown their use to be administratively unsound and politically naive. The central determination of curricula reduces even further the discretion of teachers over what and how they teach.

Meanwhile the language and practices of corporate business seep

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cancer like into every aspect of school life. These are practices associated with corporate incompetence and corruption on a scale unprecedented in our time. In the quest for greater efficiency, for example, student intakes and class sizes are rising as is the amount of abstract knowledge in the curriculum, the volume of hand-outs, student home work and assignments to be assessed by teachers while practical and field work declines towards the token gesture. All of this rides on the back of the electronic aids listed earlier and the victims are students and teachers alike.

Such developments are seriously detrimental to relationships between teacher and student. 'Mutual struggle' powered by rational thinking reigns supreme as the ideology of the classroom. 'Moving with' in Schumacher's terms is being drowned out of sight and yet if teachers were to recognise that they *share* their plight with their students, good might come out of it. There must be some advantages to be gained from the crisis of education. The more oppressive and irrelevant the school system becomes in its application the less we, students in particular, privately expect of it. Though scope for the return of responsibility for learning and socialising to household and community is enhanced, neither has the resources to deliver. Students and teachers have to take matters into their own hands. They have in adult education a model for learning based on freedom of movement. In the UK this is voluntary, task centred, caters for the needs of those who want and choose to learn, has for the most part no exams and is organised very much on the basis of mutual aid.

Compulsory education remains the nursery of servile employment. However, as truancy, self-employment and unemployment levels show, many young people are trying to find their way through the madness. It would indeed be a wonderful day if and when teachers like Schumacher find the courage to throw their lot in with those young people who strive to take responsibility for themselves. In the meantime the rest of us can recognise that our difficulties with each other and our tools and techniques are rooted in our acceptance of industrial schooling and industrial employment as the only way to prepare for life and to create wealth. For both are now squarely founded on an ideology at war with the relational.

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*Gaetano Piluso***Nurturing the Radical Spirit**

It has now been a few weeks since the *Toronto Sun* recycled its horrifying headlines warning parents that another child abductor is on the loose. Parents throughout the city responded by restricting children to familiar playgrounds, creating earlier curfews and warning their children about strangers. The mood is tense as Torontoians wait and hope. Yet again the 'milk carton alarm'<sup>1</sup> has been sounded.

It would seem that the subject of child abuse is receiving the attention that is due. From the local school boards to the United Nations, the issue is being addressed. Parents can enrol their children in 'street proofing' courses, rent videos that teach about 'private parts' and use their own means to terrify their kids about those bad people out there. Adults are making an effort to protect the young.

Has the children's rights movement of the last twenty years been successful? A new consciousness seems to have developed. Children's rights are being taken seriously and legislators are hard at work. Unfortunately this has done and will do little to overcome the oppression of young people. While the intent of the movement has a radical potential it becomes stale and conformist when in the hands of legislators and bureaucrats. Like other single issue liberatory movements it cannot bear the burden of the issue without distorting the true nature of societal oppression. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that it is possible to overcome oppression on one level while not changing the very structure of society. In its hierarchical form, society allows for and, in fact, calls for the domination of the powerless by the powerful. By compartmentalising the different forms of oppression, a new hierarchy is formed which inevitably acts to safeguard the structure of society by focussing attention on 'social problems' as opposed to society itself. It is not enough to deal with the domination of the young by the old. This narrow focus on children inevitably leads to a political chess match with the authorities, governed by their rules and played on their board. While small gains have and will be made, power, hierarchy and domination are not in any real sense addressed. As a single issue liberatory movement develops it follows the familiar pattern: 1) begins with a narrow focus; 2) describes the nature of the abuse in detail; 3) identifies

the enemy; 4) attacks the enemy and demands changes; 5) enters negotiations with the enemy and; 6) celebrates 'victories'.

### **Anarchism**

This dance of conformity is a trap that can be addressed by a sound philosophical foundation which would ensure that an understanding of the inherent oppressiveness of the social structure remain at the forefront of the struggle. Anarchism can provide such a philosophical foundation. As a political theory which aims for personal and social freedom, it has much to offer the children's rights movement. The essence of anarchism is a relentless critique of oppression in general. It addresses hierarchical social structures in all forms and the resulting domination, even that which is not overtly recognisable. As a philosophical starting point anarchism ensures that activism of all types addresses structural inequalities and hence, all forms of oppression.

No one oppression is given special status in anarchism – all oppression is equally undesirable. Anarchism fights for human freedom against each and every form of power and domination, not just a particular historical manifestation of power.<sup>2</sup>

Ageism, like sexism and racism, is but one 'particular historical manifestation of power'. By moving from a children's rights position to an anti-authoritarian anarchist position the fight for the true liberation of children stands a much better chance of success.

Where then, would an anarchist analysis of childhood lead? The answer lies in the understanding that anarchism as a philosophical tool is geared toward the critical analysis of social phenomena. All such investigations lead to the thorough understanding of the root substructures which are responsible for the maintenance and development of a given phenomenon. The aim is to lead to a critical awareness which thereby acts as the catalyst of personal and political struggle toward the anarchist vision of a world aimed at the free and therefore full development of human beings. From an anarchist perspective then, childhood in the present world, is plagued by the malignant social order which seeks to develop the unconscious need for hierarchy and domination by perpetuating the passive acceptance of oppression. This is a big step beyond the present day literature on child abuse, children of dysfunctional families and the like. The root cause of childhood oppression in all forms and indeed, all oppression can be found in the very structure of our society – one based on domination, hierarchy and oppression.



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### The 'Culture of Childhood'

The extent to which children are influenced by hierarchy and domination is clearly evident when observing them at play. As Albert Bandura's work demonstrates, children's play is modelled after the behaviour of those around them. When children are exposed to violent models, they imitate the violence. Behaviours can be learned simply by watching others and while the reinforcement of the behaviour helps to solidify it, it has been shown not to be necessary.<sup>3</sup> Children in effect, learn by simply observing within the culture imposed upon them. This 'culture of childhood' in which Western children inevitably find themselves immersed, serves as a training ground for oppression. It is the totality of childhood influences governed by complex and often concealed adult social forces aimed at profit, psychological manipulation and social conformity. It engages children in a proselytising process which is aimed at conformity in a sick society by creating equally sick individuals.

Many parents, guided by their honest desire to have their children develop in freedom, mistakenly assume that it is possible to be free within this culture of childhood. As a result they withdraw their own adult authority from the lives of children hoping that their children will develop 'naturally'. Unfortunately, as parents remove themselves from authority, others step in – most often neighbourhood peers, who bring to the relationship plasticised G.I. Joes and the other authoritarian shackles of their reality. The peer relationships that result are not developed in isolation. They are dependent on the culture which the adult world has created. This culture of childhood is equipped with all the trappings of adult life. There is a strict behavioural code which is dictated through the propaganda machine running full force on Saturday mornings. Children learn at a young age that the proper thing to do is to sit and watch cartoons while the boys wear Batman slippers, eat Ninja Turtle cookies and the girls comb Barbie's hair. This ritualised behaviour is enforced by the prevailing god – at this moment Michelangelo, not that of Sistine Chapel fame but a sewer-dwelling martial artist. So pervasive is this culture that children's 'creativity' is for the most part determined by it. Superheroes are the dominant subject of children's pictures and stories and school yard folklore is nothing but kiddyland gaybashing and tales of Desert Stormers. As Bronfenbrenner's work illustrates, child development is linked to the larger community.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, an anarchist proposal for the liberation of children must deal with this culture of childhood. It must also, like all other anarchist endeavours, address the long term goal of social change in general. What might such a proposal look like? As we have seen, it is not simply a case of removing all authority from the lives of children. If we are to

nurture the radical spirit, that is the ability to think critically, recognise injustice and seek justice, we must ensure that children are active members of a culture based on mutual aid and co-operation. Such an anarchist proposal would look much different from that usually referred to in child development circles as 'permissive parenting'. Such parenting relinquishes responsibility to the culture of childhood and does not recognise the very real developmental needs that children have for interdependence, cooperation and love.<sup>5</sup>

### **Childrearing, Education and Liberation**

In an attempt to formulate an understanding of libertarian childrearing, the meaning of freedom must be addressed. Freedom is much more than leaving kids alone. As interdependent beings, we cannot be free without the love and support of others. Freedom requires involvement in a collective spirit which at once recognises one's commitment to others and one's individuality. In Bakunin's words, "I can feel free only in the presence of and in relationship with other men [sic] . . . I am not myself free or human until or unless I recognise the freedom and humanity of all my fellow men".<sup>6</sup> As members of this collective spirit children are responsible for each other's well being which thereby contributes to their own personal freedom. For A. S. Neill this is quite simply 'freedom not licence'.<sup>7</sup> To be free as a member of a community one must respect the freedom of others.

It is precisely through nurturing the collective spirit that the radical spirit develops. As one lives with others in a respectful and life-affirming manner, one learns to be non-violent and cooperative. Any sign of corruption and coercion would be repulsive and lead to action to overcome the oppression. Revolutionary activity is in the end an attempt to educate, that is to inspire the development of this type of critical consciousness. Bookchin describes this process as a "highly complex transition, one that involves the development of a new sensibility as well as a new politics". The development of such a sensibility is dependent on the active participation of those involved in their own education, political struggle and involvement with others. "What people cannot shape for themselves, they will never control. It can be taken away from them as readily as it is bestowed upon them."<sup>8</sup>

How do we, then, engage children in such a collective spirit in this malignant society? We can begin by recognising that parenting is potentially a revolutionary activity. Much has been written by anarchists and radical psychologists about the role played by the modern family in the development of authoritarian personalities.<sup>9</sup> The family is seen by such thinkers as the mirror image of society, structured both hierarchical

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and oppressive. As the backbone of society, it is charged with preserving the social order by ensuring the development of authoritarian personalities in the individual members of society. Recognising this, the family can then be employed as a vehicle towards radicalising consciousness. Of course, this would in no way resemble the hierarchical nature of the traditional family. The term family is used here to denote the myriad of possible family arrangements provided that an 'anarchist' notion of freedom unifies the collective spirit. According to Gramsci's notion of hegemony<sup>10</sup>, mass consensus is created and maintained by one group's ability to impose its particular point of view on another. As the most basic social grouping, the family can be transformed into a powerful subversive force acting as a rival to the prevailing hegemony or mass consciousness. In this 'libertarian family', what is generally referred to as childrearing methods become counter-hegemonic forms of direct action whereby the 'common sense' of hierarchical society spread through the culture of childhood is replaced by a new sensibility.

### **Libertarian Childrearing**

In an attempt to restructure family life, a growing number of families have opted to take control away from the culture of childhood and exercise cultural power of their own by deinstitutionalising and reducing the role of experts in their lives. They are attempting to bring to consciousness present reality, future possibilities and preferable social forms and practices both within the family and throughout the whole of society. Families are opting to give birth at home, to as much as possible care for their own health, developing egalitarian forms of familial relations, recognising the childhood need for security, interdependence and love and seeing to it that children are not subjected to compulsory schooling. As a form of direct action, libertarian childrearing addresses the personal and the political. The individual develops self-reliance when in control of such vital processes of life as birth, health and education. This type of empowerment enables the individual to move towards the anarchist vision of a fully developed human being. At the same time, the individual becomes unable to accept personal powerlessness and is propelled into a confrontational position with the social order. As societal pressures mount, the critically aware, self-reliant individual has little choice but to resist. It is possible to recognise injustice precisely because the individual lives in a social milieu which is devoid of power-based relationships. In turn, the mere presence of such opted-out individuals and social institutions causes a rift in the established order. As the home birth and deschooling movements (two of the many manifestations of

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libertarian childrearing) grow, it is not uncommon to see school boards and hospital organisations scrambling to keep their grip on their constituents. This is similar in many ways to company bosses trying to regain control over striking workers.

A closer look at deschooling, as one element of libertarian childrearing illustrates that childrearing can in fact be a highly developed form of anarchist direct action possessing the ability to transform and radicalise consciousness.

Deschooling begins with the radical critique of compulsory schooling. Like other educational reform movements, the inability of the present school system to actually 'educate' is exposed. From an anarchist position, however, the deschooling critique goes well beyond this. The present schooling system is rejected because of the inherent authoritarian nature of the system. This is what separates deschooling from what might otherwise be termed the 'homeschooling' movement. Many homeschooling families reject the school system yet maintain authoritarian family structures and in fact implement authoritarian pedagogical techniques within the home. While such families do challenge the school system, the intent of the challenge is to demand that the school system adhere more strictly to its authoritarian ways. This reactionary position may offer short term challenges to the school system, but in the long run will serve to strengthen it. Deschooling does not simply move the school to the home, it rejects it and its hierarchical, authoritarian structure completely. It aims at the full development of human beings who 'own' themselves, are critically conscious, free individuals who are committed to social transformation – freedom.

Such a deschooling position rests on the following understandings:

*Mutual Aid* – This is recognised by deschooling families by creating a supportive, egalitarian environment in which strength and growth is achieved through a united effort. It is understood that much more can be achieved by cooperating than by forced competition with peers for grades. Diversity is seen as a strength and therefore individuals are not artificially divided in terms of age, sex or ability. The strength of one is the resource of all.

*Cooperative and Growth-Seeking Human Nature* – Fundamental to the deschooling position is the anarchist notion that people are capable of cooperating. Each family member plays an active role in decision making and is completely respected in this role. This requires an interesting and by no means simple balancing game with children since their developmental level restricts their abilities in some instances. It is always assumed however that children, and in fact all people, have an innate tendency to grow and develop. Since it is recognised that children will

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do what they need to do in order to grow, deschooling families accept that, for example, long periods of 'idleness' are a necessary component of the child's development.

*Freedom* – Deschooling families recognise that the active ingredient in human development is freedom. In order to create a world of fully developed human beings, children should be free to develop as their inherent potentiality dictates. This involves having the freedom to cooperate with others. Deschooled children are not subjected to an externally imposed curriculum which may or may not have any meaning to them. Curriculum is developed through life itself. In fact, the entire notion of a curriculum becomes rather obsolete since it is impossible to know what a child's interest will be within a few hours, let alone a semester. It is however understood that what children do should have real meaning in the real world. To engage in the mind-melting activities of the culture of childhood in the name of freedom is not at all intended.

*Childrearing = Education = Human Development* – Deschoolers do not misetymologise the term education. It is defined as its Latin form *educare*, which means literally to nourish, to cause to grow and therefore incorporates all activities to this end. Education does not start at some arbitrarily arrived at age such as six, nor does it end at the end of high school or college. It is life itself. This is very much like John Dewey's notion of learning by doing but gives the child the complete control. Similarly, Gandhi refers to this as 'education by the craft', insisting that education come from life itself through doing what one must necessarily do in order to survive. For Gandhi, this meant craft work which would then serve the child, the family and the community as an economic resource. Unlike the busy work prescribed children in schools, the craft is not an artificial preparation for life but in fact a vital means of participating in the life of the community.

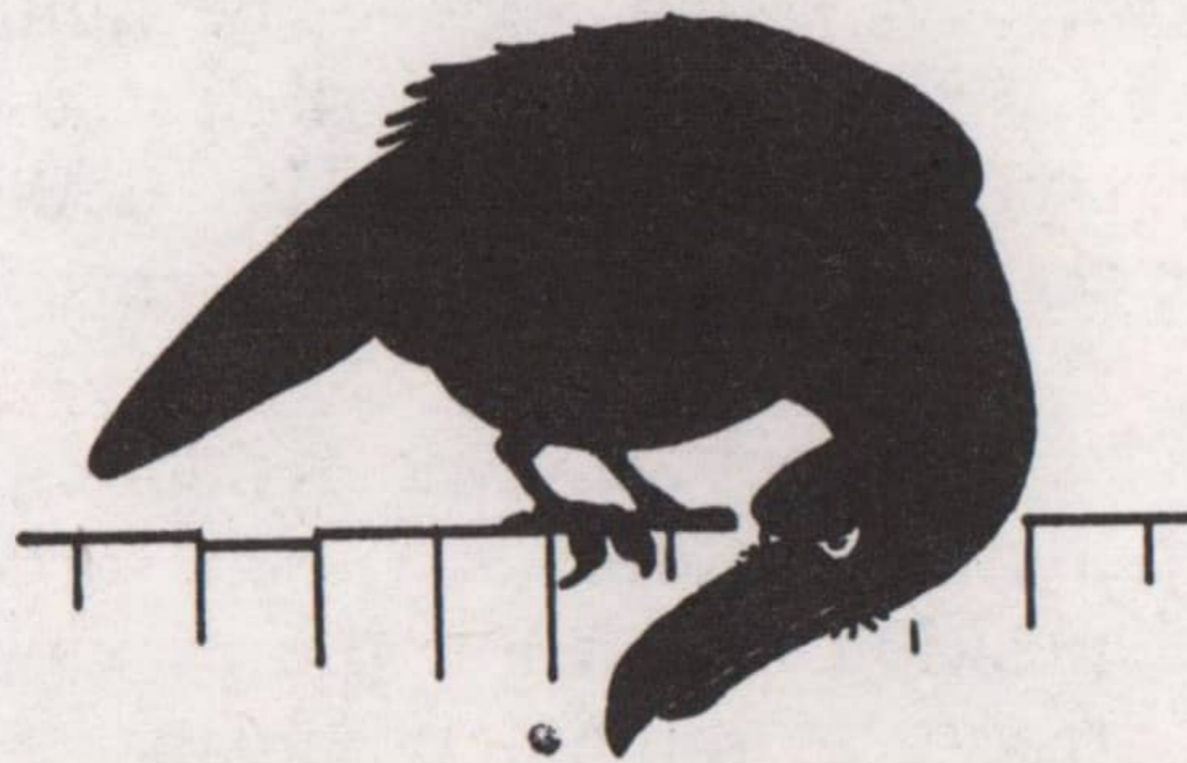
*Transformative Potential of Deschooling* – The radical potential of deschooling is recognised in that it has the ability to nurture the radical spirit and challenge compulsory schooling. It is at once both committed to personal and social transformation and recognises the connectedness of the two.

As a form of anarchist direct action, deschooling or libertarian childrearing has the potential to force the social order to recognise its inherent anti-child position and begin the process of change. More importantly, it confronts hierarchy, dominance and oppressiveness which are in the very foundations of society by nurturing the radical spirit. As it has fuelled the passion of anarchists in the past, this radical

spirit is the life force of anarchism itself and of those who will lead the world to a more sane existence based on equality, freedom and love.

## Notes

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2. Susan Brown, 'Anarchism and Human Freedom', *Our Generation*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1989: 209.
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4. Uri Bronfenbrenner, *Reality and Research in the Ecology of Human Development*, audiotape, O.I.S.E. rec. 1980.
5. Ashley Montagu, ed. *The Meaning of Love* (New York, The Julien Press).
6. Michael Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991), 237.
7. A.S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1960) 107.
8. Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989) 196.
9. Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman (New York: Schocken Books, 1983); Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (1946; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970); Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*, (New York; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1941).
10. A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).



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*Tony Gibson*

### **Sexual Freedom At All Ages: The implications of Hewetson's pamphlet**

Reading the reprint of John Hewetson's 1951 pamphlet, *Sexual Freedom for the Young* in *The Raven* 4 and Colin Ward's excellent modern preface to it, I was struck by how legal and social institutions regarding sexual relations become intrusive at *both* ends of the age scale in our society. Naturally it is a gross abuse of the freedom and dignity of children to force them, as Colin Ward says, 'to have their genitalia or anuses manipulated and photographed by medical zealots bent on finding evidence of abuse'. The outrageous aspect of the affair to which he refers is highlighted by the subsequent revelation that the bulk of informed medical opinion condemned the methods used by the medical zealots in question as being utterly useless. (see *The Times* 18.4.88). Yet the handful of eccentric doctors had the power to have numerous children removed from the care of their parents in a most arbitrary manner. Later I will discuss how such interventions in childhood are related to the sex lives of people when they are old.

In writing about this matter I must first dissociate myself clearly from the opinions of those like Tom O'Carroll (1980) who argue for the legitimacy of sexual relations between mature adults and quite young children within contemporary society. There is plenty of evidence that such activities can lead to considerable emotional harm for the children. Much of the harm comes to the children because of the contemporary attitudes of society, but I think that children must be protected from this kind of harm.

Having had my own sexuality suppressed and to some degree warped in childhood and adolescence, now that I am an 'oldie' I come across the taboos, (fortunately they have no legal force) that affect all of my age group. We are no longer considered to be 'too young' to have it; now we are considered 'too old'. Here I endorse the feminist protest that women are hit far harder than men in this respect. If I were to live with a woman 30 years my junior, there would be some raised eyebrows, but I would get away with it socially. If a woman of my age were to live with a man 30 years younger than herself she would have

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to endure social ridicule, condemnation and perhaps some ostracism. Ageism and sexism combine with a cruel force against older women.

Growing up in a society in which there are still powerful and irrational sexual taboos, despite some beneficent changes brought about in the alleged 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s, all age groups are affected to some extent by society's irrationalism, but the very young and the old are particularly penalized. In contemporary society teenagers inherit attitudes that make it seem to them rather ridiculous and reprehensible that middle-aged people, with their balding heads and thickening waists, should still go to bed together to make love. Young people tend to feel that their own parents should be 'past it', and when dad or mum is rendered single by bereavement or divorce and takes on a new sexual partner, it may be regarded as a shocking indulgence ('the randy old goat!'; 'the old bag with her hot pants!'). This attitude is immortalized by Hamlet in his jealous rage chiding his middle-aged mother:

You cannot call it love; for at your age  
the heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble  
And waits upon the judgement; and what judgement  
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,  
Else could you not have motion; but, sure, that sense  
Is apoplex'd: for madness would not err;  
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd  
But it reserved some quantity of choice...  
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame  
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason panders will. . .

Nay but to live  
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,  
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty –

(*Hamlet, III, iv*)

Thus middle-aged love may be perceived by a son distracted with jealousy and guilt.

In the same way, many people in middle-age tend to regard the sexual behaviour of real 'oldies' as being quite extraordinary and unnecessary. It may be accepted that Darby and Joan should continue to share a quiet double bed, but when such an 'old person' takes on a new partner, the association may be regarded by the young and the middle-aged as



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being quite bizarre. What is worse, powerful social forces tend to sell us all the stereotype of the sex-less 'old person' who sits at home and only pokes the fire, or placidly knits in her rocking chair. The selling of this idea means that many people come to believe that this is their inevitable fate, and that the stirring of their own emotions and erotic feelings are 'unseemly'. In their frustration such old people tend to *take it out on the young*. Thus a vicious circle is being perpetuated, and this is the important corollary of Hewetson's pamphlet.

Alex Comfort gives us some useful facts and writes as follows:

The figures for sexual activity of people over sixty-five are instructive. They show that older people are, and have always been, sexually active, but they are getting less embarrassed about it as culture gets less anxious about sexuality generally... Dr. G. Newman and Dr C.R. Nicholas questioned both men and women between sixty and ninety-three years of age and found 54 per cent sexually active over all. There was no significant decline from past activity under seventy-five; over seventy-five 25 per cent were still fully active and the fall off was accounted for by the illness of the subject or the spouse. (Comfort, 1989).

These figures may be compared with the more recent findings of Pfeiffer, Verwerdt and Wang (1968) who studied 254 men and women. The figures for sexual intercourse that was *regular* and *frequent* were 49 per cent between the ages of sixty and seventy-one, and 15 per cent at the ages of seventy and over. In this study the same people were followed for a period of five years, during which time 16 per cent of them reported a *decrease* in sexual activity, and 14 per cent an *increase* – not a very great change over this period of time. These facts are heartening, and may come as a great surprise to many people. But what of the even greater percentages of people in these age ranges who have no sex lives at all, and take it for granted that it would be 'unseemly' to consider any other possibility? Are they the ones who are the chief perpetrators of abuse of children by denying them proper freedom, and fantasizing vast orgies of sexual impropriety that call for the intervention of the law and the social services?

### **The Trobriand Island Culture**

John Hewetson makes reference in his pamphlet to the studies of Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands. Malinowski pointed out that there was no taboo on sexual behaviour among children and adolescents, and Hewetson comments that Malinowski himself in describing this society betrayed by his language various of his own Western prejudices. He does not mention Malinowski's references to the sexual life of the *old* among these happy islanders, and although little attention is paid to

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this in his book, we may as well quote what he did mention. He found to his surprise that old age and what was, to him, physical 'repulsiveness', was no bar to sexual activity. He writes:

'I was able to ascertain that the ugliest and most repulsive people have, not only sporadic, but regular sexual intercourse. Orato'u. . . afflicted with defective speech and a repulsively deformed face – can always obtain favours from the village beauties of Omarakama. . . In most of the villages where I worked I could mention a few old and thoroughly repulsive (sic) women who were able, especially if they or their husbands were of high rank, to obtain young and attractive boys as lovers. (Malinowski, 1968, p.247).

We may deplore the aspect of social snobbery that entered into the Trobriand culture, as into ours, but it is clear from this that their older women wanted lovemaking, and there was no social shame about it. Presumably, because the young had grown up in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and tolerance of lovemaking from their earliest years, they did not attempt to deny it to the old, nor was there any false myth preserved that old people cease to have a need for physical love.

### The Ancient Greeks

The Greek playwright Aristophanes who wrote in the fourth and third century B.C., is chiefly known for his comedy *The Lysistrata* which is anti-war and feminist in tone. Among his lesser known plays is *The Ecclesiazusae* which is on the theme of communism of wealth and sex, and is to some degree a satire on the fifth book of Plato's *Republic*. It is a brutal satire and gets its laughs by sexist and ageist mockery. The State of Athens has fallen entirely under the rule of women, and hence all the laws they make are quite ridiculous.

One of their laws is that there shall be sexual communism but it is not free, because before a young man can have his girl friend he must give sexual service to an older woman. The play depicts a pair of young lovers who are kept apart because three women, identified as 'hags', demand the young man's services as the law requires. Such crude humour may not be to everyone's taste, but it makes plain the fact that the Greeks accepted it as perfectly natural that old people had sexual needs and would satisfy them if they could.

What did the Greeks think of the sexual behaviour of children? Strangely, we know comparatively little on this matter. It is well known that in some periods in Ancient Greece there was a tolerated, and indeed, valued homoerotic relationship between men and boys, and Zeus had Catamitus as his cup-bearer, from whom we get the term 'catamite'. Although one may be opposed to the views of Tom O'Carroll, who was

mentioned earlier, in this matter as regards present day society, this aspect of Ancient Greek culture does make it clear that they did not share contemporary condemnatory views of sexual behaviour among children.

We must not idealize any other culture, past or present. We are concerned with the fullest expression of the human being, male or female, at all ages, and this concerns not only sexual activity but love. Of the Greeks Havelock Ellis writes:

Even the Greeks were late in developing any ideal of sexual love. True love for the Greeks was nearly always homosexual. The Ionian lyric poets of early Greece regarded women as only an instrument of pleasure and the founder of a family. Theognis compares marriage to cattle-breeding; Alcman when he wishes to be complimentary to the Spartan girls, speaks of them as his 'female boy-friends'. (Ellis, 1933, p.278)

We have echoes of this in our own society from a vociferous minority, but how shall we generate libertarian norms for the majority?

### The Wisdom of the Poets

It will be apparent that what this article is chiefly concerned with is the thesis that what occurs at one end of the age span of our lives deeply affects what happens at the other end. Hewetson has dealt with sexual freedom for the young and I am chiefly concerned with sexual relations among the old, and I argue that the two are intimately connected. Blake wrote:

Abstinence sows sand all over

The ruddy limbs and flaming hair.

and he was perfectly correct. But what of the time when our limbs are no longer ruddy and our hair is not flaming? Some would say that certainly we will form loving relationships between woman and man as long as we live, but they will question whether such relationships need have a physical expression. This question is well answered by John Donne:

So must pure lovers' souls descend  
To affections and to faculties,  
Which sense may reach and apprehend,  
Else a great prince in prison lies.  
To our bodies turn we then, that so  
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;  
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,  
But yet the body is his book.

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The time-worn bodies of the old are still the book through which love can be expressed and experienced, and there is no getting around this simple fact. This has also been expressed by another great poet, Shakespeare, in his well-known sonnet:

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Certainly we would have liked to have retained our 'rosy lips and cheeks', but must accept the reality of our own bodies and that of our lovers. Still they remain the book through which love is revealed.

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*Amorey Gethin***The New Superpower?**

These days the leaders of rich countries take good care that the wars they inflict on others do not literally come home. It is comparatively few wives and parents who have to suffer the foul absurdity that 'support our lads' is actually 'make them fight', not 'stop the war and save their lives'. In these more privileged societies life goes on the same, the old problems don't go away – though no doubt the leaders would like people to think they do – and the dangers of the future remain the same.

There have been periods in history before when dangers of intellectual origin might have been foreseen and prevented, but were not. The result in terms of human suffering were appalling. A fairly recent example was the rise to authority of Marxism. The opposition and forewarnings among conservatives must obviously be discounted, since their concern was merely about their own loss of privilege. It was those who desired revolution or reform who should have seen the dangers. With few exceptions, such as Bakunin and other anarchists, they did not, or used the new ideology for their own aggrandisement.

One of the greatest dangers for the future may now be the power of experts. That, today, means largely the power of academics. If we are very, very lucky we shall be saved from environmental disaster. But if we are, it will probably be because governments and even bankers have finally been forced to listen to and be guided by natural scientists. The credit for our salvation will rightly go – or should rightly go – in large part to them, men and women of the universities. However, in this way respect for the academic establishment in general will be greatly increased. From faith in natural scientists to faith in social 'scientists' it will only be a short step. And a need for faith in somebody or something who can find a solution to a fundamental problem is already felt in western society and is going to be felt with increasing intensity.

For all the talk about democracy, many people – not just anarchists – are aware that western society is corrupt, as corrupt in its own way as were the communities of eastern Europe that are now described as liberated.

Many people know, and perhaps an even greater number do not know but simply have the bitter sensation, that we do not really control our

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own lives, and that we are losing more and more of what little control we ever had. Our lives are largely dictated by bankers and boards, tycoons and committees, parliaments and ministers. Once in a very long while we are offered the opportunity to choose between two, three or – in some blessed countries – even five, or six, or ten tiny groups of people who are not even chosen by us in the first place but who will decide how we should live – that is, to the extent it has not already been decided by the bankers and the tycoons.

The systems and plans imposed in this way are uniform for almost everybody, and the imposition starts virtually at the moment we are born, in the form of the houses we have to live in. By the time each of us is five years old, at the latest, we have to start conforming to the pattern chosen for the shaping of our minds. The education system in a western 'democracy', as just about everywhere else, is effectively just one, and it is wholly fraudulent to suggest to parents that they have any choice in the matter. As for the choice of the children themselves, it is not even considered. Standards of merit are uniform, and it is probably only children of the strongest character that can resist judging themselves by those standards without becoming aggressive. The process of fitting oneself for and finding a job is uniform, the barriers on the way are uniform, and failing at one of those barriers is usually fatal to further progress. Moreover, that system of progress, both through education and towards work is the product of the policy for the nation collective, not of concern for unique individuals. (It is an illusion, I believe, to think our rulers arrange things for the benefit of the *state*. Most of them have *ideals* of a less merely selfish kind. These ideals are far more insidious and dangerous than straightforward self-seeking on the part of those who, at any given time, effectively are the 'state'.)

The uniformity pursues us into almost every aspect of our lives. It limits the sort of food we can eat, the sort of environment we can live in, the sort of relations we can have with other people in our work (whether bosses, trade unions, colleagues, or anybody else). It forces us to live in a style that many may abhor, consciously or unconsciously, a style based on both greedy competition and waste, but that it is almost impossible for the individual not to bow to except at considerable personal sacrifice. Dropouts can only exist because there are comparatively so few of them. And even they can for the most part only live off the flotsam of conventional society. We are all slaves to the money system, despite its daily demonstrated inefficiency, injustice and unfailing capacity to cause ridiculous and tragic problems. Even the ambitions of most people are determined by the artificial conventions of western civilisation and there are surely many unaware that their emotional discomfort, or worse, stems from the conflict between their superficial aspirations and

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their real natures. So it is not strange that with the relaxation of the direct repressive discipline of the past, the feeling of impotence in the face of the system's uniform demands and expectations produce at best a widespread malaise, and often much worse: explosions of frightening violence and contempt, especially on the part of those who are, or feel that they are, failures or rejects by the standards of the community that orders them about without even the pretence of by your leave.

When the powers that be finally have to concede that the disease has become acute they will attempt a cure, and I think I know what form that will take. They will call in the academics, the social 'scientists', the experts on human behaviour. These are the potential new superpower.

There is complaint, at least in Britain, that scientists are accorded too little respect and money. The *Guardian* has lamented "the demise of our universities as any significant influence upon the course of governance". But this is almost certainly a temporary state of affairs, and in any case it is only a relative neglect. Over most of the world, including Britain, the fates of countless individuals, as well as those of whole communities, are already determined by experts who are in, or from, or trained by the universities. If those committees that dominate so much of our lives ever consult anybody else, it is usually academics they call in. In the United States immense political power and influence are often given to academics, sometimes with fatal results – directly and literally fatal in cases like Kissinger and Cambodia. Academics to a large extent guide governments' economic and financial policies. Particularly sinister, because exercised largely out of sight, is the power of psychiatrists and psychologists. It has not been just Soviet citizens who have had their destinies decreed by experts on our minds. Over a great part of the world they decide whether individuals in their thousands shall or shall not spend years, perhaps the rest of their days, in mental institutions, and the decisions of many courts are swayed by the pronouncements of these persons skilled, so it is believed, in understanding of the mind. Chaim Bermant, reporting recently in the *Observer* on the kidnapping by social workers of the children on the Orkneys, commented that social workers "form a close community, sharing many ideas, often pre-packaged by the more modish sociology departments of our universities and polytechnics".

As social and emotional problems come to seem greater and greater, people will ask what the matter can be and will be all too ready to approve the appeal to the expert colleagues of those who showed us what was wrong with the physical world. People will believe that the solution to the problems of 'liberal democracy' lies in greater expertise, greater knowledge, particularly knowledge of the nature of humans.

Most people will not, I fear, distinguish between physical scientists

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and those who like to call themselves social scientists, the less so because both sorts of experts come from and work in the same institutions. It will not avail that, unlike the physical scientists, for whom facts make it difficult to disagree for very long, social scientists disagree with each other constantly and permanently. It will make no difference that economists have not solved the world's economic problems. It will not make many hesitate that despite the growing numbers of psychologists and psychiatrists, the world's mental hospitals have grown so full that many authorities desperately seek alternatives in order to stop them bursting.

If it seems fanciful to suppose that the academic establishment could become a menace to humanity, think of how Christianity developed. I do not believe early Christians suspected what some of their successors would be responsible for: the savagery of heresy hunting, of the crusades, of witch burning, of the religious wars. Christians undoubtedly tempered the callous selfishness of the Roman world. That was because Christianity's first principle was charity. This principle has never entirely ceased to work among Christians, but no such moral inspiration lives at the heart of the academic, expert tradition. So it may not be long before there are few academics or experts left who are moved and restrained by ideals of compassion and solidarity with the oppressed.

But the academic establishment has just the right potential to find the formula for the most fearful kind of tyranny of all, just as the church did. That formula is the combination of authority with the power to manipulate minds. Against the church, rebels could pit rationality. Against the decrees of the universities such protest will be far harder, for they pronounce themselves the very repositories of rationality.

It is true that at the moment there are many gentle and enlightened academics who speak and do what they can against the arrogance and brutality of political and financial power. But early Christians were compassionate folk too, and made their protest against authority. When the church became part of the establishment it soon turned into a source of oppression.

If academics achieve more or less absolute power over minds, there is nothing that says that they will exercise it in the cause of morality and charity. Human experience suggests the reverse. The power will be used to indulge the delight in power and to throttle any threat to itself.

In a recently published book, *Antilinguistics*, I have tried, as a non-expert, and by means of simple everyday rationality, to show that most of what the academic linguisticians say about language is either wrong or trivially obvious. In this way I want to show that the truth and understanding concerning human beings, and the ability to discover



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that truth, are not the exclusive property of an intellectual elite doing 'research' at the universities.

What makes academics really dangerous is that in both their own and the public's view the universities have a practical monopoly as the fount of *knowledge* and *truth*, a pretension that goes virtually unchallenged. How often is a non-academic granted public expression on a matter considered to be in the academic domain? At the same time, though, "Yesterday's high-brow fashion becomes today's off-the-peg common sense, taken for granted by the most 'down to earth' people". And much of modern psychology "strives to be objective and ethically neutral, but . . . ends up by encouraging an instrumental attitude towards people". Those are quotations from *From here to humanity*, which exposes the moral corruption inside the so-called 'human sciences', particularly psychology and artificial intelligence, and was written by Richard Forsyth, who was himself once an 'insider'.

It is debatable whether, if academics achieve the unchallenged power I fear, it would be worse if they were wrong or right in their analyses of human beings. If they are right they can manipulate us even more effectively. Such wicked 'realistic' power is already being exercised.

The economic theories from the universities already reach out to the whole world and are used to justify such things as the Structural Adjustment Programs that are imposed on poor countries by the World Bank. These programs are very effective in getting money repaid to the private banks and making the people of those countries even poorer than they were before.

There is an article (by Hugh McManners, apparently a former British army captain) in the 3rd March issue of the *Observer*. It describes the treatment of 'psychiatric battle shock' in soldiers.

. . . the most effective treatment of psychiatric casualties takes place on the battlefield, as close to the fighting as possible . . . with the expectancy of each returning to carry on fighting . . . Therapy will be taking place on the battlefield now, as informal discussions of emotions, actions and reactions, coming to terms with the terrible reality of war. Guilt is particularly destructive, the normal reaction of a compassionate man to the horror that he has seen and survived. Combat is another dimension, a world with very different rules. In some way it is like being drunk – doing things which afterwards you deeply regret. Servicemen returning home from the Gulf should not blame themselves or feel guilt. Despite everything, each was doing his or her duty. To make sure that this message gets home, British Army therapists will be counselling troops after combat, to exorcise the destructive tensions that generate long-term psychological effects.

I do not believe McManners or the therapists he talks of are evil people. (It would make the problem much easier if they obviously were.)

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But what he says is a terrifying example of how 'scientific' knowledge can be used entirely for the purposes of those in charge. Psychological insight is used to maintain efficient fighting machines, and 'compassionate men' are told everything is all right and are not to be allowed to draw the conclusion from the horrors they have experienced and perhaps committed: that war is an atrocity that simply cannot be permitted, whatever the politicians' justifications.

We must not allow the academics, the universities, to have a monopoly of understanding of the nature and needs of humans. We must not allow them to have a monopoly of what are accepted as valid opinions on that nature and those needs. The academics must be made to share with 'ordinary' people their starting points, their principles, their reasoning, their conclusions. It must not be left to religious fanatics either in east or west to oppose the scholars and researchers at universities. If those are the only people who question academic authority, that authority will only be strengthened. We need an alternative rational force. 'Ordinary' people must speak out and show by simple reasoning whenever academics talk rubbish. They must not be overawed and believe that they have nothing to contribute if they have not read all the relevant 'literature'. The debate about human questions must be in the widest possible public forum. It must not be confined to learned journals.

Above all, we must not allow the academic experts to determine what is good for us and what happens to us, on the grounds that they are the only ones that properly understand these matters. If the mass of human beings ever become happier than they are now, it will not be through the researcher in 'human sciences'. It will be through compassion and respect for other real individuals.

Amorey Gethin has been a teacher of languages for 35 years. His latest book is *Anti-Linguistics: a Critical Assessment of Modern Linguistic Theory and Practice* (published by Intellect, Oxford 1990).

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*Alex Comfort*  
**Delinquency**

**Introduction by J.H.**

In the years following the Second World War, there has been a great deal of concern about the increase in crime, more especially juvenile crime in this country. It seems likely that crime has increased in all countries in the civilised world, and this fact alone would be sufficient to suggest that there are underlying causes of such behaviour beyond the 'wickedness' of the increasing number of persons who commit criminal acts. But the work of Freud and of other psychologists has made everyone today far more conscious of the mechanism of motivation than was conceivable sixty years ago. And, as a result, it is no longer possible to dismiss criminals as evil creatures who ought to be punished. Instead, most of us are uneasily aware that 'there, but for the grace of God, go I'.

Of course there are die-hards who still think in the old way, just as if Freud had never existed. A surprisingly large number of them are to be found in the legal profession, at the Bar and on the Bench. But their utterances only give point to the changed attitude because they seem to utterly out of date and out of touch.

Punishment therefore seems less and less a satisfactory way of dealing with those who break the law, especially when they are juveniles. Increasingly the question of causation intrudes itself. What makes them do what they do? When they act in disregard of common humanity, what has made them lose this human characteristic?

It is not difficult to see that the legal die-hards react in an outmoded fashion partly because they are on the defensive. The law in its majesty sets the bounds of conduct and chastises the transgressor. White is white and black is black. But once the intruding spirit which seeks to *understand* appears on the scene this cut and dried aspect begins to have blurred outlines and the comforts of dogma are overturned. Hence the hostility of the legal mind towards the psychiatric mind: hence the bombinating absurdities of the Bench and Wig.

Viewed with knowledge of motive, of social upbringing and the host of other factors which a psychiatric approach to crime and criminals uncovers, the law cuts a rather unpleasant figure, old-fashioned and

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over-righteous, and very much lacking that warm quality of *understanding* which is a part of human social warmth and solidarity.

But the law is not the only quasi-sacrosanct institution that a study of criminal motivation and origins brings into a certain disrepute. Society itself, with its conventions and prohibitions and imperatives, its arbitrary economic pressures, its varying opportunities afforded to different groupings and classes: society itself must also bear its share of responsibility for what its members, even the so-called criminal ones do. Often, in the light of the new insights, society appears as the superstitious mass treating the criminal as the scapegoat for its own concealed sense of guilt.

But society is no abstract conception. It means aggregates of men, women and children, all individuals with their own responses, their own fears and hopes, joys and unhappiness. The more one understands the well springs of criminal behaviour, the more light is shed on the motives of individual conduct.

Hence there is far more in the study of crime than appears at first sight. Yet, as Dr. Comfort shows in this lecture, there are yet wider horizons. For crime is only breaking the law; but the concept of delinquency covers any persistent anti-social behaviour whether forbidden or sanctioned by the law. The realm of delinquency thus extends into many fields of activity usually regarded as normal: business and political activity present many examples of delinquent, if not – by present legal enactments – criminal behaviour.

In the space of this brief lecture, given at the Anarchist Summer School of 1950, Alex Comfort makes far clearer the problems presented by delinquency. In doing so he shows that these problems are by no means simple. If the die-hards regard criminals as fundamentally untreatable, the tendency of the more sentimental progressives is to be altogether too optimistic, for they often seem to think that a more just and equal form of society will abolish the delinquent. With the revolution they see the problem disappearing overnight. In its extreme form it is a wishful, puerile conception: on an intellectual level almost as low as the die-hard's.

The study of delinquency uncovers the social forces which favour such delinquent tendencies, and exposes the frustrations which turn children and adolescents from natural warmth to a reactive hostility towards society. In doing so it points out to us the direction which an ideal society should take. Alex Comfort rightly draws an analogy with epidemic diseases. We have largely eradicated these by understanding their causes. The eradication of delinquency, of anti-social behaviour, may be far harder because it runs into conflict with such established institutions as the law, the authoritarian family and the sex denials of

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our society. But it can only proceed from a similar grasp of the causes at work.

J.H.

### **Delinquency by Alex Comfort\***

The Mikado, you may remember, prided himself on making the punishment fit the crime. If he had been one of the more progressively-minded English Home Secretaries, he would have talked about making it fit the delinquent. A great many people use the word as a rather genteel term for criminal. I want to begin by pointing out that this is technically incorrect. Crime is something which the law punishes, and that is all it is. You probably know that the leading maxim of criminal law is that nothing is punishable unless the law expressly forbids it: crimes are those actions which are prohibited and which are punishable, and the term is a legal one. Delinquency is a psychiatric term, and it usually means that kind of behaviour disorder which expresses itself in injury to other people, or general mischief to society.

Now it is delinquency, and not crime, which psychiatry studies. I think you will see that this must be so – statistical data on the prevalence of crime, for example, are almost meaningless, because any action can become a crime or cease to be a crime overnight. If Parliament passes a Bill, or the Minister issues an order, forbidding the sale of herrings less than four inches long, it is going to be reflected in the criminal statistics. I'm choosing an extreme instance to illustrate the distinction. In most societies, including our own, it is quite true that most crimes, at least the important ones, are acts of delinquency, but in the last hundred years this has become very much less true, owing to the growth of a very large body of administrative law. And the distinction becomes highly important as soon as one begins to try to use psychiatric methods in dealing with those whom the courts convict. It must be quite obvious, I think, when we hear people saying that all convicted criminals ought to receive psychiatric treatment, that psychiatry would have very little to say to Robin Hood convicted of shooting the King's deer, or to the man who steals when he is starving, or to the Tolpuddle martyrs, or to the individual who is convicted of street betting. Those are not extreme instances. In the last few years we have seen psychiatrists being asked to rehabilitate people and readjust them in society because they refused to drop bombs on civilians or to conform to the Nazi racial laws. I don't think I need say any more to stress the distinction between

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\* A lecture delivered at the Anarchist Summer School, London, August 1950.

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criminal and delinquent, except to point out something I am coming back to later, that while some delinquents commit crimes, those who do are quite arbitrarily selected by the form of the law at the time, and that others of identical make-up are either unpunishable or are essential members of our present type of society. They may even make the laws which determine the selection.

I want to begin, however, by confining myself to the delinquents who are criminals, in the sense that they persistently fall foul of society and of the people round them in ways which bring them into conflict with the law, because they present a definite challenge to the ideas of society which we, at this conference, have been discussing. One of the standing arguments in favour of the coercive power wielded by the state is that delinquents of this type exist, and that we need to be protected against them. Now I know that most of us here don't accept that argument, any more than we accept punishment. What I want to do today is to give you a clearer idea of the evidence which, to my mind, justifies our rejection of it, but nevertheless I feel, from reading a good deal of our literature, that we are in danger of underestimating the activity of these delinquents, and of assuming rather blithely that in a society of the kind we envisage they will disappear and give no more trouble. It is quite true, I believe, that we can eradicate this kind of delinquency almost entirely by altering the form of society, but only if we have a very clear idea of the exact causes which produce them. If we talk in general terms about getting rid of capitalism or of coercion, we are really being just as vague as the elderly magistrates who talk about improving the moral standards of the nation. The only hope of getting rid of delinquency, in an anarchist society or in any other, depends on our having as accurate a picture of its causes as we have of the causes of epidemic disease, and we can get that information by exactly the same methods. I want to look at some of the ideas of causation in delinquency which have been held in the past, then at more recent studies, and lastly at the implications of this work in any planning of new social patterns which we undertake.

During the period when our criminal law was formed, the normal explanation of delinquency was that it arose from spiritual wickedness. In other words, it had a supernatural cause. So long as that view persisted, attempts to analyse this construct any further were rather limited and scattered, though they were not by any means absent. With the growth of deism and rationalism, the idea of original sin and of the Devil did not decay at all rapidly – they became translated into the ideas of a basic human tendency to relapse into aggression against others, and in the idea of antisocial instinctual drives which had to be curbed. We no longer accept the 'basic human tendency', or rather, we recognise

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that aggressive impulses are normally the obverse of social impulses, but we have to accept the idea that some people have strongly-developed antisocial impulses – the starting-point of rational criminology came when individual workers began to try to ascertain where these impulses originate, why some people show them more strongly than others, and how they can be remedied. The book which is usually regarded as the start of modern psychiatry of delinquents is Beccaria's *Dei Delitti e Delle Pene*, published in 1764, but that book is a plea for humane treatment rather than a study of causes. Perhaps the first serious study of causes, though it was rather a mistaken one, came from the physiognomist Lavater, who originated two of the longest-lived and most misleading ideas in psychology, that of the criminal type and that of the personality-trait, which he claimed to be able to recognise in the face. His influence is very manifest in the work of Lombroso at the start of the century. The tendency of Lombroso's work, as you probably know, was to assume that crime was an innate predisposition, similar to artistic proficiency or high intelligence. Ideas of this kind did much to limit the attempt to treat delinquents with a view to cure, by assuming that the man who commits crimes is genetically different from the man who does not, but it did rest on one very important observation, which still holds good, that those who commit crimes fall into two very sharp groups – those who commit one crime from a fairly obvious cause, who steal when they are hungry or murder someone under the influence of extreme provocation, and those who are recurring decimals and commit crime after crime, very often identical in detail.

I think it is important to recognise this fact, when we try to assess the claim of political theory that the law and the coercive forces of the State are our main protection against delinquents. Quite apart from any consideration of anarchism, the facts show that a relatively large proportion of the crimes which occur, and which are delinquent crimes, as opposed to administrative offences, are the work of a relatively small number of people. The evidence which we have today suggests that any of us here today are good for one criminal-delinquent act, given sufficient provocation – the fear of punishment may play some small part in keeping us in order, but if it were withdrawn, very few of us would rush out to steal something or kill the person we like least. Our internal standards of conduct would stop us from doing so. On the other hand, there is this very definite group of individuals who repeatedly do such things, and who do them in spite of the law, in spite of repeated punishment, and very often without any great personal advantage accruing to them. The problem of crime is not the problem of stray, innate, or natural antisocial impulses. Stable societies control these very effectively without coercion by the same kind of group-custom which would make

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any of us here very loth to walk down Oxford Street naked, even if we would not be arrested for doing so. The problem of crime as a serious menace to individual life and rights is the problem of the persistent offender, and the only protection the State gives us against him is that which we get from his absence in jail. I don't need in the present company to argue against mere incarceration for preventive purposes. If we can rehabilitate these people, we ought to – there is quite as good a case, on grounds of policy, for imprisoning those who have open tuberculosis, but we don't consider it just or equitable to do this. From our point of view, the important thing is that this threat to society, upon which the State bases so many of its claims, would disappear if we could ascertain why individuals become persistent offenders, remove the causes which make them so, spot and rehabilitate the early case, and thereby remove the supply, even if we did nothing to rehabilitate the hardened cases.

The second thing which Lombroso recognised, and which led him to regard crime as congenital, was that the persistent offender almost invariably begins his antisocial activities at a very early age. And it is generally agreed that if we can focus our attention on the juvenile delinquent, pick out the group who are going to become persistent offenders, as opposed to the group of naughty boys, and arrest the process there, crime as an administrative problem will virtually disappear. That is why so much psychiatric attention is being focussed on juvenile delinquency today.

Now you'll notice that I have not been talking in specifically revolutionary or anarchist terms about this problem, because most of the work which is being done today is not being done by revolutionaries, but by psychiatrists who are trying to work, if not with, at least in, the existing order. I think their work is important, and for this reason – delinquency is not limited to crime. The further we go in the anthropology and psychology of delinquency, the clearer it becomes that the mechanisms which make some people into thieves or persistent murderers are not dynamically different from the mechanisms which make people into the other kind of delinquent, the socially-accepted and unpunishable delinquent, with whom we are at odds whenever we criticize power and coercion as institutions. This is not a theory peculiar to anarchists. It has a very wide, and, I believe, an increasing acceptance in psychiatry. As anarchists, the desire to dominate is the 'crime' which worries us most. We recognise that at the moment the delinquent activities of governments, and of individual psychopaths in them, are a greater threat to social advance than even the most serious examples of punishable crime. The individual who is clever or lucky as well as delinquent may be able to express his basic character-disorder in an unpunishable form



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– if he is unlucky or of low intelligence he will express it in what is commonly known as crime. In another context, the aggressive psychopath who bashes people and robs them may well be psychodynamically identical with the sadistic warder who bashes people and is allowed to do so, or the bucket-shop proprietor who goes to prison, with the demagogue who rises to be head of his party.

For this reason, a scientific attempt to ferret out the actual, concrete factors in society, the family, and the individual which lead to 'crime' of the delinquent type is in itself a revolutionary activity, if by revolution we mean the attempt to alter inadequate social patterns by deliberate action, and any contribution to this study, even if the people who make it do not realise its wider significance, is of vital importance to us as revolutionaries. And it has another side. We're not always very logical. Most of us, I think, refuse on principle to be indignant, and to react by demands for revenge, against bandits or murderers, because we say that their behaviour is the outcome of defects in society. On the other hand, we are very often indignant, and we may react equally sentimentally, at the activity of power-groups or of individual rulers – or, perhaps more characteristically among anarchists, at the activity of a class, or of the whole group of rulers, who seem to us to be acting brutally or wickedly in their own fields. I don't want to suggest we should lose our healthy social indignation, any more than I suggest we should come to shrug our shoulders when we come across a multiple murderer, but I do feel that any revolutionary movement which is able, as I believe we are able, to ground itself in psychiatry should thereby acquire a balance and a principled approach to social evils which it can get in no other way. I believe that there is only one possible kind of revolution, a revolution based on scientific study of the things we wish to foster and the things we wish to eliminate, and their adjustment by means which I would call psychiatric, not political, and those are the criteria which we have to fulfil if we are to make a contribution to human progress. And it goes further than that – it is known today that not only governmental power but revolutionary activity itself is a very common cloak for psychopathic tendencies in the participants. We all know the psychopathic crank, to our cost, and being a minority movement we have to guard against him: for all I know, I may be one. The application and reapplication of rational criteria to our own response and opinions is a positive duty, and an extremely difficult and arduous one. Is our hatred of coercion or authority based evidence, or is it a discharge of aggressive tendencies which might have landed us in Dartmoor or in the Cabinet? It's a point I won't pursue, but we should mention it in passing. 'The Delinquent' or the psychopath is invariably someone else, not the person who uses those words.

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Now the crucial question for us is this – can we hope to interfere effectively to prevent the development of the delinquent type of behaviour disorder? Is it, as Lombroso suggested, and as a very few penologists still suggest, an innate defect? I think we can answer that with an unqualified ‘No’. There is no significant evidence whatever to support such a view, except in a very limited number of mental defectives and organic psychotics who are destructive or troublesome, and even these can to some extent be trained as well as restrained. Is it, then, an economic effect? Does poverty breed crime to the extent we formerly believed? Up to a point it does, though some of that crime is hardly delinquency – crime, as I hope to show in a minute, is a breaking-down or breaking-out process, and like other explosive forms of behaviour many non-specific stresses can contribute. But poverty is by no means the only cause, and any simple economic view is not enough.

If you read the press, you will see that the causes of crime, especially juvenile crime, are known to practically everyone – bishops, magistrates, doctors, social workers, postmen, and editors. Unfortunately, no two of these agree what they are. The most commonly cited are low moral standards in the home, either through lack of religious teaching or through the supposed growth of pilfering, fiddling and so on, lack of what is termed parental discipline, and the notorious fact that children steal because they want things – if they pinch sweets it is because they want sweets but won’t save up for them, which is the spiritual-commonsense theory in another form.

The only way to deal with this kind of assertion is by proper observation, to see if it is true. I’m going to devote the rest of my time to one particularly important study on these lines which has just been published, that undertaken by Stott for the Carnegie Trust. So far as I know he is no anarchist, so I can quote him without any charges of special pleading. His series of cases covers 102 youths between 15 and 18 in English approved schools – this is a smallish sample, but the results and the method were both of great general importance. I can’t unfortunately do more than summarise Stott’s findings, but the book can be obtained from public libraries under the title *Delinquency and Human Nature*, and I commend it to everyone here.

Stott’s primary finding is that in almost every case the actual offences, whatever they were, whether sexual, larceny, or other, represented breakdown-reactions to enormous internal stress. In no case did a boy steal because he wanted something – unwanted objects were stolen, stolen objects given away. Parental discipline ranged from very severe to absent. Religious upbringing was indifferently present or absent. In Stott’s own words, delinquent breakdown is an escape from an emotional situation which, for the particular individual and with various condition-

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ings of his background, becomes at least temporarily unbearable. The motives of the offences Stott summarises as avoidance-excitement, which is apparently particularly associated with housebreaking, inferiority-compensation, delinquent-attention, resentment against parents, desire for removal from home, in that order. One important deduction from this finding is that criminal parents are not an important determinant, for this reason: the satisfaction or relief which the delinquents got from their offences were not concrete ones, like gain or advantage, but depended almost wholly on the fact that crime is something which society rejects, which brings punishment, gets them sent away from home, or scandalises parents. The boy whose father is a burglar does not try to spite him by stealing. The largest number (53%) engaged in crime as a means of forgetting their home problems in a round of adventure. Others deliberately courted detection to spite their parents or to escape from home. I think that a reading of the 102 detailed case histories here gives us a truer picture of what we are up against in dealing with the persistent criminal than does any examination of the later part of the process. The old lag has a hard shell – he is in equilibrium with himself, and one can't easily break in. But he is the end result of the same process. Stott shows very clearly that delinquency is a neurosis, if by a neurosis we mean a repetitive kind of response to a situation we cannot cope with, which is in itself inappropriate and useless, but which has become fixed as a habit.

For our purposes, we need to go further, and see what the stresses were which produced this pressure. They were all in essence tensions within the family. Summary gives little idea of them – to realise what these boys had to contend with, in 'good' (respectable) homes for the most part, one has to turn to the case histories; Stott gives us broad headings which indicate the type of anxiety source, but not its intensity or the total absence of any real means of escape for the victim: anxiety over parents' health, desertion threats, being unwanted, estrangement from parents, unsatisfactory parents, neurotic, hysterical, stupid, over-severe; homes upset by quarrelling, separation, remarriage and so on. Under these one can make out, if one wishes, some of the more classical Freudian outlines. There is no one paramount cause – any major stress which impairs the stability, the confidence or the affection in a family can, under the right conditions, produce delinquency, some more than others, but in every case the aggression, irresponsibility or cruelty of the delinquent is the outcome of learning – it is a response he has acquired, not a character-trait, but a way of reacting to a situation. And behind the family structure lies the structure of Western urban social-democracy, a pattern of communal life in many respects non-viable, a society which tends to consume, not reinforce its children because it

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has become socially non-cohesive. And the treatment which is required, this being so, is one of deconditioning, of 'placing the delinquent in an environment in which his emotional wounds can best heal'. How far this is from the orthodox legal idea of punishment I need hardly stress. As to the asocial society to which he must then return, the reform of that is already our prime concern as advocates of freedom and mutual aid.

I have neither the time, nor, I think, the authority to try to apply the lessons of what I have been saying to our ideas of changing society, except to point out to you once again that the family, in view of its part in character-formation, and the whole nexus of personal relationships which contribute to it, is the key not only to the problem of delinquency in its limited sense but in all the wider social and political contexts which interest us in our desire to found a non-coercive society where individuals respect one another without external sanction. There is plenty of room here for discussion and study.

There are two points I would like to make. First of all, modern work in this field seems to me to give us extremely strong ground for encouragement. The political field, and the type of revolution by a *levée-en-masse*, which earlier radicals looked for, have never been bleaker in prospect: the new knowledge and study of the machinery of human societies and of individual character-formation gives us, I think, not only a field in which to work with every hope of success, but also an assurance that the ideas which we have espoused, for various reasons, conscious or unconscious, since the time of William Godwin, are becoming increasingly the currency of scientific thought. Secondly, I want to stress the importance of our keeping up with the work which is going on, of seeing all the results, whether they support our preconceptions or not. It is not good enough to read A.S. Neill because we like his ideas and not read those who criticize him. Personally, I would like to see more of us, those who can, taking training in social sciences or engaging in research in this field. I do not want to try to turn anarchism into a sociological Fabian Society, from which non-scientists are excluded. I want to see something done which has not been done before – a concerted, unbiassed, and properly documented attempt to disseminate accurate teaching of the results of modern child psychiatry, social psychology and political psychology to the general public on the same scale as we have in the past tried to disseminate revolutionary propaganda. That most certainly does not involve any split between 'worker' and 'intellectual' – the worker wants the information, and wants it now, exactly as he wants the doctor, or as the intellectual wants food and coal, and in terms of mutual aid each relies on the other to deliver the goods. I think this is the complement of what other comrades are doing in industry by pressing for such things as workers' control

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and local autonomy – the two go together. And there is another side to this – most of us may feel depressed from time to time at the complacency of the public in the face of economic and industrial issues and of political injustice: we should have to be radiant optimists, I think, to anticipate any mass movement toward our ideas at the moment, or, if such a movement did miraculously occur, to believe that the English public, conditioned to live as it does and think as it does, could be translated at all suddenly into a higher level of individual responsibility. As a minority movement, our best chance lies in our power of forming opinion. By learning how free men are made, and why they are in short supply today, psychiatry seems to me to be filling a role which is not less revolutionary for being unspectacular. I want to suggest to you that it is here, where power, delinquency, and most of the other maladjustments which we want to see removed, can be attacked by the methods which got rid of epidemic disease that we may perhaps be able to make our most effective contribution to the kind of world we want.



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*Peter Gibson*

## **Kropotkin, Mutual Aid and Selfish Genes**

### **Kropotkin and anarchism**

In a previous article in *The Raven*, 'Anarchism and the selfish gene', I attempted to show the relevance of the selfish gene theory, described by Dawkins, to anarchism. The bottom line was that our behaviour, socially and politically, is determined by self interest. An understanding of theory of selfish genes would, I maintained, go a long way to furthering the objectives of anarchism. However, I had not read, as was pointed out by Nicolas Walter, Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. I have now filled this gap. What Kropotkin said in his book was the very opposite to what I was saying. He maintained that animals, including man, basically cooperate with each other within their species. They show mutual aid (altruism). As I understand anarchism, the individual holds pride of place and this fits well with the selfish gene theory. The altruistic and cooperative behaviour, which undoubtedly exists in man and other animals, appears at first sight to contradict the selfish gene theory.

Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* was a collection of essays that were published as a book at the turn of the century. His anarchism and writings on natural history cannot be separated. As a naturalist he was a convinced Darwinian though he had reservations about the theory of natural selection. Kropotkin felt that Darwin had over-emphasised the importance of the species' struggle for survival and had neglected mutual aid amongst animals and specifically humans. Kropotkin's view of the struggle for survival lay, as he says (p.24), somewhere between that of Rousseau's optimism and Huxley's pessimism.

Kropotkin wished to show that mutual aid is common in animals (Chapters 1-2) and humans (Chapters 3-8) and that it is of great importance in the survival of species. In the chapters on humans he considers mutual aid largely from the point of view of cultural development. In what follows I am attempting to compare his arguments with the current view of the selfish gene theory.

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## Mutual aid in animals

### Kropotkin and Darwin

Kropotkin's clearest statements about mutual aid came from his consideration of animals. Darwin, he claimed, had failed to consider the importance of mutual aid in the evolution of animals. Darwin's theory is built upon the idea that evolution is driven by the pressure of competition. It is the antithesis of Kropotkin's beliefs and was, to some extent, repellent to him. Kropotkin did not doubt evolution but only the emphasis on a nasty bloody struggle. Huxley, champion of Darwin's view of evolution, wrote graphically on 'thirsting . . . for blood' (p.23) which appeared to have incensed Kropotkin. What is slightly ironic is that Huxley was never wholly convinced by the theory of natural selection.

A key figure in Darwin's theory was Malthus and his ideas were an anathema to Kropotkin. Malthus was a supremo blood and guts man and had pointed out that an enormous waste of life naturally occurs in populations of animals. Kropotkin's belief in mutual aid was strongly coloured by his obvious concern about wastage. He may have disliked carnage but he abhorred wastage. Running through *Mutual Aid* is the belief that the world is under-populated by both animals and man. As far as I know this is one of the themes of his book *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. He felt that mutual aid must make competition between animals unnecessary. Of course, he overlooked that what might appear as waste for one animal is bounty for another.

Kropotkin clearly understood the mechanism of natural selection for he discusses it in depth (pp.62-73). In his discussion he points out that the struggle, or as we would now say the pressures of selection, are not entirely due to competition between animals. At the same time he acknowledges that when Darwin spoke of competition he was using the word in its widest sense (pp.63, 68). Kropotkin goes on to point out that the selective force may act at specific times of the year as, for example, in winter when food is in limited supply (p. 72). He quotes Tchernyshevsky, who commented on Darwin, as saying 'Evil cannot be the product of good'. Also, that 'better conditions can be created by the elimination of competition by means of mutual aid and mutual support' (p.72). Kropotkin cites Darwin as supporting this view. Kropotkin ends this discussion by saying that animals are attempting to avoid competition and that those that are particularly successful are the social insects, ants. What Kropotkin appears to want to say but stops short of, is that mutual aid evolved by reducing competition within species. In his introduction he says in italics (p.13) 'no progressive

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evolution of the species can be based upon . . . periods of keen competition.' In fact, if there was no selective pressure evolution comes to a stand still. Kropotkin failed to see this possibly because he was searching for a mechanism to account for mutual aid. He lost his way.

### **Group and kin selection**

Kropotkin felt that mutual aid could and, more importantly, should be of use to the species. That is, not just within the family. He was, what we would now call, a group selectionist. His view, though not clearly articulated by present day biological standards, was the established one in his time. It is still popular. The group selection theory has been developed scientifically principally by the eminent biologist Wynne-Edwards (1962) who acknowledges Kropotkin as well as others. Wynne-Edwards attempted to show that animals in a species that are not necessarily closely related come together for mutual aid. One of the advantages he sees in such cooperation is to control the size of populations and so reduce starvation through over-exploiting a resource. Starlings, for example, will flock for a head-count and adjust their breeding accordingly. Group selection is neat and tidy and, which should have pleased Kropotkin, saves wastage. The problem with the theory is that no convincing mechanism has been suggested by which it could have evolved or might be maintained.

The opposing view to group selection is kin selection. This theory, however, does offer a mechanism by which it may have evolved and is maintained. In kin selection mutual aid only exists within groups that are closely related genetically. The closer the relationship the stronger the mutual aid. The basis of the theory is that individuals and not species are self interested. What is happening is that the genes of individuals are promoting their own chances of survival. The theory is a logical extension of those of Darwin and Mendel and was developed principally by Hamilton (1964). His work is aimed at explaining the social behaviour of insects. The seeds of the idea had already been discussed by Fisher and Haldane.

The argument for kin selection is that resources for animals are, as Kropotkin pointed out, often at a premium and that if an individual is to reproduce successfully and pass on its genes it benefits from cooperating with other individuals that carry the same genes. That is, its kin. There is little advantage in offering mutual aid to individuals carrying different genes. In fact, an individual's genes are in competition with those carried by unrelated individuals of the same species. Because of the popular belief that people should work in harmony and mutual



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benefit, kin selection is unattractive to some people. A problem Kropotkin faced was that though he could see mutual aid existed between individuals of a species he did not know to what degree they were genetically related. Also, in humans some mutual aid is not genetically based but cultural and learned.

The explanation for mutual aid based on genes could not be understood by both Darwin and Kropotkin because at the time there was no satisfactory theory of heredity. In places in *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin appeared to come near to realising that associations between animals are largely for reproduction. He was aware that animals associate for a variety of reasons and he drew a distinction between mutual aid within the family and that between unrelated individuals of the same species. However, he states 'that associations that do not extend beyond the family bonds are of relatively small importance' (p.34). He dismissed kin relationships presumably because mutual aid is obviously strongly instinctual within families. Biological mutual aid for Kropotkin existed between members of the species outside those of family bonds and he attempted to establish this. Time has worked against him for this has been shown to be wrong. However, even the eminent biologist Wilson, who is a kin selectionist, until recently also excluded the family from the general principle of kin selection.

### Mutual aid in humans

Kropotkin was on difficult ground when discussing humans since the subject is emotive. Having felt that he had established mutual aid in animals he correctly, as an evolutionist, assumed that the same arguments should apply to humans since we are animals. What he considered in humans, however, was largely cultural development and is not entirely equivalent to the two preceding chapters on animals. The distinction between culture and biological (gene driven) behaviour needs to be made because it is not obvious to everyone. Kropotkin must have been aware of this difference but he did not discuss it. He started the section on humans with savages (the word could not have had its present connotations) and moved through historical times to the present. He described a loss of mutual aid with the gradual advance in culture (p.231). As he saw the changes, humans progressed from tribes to patriarchal family life, to village communities, to medieval guilds and finally to the modern political state. During this process he saw our animal drive for mutual aid diminish and become supplanted by individualism. I feel that he did not demonstrate a loss of mutual aid. The problem is that his and certainly my understanding of social organisation becomes clearer

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the nearer we get to the present. The historical past often seems, probably incorrectly, simpler.

### Humans as animals

As with the details of Kropotkin's mutual aid in animals some of what he says about humans can be questioned in the light of present knowledge. To do this in detail is not productive. The details are not so much inaccurate but illustrate where Kropotkin deviates from the kin selection argument. For example, he saw the patriarchal family as developing from social groupings such as tribes or clans (Appendix 7). He pointed out in support of this that in some tribes the family does not exist. Some have a matriarchal system. We now know that under these circumstances, for whatever reason, a father cannot establish his parentage beyond all doubt. (It's a wise father that knows his own children.) Under all natural circumstances, however, a mother can be certain of her genetical relationship to her children. Her brothers and sisters know they are directly related to one another and to their mother for the same reason. Should the mother die her biological responsibilities to her children are normally taken over by the mother's brother. So, although the family may not exist as such the genetic relationships still control behaviour as though it does. The parallel with animals strongly suggests that the family, in one form or another, has always existed.

Kropotkin has a Rousseau-like admiration for the savage although he denies it (p.234). He claims savages are peace loving (p.74) when all evidence points to tribes throughout the world as having always been at war constantly with one another. Kropotkin's attitude has close parallels with those of Margaret Mead. In her *Coming of Age in Samoa* she portrayed the savage as noble beyond belief. This book was very influential on education and particularly in the USA. Unfortunately, what she wrote has been shown by Freeman to be a lot of nonsense. She was an innocent caught up in a long standing battle between Galton's Eugenics movement and the culturalist lobby headed by Boas. That is, the nature versus nurture controversy. Mead was set up by Boas and her ill conceived and executed research in Samoa did not throw any light on the social behaviour of the Samoans. She merely fulfilled Boas' expectations that her Samoan work would clinch his arguments in favour of nurture. Mead could not have got things more wrong. The Samoans were neither sexually tolerant nor peace loving. Up to the time Europeans took economic control of Samoa its inhabitants had spent much of their time warring with each other.

The view of aggression taken by Kropotkin and Mead is similar to that of the present day group selectionists. They, however, claim that aggression has evolved because it is advantageous to species. This line

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was taken in the popular writing of Lorenz (*On Aggression*), Ardrey (*The Social Contract*) and Eibl-Eibesfeldt (*Love and Hate*). The kin selectionists' view is that aggression is not of benefit to the species but is to the individual (or more correctly the individual's genes). This difference is not just scientific semantics. On the basis of the group selectionists' argument sacrifices have to be made on behalf of the species. This is a popular idea especially with those for whom someone else is making the sacrifice. Armed with that argument they can get away with anything from gross exploitation to planning for nuclear war. Seen in this light kin selectionists cease to be the bad boys and are relegated to brawling in bars. These are social and political arguments based on biological thinking. An important question is whether they affect our cultural behaviour or are simply used to rationalise our biologically determined behaviour.

### **Mutual aid and culture**

Kropotkin when considering mutual aid in barbarians (again, without its present connotations) the medieval city and ourselves (Chapters 5-8) was, as I said, largely looking at human behaviour as cultural development. He did not state this as such though he was aware of the distinction between biologically and culturally determined behaviour. He says 'Man is a result of both his inherited instincts and his education' (p.218). Obviously he was aware of the nature/nurture debate as it has always existed but he did not, perhaps wisely, involve himself with it. The problem in accounting for our behaviour is how to apportion the two. A large part of our social structure is gene based and therefore does not vary appreciably over the centuries. We have a limited range of gene controlled responses. The historical changes that occur and Kropotkin described are our social customs and technology. The level of mutual aid is largely dependent on our biology and must have remained static. What alters historically is who benefited most from cultural changes.

Because of our gene based behaviour our culture is not free to take on any form. In the same way there are physical restrictions on the shape animals have evolved. For example, as Galileo pointed out, large land animals need proportionately (by the inverse square law) thicker legs than smaller animals. Again, however much one might wish it pigs will never fly. The way society is organised at any time is restricted by the limitations imposed by our genes and current technology. Hunter gatherers, for example, are forced to behave in the way they do by these two factors. Kropotkin describes, as examples of mutual aid amongst savages, bushmen sharing their food (p.83) and eskimos (p.89) giving

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away their surplus wealth. This classes as mutual aid but I suspect it is done out of expediency. It incurs a moral debt. Neither the bushmen or eskimos had the means for storing their excess wealth. Although there was no payment the beneficiaries were expected to reciprocate when they had a surplus. This is so called reciprocal altruism and is cultural. The modern eskimo who sells and banks his excess is no less generous than his ancestors. Also, sharing by kin need not be considered as altruistic since any excess is indirectly passed onto the giver's own genes (or to be more precise, their replicas).

### Summary

All branches of biology pass through a stage of collecting facts and Kropotkin contributed to this. But ultimately some explanation must be given to account for the phenomena described. That was Darwin's great success in accounting for evolution. Kropotkin did not identify any mechanisms that might explain mutual aid. This had to wait for the development of genetics. With hindsight one sees, particularly from the two chapters on animals, that Kropotkin believed in group selection. This is also implicit in his descriptions of human mutual aid. The group selectionists claim that animals act in ways that benefit their species. Kin selectionists say this is untrue and I maintain that as a belief group selection is a recipe for exploitation. The problem with group selection is that it fails to explain how mutual aid could have evolved. Kin selectionists argue that mutual aid depends on the interests of individuals and their genes. This might have consoled Kropotkin in his belief that as we progressed to the present we gradually lost much of our biological drive for mutual aid. The result was, as he saw it, 'unbridled individualism' (p.82). However, that, as I see it, is the basis of both kin selection and anarchism.

### Notes

The copy of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* I refer to is the Freedom Press impression, published 1987. The other two books that I used were Derik Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa*, published by Pelican in 1984 and Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, (2nd edition) published in paperback by Oxford in 1989. My article 'Anarchism and the selfish gene' was published in *The Raven*, 6 pp.167-173 in 1988.

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David Koven

## Adrift in the Land of Patriots

In the United States, *shit kicking yahoos* are driving battered pickup trucks adorned with gun racks and American flags. Dirty yellow ribbons tied to their antennae signal to the world that they, the *True Americans*, are number one.

These bearded, dishevelled men, arms tattooed with deaths designs, appear like warped reflections of older hippy or beatnik brothers. Brothers whose lives bore witness to rejection of the society into which they'd been born. Burnt out, defeated brothers who'd turned their backs on the values and politics these young men extol today.

Bearded, macho young men flex muscular tattooed arms to dispel confusion, despair and the ghosts of poverty and ignorance.

Yelling to the world 'We're Number One,' they goose their old pickups and hurry home to sit, beer can in hand, watching others' hapless, violent, fantasy filled lives on TV screens.

Just after the end of the Iraqi war, Marilyn, my comrade/companion and I drove home from the tiny Canadian town of Creston. Located in eastern British Columbia at the foot of Kootenay Lake in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies, Creston seemed an idyllic place to live. But, as in logging towns the world over, there was an ongoing, angry struggle between the logging companies, those who depended on them for their livelihood, the loggers and millworkers, and a small but active group of local conservationists. Motivated by concern over the future of their beautiful countryside and strong environmentalist beliefs, they were actively opposing the clear-cutting practices of the lumber companies. Typically, driving down country roads, one could find houses on adjoining properties bearing contrary signs; 'STOP CLEAR-CUTTING NOW!', or, 'THIS FAMILY'S LIVELIHOOD DEPENDS ON FOREST PRODUCTS'!

In the nearby town of Canyon, we stayed with old friends, Lowell and Virginia Naeve, both are creative artists, both are American born ex-patriots now settled in this rural community. When we met some of their friends I was impressed by both their perceptive evaluation of world events and their active involvement with local issues. Although

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Creston/Canyon, like most logging towns was ultra conservative, there seemed to be a fair sized, active group of people who had somehow managed to find each other.

Because the Mid-East war was of such concern to us, we spent long hours in discussion of the war. Lowell had served five years in various federal jails as a conscientious objector during World War II. When their two sons were approaching draft age, the whole family sat down and discussed the options that were open to the boys. They could register for the draft if that was what they wished, ignore the draft and take their chances of never being caught, become C.O.er's as Lowell had, or the entire family could leave the country. The choice was left to the young men to decide upon. After long consideration, the boys decided to leave the country and the family moved to Quebec, where eventually they all became Canadian citizens.

When we had entered Canada, the United States was still in the throes of orgiastic jingoism. We were immediately struck by the difference in temper of the Canadians. Most obvious was the paucity of patriotic display. During the two weeks we spent in British Columbia, we saw no evidence of the hysteria we had left behind in the United States. No flag waving, no yellow ribbons, no sycophantic press pimping for that most puzzling of phenomena, Patriotism. We spent two pleasurable weeks visiting our comrades and friends in Vancouver and Creston, two weeks during which we were able to discuss the war without the irrationality we had encountered in the United States.

When we finally left Canada, via Idaho, eastern Washington and eastern Oregon, it was as though we had suddenly been pushed on stage during an ongoing surrealist drama. We were greeted by a patriotic hysteria that was an immeasurably louder, more violent and more mindless portrayal of 'American Values' than any we had experienced in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the United States, it seemed as though excessive display of patriotism increased geometrically in those sectors of society that were most uneducated, most poverty stricken, most ill informed and most hopeless. The older and more beatup the car or truck, the more decrepit the houses, the more American flags and yellow ribbons they displayed. Marilyn was all for turning our car then and there and returning to the saner, calmer society we had left behind in Canada. Only our loving connection to family and friends deterred us.

### **Peripatetics**

*En route* home from Canada we drove through those parts of Idaho and eastern Washington that brought back melancholy memories of the

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history of the labour and free speech struggles that American workers fought in this area from the turn of the century until after the end of WW-1.

In 1905, in an attempt to destroy the Western Federation of Miners, the miners' union which was affiliated with the IWW, (The Industrial Workers of the World) the most active organizers and strike leaders were arrested in Boulder, Colorado, by Idaho law men. Ignoring their constitutional rights, the men were kidnapped and brought to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho to stand trial on trumped up charges of murder. It was only the brilliant defence by Clarence Darrow the legendary labour lawyer that cleared and freed them.

In Spokane, Washington, in 1910, hundreds of members of The Industrial Workers of The World, (The Wobblies) were thrown into jail without trial in order to break a strike against the logging companies.

In 1916, the IWW attempted to hold free speech meetings in Everett, Washington, to protest against the brutality used by Everett police in breaking a strike by the local shingle mill workers. About three hundred Wobblies were met by gunfire from a boozed up posse of vigilantes employed by the mill owners when they tried to disembark from the steamer Verona that had brought them to Everett from Seattle. Five of the Wobs were killed outright, as were two of the vigilantes when some of the Wobblies who were armed returned the fire. Four other Wobblies were presumed drowned and seventy four were arrested and ordered to stand trial for murder. The local lumber barons and mill owners who had engineered the massacre in Everett to prevent the IWW from supporting the striking millworkers, were ultimately defeated when the Wobblies on trial were cleared and freed by the testimony of Everett citizens who told the court that the gunfire was inaugurated by the vigilantes.

I suppose in light of the reactionary history of this area, it shouldn't have surprised us when we happened upon a large right wing demonstration in a shopping centre in Spokane. We observed a noisy, picket-line in front of one of the big K-Mart stores. Flying the U.S. flag, the picketers bore signs urging people to boycott the store because K-Mart was selling a book which the picketers and/or their religious mentors, conceived of as advocating *Satanism*. They also carried signs proclaiming their anti-abortion views and boasting of their patriotism.

### **The Fundamentalists**

Religious fundamentalism is rife in small town America, it has become an increasingly active movement that exerts powerful political clout.

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Witness the acceleration of union busting, the ongoing attacks on civil liberties and the Bill of Rights in the courts and legislatures of this country, or the utilization of the AIDS crisis to punitively attack the gay and lesbian communities. Patriotism, religious bigotry, hyperbole, and hysteria mask the Calvinist anti-sexual bias and ethnocentric fears of mid-America.

Religious fundamentalists co-opt natural philosophy and set themselves up as the arbiters of public morality. Like all orthodoxies, fundamentalism generates enormous energy and moves numbers of people to participate in angry, irrational, often violent, actions. Actions that revive memories of the Inquisition, the public acceptance of and indifference to the attacks on striking workers by the National Guard during the first half of this century and the public acceptance of and cooperation with the 'anti-red' witch hunts during the McCarthy period. Fundamentalist political activism can't be ignored, it is potentially too dangerous. It resembles too poignantly the time of the collusion of the western 'democratic' governments with rising Nazism during the last days of the Weimar Republic in Germany.

I can't describe the feelings of anger, chagrin and despair we felt when in Spokane we observed the public display of yahooism. In the past there have always been reactionary politicians like Jesse Helms, Gene Talmadge etc; politicians who advanced the agendas of reactionary movements in this country, movements that inflict great damage to our communities. Today, when our society is in a state of economic uncertainty and turmoil, with increased feelings of anger and despair being generated in the poorer sectors of society, reactionary politicians, using the most sophisticated of media tools, exploit these responses ever more skilfully. Since this economic turmoil and insecurity has a greater effect on younger, less informed, unskilled workers and their families, the reactionary propaganda is aimed at masking the true causes of economic problems, the voracious appetite for profit and power and focuses the responses of this increasingly angry group on anyone who is critical of the government and its representatives.

In order to preserve some semblance of freedom in this society, we must find a way of reaching these same people with our more rational, alternative views. We must explore ways of disengaging their prejudices. Only then, we'll be able to counter the propaganda of the right wing fundamentalists.

**'Long haired preachers come out. . .'**

There's an old 'Wobbly' song that had been written by Joe Hill in 1910,



that's still appropriate for our time. (Tune, from the old hymn, 'In The Sweet Bye & Bye.')

Long haired preachers come out every night,  
 Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;  
 But when asked how 'bout something to eat  
 They will answer in voices so sweet:

*(Chorus)*

*You will eat, bye and bye,  
 In that glorious land above the sky;  
 Work and pray, live on hay,  
 You'll get pie in the sky when you die.*

All fanaticism is dangerous, but the coupling of fundamentalist religious fervour to patriotism is potentially the most threatening amalgam we face. Witness the havoc religious fundamentalism coupled with political power has wreaked in the Islamic countries or in Israel, or the horrors perpetrated by Stalinist or Maoist fundamentalism on the Russian and Chinese people. Other cases in point are the killing of peasants and dissenters in the name of fanatic anti-communism by South and Central American Dictators, with the connivance of the U.S. State Department, or the ruthless repression of black South Africans by the reactionary, white, fundamentalist governments in South Africa. Fundamentalism has always been used to control the populace wherever it has sprung up. It's used to preserve the power and privileges of those who wield power. If you think this is mere paranoia, try spinning the dials on your radio or TV set without finding some slick, multi-millionaire, fundamentalist preacher playing to a fear filled audience by spewing forth their anti-humanist, hate filled, 'pie in the sky' patriotic propaganda.

Living as we do in the San Francisco Bay area, a part of the country that seems a little more sophisticated, a mite more cultured, more international, more multi-ethnic, and perhaps because of the many universities and colleges in the area, a lot more radicalized than most comparable sections of the United States, we have become insensitive to the degree of patriotic feeling in the rest of the country. Our recent peripatetic voyage through the small towns and cities of the Pacific Northwest brought home to us the prevalence and strength of these beliefs and made us reconsider the role patriotism plays in the lives of the populace.

### 'We're number one'

Patriotism seems to be just another irrational form of yahoo fundament-

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alism which becomes more activated and oppressive during times of war or preparation for war. Barely hidden in the sanctimonious display of patriotic love of country is the glorification of killing. We live in a society that has accepted and pays lip service to Christian morality and the ancient admonition, 'Thou Shalt Not Kill'. But at the same time, it is one of the most violent societies in the world. We live in a society in which most of its population feel powerless, frustrated and frightened of the future. A society in which people are assaulted daily by the venality, hypocrisy and self serving by their political representatives. Yet, the American people have been so conditioned, they accept without question whatever edicts and rationalizations get handed down by their leaders. This society, now in a period of decline, increasingly brings out reactions in people that resemble those of the German people, who suffered from similar feelings of powerlessness, and who sought relief by turning toward the glorification of violence and '*Der Vaterland*'.

Today, increasing numbers of the population seek reassurance that they are in fact still 'Number 1', by worshipping and identifying with greater, more violent macho images. The public responded with hysterical approval to the quick military 'victory' in the Iraqi war without thinking of the human cost. They responded to the war as they do to their 'Roman Circuses' of professional contact sports, their irrational fascination with weapons, or their crazy investment of sexual and power fantasies in their automobiles.

Ignored, except for hypocritical pontification by politicians, is the increased dependency on alcohol and other drugs. Inured to violence by their video games and the images on their TV screens, it becomes almost inevitable that the populace is drawn to participate in patriotic events that are always couched in militaristic terms. Bands play martial music, hundreds of flags are displayed, troops march smartly, tanks and armoured vehicles roll down the streets and killer aircraft fly overhead. On the reviewing stands, the generals and politicians extol this militaristic display as signs of the superiority and invincibility of this country. But the undercurrents of these patriotic displays are also threats and warnings to any individual who may dissent from this view.

Love of one's native land, or love and respect for one's family and community, or love of one's native culture have nothing in common with patriotism. In fact, love of one's native land has caused many individuals to radically re-evaluate and reject the dominant political system. The radicalization and increased use of direct action as an educational tool by environmentalist groups like *Earth First* is a clear example of this response. Love of family and community have led many others to seek an alternative to conformist lifestyles by attempting, together with friends and family to form experimental, cooperative

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communities. Patriotism is used by governments as a means of spreading confusion in people's minds between wholesome, humanity affirming concepts and the politicized concepts of Nation, State and Government.

### The Centralists

The present movement in Europe toward concentration of power in the legislative body of the European Economic Community may be a threat to the survival of any independent people. For example look at the resistance of the European Economic Community to a commitment of support to the would-be breakaway republics of Croatia and Slovenia in order to maintain the semblance of a centrally unified Yugoslavia. Earlier, both of these areas had a brutal, reactionary history marked by religious bigotry and deadly violence visited upon minority peoples in their borders. However, this is not the reason for the EEC's foot dragging. If we examine the EEC's unflagging commitment to Gorbachev, we must conclude that the EEC would rather deal with a centralized, autocratic government, even if it is totalitarian, than with a group of independent, smaller Republics. The EEC may pay lip service to the idea of Federation, but in fact it is reluctant to support any movement toward decentralization.

In the United States, a similar centralist movement, inaugurated by the U.S. Government in response to the EEC's pressure on the failing U.S. economy, is the proposed establishment of an hemispheric, economic union, (which will be just another name for the exploitation of its less powerful neighbours). All these developments reflect a change in the structure of Capitalism from a narrow, nationalistic structure, to that of a highly centralized international super government. A body which will develop new ways to control and exploit a more desperate, disorganized population and workforce in order to extract greater profits for the few who will benefit from the system. The only possibility of this move failing lies in the fact that the politicians who spearhead these movements are usually so narrow minded, egocentric and crassly ambitious they will be unable to succeed. The international scandals in the banking systems are an example of their lack of vision. They're so blinded by their visions of profit, glory and power, they can't face reality. Despite all their planning, and dissembling behind patriotic hooplah, they've been unable to begin to solve the internal dilemmas that their political structure and their *raison d'etre* create.

Here in the United States, union busting, with the collusion of the federal government, has resulted in the destruction of the manufacturing jobs that supported the once self sufficient blue collar working class. Union busting has been accelerated and implemented by the movement

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'offshore' by American manufacturers. The result has been increased unemployment or underemployment and the decreased purchasing power of working people and the lower middle class, which in turn has had domino effect of resulting in the closure of still more factories as the manufacturers accelerate their movement 'offshore', where they now produce the goods that when produced here, sustained the economy.

As always, when faced with internal crisis, the only solution that politicians are able to come up with is the creation of still another international *contretemps* which then leads to still another military adventure. Dependence on war with its attendant pain and sacrifice, seems to be government's only political solution to economic crisis. This continued stupidity must eventually result in a change in the nature of our society, but in light of the irrational reactionary nature of most people's belief systems, change to a more reasonable, liberal society is less likely than a change to a more controlled one.

### A State of Mind

*The State* is essentially a mystical concept that theoretically holds forth promise of peace and perfection in societal relationships. *Religion*, another mystical concept, promises the attainability of peace of mind and a state of spiritual unity and perfection. Together these concepts are held out as a vision of perfect peace, perfect balance, salvation and eternal life. A vision much like that of the ancient belief that the heavenly bodies were suspended in the firmament in perfect peace and balance with the heavens between the spheres filled with unimaginably beautiful, unearthly music.

*Government*, the voice of The State is purported to be the visible embodiment of the ideal of The State. But, in fact, government is always vested in the hands of fallible, power hungry, corrupt men. Plato's vision of government, the rulers of which would be wise, benevolent philosophers, never materialized, and if it had, it would soon have evolved into a tyranny because of the corrosive effect of decision making for others.

All Religions when organized into churches, develop power structures similar to that of secular governments. The governing priesthood controls the belief structure of their congregations, interprets religious dogma and postulates unquestioning faith as the answer to all unanswerable questions. Those who persist in questioning the priests' interpretations are admonished to have faith and if they persist, and the questions are deemed dangerous to the church, the questioners are accused of apostasy and heresy. They are then threatened with excommunication.

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This priesthood, which is just another form of government, like the secular governments, attracts similar men, equally fallible, power hungry and corrupt. Men who exploit the fears and beliefs of their followers in order to feed their own egos and perpetuate their positions of power and privilege. Both groups, priests and politicians, who are after all secular priests, exploit the fears, feelings of inadequacy and self doubt in their followers. Doubt in the minds of ordinary people of their ability to make realistic decisions affecting their lives. Alas, since most people have been programmed to believe that politicians and priests know best what is good for everyone, the politicians and priests easily maintain their positions of power and perpetuate the structures that assure their continuance.

### **Pledged to what?**

Nation is a concept which is mistakenly identified and confused with the idea of nationalism. But more accurately the concept has more to do with tribal, communal and familial history and local language and culture, than with political organization. These human interconnections have become increasingly obscured and here in the United States, almost lost. They've become confused with the abstractions of government and the State. Not too long ago in history large areas of the world were organized into smaller, political units. For instance, it wasn't until 1886 that Bismarck was able to enforce the unification of Germany into a single political state, and it took until 1870 for The House of Savoy to be able to declare the unification of Italy. Both of these moves were expedited by suppressing and co-opting the various pre-existing provincial and city states. This centralization was hailed as progress, but in fact served only the purposes of a nascent, voracious capitalism. Today, still in the name of progress, the drive toward even greater centralization of power into fewer hands continues unabated.

For a short time, during periods of military adventurism, the problems people face in their lives become obscured from their consciousness. By allowing themselves to be swept up in the patriotic fervour, people can feel themselves assimilated into the powerful body of 'The State'. For awhile, they bask in the warmth and energy that emanates from the centres of government and their daily lives become infused with a sense of purpose. They imagine themselves as one Nation. In fact, this sense of unity is illusionary, and fragile. In all countries, particularly those with great ethnic mixtures in their population, paranoia and ethnocentricity mandates that the significant groups in society have little trust in, or ability to identify with, people of different ethnic,

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religious, sexual or racial backgrounds. An example of the fragility of this sort of nationalism is the resurgence of ethnic and religious strife in eastern Europe, this potentially tragic nationalism threatens bloody violence in Russia, Hungary and Yugoslavia, where ethnic groups have coupled their national ambitions to narrow religious beliefs in their struggle for independence.

An older, healthier manifestation of feelings of self identification can be observed in the continuity and vitality of local languages and dialects in countries like Italy, Germany, France and England. They demonstrate the power of ancient tribal and communal connections and loyalties, rather than that of a single nationalistic identity. For example, when a Celtic reunion was held in Brittany a couple of years ago, people attended from the Basque areas of France and Spain, Wales, Ireland and Scotland and expressed their communality in their shared Celtic languages, shared myths and songs. In Italy, most Italians don't really think of themselves as Italian, but rather identify themselves by their local origins. They refer to themselves as Toscani, Abruzzesi, Friulini, Siciliani, Sardi, Veneti etc. Some of them choose an even more localized source of self recognition, identifying themselves with the cities from which they came. 'Sono Milanese, Bolognese, Genovese,' etc. Likewise, many Germans have a similar sense of self, 'Ich bin ein Berliner,' 'Ich komme von Bayern,' etc. And, of course, don't make the mistake of calling people from Ireland, Wales or Scotland, English.

### **At Home**

In the United States; regionalism, with Northerners distrusting Southerners, Westerners distrusting Easterners, whites afraid of and distrusting the non-white population and vice versa, has historically resulted in violent struggles. Prejudicial hiring practices affecting women, gays and other minority and ethnic groups; genocidal attacks on blacks in the ghettos; Latinos hunted down and harassed like animals by the Immigration Service looking for so called 'Wet Backs'; liberals and radicals are looked upon with suspicion and kept under surveillance by the FBI; and the not to be forgotten incarceration of Americans of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps during WW-2, attest to the existence of an ubiquitous, irrational prejudice.

This distrust and paranoia is most widespread among the poorest, least educated, most exploited and hopeless people in this society. The people at the bottom of the social structure are those who suffer the most in this exploitive society, but they also are the ones most swept up by patriotic propaganda. Large numbers of Afro-Americans and Latinos volunteer for the armed services of this country. Granted, there

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may be ulterior motives for their involvement, the hope for training that will enable them to better compete in the job market and break out of the ghettos. But during times of war, these minority groups become the largest part of the armed forces and alas, suffer the most casualties. As for retraining, for most the promise turns out to be illusionary.

During periods of crisis, patriotism enables people to experience a feeling of euphoria in response to the propaganda. A response that can be easily enlisted to pursue what becomes a 'holy war'. This euphoria can obscure the existential '*weltschmerz*' from which people must suffer as they see their lives as a hollow mockery of the 'successful' lives they've watched on their TV screens. During these periods of extreme patriotic fervour, many people from this segment of society can, perhaps for the first time in their lives, feel powerful and important. Their patriotism furnishes them with opportunity to give vent to their anger in a manner that is socially acceptable, anger turned against the stranger enemy, or local dissenters.

Like our efforts to comprehend and address ourselves to all of the other problems we face as radicals in this society, we can have no pat, easy response to patriotism. In fact during periods of patriotic upsurge, we find ourselves more isolated than ever. If we take a long view of history we may get some small satisfaction when we can observe that our struggle isn't completely hopeless, and that we've made some small progress. At the very beginning of the Mid-East War, we felt good when we found ourselves participating in anti-war demonstrations that were larger than the last demonstrations in which we had participated which brought the Vietnam War to a halt, and we saw a return to some semblance of sanity by people who during the first flush of patriotic response were supportive of the war, when they recognized that the war did nothing to solve and perhaps has exacerbated the social and economic problems that American society faces.

But, as always, the State as Government has emerged from the conflict in a more reactionary and strengthened condition. The State's voracious appetite for power seems to be assuaged only by death and destruction. As Randolph Bourne said, almost eighty years ago, 'WAR IS THE HEALTH OF THE STATE'.

If in fact we accept the view that patriotism is an expression of a misdirected need by humans to dispel the ghosts of isolation, fear and uncertainty about the future; and if we believe that patriotism is an erroneous form of affirmation of our communal instinct; and if we think our human needs will find fuller expression when we live in decentralized, co-operative, communities; then we have little alternative but to continue to advocate a change in this direction, and we must turn away

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from the centralized, dangerous, power structures in which we live today.

### **Onward Anarchist Visionaries**

In the light of history, it's unrealistic to think that an anarchistic society will be brought about by means of a violent, revolutionary upheaval. Perhaps the idea of a libertarian revolution achieved from the barricades has always been a myth, a myth perpetuated by a handful of urban, middle or upper class theoreticians who, although they could perceive the grim reality of the lives of those they identified as 'The Masses', didn't really comprehend that the nature of the societies and cultures into which 'The Masses' were born, made it almost impossible for them to comprehend the utopian choices beyond the slogans of 'Bread, Land and Liberty' that the revolutionaries were advocating.

There is an historical lesson that should be heeded. Poverty and misery have moved people to rebellion, but have never led to a 'Free Society'. In both the historical and recent past, we can observe that each violent uprising has led only to another tyranny.

If in fact our anarchist beliefs are rooted in the notion that anarchy can be achieved best through the practice of co-operation, mutual aid, and belief that the means we employ must be commensurate with our ends, it then becomes imperative that we apply our major energies to the implementation of ways in which some non-deadly technologies can be applied to aid us to withdraw from the dangerous, centralized societies in which we live. We must try to abandon the large urban centres that increasingly are turning into death traps and start directing our energy toward the development of a decentralist way of life. Rather than looking toward Bakunine, Kropotkin, Malatesta or Marx for guidance, for despite their abstractions, they were all infected by the 19th century belief that progress was inevitable and that science must benefit mankind.

Perhaps it would be more fruitful if we took another long look at the example of a decentralized society proposed by William Morris. Morris' model for society was spelled out in his utopian novel, 'News From Nowhere'. In Morris's informal communities each individual takes an active role in the process of decision making. Unlike most other utopian writers, Morris sympathetically deals with human frailty, passion and the possibility of error, yet his communities are eminently workable. (If somewhat sexist, the women did all of the real work in the society) (Again, Morris, too, was a product of his times). In our modern communities we must work always toward withdrawal of our energies from support of capitalist illusions, with their promises of eternal progress



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and material plenty, and devote ourselves toward developing smaller, simpler, self sustaining societies. Societies which will offer satisfaction in non-destructive creative work, direct involvement in decision making, loving, non-authoritarian connections between people and renewal and preservation of familial, tribal and communal relationships. We will then, non-violently, be able to turn back the destructive, anti-human, earth threatening effects of capitalism.

Anarchism will reach a dead end if we only devote our energies and activities toward criticism of existing institutions, or demonstrating in the streets against economic conditions or governmental actions we detest. Not that there aren't times when these tactics are necessary, but these actions must be tempered by the memory that action for its own sake is a blind alley and not the end we seek. The main emphasis and direction of our living philosophy must be on developing the working models of the anarchist society we advocate, models that will bypass existing institutions and by their peaceable, experimental, creative nature and inner beauty, stimulate the imagination of others to design societies that will surpass any we can invent.

### A Mini-Mini Glossary

*Shit-kicker* – One who grew up in a society so bereft of culture as to gain their main pleasure from seeing how far they could kick a dried cow pie.

*Yahoo* – A Dolt, Brute or Know-Nothing. See Jonathan Swift's *Gullivers Travels*.

*To Goose* – To startle, to cause a sudden jump or acceleration.



## Editor's Notes

In *The Raven* 15 we promised a mixed issue for No. 16. In so far as none of the articles included in this issue were 'commissioned', it is 'unplanned'. But it has turned out to be almost planned, dealing as it does with two major topics of the day.

*The Raven* 17 is planned to deal with *The Use of Land* and we invite readers with ideas on this most important, yet much neglected topic so far as the Left is concerned, to send us, in the first instance, a synopsis of their contribution and as soon as possible.

Our comrade John Pilgrim has taken up our invitation to readers to emulate Silvie Edwards' brilliant effort in producing *The Raven On Health* and he is exploring a *planned* issue of *The Raven: On Sociology*, obviously viewed from an anarchist point of view. Readers interested in contributing should get in touch with John Pilgrim c/o Freedom Press.

With this issue we shall be sending out renewal notices to most of *The Raven's* subscribers and we are counting on your continued support. Though all costs of production and our postage have increased we are not increasing our subscription rates. This of course will add to the deficit on every issue of our Journal. We are selling more copies – and what is equally important – there is a steady demand for back issues. But in spite of that we are 'losing' £1,000 on each issue which at the moment we are able to finance from Freedom Press Distributors' sales of literature. But in financing our two journals in this way limits what we can publish in the way of new titles with the *Freedom Press* imprint. So we appeal to *The Raven* readers who think our Journal is doing good work to introduce it to new readers (with the demise of *Marxism Today* there must surely be some for whom *The God Failed* who are looking for a libertarian approach to socialism and revolution). And those of you who have a dime to spare think of our Raven Deficit Fund!

And now on to *Volume 4 of The Raven*.

### Raven Deficit Fund Sept – Dec 1991

Rexdale Out: A.B. £13; Heidelberg: R.S. £3;

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Total = £105.00

### Correction

Correction to the article 'Mental Health and Society' (*Raven* 15).

p.261 'He [Marcuse] argued that current technologically advanced societies are characterized by 'surplus repression', and that the 'reality' to which Freud refers in his reality principle is *not* fixed by the facts of scarcity and the necessity to preserve society.'

p.263 'On these accounts (eg Beck, Ellis), the problem of 'mental illness' is solved simply by persuading the sufferer to think more logically, to drop all 'dogma' and 'ideology' except that of the rationalist, scientific discourse.'

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## **THE RAVEN 16**

This is the second issue of The Raven to be concerned mostly with the topic of education. The earlier issue on the same subject, still available at £2.50, is

### **The Raven 10, On Education**

Contributors include John Shotton on the authoritarian tradition in British education, Michael Smith on Kropotkin and technical education, Zeb Korycinska putting the case for home learning, Lynn Olson on education and processing, John Dohoney on the industrialisation of education, Colin Ward who contributes five perceptive essays, and Paule Pym with a disturbing story about attitudes to a disruptive nine-year-old.

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