



*R. B. ...*

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# The sociology of a school

**JOHN WEBB**

THIS ESSAY<sup>1</sup> IS AN ATTEMPT to set up a model which will perhaps shed light on what goes on in a secondary modern school for boys, of a particular type. The large number of secondary moderns which are of this type falls short, I hope, of a numerical majority. The example (called Black School) used to illustrate the model is fictitious.

Hostility (between teachers and boys) is the key factor at Black School. It is present whenever a teacher deals with boys, but varies in intensity. At one extreme (uncommon but illuminating) it can be almost ferocious, when for example an inexperienced teacher wrestles with a lad for possession of a flick-knife, surrounded by cheering boys. Or when a gang yell derisively at a teacher, hoping twilight in the playground will mask their identity. At the other extreme, the hostility is so mild that it needs inverted commas. An example would be a teacher trying to make a class get on with a given task. They play him up by exaggerating the bluntness, or breaking the points, of their pencils, or by losing rubbers, or complaining loudly that they cannot see the blackboard, no matter where he stations it. With firmness, and not without humour, he overcomes their irrepressibility. Here the 'hostility' is like that between two football teams playing a really friendly match—on both sides there is an element of play for play's sake. This is present almost always on the boys' side, but only rarely on the teacher's, because he is one against so many, whereas they are many against one.

The most common hostility however lies between the mild and the ferocious and is, on the boys' side, almost a guerilla war against the teacher's standards—a ragged, intermittent fight to be oneself by being

*JOHN WEBB's article first appeared in the British Journal of Sociology and we are grateful for permission to reproduce it. He is lecturer in sociology at Chorley College of Education.*

spontaneous and irrepressible and by breaking rules.<sup>2</sup> For example—the boy giving out ink tries to make an entertainment out of it. Up-roarious laughter is nipped in the bud by the teacher firmly taking hold of him. A friend, carried away by high spirits, trips the inkboy. The teacher's nimble footwork saves his suit. After the ritual caning and telling-off, all is very quiet for a while.

Apart from the boys' irrepressibility, rule-breaking and spontaneity, the things which make this example typical are: the general failure of solidarity (this is the boys' lack of organization—the other side of the spontaneity penny); the enjoyment by many (but not all) of the attempt at entertainment by one or two; and the grim silence as the two intrepid ones pay for their misdeeds. On the teacher's side, the things to be noted are: his efficiency in dealing with the situation before it develops; and that he does not much enjoy his victory, or the caning and telling-off—in fact, he looks rather tired. And finally, the deathly quiet which (to return to irrepressibility) is gradually eroded upon as the boys' spirits revive.

To put a naïve question—why does the teacher want quiet (or more generally, order?). One answer is because, when tired and not at his best (which typically is more often than not), he tends to see the boys' playground behaviour as chaos. And he feels that, unless he is rigid in his insistence upon good behaviour (order, obedience), it will spread to the classroom. In fact his rigidity makes in part for its own justification, in the boys' hostility. (That is, their irrepressibility and so on.) The same may be said of the standards he tried to insist upon in the boys' work. (Accuracy, neatness and individualism, in the sense of no copying, no helping.)<sup>3</sup> Because of the dislike they make for, they are resisted.

To help understand the teaching relationship at Black School, the analogy of sergeant and drill squad is useful. The sergeant (like the teacher) may bawl harshly, snarl softly, or talk in a normal human tone with his voice slightly raised. The squad (like the boys) may play him up by exaggerating their genuine clumsiness, or by obeying, say, each command meticulously but, by getting the sequence wrong, upsetting the whole manoeuvre. One thing that follows is that, at Black School, the drill-like nature of the teaching means that only rather mechanical skills can be taught. For example, in English—spelling by the repeated copying of the same words. And arithmetic by the infinite working-out of long dull sums (that have no bearing on anything the lads are likely to encounter in life); not practical and independent measuring and calculating, because that would give the opportunity for hostility (irrepressibility, spontaneity) and be fraught, for the teacher, with fear of playground chaos.

In short, only certain rigid work and conduct standards can be conveyed by drilling. And these make or maintain dislike and there-

fore the need for drilling. So the point has now been reached when the system at Black School can be completely understood, if it is seen as a closed one. But, because boys and teachers spend only about seven hours a day in the place, it is obviously not a closed system. Rather it is in a two-way relationship with things outside, since it affects them and is itself effected by them. To look at it, therefore, only as a closed system, is to ignore part of the picture. Things outside must be taken into consideration, and in doing so, our assumption is that the two-way relationship must be, in most cases, harmonious, otherwise Black School would not survive.

A start may be made with the street gang.<sup>4</sup> Its two-way relationship with the school is harmonious, because the values the school hostility helps make for are very similar to those that confer prestige in the gang, in its constant war against Them. It is not a long step from rule-breaking to law-breaking, from smashing a pencil to smashing a belisha beacon, from throwing insults at a teacher to throwing a brick at a policeman. (Respectability is strong, however, and not many boys make that step.) The suggestion is not that Black School makes delinquents,<sup>5</sup> but only that it helps to make them, because, by providing the gang with a very tangible enemy (the drill-sergeant teacher and his standards) it helps the gang to define itself.

However,<sup>6</sup> as a boy gets older he may find social childhood inside the school out of tune with growing-up outside. When growing-up, some of the landmarks (the first pair of long trousers, the first cigarette) are passed while still at school. Others (the first date, the first pint) cannot really be passed until he is earning full-time. Therefore, the outlet for the dislike which the sabotage of a lesson affords, becomes insufficient, especially when he is fourteen, and release is in sight after his next birthday. So, because of the need for another outlet, and to prove himself, he breaks the law. (For example—with a few good mates he risks not only being caught by police or caretaker, but also the peril of the roof in the dark, the wind and the rain, when breaking into an old warehouse. The "loot"—a dozen pairs of nylons ruined by a minor fall—serves only to testify to the truth of the exploit.) This is the reason possibly for the persistent association of one of the peak periods for delinquency with the last year at such schools at Black School.<sup>7</sup>

Thus there is both harmony and disharmony together. The lad's crime, as a piece of co-operation between an agency concerned with discipline (the school) and social control outside (respectability) is disharmonious. But as informal co-operation between the school and the gang, however, it is harmonious—for the crime supplies the gang with an event which reinforces a standard (of law-breaking). And it is material with which to supplement an old, or make a new, myth: thus enriching the oral drama which keeps the tedium at bay during the long winter evening on the street corner.

It is sometimes claimed that the main job of the secondary modern school is not the teaching of skills so much as the moulding of character. Putting delinquency to one side (and bearing in mind our theme at this point—the harmony or otherwise of Black School with things outside) let us look at this question of character moulding. What sort of person would the boy become who accepted the standards the teacher tries to impose? In himself he would be neat, orderly, polite and servile. With the arithmetic and English he absorbed at school, and after further training, he might become a meticulous clerk, sustained by a routine laid down by someone else, and piously accepting his station in life. Or, if he got a trade, we can see him later in life clutching a well-scrubbed lunch-tin and resentful at having to pay union dues, because the boss, being a gentleman, knows best. To grow up like this a lad has to be really cut-off from the pull of social class and gang, which luckily few of the boys at Black School are, because both of these types are becoming more and more redundant as mechanization increases and job content decreases. For the majority who emerge from Black School, however, there is no disharmony between what the school has accustomed them to and what they find at work—tedium. The trend is for most jobs to become semi-skilled, capable of being done with only a small part of the mind. It is therefore not too much of an exaggeration to say that sanity is only possible by being, when not working, irrepresible, spontaneous and rule-breaking—qualities which harmoniously Black School helps to develop.

How does the teachers' side of the system tie-in with things outside the school? Surely here, since the school appears to be such an anachronism, there must be disharmony? The answer is that the staff ideology is set to nullify any discordant influences from outside; or for that matter, any counter-trends inside. But before going into this, let us look at the staff ideology generally. It is based on two beliefs that are very close to one another. The first is that the boys, considered collectively, are rather hateful. (This is the reflection, in the teacher's mind, of the hostility.) The second has already been mentioned. It is that playground chaos has a tendency to spill over into the classroom. Both these beliefs justify drill-sergeant teaching.<sup>8</sup> They also make for an aversion, which can be put into words something like this. "Never think about the boys, or anything to do with them, when you're not in front of them."

It is obvious that, if the boys could be understood, they would not be hated. In part, what prevents understanding is this aversion. Very close to it, however, is something else that completes the job. So close is this other factor that it is only separable when put down on paper. In reality it is part and parcel of the aversion. This second factor is fatigue.

In the typical teacher, this fatigue tends to be residual.<sup>9</sup> That is, it is not significantly dispelled by the normal rest or recreation periods

(a night's sleep or a weekend's relaxation) and is therefore cumulative. It was discovered in industrial studies, and perhaps particularly characterizes those jobs that are very noisy and tedious. As well as being physiological, residual fatigue functions psychologically so as to impair a person's best qualities, like the ability to look at his task with enough detachment to consider whether he is using the right tools, and is on the right track.

The point has now been reached when the staff ideology can be summed up in a rough equation, which may be put down something like this. The hate belief (alongside the fear of chaos) plus the residual fatigue equals (or tends to make for) aversion. This equation is the key to several mysteries. For example, why the typical teacher does not prepare fresh lessons, but rather continues to use those prepared years ago—why he goes on teaching the same dry old stuff. The hatred, the fear, the fatigue make for an aversion—a psychological block—against reshaping, or revising content of, lessons.

This equation helps to illuminate another important item—control (of the boys by the teacher). The typical teacher<sup>10</sup> considers such control vital because without it playground chaos, he fears, would spill over into the school. Why does he fear this? There are two answers to this question. The order in which they are put down here is not necessarily their order of importance. First then—if playground chaos were to flow over into the school, residual fatigue got by being in amongst it would perhaps be enervating. The second answer can only be put in a rather roundabout way. Assume for a moment that in a factory, the equivalent of the noise of the whole of Black School's roaring boys running riot could be produced mechanically, without the machines going wrong—would the fatigue of the typical factory worker then be comparable to that of the typical teacher? The answer of course is no, and the reason is that the teacher would not only suffer from the noise, he would also suffer from fear—fear of being judged a bad teacher, because his control of the boys had failed.

If we now leave naïve, unlikely examples, and return to reality (but with our sensitivity sharpened by the journey) we can see that the second reason why control is important is that it touches self-respect. Surely, it may be argued, there is nothing new in this. Even at the best grammar school a master must have control. But at such a grammar school, control by coercion is one means among several. Whereas at Black School, because of the strength of the hostility, control tends to be a sole end.

Good control has two functions. It (1) minimizes fatigue by keeping down hostility. And (2) it makes for a good assessment as a teacher. Good assessment by whom? Firstly, by one's fellow teachers, for if a teacher lets playground chaos into his class, it may spill over into a colleague's, so threatening him with increased fatigue. Ridicule is

used to stop this threat. ("Hell of a row from your room this morning, Mr. Penguin. Thought you'd left them for a minute, and the little blighters were taking advantage. Just going to go in and step on them, when I saw you were there!") And secondly, assessment by the headmaster, who claims that the school is judged by the amount of noise inside the building. Clearly then, self-respect for the typical teacher (as a teacher and inside the school) is a simple function of degree of control. This is why his attitude towards control is obsessional.<sup>11</sup>

We have now reached the stage where we have almost completely answered one broad question about Black School. (The rest emerges in this summary.) That question is, how does this school, apparently such an anachronism, survive in this day and age? The answer falls in two parts. On the boys' side it survives because (1) the drill-sergeant method is the only way of handling them. (This is the answer the teacher would give, and it is quite sensible in terms of the staff ideology.) Therefore the drill-sergeant method fits quite harmoniously (as no other method would) into the context of the school. And it survives also, on the boys' side, because informally it is harmony with the street gang, and with the boy's job later, which typically is semi-skilled and tedious.

On the teachers' side, it survives because the staff ideology (hate, fear, fatigue) make for an aversion against thinking more than is absolutely necessary about the job. What thought there is stops short at—"But this is the only way to handle the blighters!" Influence from the modern world of educational theory is rejected by ridicule—ridicule which is justified, for it has no relevance to their situation. (Psychology, for example, is a dirty word in the staff-room.)

Now let us turn to another question. This is, how does the system at Black School perpetuate itself? The answer on the boys' side runs something like this. The lad who walks in at age eleven behaves as we all do when we go into somewhere new. He is diffident until he sees what is expected—expected by those at the same level as himself, or a little above. He is at home when he knows what this is, and soon he too is fighting, actively or passively, the guerilla war to be himself by being spontaneous, irrepressible and rule-breaking.<sup>12</sup>

Now let us turn to the teachers' side, making the best possible assumption about the new teacher—that he comes in full of idealism and energy. Secretly he despises his colleagues. He will never be a drill-sergeant as they are. In class he tries to be relaxed, treats the lads as equals. This does not work, because they play him up. He is a chink in the armour of the system which oppresses them. At first he looks upon fighting for control as a game. So do the boys. Then he begins to get tired. There is ridicule from colleagues. The head seems to be saying good morning rather coldly. A game's a game, the new teacher thinks. But the "blighters" don't seem to know when to stop.

And he has not enough energy left at the end of the day to do anything worthwhile. After spending the first week of the holidays in bed, he resolves to do as a kindly colleague advises—to "really get on top of the blighters next term from the word go". In a year or so, if he is not qualified to move, he is another drill-sergeant. Thus Black School perpetuates itself.

The model of Black School is now almost complete. Only one thing has not been mentioned explicitly, which should be—guilt. How do the men who are held accountable for Black School ease the guilt they feel—the headmaster, for example, or the inspector? (But not the teacher. The drill-sergeant rôle is too narrow. Anyone in it has not sufficient freedom to be held accountable.)

The headmaster eases part of his guilt by burying himself in the administrative load. Some of it comes out in his relationship with the boys—as compassion or hate. Or similarly, in his relationship with the staff. When talking with the inspector it may at best necessitate exaggeration, so preventing effective communication. For example, he over-emphasizes an achievement like canoe-building or two subjects at "O" level (which in terms of numbers really affected, is insignificant). By carrying abroad this over-emphasis, the inspector eases his guilt.

There is another reason, apart from guilt, which prevents effective communication between those concerned with the problem of Black School. (As well as the head and inspector, this means the teacher who, although imprisoned in the drill-sergeant rôle, may be acutely concerned.) This is, the lack of a language in which this problem could be usefully discussed. Everyone would agree that what is important about a school is its tone. Therefore what is wrong with Black School is its bad tone. Disagreement occurs when the question of how the tone is to be changed crops up. If we are to tread the middle road between the facile optimism of much of the written word on education, and the despair that, among equals, those actually involved in it show, we must have a language in which tone can be discussed. Out of that discussion may grow, in time, agreement as to how tone can be changed—a possibility that is, perhaps, a ground for rational hope. This essay is an attempt to make a start at the task of building this language. It is a language of structure and function, in which there is room for humanism but not for personalities.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Some of the following have been kind enough to read earlier drafts of this essay. I am in debt to all of them for their interest and for the stimulus of their criticism.—Norman Birnbaum, E. D. Butterworth, J. B. Cullingworth, Melville Currell, W. Howard Jones, Norbert Elias, Jean Floud, Stuart Hall, A. H. Halsey, Thena Heshel, Hugh J. Klare, Tom Lupton, Margaret Matthews, J. G. H. Newfield, Peter Newsam, Peter L. O'Malley, Stephen Shenck, Peter G. Squibb and Richard M. Titmuss. I am also indebted to Mary Welsh for typing, and to my wife for patience and understanding. Any mistakes are my own fault.

<sup>2</sup>It is possible to look upon these values (spontaneity, rule-breaking, irrepressibility) as extreme working-class ones. (A. K. Cohen does in his *Delinquent Boys*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1956—a study to which this essay owes much.) Perhaps it is more true to see them as the values attached to a low position from which mobility upward is unlikely, or unlikely within a reasonable time (therefore the occupant has no stake in the system) and which appear during association with equals. Examples are student, assistant lecturer, convict, private soldier, rarely-employed actor. In short, all those in a position of social childhood, which is an important aspect of jobs of low rank. While all working-class jobs are of low rank, not all low rank positions are working class.

<sup>3</sup>For the historical origin of these conduct and work values, see *A Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools* by M. E. Highfield and A. Pinsent, published by Newnes Educational Publishing Co. for the National Foundation for Educational Research, 1952—page 32 on. This essay is concerned merely with their present function.

<sup>4</sup>According to F. M. Thrasher (*The Gang*, University Press, Chicago, 1927) the gang offers a “substitute for what society fails to give . . . it provides a relief from suppression and distasteful behaviour . . . fills a gap and affords an escape”.

<sup>5</sup>The suggestion is that Black School helps to make delinquents, not criminals. A delinquent is a youngster who is caught, charged and convicted while satisfying his need for adventure (or outlet). But typically he does not make a career of crime after the age of say, 16, as the criminal does perhaps. See *Growing Up in the City* by J. B. Mays, the University Press of Liverpool, 1954.

<sup>6</sup>This paragraph is even more in debt than is the rest of this essay to *Growing Up in the City* by J. B. Mays (see above).

<sup>7</sup>As J. B. Mays says (quoting *The Young Delinquent in his Social Setting* by Ferguson)—“The danger period for delinquency is generally accepted as falling between the ages of 11 and 15.”—*Growing Up in the City*, page 77. This is exactly the period spent at Black School. The last year at school as the peak age for delinquency is shown in Appendix 9 of the Albemarle Report—*The Youth Service in England and Wales*, Cmnd. 929.

<sup>8</sup>In the Black School model, size of class has been omitted as a factor. This is not because it is not important (it obviously is) but rather because I have been concerned with factors and their consequences rarely mentioned in public discussions of the problems of certain secondary moderns. What the model does indicate however is that reduction of class size is not a panacea. If by some accident, a teacher in Black School finds himself facing a class of 25 (instead of say 35) he may look upon this (quite humanly) as a blessed relief, and set them routine work which requires that his function is merely that of an overseer—a role that may be played in the circumstances, with minimum expenditure of energy. In brief, he idles, as the boys do when they can get away with it—and for the same reason: as an endeavour to be oneself in a system the pressures of which try to force upon one a pseudo-self. If in Black School, by some miracle, all classes were tomorrow reduced to 25—would the teachers change their habits? I leave this question open. But an important point in considering it is this. Many teachers, in their career-formative years, are moulded by the tone of Black School. How easy is it (for the ordinary, not the exceptional, man) to throw off the effects of that moulding?

<sup>9</sup>See discussion in *Industrial Society* by George Friedmann (translated by Mary and Tom Bottomore), The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1955—page 77 on.

<sup>10</sup>The typical teacher is not a person. He is an abstraction, arrived at by looking at all teachers in Black School with one's eyes blurred slightly. This enables differences to be ignored while bearing in mind similarities. The typical teacher is a sum of those similarities. Once obtained, you can watch his mental processes in yourself, if you are a teacher and if the necessary detachment can be

mustered. Validation of the abstraction is a matter of fitting into the rest of the model. The chances are that it is sound if the rest is.

<sup>11</sup>There is another belief, which touches self-respect, and which is a part of staff ideology in various schools. It is best described by C. Wayne Gordon—“successful teachers do not have problems” (*The Social System of the High School*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1957—page 49). The problem, in Black School, would be one of control. (Sometimes this piece of ideology takes the form of a belief that successful teachers owe their success to an inborn, rather mystical quality, called perhaps “moral ascendancy”.) However, it is not in the model, because I have assumed honesty amongst the staff. Therefore even the most successful drill-sergeant at Black School would admit that sometimes he could not quite achieve control. And he would agree that the secret was not “moral ascendancy”, but rather that, from a reputation built up over some years in the school, the boys knew that if he got the stick out, he would apply it with energy. (With this sort of reputation, of course, he did not have to get the stick out very often.) If lack of sufficient honesty is widespread amongst the staff then this “success ideology” can be subscribed to by some teachers. (As Dr. Wayne Gordon says, the head may encourage such subscription, because for him it is a way of controlling staff.) In which case, any severe stresses in the system of the school would tend to emerge as nervous breakdowns in teachers who subscribed.

<sup>12</sup>There is of course the boy who does not fight the guerilla war, either actively or passively. This sort of boy is at best a little withdrawn, at worst very servile. At Black School, as a boy, I was this sort. Such a boy can take full advantage of what little opportunity Black School offers for education. (For example, because he is known to be safe, he can be left alone in the library.) But most of the boys I was at Black School with left with the desire to learn formally totally extinguished by the drill-sergeant system, long before the capacity to do so started to decline. They were like that “large number of boys and girls” who have a “deep-seated apathy” towards things educational, which so amazed Crowther. See 15-18: *Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education: England*, Vol. 1—page 391.

## Day release experiment

ANNE TREVETT

**INTRODUCING THE YOUNGER WOMAN: the story of an experiment in further education for young women out at work, by W. R. Page (Cambridge University Press, 30s.).**

“WHY ARE WE DOING THIS MISS? We done all this at school.” The question crystallizes all one's own questions about non-vocational day-release. Never mind the phrases about the four strands of college life,

ANNE TREVETT is a tutor-librarian in a College for Further Education.

what should happen in the course of a college day to justify dragging back into education those who thankfully escaped and were thankfully waved goodbye at 15? Justify to the students I mean, not the employers. Why are they being distracted from their economic functions as hewers of wood, drawers of waters and packers of cough pastilles? Their jobs do not demand training, let alone education.

These questions are at the root of all difficulties in motivating and maintaining interest in students. In Mr. Page's essentially pragmatic (to coin a phrase) approach we can perhaps begin to see the answers.

His book is an account of his work in teaching English and Social Studies to an assorted group of girls from the local cigarette factory, telephone exchange, shops and elsewhere. His inspiration was that they should produce a magazine, a "proper" woman's magazine, with all the usual features, only for girls their own age. For the first time they began to write willingly, even eagerly. Gradually all their work came to be based around the magazine: reports of visits made in Social Studies, drawings done in Art classes, stories and poems from English classes, book reviews from the Library period.

My training college lecturer always said that what student teachers really need is a collection of accounts by practising teachers of "The Best Lesson I Ever Gave". On mature reflection, after two terms' teaching, I think he was almost right: what new teachers really need is a book like Mr. Page's: an account of lessons given, good, bad and indifferent. Most teachers are too proud, too neurotic, too status-conscious to be quite this honest.

W. R. Page is not a perfect teacher—anyway they went out about the time we realised education was for and by human beings. I don't think he quite knows what non-vocational day-release is for, and neither do I. But he has helped me to see that what it can be used for is creation: creating a poem, a play, a picture, a pot or perhaps a cake, a dress or a magazine.

The Rolling Stones' "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" expresses a much deeper yearning than the crudely sexual one; the satisfaction of achieving something, of creating, is missing from the working lives of the vast majority of us. On one day of the week, at college, a few of the younger ones can have a chance.

# What Beacon Hill School stood for

**DORA RUSSELL**

BEACON HILL SCHOOL WAS STARTED IN 1927: it began as a joint enterprise run by Bertrand Russell and myself. What I write here is my own view of the principles on which the school was conducted under my leadership and must therefore not be taken as representing Russell's theories on education.

Over a long period of years a change had been taking place in people's attitude to children: in education its source lay as far back as Rousseau. In the nineteen-twenties it was the new psychology, of Freud, Adler and Jung, which exerted an exciting influence and led people to question, not only the methods of the schools, but the effects of traditional family life. None of this had touched the general run of conventional schools; indeed, in 1925, in a letter to the *Evening Standard*, the Rev. Lyttelton, ex-Headmaster of Eton, deploring the relaxing of parental discipline, had written: "Children go to school impressed with the belief that they have a right to be happy, that God will give them a good time. This is the perversion of true religion, self-denial and obedience."

There were, however, developments in techniques of teaching the three R's and other subjects; varied equipment had begun to replace the copybook and "sums", whilst the field of medicine and nutrition had much that was new to offer about child nurture and health.

Quite a few people began, like Montessori and Piaget, to ask themselves what were the stages in a child's development of its relation to the outside world, how children in fact set about learning, what, in fact, did they *want* to learn, as opposed to what the adults wanted to teach them.

We had the idea, at Beacon Hill, of trying to lay down some sort of basis for a modern education by combining what we felt was the

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*DORA RUSSELL, who for many years ran Beacon Hill School, is the author of The Right to be Happy and In Defence of Children. She wrote on "The Eclipse of Woman" in ANARCHY 56.*

best:—in teaching methods; in diet and care of health; in the psychology of handling the children and in the subjects that we taught and the way we approached them. Geoffrey Pyke and Susan Isaacs, at the Malting House School, of roughly the same date as ours, conducted a fundamental experiment by leaving children very great freedom, in order to see what they would do and what they would find out for themselves. We did not go so far: we did have an idea of the society into which the children would ultimately go, or rather of the society which we hoped would develop out of the progressive trends which were apparent and operating.

But first something about food and hygiene. School meals in those days took little account of vitamins, fresh fruit and a balanced diet. Ours did: our menus were carefully worked out for a week and as varied as we could make them. We were often criticised because our children were allowed to "get dirty" as they worked and played, but there were not many boarding schools in which every child was washed from top to toe nightly as ours were. I was, and am, highly suspicious of the immaculate classroom with pupils to match.

Our pupils were being educated to live in a nation proud of being a democracy. But when examined, this democracy rested on established authority whose main concern was to keep its own citizens in order within the state and fight enemies without. The ultimate sanction was power and violence. Life within the democracy was highly competitive, though there were democratic elections and some aims were achieved through committees and voluntary co-operation. We thought that, as socialism advanced, co-operation would increase. But was a child, subject in its earliest years to parental authority—rendered more powerful now that families were so much smaller—next, forced to obey its teachers without question, over-disciplined in class, in games and even some military training, taught to revere the Fighting Services and the Police, likely to develop into a self-reliant, independent democrat?

Freud had pointed to the distortions of personality within the family, stressing sexual frustration, Adler to the thwarting of the impulse to power. Could not psychiatric findings be applied to some extent as a preventive rather than therapeutic measure?

This was, roughly, the basis of self-government in our school. We did not deny that the child needed the background of adult protection, but held that this should express affection and a desire to help, not to inspire terror. Relief from the pressure of adult authority could be found in a community in which children lived among their equals, meeting to discuss and settle together the problems of social living, as they arose day by day. Our School Council was not much concerned with crime and punishment; it met to discuss the time-table, a bedtime rota, private versus public holding of toys, etc., bullying,

countless other matters which, in fact, had their counterparts in society in the outside world. Anyone, child or adult, could bring a complaint or problem to School Meeting. Freedom and self-government began with our children as soon as they seemed able to take part in it, usually from about five. This is contrary to the usual idea that progress should be a gradual emancipation from discipline to greater freedom; we held that freedom should be exercised when the young child's destructive impulses could do relatively little harm; thus he would progress by experience to self-discipline, achieving a greater maturity and stability than the individual suddenly released from restrictions.

Corporal punishment we, of course, ruled out entirely. It is with a sense of shame and horror that I note that it is still the practice in our schools of today. The blow of the adult hand against the child is the primary act of war. From him it passes, like a chain reaction, throughout the body politic. Proof of this came to us often in our work: as when, for instance, we were remonstrating with one of our middle group for bullying younger ones. "The Bigs tease me, so I tease the Smalls, that's fair," came the reply. One of the most interesting decisions taken by our Council I have often quoted. The children were debating how to check fighting one another. Someone naturally proposed that "sloshing", as they called it, should be forbidden by resolution of the Council. This was not agreed to, for they felt that they could not live up to so complete a prohibition. In the end this pronouncement was passed: "That this Council disapproves of sloshing as a method of settling disputes." Thereafter when two started a fight, others would be seen running up chanting the Council resolution. It was quite effective. And how like the relation of the United Nations to the rest of the world at the present day.

Our attitude to sex education would not now be regarded with the hostility that it provoked at that time. We answered questions as they arose, but had no special sex teaching, most of our children left us before adolescence. They were allowed to remove all their clothes in the summer if they wished to, especially for outdoor dancing and exercise.

Fierce competition to be top of the class had put me at strain throughout my own school days. In Beacon Hill we had no such system of marking and rivalry. So far as possible the children worked at their own projects and at their own pace, but comparisons which they made with each other's work did not rule out some spontaneous emulation. And an exhibition at each term's open day gave what we felt to be a legitimate incentive. There were also, of course, projects undertaken co-operatively, writing and producing their own plays, their own Science Society. Their plays and "co-operative" poems aroused much comment and incredulity, which would, again, not be so today.

This raises the vexed question of emotion versus intellect, impulse versus reason. I suppose it is not easy for people nowadays to realise the impact of the popular Freudian cult, which urged all and sundry to disperse their complexes and get rid of their inhibitions. This inspired giving to children the utmost freedom of "self-expression". Though extreme, on the whole this did much good, for, like Neill's revolt against existing school conditions, it made educationists think. In this controversy I found myself midway between Neill and Curry, when he was at Dartington. Curry's pupils used often to quote him as saying to them: "I think we are all reasonable people", whereas they felt themselves to be very much the reverse.

Basically, one cannot do or learn anything unless one wants to. In this respect the emotional drive comes first. Clearly you can use the stick or the carrot as a stimulus, but here again you appeal to terror, ambition, or greed, all of them emotions. If you repress the individual spontaneous drive to learn about the world and then train the intellect, parrot-wise, it is as if you sought to produce flowers, having severed the plant from its roots. This sort of thing does go on in conventional education and there are many who now admit that our education has been too academic, factual and intellectual. But, while it may not be entirely true that, as Neill wrote: "If the emotions are free the intellect will look after itself", it is certainly true that you cannot, as is often attempted today, redress the balance by grafting "using the arts creatively in education" on to pupils already warped by other aspects of their training. Emotional and aesthetic response is not a sort of decoration on rational man, it is of man's very essence.

If you want to help the young to resist commercial propaganda techniques or the lures of the Father-figure dictators, then you must offer them in their very earliest years, not only the means of self-expression in varied arts and handicrafts, but also an atmosphere of initiative in free association with their fellows, so that for them respect and love for one another is not mere theory, but rooted in feeling; so that they learn by their own efforts how government may really be by and for the people, and how man's reason is a faculty gradually shaped by him out of his individual and social experience. In our attempt to educate for democracy I believe that we at Beacon Hill were pioneering in something which has never yet been sufficiently tried out.

Looking back at our attitude to intellectual education I trace a somewhat similar approach. Though we were ready to teach our children to read and write, on the whole we thought that this, as well as mathematics, came too early. A child learns, as Montessori well said, by using his senses to explore his surroundings, by moving, handling, make-believe, asking innumerable questions. If he comes to think everything can be found out from books, his power of direct observation may diminish. One feature of our work at Beacon Hill, for instance, was doing simple experiments in "the lab" long before

the experimenters could spell the names of the substances which they used. Have not many of us learned to cook from just being with mother in the kitchen?

But of course we used books to the full. They would run to them to look up things, get absorbed in legends and stories. We thought that offering them modern languages was important. I wanted the main languages to be Spanish, Chinese and Russian, which, in the future, might serve them in most parts of the world, but this was not practical for that date, though we did make Russian available as well as the usual French and German.

History is a key subject. It unlocks the accumulated knowledge of the ages. The sort of historical perspective first acquired is most important. To some children's questions I said: "Well, we could learn some history." Asked with what we should begin they told me: "Begin at the beginning." So, aided by the work of H. G. Wells, we traced the earth's formation, the geological periods, the coming of life. We did no national history until we got to the Romans in Britain. I believe that this method did two things: first it gave the children a sense of kinship with everything on their own planet, with the animals and plants, the very stones beneath their feet. They would collect fossils, and on the Downs we found bones of animals, in our own grounds fragments of remains from a Romano-British farm. More important, perhaps, it gave them a sense of the oneness of the human species, slowly acquiring knowledge and skills, before the rise of nations and empires and the devastation of wars. Something like this perspective in history teaching is vital to international understanding and world peace. Though this is now quite well understood, it is not put into practice.

I am not saying that a child should not learn the history of his own people; on the contrary, the background of our own culture gives security, as does the family in early years. It is the overall perspective, early acquired, that matters. In the nation states of our time children are, more and more, miseducated from birth, in fear, rivalry, hatred and violence.

The main argument put forward recently for the extension and improvement of our educational system, even by well-meaning educationists, was that our standards of learning and technology are not adequate to competing with our rivals overseas. Recently, too, authority's answer to juvenile delinquency was to raise the pay of the police, while underpaying the teachers. In the year in which we abolished capital punishment, teachers voted to keep the cane, and a headmaster of a State school was the centre of controversy because he would not cane his pupils. All these things are interrelated, they have to do with the purpose of the State. More industry and technology—often for war purposes—are required, which leads to an even

greater stress on intellectual education. So the atrophy of the creative emotions continues, whilst frustration generates more violence.

In Beacon Hill School we were trying to educate "whole" people, first, for their own sake, and second, for what they might achieve in human evolution. We looked forward to seeing the State turn from power and war to caring for its people and fostering the creative sciences and arts. We envisaged constructive emotions prompting the use of the mind, the parental impulses of men and women no longer confined within their own family, but pervading all society. At the same time I also feared—and wrote—that large-scale organisation might prove too great a strain for human beings, and that industrialism might well put an end to the democratic way of life.

The passing years would seem to have endorsed the pessimistic view. Mankind has not really progressed in many hundreds of years, except in the accumulation of knowledge. And this—like patriotism—is "not enough". However, it can help to give us the blueprint for the non-violent society which so many are now seeking, if we should care to pick it up and put it into practice.

## Teacher as Tyrant

JOHN THURSTON

WITHOUT WISHING TO COMMENT on the whole of John Pilgrim's article "Salvation by the working class" (ANARCHY 68), I do feel that the following points are worth making in relation to one small, but important section of it. This is the section dealing with corporal punishment in schools and with educational authoritarianism generally; and it is with the latter of these that I am mainly concerned.

John Pilgrim speaks of the continuing use of corporal punishment in secondary schools and points out, quite rightly, that it is "a particularly virulent agency (sic) both in the inculcation of submissive attitudes to authority and in the breeding of authoritarian attitudes". He goes on to blame the high incidence of corporal punishment on overcrowded classes, unimaginative teachers and the strongly authoritarian polarization of teacher training.

*JOHN THURSTON has taught in a number of primary and secondary schools all over North London.*

As this section of the article progresses, however, the overcrowded classes quickly disappear and the blame is laid squarely on the teachers and their failure to realize that "the teaching-learning process can be a co-operative effort". And Mr. Pilgrim has proof of this failure in the form of *one* article in the *Guardian* by a Mr. Arthur Barton, who is permitted, presumably by virtue of having got his views into a national newspaper, to "express the attitude of the contemporary secondary modern teacher". Or so says John Pilgrim.

"Teaching is a job to us, not a vocation," says Mr. Barton, apparently employing the royal plural, "(and) we enforce discipline any way we can." He mentions classes of thirty-odd noisy, insolent, bored and unwilling boys as his justification. John Pilgrim rightly takes exception at this point and most of us would agree that he is right in doing so. But as a teacher I feel that a few things should be made clear in this regard; and I feel that the issue is particularly important since education can play such a fundamental rôle in the shaping of attitudes to authority.

It should hardly need to be pointed out to John Pilgrim that one newspaper article simply cannot be taken as expressing the views of the majority of secondary teachers; yet he accepts it unquestioningly as doing so. Nor should he need to be told that the real groundwork is not laid in the secondary schools; basic attitudes are formed at home during pre-school years, and later in primary school. It is in this light that we should consider the following:

1. Families in working-class urban areas of England, particularly London, often tend to be divided or unstable in a number of ways, with weary and frequently ill-educated parents too ready to assume that their children are "all right" at home and at school as long as they aren't causing too much trouble.

2. The current trend in primary education is "liberal", that is to say, there is less emphasis on formal teaching; the children, in theory at least, work together in groups, with guidance and constant stimulus provided by the teacher, in such a way that they explore and learn things for themselves. This is what John Pilgrim wants—the teaching-learning process has become (I repeat, in theory at least) a co-operative effort.

3. Unfortunately for thousands of children in this country, this set-up only works effectively when a class has a fairly high proportion of positively co-operative pupils; and this kind of class is precisely what you do *not* get in working-class urban areas, whether Mr. Pilgrim likes it or not. The necessary stability of personality, springing as it does from a secure home background, just isn't there; yet teachers are obliged from above (inspectors and headmaster) to use this approach and have to be content to make what modifications they can get away with.

4. The results of this liberal, co-operative and relatively un-authoritarian approach can be seen in a five-minute glance at anything lower than an A-form in a North London secondary school: the figure of thirty-odd mentioned in the *Guardian* article that John Pilgrim quotes is generally closer to forty; a large number of the pupils are noisy, insolent, bored and unwilling; and more often than not, as a further complication, half of them are girls, who, for noisiness, insolence, boredom and unwillingness, far outstrip most of the boys.

5. The pupils themselves cannot be blamed for these attitudes; they are only reflecting their home lives and the over-simplified "self-expression" they have been permitted in primary school. But regardless of where the blame lies, the teacher is the one who bears the burden and often has little alternative to the authoritarian approach. Even Mr. Pilgrim (whose tone of voice shows that he has never been a teacher himself) will admit that creative teaching has its difficulties when at least a quarter of the class is actively engaged in hampering basic communication between teacher and pupils. There are few teachers who are not tremendously pleased when they conduct a lesson to which the greater part of a class contributes; yet all too often the only resort, for even the most conscientious teacher, is an arbitrary method of silencing troublemakers so that the willing students can get something done. The argument that a "good" teacher can achieve anything by pure force of personality is a tragically laughable fallacy believed in only by those who have never taught.

6. Teachers are people; all of them are middle-class, many of them are stupid, a large number enjoy their "authority" in a very positive way. To most of them teaching is only a job, however reprehensible John Pilgrim may find this; it is a job because it is the situation they work in, a situation which, under the present system, leaves little time or energy for the ideas of "vocation" that non-teachers find so important. Teachers are ordinary people, struggling against heavy odds, and often driven by their "jobs" to desperation and complete breakdown.

7. Pages more would be needed if we were to begin theorizing about the means of establishing a completely new and sound non-authoritarian education system in even one county. It can only be repeated for the moment that in Britain the social and educational systems of the present day have meshed to produce an environment that is simply not conducive to learning; and that alternatives to both must be found. But to blame the teachers for the present sorry state of affairs is only to scratch at the surface of a vast and complex problem.

## A one-man Shaw : the story of Red Hill School

ANTHONY WEAVER

RED HILL SCHOOL IN KENT was founded by Otto Shaw in 1934. Sometimes it is described as a maladjusted grammar school, for it caters exclusively for highly intelligent emotionally disturbed and delinquent boys. It has dominated the small special school world for thirty years and is remarkable for the completeness of the service it offers. There have been a number of articles and theses written about it but only recently has Shaw produced his own book. This is an achievement in itself since most accounts of comparable work have been written after the place in question has closed or been closed, or written by a visitor or fellow-worker of the founder (for example, the Peckham Health Centre, the Barns Experiment, Burns on Lyward, Bazeley on the Little Commonwealth).

Red Hill has exemplified thorough-going, daring and unconventional methods in such a competent way that the school has survived opposition from without and stresses from within. Other institutions or movements collapse, compromise, become fossilised in a posture valid initially, or contribute a new idea in a one-sided way.

The ingredients of the school may not be original but in my opinion it is unique to see them so successfully and comprehensively welded together. One may point out that this is a non-maintained school (recognised on List 42) and ask whether it is axiomatic that qualities of such long standing are not to be found in any of the maintained categories, Day or Residential.

Shaw began his working life in an oil refinery, but the chance reading of a book by A. S. Neill changed his vocation. The freedom, joy and contentment of Summerhill, he says, fired his imagination. There followed a deep but unsupervised reading of the dynamic psychologists and study of the records of St. Vincent de Paul, St. John de

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ANTHONY WEAVER, who has contributed to many issues of ANARCHY, is senior lecturer in education at Redlands College, Bristol.

Bosco, St. Ignatius and St. Francis, all of whom "had discovered ways of loving unlovable people". Hence psychoanalysis—and later election as a Labour councillor and appointment as a local magistrate.

Shaw was outraged by the idea that delinquent behaviour could be modified by "moral persuasion, coercion and punishment" rather than by an appreciation of unconscious motivation. (1) From Neill and David Wills (with whom he was associated with Dr. Marjorie Franklin over Q Camps) he has developed a sophisticated system of shared responsibility. (2) From the insights of Melanie Klein he has built up a realistic form of psychotherapy, verbally earthy and supplemented by ingenious and altruistic acts of compassion. (3) For more than 25 years the headmaster, Ivor Holland, has enjoyed autonomy in his running of the school, while Shaw has performed the functions of principal and psychotherapist.

Let us deal with these three in turn.

1. Shared Responsibility. By now there is a considerable weight of tradition at the school which gives stability, added to the fact that it is customary to keep a boy on for educational reasons (i.e. not to interfere with continuity of GCE work) even after his official maladjustment has disappeared. In the early days the School Meeting was run as a kind of enlarged family council, the main object of which was to demonstrate that the adults were not an alien, aggressive and dangerous group, but prepared to respect the opinions of the pupils.

Complaints and accusations, known as charges, were kept out of this meeting and relegated to school courts which were empowered to issue verdicts and penalties.

A significant development has been the selection of a sub-group of responsible pupils sitting as a bench of magistrates, hence known as Bench Members, or BMs for short. The BMs have run the courts and certainly acquired prestige in other areas of the school. The precise method of their selection has varied, but the very fact that each individual must be acceptable to staff, to the other BMs, and to the community as a whole, is salutary. Unlike prefects they have no authority over other pupils which they can use for personal advantage; in status they more nearly resemble a scout troop's court of honour.

The School Meeting has also developed and works through a number of Committees, elected twice annually, which are concerned with Food and Hygiene, Sports, Social Events, Library, Archives, Exterior Maintenance and Decorations. Reports of the Committee Chairmen are read to the Meeting and, after all questions have been discussed, are rejected or accepted. Matters raised by individuals, which once formed the entire content of the Meeting, are then dealt with. These are now relatively few for it is difficult to find a subject which does not come into the field of activity of one of the Committees.

It is easy to see that the Committees and the BMs enjoy a high degree of autonomy—higher than would be possible with younger or less intelligent boys—and that membership of them involves some practice in public speaking. At Red Hill, however, they have not importance as a vehicle or group therapy, since there is a very definite provision for intensive psychotherapy conducted by Shaw himself quite separately.

Although, from the foregoing description, the system might appear to be predominantly "political" or administrative, its most important function is contained in its inner meaning of closer personal relations between adults and pupils. Ivor Holland explains it thus:

"Difficult parents have set up in the child's mind images which stand in the way of mutual confidence even when the teacher is not made a direct substitute for parents. . . . But unless such barriers are broken, not only will the staff of the school be unable to give any adequate guidance, but also the insecurity which lies at the roots of the child's maladjustment will be perpetuated. *The object of self-government is to place adults in a new and different relationship to pupils which will make it harder for them to be set down, ex hypothesi, as members of a different group with alien aims and intentions*" (my italics).

An important conclusion, consequent upon this, is that authority conflicts can be left outside the classroom door: inside, much helped of course by the small numbers of about ten to a class, there is a remarkable lack of tension, the teacher can get on with his job of teaching and the pupil benefits from the realisation of his academic progress.

The staff at Red Hill are clear about the function of their system of self-government, and the areas which it covers, as well as the fact that such elaborate machinery cannot be left just to run itself. There are certain fictions to be preserved: the staff maintain them by acting as stage-managers and leaving the performance of the boys in the limelight to be judged or applauded by those in the audience.

It may be added that a survey, which I have carried out recently, of 88 establishments for maladjusted pupils has shown that those which operate a system of shared responsibility are significantly less punitive in their sanctions. Red Hill is no exception to this; indeed it relies entirely on reparative and consequential measures to deal with stealing and destructiveness. So much for the adult argument that children, especially maladjusted ones, are excessively cruel if left to deal with their own recalcitrant members.

(2) Psychotherapy. The book abounds with summaries of case histories which reveal a simplicity of principle and boldness in

sessional treatment. The story of Cecil Young is summarised here as an example for those readers not familiar with this type of work, and because its action shows the gratuitous relationship that is commonly found in ordinary parents but rarely in their substitutes. Shaw holds that the psychotherapist should dichotomise the private and public contacts that the boys have with him in school; yet he is no mere clinician waiting to be asked for help: he acts dramatically beyond the bounds of working hours or bureaucratically prescribed shillings and pence.

Cecil's mother was a prostitute; he was daily in the company of her men and became involved in their quarrels. One afternoon, when he was eleven, his mother returned home, and from her almost demented conversation, he discovered that she had gone to the river and drowned the baby she had borne a few weeks previously, and her manic comments seemed to suggest that she would soon kill herself. She left the house and presently he followed what he believed to be her path, to discover, by the side of the river about an hour later, some men and policemen standing over her drowned body in the same part of the river in which earlier that day she had drowned her baby.

He was now put into care of the local children's committee but his aggressive, truculent and dishonest behaviour caused his quick passage from altogether six Homes one after another.

"Quite obviously," says Shaw, "the challenge of a child who had no reason to believe in other people's trustworthiness was very deep and if we were to succeed we had to withstand whatever reactive test he inflicted upon us. . . . It is insufficient to be patient; it is insufficient to give affection, but both have a promise of success if the boy is continually told why he is doing the thing that not only hurts others but bars the affection of others and therefore hurts him as well. The path was long, but after five months he had begun to smile; he had taken to asking for instead of demanding things, but at no time had any moral advice been offered as clearly such would be highly suspect."

His first Christmas came, and as it was undesirable for him to return to his own home area, he was asked if he would like to accept an invitation, if such were offered, from a staff member. . . . He chose, and "shaw enough" the invitation was forthcoming. Along with the Shaw family Cecil had his own pile of presents which, in his case, included a bicycle. When he had received it on that Christmas morning, so it is reported, a real sense of gratitude glowed.

After this fortnight his return to school was marked by a relapse to his unhappy truculence and it was noticed that he was wearing a watch, the result, it later transpired, of a kind of forced loan. To have asked the obvious question would have denied the trust hitherto shown

to him. Shaw took off his own watch before meeting him, seemingly by chance, in the corridor, and lifting his wrist called "Oh damn, I've left my watch somewhere. Do you know the time, Cecil?" Two days later, on hearing that the watch had been returned to the other boy, Shaw ordered Cecil sharply: "Come to my house at 7.45 tomorrow morning." Despite protests, he came, had breakfast and accompanied Shaw to a shop in the village where it had previously been arranged that the most expensive watch stocked should cost three guineas. Shaw then asked him to choose the one he liked, and when he had done so said, "Right. That is yours." Immediately he demurred, "Oh I can't take that, it's too valuable." A few seconds later he was crying. Shaw explains that the point of this story is that it anticipated a theft: "It is little good to pardon a theft after it has occurred by making up or not making up to the thief by some gift what he has symbolically stolen."

Somewhat later the English teachers reported an inexplicable deterioration in Cecil's spelling. Words involving a, e, i, d, and s, he could not get right. He brought the matter up in private session. Shaw asked him to write the five offending letters on cards and arrange them in any way his imagination suggested. After some hesitation the word SADIE appeared at which Cecil blushed and began to sob. "That's my mother's name. She was called Sadie"—over and over again he muttered. At the time of the curious impairment of his spelling he had realised it was the second anniversary of his mother's death: the discussion was later shown to have completely remedied the mis-spelling.

Needless to say his relationships with adults and with the boys gradually improved. He left for a university and shortly afterwards was to get married.

What do readers of ANARCHY make of this story? Do they detect a sense of unjustifiable pride in Shaw's attitude? In a non-competitive society would theft be an impossibility—in which case by what symptoms would a boy like Cecil make manifest his deprivation? Would marriage, so often applauded by Shaw in his after histories, cease to be regarded as a criterion of successful treatment?

(3) Schoolwork. The classroom at Red Hill acts as a kind of testing ground for progress in psychotherapy as well as being a source of benefit in itself. Schooling is seen to be not merely a matter of increasing knowledge, or of passing exams nor even of broadening interests, but of building up better *mental functioning* in ways which affect all aspects of the pupil's future life.

Work dependent mainly on self-expression may flourish almost from the outset, but progress in history or geography, dependent to a greater degree on facts, comes more slowly. The greatest difficulty

occurs in such subjects as mathematics, especially Euclidian geometry, which demand clear reasoning and in which the knowledge gained must be closely retained since new topics require the use of what has gone before.

The general public nowadays seldom expect that delinquent habits can be eliminated by a direct appeal to reason, yet the implication is rarely drawn that some kind of intellectual malfunctioning may be involved in such behaviour. It is very obvious that a realistic approach to knowledge is not easily acquired by pupils whose anxiety makes them obsessional or unable to concentrate. Thus the teacher of science, for example, is not only concerned with the pupils' insight into scientific methods, but is also at grips with their illogical and flighty mode of thinking.

"It has often become more natural", Ivor Holland explains "to take refuge in self-deceptions and confusion, to develop habits of anticipating all manner of possible contingencies irrespective of their probability, and to seek to evade a problem rather than to face it directly and look for a straightforward answer".

There is of course the danger that an emphasis on the "blunt acceptance of facts" may develop into a defensive armour to the impairment of imaginative qualities.

Hence the art teacher, Lawrence Mills, for example, recognises the cathartic value of work done on a conscious level and encourages this in ingenious ways. But he also finds paintings taking shape that are comparable to a dream without words, and expressed in symbols which are incomprehensible even to the originator since they derive from his unconscious. The task then is not primarily one of stimulation nor of sublimation but of drawing out the boy's feeling and providing him with a means of communication at an emotional level. Mills knows when and how to help by demonstrating methods and skills, but the actual problems of expression he leaves for the boy himself to surmount. Not to be given such help will lead to an excess of frustration accentuated by the realisation of possibilities. Yet, too, in asking for help the boy may be expressing his fundamental request for approval: slowly as his work is appreciated, and he himself accepted because of it, his intellectual interests develop so that he begins to want to know about the things that constitute the normal school curriculum. Shaw's policy is not to interpret to the boy the products of the art room, for the sake of introducing no inhibition in the work itself, although he and Mills may do so to each other.

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The title of this review is not entirely cynical. What more could one man have done? Although Shaw has demonstrated a sophisticated

way of running a special school he has been able to reach rather less than 500 boys in 30 years. But by now the workers in the field and the committee members of local authorities have been taught many lessons. Are their treasurers disposed to provide the wherewithal, as they certainly were not in the 1930s, to supplement and extend such innovations?

#### NOTES:

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## SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE OR SELF-KNOWLEDGE: A REPLY TO CRITICS

THE DEFECTS AND INADEQUACIES of my article in ANARCHY 63 were indeed serious. It was a crude attempt, often careless and sometimes ill-mannered; and for its many shortcomings I can only offer my apologies, both to readers in general and especially to the persons I attacked—whose sincerity and libertarian intentions I never meant to question. However, not all the criticisms in ANARCHY 66 were valid, and I still think the main ideas of the article were sound.

What originally alarmed me about Mr. Pilgrim's article *Anarchism and Stateless Societies* was his statement that before the abolition of the State could become acceptable "we need a great deal more knowledge of the methods of creating social cohesion". "Creating" seemed to imply the existence of a creator, of some "social engineer" who would use scientific techniques to control a mass of incohesive human beings and weld them together. In other words, who would govern us. In ANARCHY 66 Mr. Pilgrim does nothing to allay my anxiety when he writes: "Social institutions are social facts and require social knowledge if they are to be altered in any desired direction." Desired, we may ask, by whom? Who is going to apply this knowledge and make these alterations? And if the alterations could be in any desired direction, what is to prevent the social scientist from creating, not only social cohesion, but also a personal dictatorship? No doubt Mr. Pilgrim has no such intention. But the dangers of his approach are obvious. Moreover, to suggest that anarchists could not work out an

acceptable way of life without a sociologist to guide them is to suggest, however unwittingly, that anarchism *per se* is inadequate. Indeed the very notion of guidance—even voluntarily accepted guidance—is surely incompatible with anarchism.

I do not think, therefore, that I misrepresented the latent authoritarianism of Mr. Pilgrim's approach, however careless my analysis of some of his sentences. But he certainly misrepresents me completely when he accuses me of "mystic religiosity". I specifically condemned what I called "religious idealism"; and Taoism and Zen as I understand them do not involve any religious practices, "mystic" or not—or indeed any effort of will whatsoever. My position is that anarchism primarily requires, not the reformation of social institutions, but a radical transformation in the mind of the individual. This transformation must come, not through religious practices (or moral self-discipline), but through an intelligent understanding and awareness of oneself, of one's own psychological processes. I hold that once the individual realizes how enslaved he is by fear and the craving for security, he is *ipso facto* released from class-antagonism, status-seeking, power-mania, and all other authoritarian and divisive psychological compulsions. Thus the individual becomes a true anarchist as defined in my article; and given the anarchist individual, the anarchist *milieu* inevitably follows. What we need, then, is not social knowledge but self-knowledge, because authoritarianism is fundamentally psychological, not social. It is the authoritarian individual who creates the authoritarian society, and not the other way round.

The basic objection of my critics to any such analysis, is that in their view the individual is determined by social forces. The individual as such, as a person capable of entirely spontaneous and original behaviour, is in their view a myth (F.B. expresses this view most uncompromisingly, but all my critics seem to share it). Man, as my critics conceive him, is essentially a socially conditioned animal. It follows from this conception that it is vain to expect a change in the individual before a change has occurred in his social environment, and that therefore anarchists must primarily try to devise new forms of social organization calculated to produce an anarchist society. Hence the emphasis on sociology, and the demand for methods of social engineering, without which, it is thought, anarchism can never be more than a "wistful dream".

When I called this approach to anarchism "socialized", I meant that it is merely a product of the society we live in—the mass society, where the individual has come to seem powerless and insignificant in comparison with the group. Anarchists adopting this approach are indeed behaving like socially conditioned animals. But there is no good reason for adopting it. Man is socially conditioned to a large extent, but not entirely. Each individual acquires at birth a unique physical and temperamental constitution which is neither created nor altered by his social environment. Moreover, man differs from the animals in his capacity to become aware of his own conditioning, and so to transcend it. He can become, in a very important sense, free

of his conditioning, and only reaches his full stature as a man when he does so. It is not society that finally turns the human animal into a human being, it is awareness that renders the socially conditioned animal human. And once the fully grown, psychologically independent individual has emerged, he can affect his social environment in innumerable ways—without the least danger of authoritarianism. Society is of course essential in the general sense of relationship, as I stated in my article. But in the particular sense of "a society", or "society as a whole", I still say it is a disaster.

Mr. Pilgrim's definition of this sense of "society" will not do. He completely ignores the actual, historical development of this concept, maintaining that "any given definition is valid . . . to the extent that it is adequate for the task involved" (yet later calling *me* "solipsistic"); and produces a definition which may be adequate for the task of the modern social scientist (which is to reduce man to the level of a conditioned animal), but which certainly does not correspond to normal usage. We do not, for example, say that the ancient Greeks lived all in one society, although, if one chooses to regard the Athenians, Spartans, etc., as a group, they possessed all Mr. Pilgrim's defining characteristics of a society: sexual reproduction, a definite territory (which they called "Hellas"), a comprehensive culture (which they recognized as distinguishing them from the "barbarians"), and independence (which they stoutly defended against Persia). The same example also shows that culture and society are not, as Mr. Pilgrim holds, different ways of looking at the same thing. Another example: we may properly speak of European culture, but Europe has never yet been a society.

In defining society, in the sense under discussion, as a purely modern phenomenon, I was merely following Miss Arendt's definition in *The Human Condition* (a definition which was not, presumably, regarded as "highly risible" by the distinguished critics who praised the book). Miss Arendt writes that what we call "society" is "the collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family"; and her thesis, as I understand it, is that this concept has evolved as economic activities, ceasing for technological reasons to be confined to the private realm of the household, have become more and more matters of public concern. In any given society, as a result of that process, the very distinction between the private and the public gradually disappears, to be replaced by the concept of the social; and the final outcome is the totalitarian mass society, where privacy has been virtually lost and society dominates the individual totally, in every aspect of his life. If my critics care to observe our own rapidly changing conditions of life, and to study the way our concepts of society and of the social have actually developed, and are now actually used to describe those conditions, I think they will realize the appalling truth of Miss Arendt's thesis. (That it is so appalling sufficiently explains why most people, reluctant as they are to face disturbing facts, have not yet realized that totalitarianism is not just an unfortunate disease

afflicting some societies, but the inevitable result of the rise of society *per se*.)

Mr. Papworth writes that the distinction between a society and a *milieu* "is not only unreal, it is unimportant". If, however, he could see that it is real, he would surely change his mind about its importance. If a society is essentially a totalitarian concept, it is hardly advisable to talk about "an anarchist society". I am not suggesting that anarchists using this concept must be conscious believers in totalitarianism; but if we habitually use totalitarian concepts we are in danger of adopting totalitarian attitudes and assumptions unconsciously. In any case, to theorize about anarchism in totalitarian terms is not, surely, the best way to avoid confusion—even if we all know that the theorist is opposed to totalitarianism. (Nor can I see why Mr. Papworth thinks that to recognize the distinction between a society and a *milieu* is to obscure the other important distinction he mentions, between large and small scales of organization.)

Mr. Papworth complains that my concept of an anarchist *milieu* "is hopelessly vague and impracticable, and certainly provides no kind of tangible alternative to which masses of bewildered and disillusioned people can turn". As for practicability, given the necessary mental transformation of the individual, the anarchist *milieu* would be not only practicable but inevitable. As for vagueness, of course the idea of an anarchist *milieu* is vague in the sense that, being entirely unplanned and spontaneous, such a *milieu* cannot be known in detail until it has emerged. The demand for something "tangible" is merely the demand for a plan, a blueprint. But that is an authoritarian demand, for the simple reason that there cannot be a plan without a planner—somebody who wants to make us all conform to *his* system. No matter how "libertarian" that system may be, it remains *his* system which he is trying, by force or persuasion, to impose on others. I have no such plan to offer bewildered or disillusioned people, and if I had it could only breed false hopes and lead to further disillusion. Such people must be told that their wellbeing depends on their own intelligence and awareness, and not on anybody's plan. Not even on Mr. Papworth's hopelessly vague and impracticable plan for the small-scale organization of modern technology—which by its very nature demands large economic and social units and, therefore, large-scale organization.

Mr. Robinson has a peculiar idea of spontaneity. "Most people's spontaneity," he writes, "has been warped by this crazy, authoritarian world. If the world has made one a nonentity or a compulsive bingo player then spontaneity for you is being a nonentity or playing bingo neither of which seem particularly anarchistic to me." But to be "warped by the world" is to be enslaved by one's social conditioning, and not spontaneous. Freedom from conditioning comes through simple awareness: the compulsive bingo player stops playing when he realizes, without making any effort to alter the fact, that he is just that. (Incidentally nobody is a nonentity, and the desire to become "somebody" is the kind of psychological compulsion that causes status-seeking, power-mania—and bingo.) As for murderers and rapists, I

do not advocate merely letting them "carry on". But whatever may be the best way of dealing with such people (and without self-knowledge we are all potentially such people), it is certainly not libertarian to shut them up in an institution, even if the intention is not punishment but "rehabilitation". To be shut up *is* a punishment as far as the prisoner is concerned; and frankly I would rather be put in a straightforward prison than become a helpless guinea-pig in the hands of psychiatrists and other assorted "experts", however well-intentioned.

Mr. Otter writes that I tried to saddle Mr. Pilgrim with "pro-prison views". That is not correct. I did suggest that the logical outcome of Mr. Pilgrim's approach is a society where "deviants" would get locked up; but I did not say that Mr. Pilgrim himself realized this or consciously held such views. Mr. Otter seems to think, however, that in any case pro-prison views are perfectly compatible with anarchism. He may be right in saying that various people known as anarchists have not been against prisons, but as far as I am concerned an anarchist prison is a contradiction in terms.

Mr. Otter argues that since neither "political", "urbane", nor "civilized" will strictly do as translations of the Greek word *politikon*, it is "perfectly accurate" to render the word as "social"—a thumping *non-sequitur*. In his next sentence "perfectly accurate" becomes merely "fair". However, as Mr. Otter so rightly says, *politikon* refers to life in a *polis* or city-state. It does not refer to life in a society, of which the Greeks had no experience. To translate the word as "social" is therefore very misleading; and I quoted Aristotle's dictum, rather than Kropotkin or Malinowski, precisely because this translation has misled so many people (including perhaps Kropotkin and Malinowski). On the other hand "political", although not strictly equivalent, at least reminds us of the *polis*, and is therefore to be preferred. (Strictly, of course, *politikon* is untranslatable.) As for *anarkhia*, it is true that this name was given by the Athenians to the year of the "thirty tyrants" (404 BC) during which they had no *arkhon*, but it is quite wrong to regard that special usage as normal, or as showing the derivation of the word. The word derives from *anarkhos*, "without head or chief", and was used by Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides and others to mean, according to Liddell and Scott, "the state of a people without lawful government, anarchy". (*Akephalos*, "without a head or a beginning", was never used of peoples, though it was used in post-classical times of certain religious sects.)

I cannot see why Mr. Otter thinks a stateless but also totalitarian society is a contradiction in terms. If a totalitarian State is one which claims the right to control the individual totally, a totalitarian society is one which claims the same right. Such a society would be quite possible without a State, if social cohesion was ensured by an *élite* of social scientists backed up by a "socialized" public opinion. Society can in fact be far more totalitarian than any State, owing to what Miss Arendt has called "society's unbearable perversion of the human heart, its intrusion upon an innermost region in man. . . ." (*The Human Condition*, II, 6)

I do not dispute Mr. Otter's statement that the "socialized" anarchists regard authoritarianism as a corrupting factor in human development. However, it is one thing to be sincerely opposed to authoritarianism in principle, another to realize when one is actually being authoritarian, or tending towards authoritarianism, in principle or in practice. And authoritarianism will always be apt to creep into our thought and action, no matter how good our intentions, as long as we fail to see that it is generated, not by particular social institutions, but in the mind of the individual.

FRANCIS ELLINGHAM

## The shop round the corner

PAUL DOUGLAS

MY NAME IS HENRY HARPER and I am an out-of-work youth, who will not sign on at the Labour Exchange.

"Go and get the shopping then, do something for yer living! Parasite!" bales my mother, hair in curlers, flowered pinny, "Hoovering" on the stairs, and the Light Programme boring itself to death. All right, I will. I take my boots off the chair, drag myself up and get a list from the old woman.

"And get yerself a job while you're at it," she says.

All right, all right. I slam the door as I go out. Sauntering down the slum-like, prison-camp estate, I bump into my mate, out-of-work Will. He's a thief.

"Where you going?" asks Will.

"Shopping, you spastic—why, where are you going? Labour Exchange, by any chance?" says I.

"No," says the outlaw, "But I'll come with you."

"Right," I said.

The day was wet and sluggish and I like it like that. Wet weather makes me feel wanted.

We both squash through the doorway at the corner shop. A smell of stale tinned foods hits us, and our eyes swoon at each other. Four old scraggy bags in front stand gossiping like ignorant hens. Mrs. Tracy, the shop owner, is a mean old bitch with eyes of police kapos and thoughts of the devil.

*PAUL DOUGLAS is 17 and changed his job to become an early-morning market porter so as to attend a further education college in London.*

The shop is years old, and must have been bought by her long before the war. It stank then, and stinks now, and is falling decrepit through disease and the witch that lives in it. The windows are barely visible from the inside. Dust and boot polish advertisements have inherited the glass. Stop, the witch is coming. I hand her the note. She reaches out with her nine-hundred-year-old claws and picks a packet of Oxo cubes down, placing them on the greasy marble counter. Tins and tins of beans and spaghetti sit in rows on shelves like a bored audience in church. I think the smell of the yellow cheese and fatty ham puts life into the hole. Well something does, and it cannot be the old bitch.

Sorry, tell a lie. Lily puts life into the place. It's a very odd name for a girl to have nowadays, Lily. The only thing I detest about her is that she is common. I mean she speaks common—and sort of lives it. But her body and looks make up for all her unforgivable ways. She's thin, not bony, blonde, white teeth, and that black around the eyes gives her just the touch. Just like Cleopatra. And she's sexy, and everything's got two meanings with her. How on earth did she get a job with that obstinate old bitch?

The four hags in front turn round, stare, sum you up from head to foot—roughneck—then they nod to each other with concerned disapproval, as if you were an accident or something. The witch is building up on the counter a concoction of cauldron ingredients for my dinner tonight. I glance around the shop. "What a state," I think. Yellow newspapers on the floor. Washing powders stacked up in one corner that's suffering from damp and the rats. One light, of which there are only two, out. The other gives a brown glow.

The old witch herself is like a stale old tin of canned runner beans. My notorious friend pickpockets a Cadbury's on the sly. Lily comes in all bright and dead-looking, late again as usual. I exchange a nod with the witch and take out the rations. As we open the door the bell gives a loud persistent ring. We shut the door but it still rings. We are on exhibition now, I suppose, because the bloody door bell won't stop, and was it our fault?

Will slams it shut, then opens it, slams it again. Ring, ring, ring. Opens it—ring. Shuts it—ring. By now we come to the conclusion that the ruddy bell has jammed for ever.

Was this some kind of warning never to go to the corner shop again? Was it an evil threat from the witch? I hoped it was a sign that the place would crumble down on the five lost souls of ration books and penny bars of sixpenny chocolate. Whatever it was, we took leave pretty soon. The bell could be heard right through the town, and as we looked round in the distance at the old shop, we saw eyes piercing us through the heart, and gesticulating arms conducting, with clenched fists, a massive war on all and sundry.

I get home with the shopping. "Have you got a job yet?" asks my mother. No, not yet!" I answer. I sit down in the armchair and start reading the *Daily Mirror*.

## In a reader for the sixth form

HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER

*Read no more odes, my son, read timetables:  
they're to the point. And roll the sea-charts out  
before it is too late. Be watchful, do not sing,  
for once again the day is clearly coming  
when they will brand refusers on the chest  
and nail up lists of names on people's doors.  
Learn how to go unknown, learn more than me:  
to change your face, your documents, your country.  
Become adept at every petty treason,  
the sly escape each day and any season.  
For lighting fires, encyclicals are good:  
and the defenceless can always put to use,  
as butter-wrappers, party manifestoes.  
Anger and persistence will be required  
to blow into the lungs of power the dust,  
choking, insidious, ground out by those who,  
storing experience, stay scrupulous: by you.*

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NOTE: Enzensberger, born in Bavaria in 1929, has been called the Angry Young Man of German Poetry. This does not seem to do him sufficient justice. A note in *Poesie Vivante* (Geneva), accompanying a powerful poem on militarism and group obedience—the German text with a French translation—says that he lives in Norway now “as a refugee almost”, having attacked the Germany of today, East and West indiscriminately. Several writers have compared his work with that of the early Brecht. Five of his poems are included in the *Penguin Twentieth Century German Verse* and an interesting translation of the poem printed above appeared in *OUTPOSTS* 69 under the name of Paul Coltman.

HAROLD DRASDO

In next month's  
**ANARCHY**  
What about  
the workers?  
ask angry  
critics of  
**ANARCHY 68**

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