WHICH KIND OF "PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION"?*

A review of Det Sunne Barn (The Healthy Child) by A. M. Nørvig, and of The Problem Teacher by A. S. Neill.

Two books which seem to advocate the same thing, a free upbringing; and yet, they represent two different worlds. One is by a public school teacher, correct and irreproachable in style and content; the other by the great, independent and imperturbable Scots teacher who calls a spade a spade, who knows that his kind of upbringing is in the direction of a new kind of world where people are going to be different, where they are going to be independent personalities without fear of and bondage to authority; people who will have a better appreciation of each other, a better understanding of the real values in life, and the capacity to give themselves, in love and work.

In discussing these two books at some length, we hope to help the reader to understand that there are two very different types of modern upbringing: one is a more or less indolent reform movement, the other what I have termed "upbringing for living," an attempt really to make people capable of living and happiness.

We shall discuss first Mrs. Nørvig's book, "The Healthy Child," with an addition, namely, "and its parents."

It is difficult to evaluate a book which presumes to give parents such thorough directions for the upbringing of their children as this book does in its approxi-
mately 200 pages. But the book and its author occupy such a prominent place in public education that we find it necessary to make clear our own point of view. First of all, because of the wide acclaim it received from the reviewers. Second, because it is being used as a textbook in teachers’ education. And, last but not least, because we want to take this occasion to point out the difference between those attempts at a free upbringing which we can endorse because they really do forge ahead, and such other attempts which are apt to discredit the whole movement for a free upbringing because they do not really purpose to bring up people in such a manner as to make them free of the inhibitions from which the world is suffering.

Only that kind of upbringing which really gives freedom a chance to prove its value deserves the name of “free” and “progressive” upbringing.

The very form and style of the book show how it lacks a clear-cut point of view, how basically evasive it is, as if trying to avoid any possible controversy. The form is definitely authoritarian, something that unfortunately is found all too often in “liberal” movements. This applies both to the text and to the “Questions” and “Examples” parts of the book. Particularly dangerous is this authoritarian form in a book which is being used as a textbook for the education of teachers.

Not only the form and the style, but the content also leave one dissatisfied. After reading through the book, one is left with a peculiar feeling: inclined to be grateful for all the good advice, but—where are the healthy child and its parents? My honest impression is that not one can be found in the whole book! There is perhaps one exception, and the author herself does not know that she is dealing with a healthy child; on the contrary, she speaks of the child’s ambivalence which she attempts to demonstrate. It is a little girl who comes out with the following open and quite natural statement, “I like you a lot, Mother, but when you say ‘No’ to something I want, I get mad at you.”

But not alone is the healthy child absent from the book. There are no children at all, just examples. And not any adults either, for that matter. It is as if all that is human had been swallowed up by pure pedagogics. This is undoubtedly the main defect of the book. The consequence is that one can take any chapter by itself and correct errors in the respective fields by themselves, without any relation to all the rest. When every chapter begins with some remarks on freedom, biological and social needs, and then proceeds to give advice with regard to difficulties in the field under discussion, one gets the impression that one is dealing with a free and good education. But in reality all one has done is to correct some of the worst evils of the old-fashioned upbringing; one has not even laid a basis for a new one; all that is fundamental is treated only in a superficial manner.

This is particularly true with regard to the parents’ relationship to the child (that of the teacher is not even mentioned). The author knows its decisive importance; she also knows that one cannot fool children, that they react to the whole way of being of those around them. She knows all these things, and yet in not a single place in the book does she draw the real conclusion from this knowledge, nor does she point out to the parents that their total weaknesses, their total way of being—their structure, as we would say—is the decisive factor in the child’s development. It is just for this reason that one misses the people in this book and that it can influence parents and educators only in terms of petty reforms. The book fails to indicate the depth of the problems and the far-reaching demands they make on the parents—or society. As to the latter, the book goes no further than minor criti-
cisms. It does not really approach the problem of the healthy child. There is a really good chapter on children's play, but, on the other hand, there is also a very poor chapter in which the author shows herself to be entirely on the side of the school as against the child and the home.

A subtitle of the book is "The child's social and biological needs." To this, I would like to remark: Not only does the author consider the social needs as important as the biological needs, but, with her, the social needs come first. This is a basic error in her whole attitude. To begin with, a great many biological needs are in themselves social, particularly the need for love. Furthermore, there are many biological needs that have to be gratified in order that the organism, the living child, may remain healthy; for example, hunger and love. Therefore, the social circumstances must be adapted to these needs and should be mentioned in second place. Only when the world is adapted, to a certain degree, to the people in it will people then be able, without suffering damage, to adapt themselves to the world and to the demands of society.

That this is not a matter of hair-splitting will be seen from the anti-child attitude which the author—in keeping with her "social" attitude—assumes on subjects which are as important to the development of the child's health and vitality as sleep, sucking and sexuality.

Particularly not, since the author does not even tell "us parents" that children should not be "educated," but should simply be given the best conditions for realizing their own potentialities of development.

"Where economic circumstances are reasonably satisfactory, it is the parents' knowledge, understanding and equilibrium which determine how good or poor the child's chances for development shall be."

No, it is the parents' whole structure and way of living—conscious and unconscious—together with school, society, relatives, the whole environment of the child, which are the determining factors.

"The purpose of this book is first of all to be a help to parents in properly utilizing the given possibilities, and second, to prevent them from getting too upset when their child is not a paragon in every stage of its development but is just an average child with average difficulties in adjusting itself to a not too favorable society. And finally, there is in it a tiny bit of a hope that to some parents it may perhaps be an incentive to take up some of the common ideals, attitudes and suggestions for a sensible and badly-needed revision."

This formulation is characterized by a not quite natural modesty. The title of the book is anything but modest. The least that one could expect of a book on "the healthy child" is that it would show what a healthy child is and how poor are the average results of education compared with the child's potentialities. If one really has as one's goal the utilization of all the potentialities, one gets far beyond the author's "not-to-get-upset" and "perhaps-an-incentive" attitude. The preface contains several errors just as serious:

"In a society like ours, enormous demands are made on the child's capacity for adjustment. It has to acquire a great many cultural habits and practical abilities. It must master language and must
be informed about many things in order not to feel inferior, and, finally, it has to learn to avoid conflicts with a great many demands made by society, demands which are not always based on reason but often on nothing but tradition."

This passage contains the whole book in a nutshell. First comes the quite banal remark that the child has to "master language" (which, after all, it does by itself). With a weak protest—for deep down one is dissatisfied with things as they are—the author then takes the side of things as they are and states that the child has to learn this or that no matter how crazy it may be ("based on nothing but tradition"), simply because this is what society demands of the child. The logical conclusion is that if society demands it we have to educate children to be cannibals, ruthless egoists or slaves. According to her students, she has indeed stated in her teaching that one should always insist on adjustment to the given social demands. If, furthermore, one contends that one should be "informed about many things in order not to feel inferior" one has taken one's starting point in an entirely erroneous psychology (in the same way as did Alfred Adler). The fact is that if one realizes one's potentialities, if only to a reasonable degree, one does not feel oneself inferior; one only acknowledges the achievements of others, when they are objective. On the other hand, if one does not achieve what one feels one should and could achieve, then one feels inferior, even though one may cover it up; and one of the mechanisms for covering it up is just this "being informed." Everybody knows how much inferiority feeling even the best-informed people suffer from. What the author suggests may well serve as a compensation for all kinds of lack in personality development, but it can never lead to a healthy personality development. Quite in keeping with this, the author makes bodily and psychic equilibrium the most important postulate of health: "Growing and maturing means, in the first place, the development of the ability of the child to adjust itself to changing life conditions and to establish an ever new psychic equilibrium every time that external and internal causes may have disturbed the child's equilibrium. One should," says the author, "avoid controversy."

Elsewhere I have discussed this problem to some extent. Here I want only to state that the author's point of view is diametrically opposed to mine. What should be achieved is not the child's ability to "adjust itself," but, quite on the contrary, its ability to fight back, to force the environment to acknowledge its needs, its personality development—(of course, not to the extent of interfering with others' justified personality needs)—and the ability to do this rationally and fully, not neurotically and inhibitedly. It is here that the author shows herself to be altogether on the side of the given social conditions. This is only the logical consequence of putting social adjustment in the foreground. It goes without saying that it is always good to be able to stand even the worst conditions, but without giving up one's inner attitude, without "adjusting oneself" to the conditions; but just that is possible only under optimal conditions of personality development.

In an introductory chapter the author tries to present the general points of view with regard to the child's development and the adults' attitude toward the child. The main point would seem to be a knowledge of infantile development, the knowledge that nothing should be forced on the child for which it is not ready, and that one should give the child the right amount of freedom for the gratification of its needs.

There are several reasons why these remarks seem insipid and sterile. First of
all, such concepts as the personality of the child are not even mentioned; throughout, the author adheres to the word "child" and one feels all the time the common—and quite unjustified—attitude of superiority on the part of the adult toward the child. More than that, where the author tries to substantiate the postulate of freedom, she does this by no means from the point of view of the child's natural needs for development, its individuality and its desires; no, she professes to "an humble realization that we know too little about the inner growth of the human to be able to decide how a child should be at any given time." To Neill, this very idea that the child "should be" such and such, would be a sign of dignity in the adult which to him is the worst thing to have, if one has to do with children.

Chapter I is entitled "Sleep and Rest" but deals also with sucking and masturbation, subjects which would well deserve chapters of their own.

It is this chapter more than any other that makes this book dangerous and harmful. I cannot escape the conclusion that the author is worse than the average old-fashioned teacher or pediatrician. True enough, she mentions that "certain circles" maintain that "the demand for regular sleeping hours is an unjustified compulsion" and that "the child should sleep when it is so tired that it wants to sleep"; she admits that "there is something correct in this idea, just because every primitive need regulates itself to a certain extent" (italics mine, P.M.). Her chief argument against this is that too few children have been treated reasonably enough since infancy to escape difficulties in adjustment.

I think it can safely be stated that these "certain circles" are our circle, which is of the opinion that the principles which the author presents here are of an extremely harmful compulsive nature. I want to emphasize, therefore, that I am in full disagreement with the author's statement that all primitive needs regulate themselves only "to a certain extent." It is a basic biological law that a primitive need—unless it meets with insuperable obstacles—regulates itself. When the author argues that too few children are treated "sensibly" enough to escape "difficulties in adjustment," she defends one bad principle (see problem of adjustment, above) with another bad principle, saying, in effect, that because the children are frustrated, one should also frustrate them where sleep is concerned. This is only consistent if one is of the belief that one should avoid difficulties. This is like giving morphine to deaden pain without finding and eliminating the cause of the pain.

The author adheres to the old misbelief that crying "during the first few weeks can also be a form of motion." No; crying is a sign of unpleasure, motion in itself is a pleasurable function.

On p. 16 we find two tables charting the child's need for help; these are given in such a way that they must be considered as authoritative advice for parents. The first of these tables is the worst I have yet seen; it demands, for children between the ages of 2 and 3, fifteen hours of sleep daily: twelve at night, one and one-half in the morning and one and one-half in the afternoon. The author actually approves of compulsive rest mornings and afternoons.

Her main idea is that of training the child in good sleeping habits, right from the second month of life. "There are very few children who will persist in crying for more than an hour for 3 or 4 nights if they have never found out that crying brings food or attention; but if the child has had some such experience, it will become more than twice as persistent." This is because it has learned that it can
assert itself. Further: “Here it is also of great importance whether, from the first time the child is dressed and is allowed up for a few hours, regular sleeping hours have been established, so that it is a matter of course, without discussion (italics mine, P.M.), that undressing and washing take place at the same hour every day. It must be pointed out that any relaxation in this regularity before it has become a well-established habit, can give rise to persistent protests against being undressed and washed.” Further: “The same applies to the rest periods in the mornings and afternoons. Unless they are instituted with regularity from the very beginning and without any discussion, they will lead to conflicts between the child and the adults. The benefit of an afternoon nap is materially reduced if the child, after violent protest and struggle, is put to bed by force. The afternoon nap must be taken right after the noon meal, otherwise there is going to be too little time for play because the child must again be put to bed in the early evening and then it will have difficulty in going to sleep.” Somewhat later, the author says explicitly that it is a matter of not disturbing the “quiet building up of good sleeping habits.”

The author then goes on to say that when children get to be about 2 years old they often try to protest against “the usual bed time.” “The most frequent reason for this is that the child expresses its increasing urge for independence in forceful protests against a number of things which previously it submitted to as a matter of course.” Here it becomes quite plain that the author, indeed, knows that her purpose is that of keeping down the child’s independence and of forcing it to “submit,” even “without discussion” and “as a matter of course.” And this is supposed to be an upbringing to be a healthy child! From a passage on the same page it is evident that the author knows that it is the spontaneous child, that is to say, the very lively child, who is the adversary in her struggle.

The author, furthermore, believes that if a child protests against being suppressed, it is because the child wants to take revenge or to attract attention. This is erroneous. The child’s aggressiveness is a biological result of the repression of its pleasure. Apparently, the author is ignorant of this fact. Neither do I believe that when the aggression is also suppressed the result must of necessity be passivity and stultification. But it must be so if the suppression is to take place “without discussion” and “as a matter of course.” This misunderstanding explains also why the author again and again mentions aggression as something which the child produces in order to take revenge or to obtain certain things, e.g., affection. No, the aggression appears as a biological reaction to suppression, and is then utilized, if the cause for it is not removed, that is to say, if the child has no possibility of satisfying its need. On the other hand, if the aggression is suppressed, the result is a regular inhibition.

Then follow a number of statements covering the harmful effects of “poor sleeping habits” as a result of which the children are supposed to become “nervous, undernourished and irritable,” and if they become entrenched they may “have an influence on physical and psychic health all through life.” From this the author concludes that “the demand for regular sleeping hours and reasonable preparation for sleep” is not a “question of obedience and authority.” I can see no other explanation for such statements than that such demands are made even more irrefutable by being justified from a hygienic point

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2 Neill’s attitude toward “habits” is expressed in his saying, “The conditioned reflex is the very devil.”
of view, which the author presents without any factual knowledge. Such a point of view is bound to lead to absurd conclusions: "The germ of the insomnia in the adult lies in the small altercations at bedtime which in themselves are insignificant but which, in their totality, have the greatest influence on the child's and the adult's constitution." Further: "There is good reason to assume that a child who is treated reasonably during the daytime and who is accustomed to a definite bedtime will maintain its natural sleeping needs as a safeguard against over-exertion through the years. In any case (italics mine, P.M.), the person who has acquired good sleeping habits in childhood can stand a much greater burden before converting difficulties into insomnia than the person who as a child has already acquired a basis for insomnia."

But has the author ever treated a single adult for insomnia? Has she a trace of proof that "constitution" or "disposition" is permanently influenced by sleep conflicts in childhood? Or for the contention that the training which she calls "good sleeping habits" would lastingly eliminate any conflicts? Certainly, I do not know any either from the literature or clinical experience. In reality, quite different things cause disturbances of sleep; first of all, acute lack of sexual gratification. The remarks just quoted can have such far-reaching consequences that they must be considered quite irresponsible, particularly in a popular presentation.

Later on, two schemata are given concerning the causes of sleeplessness in children. Significantly, they both fail to mention love and sex needs, though in another place (section on masturbation) it is said that "a struggle between the pleasure drive and the fear of doing something which would shock the parents, usually disturbs the sleep of the child." It would be hard to put it more nicely.

The author can also be generous: "There would seem to be no great harm in letting a child take a doll or a teddy-bear to bed, but there would not seem to be much point in it."

There follows a section on night terrors. It is misleading more because of the way in which it is written than because of its content. The sexual causes are mentioned in the following manner: "Other children have learned that something or other is not nice but naughty, and often especially with regard to things which seem particularly attractive to them. Thus, a conflict is created between the child's curiosity, morality and urge for activity, on the one hand, and the parents' concepts of morality on the other hand." In other words, don't call things by their right names! "The child's anxiety shows that it wants to be better behaved than it is able to be. One has to be careful not to let the child achieve by its anxiety attacks what in a vague way it tries to achieve, namely, tenderness and attention; instead, one has to calm it down in a quiet, factual manner without taking it into one's bed or petting it."

This passage is again characteristic of the author: if conflicts are avoided, if the child is not given a chance to get anything it really wants, it will finally be quiet, that is, suppressed. Of course, it is preferable to satisfy the child's need for affection and attention during the day; but the very presence of night terrors is an indication that these needs have not been satisfied. The same is true of jealousy, which the author similarly mentions as a causal factor.
The next section deals with sucking. This, the author considers a "psychic defect"; she accepts as true the old warnings by physicians and dentists that finger-sucking will lead to dental and speech defects. She quotes an author who suggests prevention of the "bad habit" by "carefully watching the child during the first weeks and taking its fingers out of its mouth." Nevertheless, the author realizes that in order to treat the symptom it is necessary to eliminate the underlying cause.

Her attitude toward the pacifier is characterized in the following statement: "As a last resort, some physicians recommend the pacifier." That our attitude is an entirely different one, how we consider the pleasure aspect the most important in sucking the fingers or the pacifier, I have shown elsewhere.

Masturbation is treated on barely one page. To Neill and ourselves, this is one of the central problems of upbringing. The author's attitude is that only where it is "excessive" should one treat the underlying conflicts, that otherwise it is apt to be "temporary and entirely harmless." Her attitude, thus, is one of tolerance, without a trace of insight into the enormous importance of the problem for the whole development. According to the author, even masturbation in the infant which, erroneously, she considers to be rare, should be prevented. One of the "questions" at the end of the chapter deals with the effect of the prohibition of masturbation on the sleeping habits, another with the connection between the urge to masturbate and the urge for activity, and between masturbation and inferiority feeling. So, there is a connection there, after all! According to our experience, the problem is enormous, but this book makes it very simple: "In some cases, masturbation is a result of boredom and a desire for experimentation. In other cases, it is a consolation for some defeat in the course of the day or some blow to the ego." This is correct, and yet completely misleading. In reality, masturbation is, first of all, an essential expression of the child's strongest urge, the sexual urge. Secondarily, as a result of the inhibition of the natural expression of the sexual urge, it may be used, or rather misused, for the purpose of consolation, etc.

The following chapter deals with "Appetite and Table Manners," two subjects which the author seems to consider of equal importance.

True, she seems to endorse to some extent the correct point of view that not hunger but appetite is what makes us eat. But, on the one hand, this point of view is not expressed consistently, and on the other hand, it is nullified by the constant insistence on eating habits. The more important the eating habits, the more is the pleasure in eating reduced. In the section on the refusal to eat we find again the author's consistent tendency to put the secondary first, namely, the way the child utilizes its inhibitions, and to put the primary thing last, namely, the inhibition of the function itself. This may create an unfortunate bias in the reader's mind. The way the whole subject is treated will at best lead to a correction of only the very worst mistakes that are commonly made in this respect; it is almost "harmless"—up to the point where the author, approvingly, quotes Dr. F. H. Richardson's "Exact directions concerning the refusal to eat." This method is so brutal that in future times it will stand out as a horrible example. After a physician has found

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3 Translator's note: The New York Times, of February 8, 1942, carried the following notice: "An attachable sleeve for children which prevents thumb sucking won a patent (No. 2,271,580) for Margaret S. Abell of Berkeley, Calif. When the child lifts the hand to suck a thumb, the sleeve automatically pulls over the fingers and thumb so that they cannot be reached by the mouth."—Such inventions should be exhibited in a horror chamber of education.

4 Cf. "Sex-economic 'Upbringing.' " This Journal 1, 1942, 18-32.
that the child is not suffering from some "hitherto undetected disease" and has outlined a diet, this is what follows: "The child is put to the table five times a day, and a very small portion is put on its plate. Then one says in a friendly manner, 'Here you are,' and after that, no remarks of any kind should be made, whether the child eats or not. Its eating should be neither praised nor criticized. The child is to experience that it does not make the slightest difference to the adult whether it eats or not. After the child has been sitting at the table for a reasonable time, the food is taken away without any comment, and after this the child is not, under any circumstances, allowed to have any food until the next mealtime. With many children, this treatment works within half a day, and very few are able to carry out a complete refusal of food for two days, if the parents are really able to achieve so much reasonable 'hardheartedness.' Naturally, this has to be continued all through childhood, so that the old habits are replaced by the new ones." Now, it is of course correct to see to it that children do not eat or refuse to eat for the sake of somebody else. But this schema with its uncompromising brutality must of necessity give the child the feeling that it is being punished, and so severely, at that, that it has to give in quickly.

The other half of the chapter deals with "Table Manners." Though the author admits that it is "quite a ritual," she nevertheless considers it necessary to teach the children such a ritual. She demands of the parents that they set an example particularly in this respect. This is a dangerous demand. If the parents also have to be faultless in order to have faultless children, the adults have to suppress their own spontaneous liveliness. According to the author, this process should take place slowly, but surely: "The training starts the moment the child begins to eat by itself, and it cannot and should not be terminated until around the age of puberty. The power of the example is mightier than that of the word, and if the parents themselves cannot fulfill the demand which they make on the children, the result will be anger and irritation on the part of both children and parents." My italics here are to emphasize the fact that in the author's way of looking at things there is no room for a spontaneous development of behavior on the part of the children. This is further substantiated in the rules, questions and examples at the end of the chapter. For example, a number of times there is talk of the child being "allowed" to do this or that.

The third chapter deals with cleanliness. Again it is difficult to find the author's own viewpoint because of the vast divergencies in her statements. On the one hand, she says that "it is not abnormal if an occasional accident happens at the age of two and a half"; and on the other hand, that "as a rule, the child, in the course of the first year, establishes one or two regular times for evacuation." Further: "As with all other habit formations, it is important to develop this habit as early as possible, that is, as soon as muscles, nerves and brain centers are sufficiently developed to work together in this desired control."

That is, the author, again, recommends habit training instead of self-regulation. In addition, she quotes one of the worst pieces of advice ever given. In this case, it is Watson's proposition that "as early as the second month of life, one can hold the child in a slanting position over a potty before or after meals and thus get the child very early to react to this situation with an evacuation." There are certain limits to this procedure, though they are strange: "In no case should the child be held over the potty more frequently than once an hour." Finally, perhaps the worst of all: "If the mother does not
know just when to put the one-year-old on the potty or when to call the two-year-old in from the playground to go to the bathroom, she can make sure by having handy a table with columns for each of the 24 hours of the day on which a cross and a cipher mark the evacuation of bladder and bowels, respectively." Under such a regime, it does not matter if the whole house stands on end, if only little Johnny never wets his pants.

All in all, one gets the impression of a very early, "kindly" and persevering training to cleanliness. The author does not even mention the principle of self-regulation here, and she has no idea of the severe spasms of the pelvic floor which result from a training according to her principles and which are very difficult to eliminate. As a psychologist, she also should know the disastrous effects of too strict a sphincter training on the whole character structure—even though this training may be achieved by kindly methods. But there is not a word to be found about the significance of sphincter training for character structure.

The section on enuresis (wetting) is, in its main tendency, positive, inasmuch as making the child feel secure is considered the most important thing. It is impaired by such things as the ugly consolation to parents that "a child, if treated sensibly, may develop normally in spite of this defect." Surely, this is the rule and not the exception. On the other hand, there are a number of practical examples which all show that if the child is allowed to wet the bed, or simply that if no preventive measures are taken (rubber sheet, etc.), this will in itself eliminate the symptom. Just today I heard of such a result from a home for problem children: the simple fact that they "did nothing" stopped the symptom in two five-year-old boys.

The succeeding section deals with personal hygiene, and here we find an excellent illustration of the author's method of upbringing. It concerns a nine-year-old girl who tells her mother "gleefully" that for three days she has not washed her neck and that the mother did not notice it. Whereupon she receives the "quiet" answer: "Well, that's up to you; after all, it's you who have to go to school with a gray dirt collar around your neck. That will go nicely with your nice new red sweater!" A few days later, the girl herself came to the conclusion that "really, it didn't look nice."

In other words, she is supposed to be "nice." But healthy? And free? No, if this powerful moral pressure is to be called free upbringing, then the old-fashioned upbringing, which was honestly authoritarian, is to be preferred. This is not a phrase, it is my honest conviction, because the old-fashioned upbringing left more room for protest than an upbringing which uses only "moral" means.

Chapter IV really would deserve a review of its own. It is about play and its significance. It is splendidly positive, an experience to read. One could make any number of criticisms, but they would be quibbling. A few extracts: "Play is not only a preparation for adult work, it is at the same time an absolute necessity for psychic and bodily health." It is "the most important means of curing any kind of psychic disequilibrium ... Every time the child is so engrossed in its play that it forgets itself in the pleasure of playing, it is a step further along toward the solution of its problems ... There has been an increasing appreciation of the importance of play, while at the same time living conditions and traffic conditions have considerably decreased the play possibilities ... The child conquers itself and its small world in its play ... One should have as much respect for the child's playtime as one demands for its work time ... The child loves its own little corner ... When children's needs are better understood, we may come to the point where
parents will be ashamed if their home is arranged without consideration for the children, whereas now a great many parents are ashamed when it can be seen that the home has been played in." And from a more social point of view: "The place where a deeper understanding of the need for playgrounds would most quickly bring results is the legislature. If it were unlawful to build up whole blocks without proper playgrounds, the old settlements would also be forced to provide some facilities for outdoor play."

"A child without playmates is an unhappy child... The best help for an only child is to have playmates come to its home... It is best for a child to have playmates of its own age, together with some that are older and some that are younger... Many parents are afraid that their children will learn bad things and words from their playmates. This fear shows how little confidence they have in the child’s healthy nature and in their own ability to bring up a child. It also shows the exaggerated importance people ascribe to such external things as the use of slang words for an evaluation of character... The attraction between children is so strong that if only the adults do not put obstacles in their way, they will go out and find by themselves exactly those playmates which they need at a given period... For the child the activity, the play itself, is the important thing, and it spends its energies without any consideration of the result... If the adults take a hand in the child’s play and make such demands as that it should be finished in the way in which we demand that work be finished, the child’s attitude toward play and activity may easily be spoiled. The children must have full freedom in their play."

Chapter V deals with a relatively unimportant subject, language. On the whole, it is treated positively and correctly: "The child who is treated as a sensible being, who has a right to think and say what it wants, has a better chance of developing objective thinking... Of course, busy parents cannot always stand ready to give extensive answers to the children’s questions; but one is never too busy to say that one will talk about it when there is more time, and a question which is of importance to the child can wait a few hours."

But the section on "The Problem of Procreation" is not good. True, it says that the child’s questions should be answered in a factual way, but they are considered "pure curiosity and nothing else." Consequently, "honest and reasonable answers" make the child "lose interest in the problem." This is not astounding, because "the main thing is to make the child understand that sexuality is a natural thing, an indispensable part of life, neither nice nor ugly, but simply natural."

Clearly, we have here a kind of sexual enlightenment which completely disregards the fact that sexual life is love life and the deepest and strongest source of pleasure and happiness. It is the kind of sexual enlightenment which is called "objective enlightenment." The children are expected to and are made to "lose interest" in sexual life which is shown to be "neither nice nor ugly," not the most beautiful thing on earth, no, "simply natural."

A section on bad words is very good: "The fact is, no prohibition will keep children from swearing, once the urge for it is created."

Chapter VI is called, "The Child Learns from Experience," and deals, mostly in a very general way, with various factors in the child’s development up to and including puberty. The author says quite correctly: "The worst kinds of admonition are those that in a broad way exhort the children to live up to the parents’ ideals, to be industrious, modest, obedient, cleanly, etc." But then she goes on to say,
“Nevertheless, there are certain kinds of admonition that are necessary, particularly with small children. They are all the small reminders of things which the child as yet cannot remember, but these reminders, such as to close the door, to dry off their feet, wash their hands, to brush their teeth . . .”

The author is opposed to bodily punishment, but does not quite dare take up the fight against it. She knows the real danger: “The child, since it knows that it must love father and mother, will be ashamed of its anger and unfriendly feelings and will try to repress them.” Nevertheless, the author nowhere protests against this “must” which she herself italicizes.

The author knows that “the child very well understands that the adults can get out of equilibrium.” Nevertheless, this equilibrium remains in the dark throughout the book. The adults’ temperament and structure and their influence on the child are nowhere mentioned. She believes that the baby’s “life situation is satisfactory because things and people come to it in its bed or carriage and give it what it requires.” Exactly, what it requires, not what it wants. She realizes the harmfulness of “overprotection on the part of apprehensive mothers,” of “impractical furniture, bric-a-brac, etc.,” and of the demand for obedience. True, she considers a spite reaction normal, but only if it does not last beyond a certain length of time. One should “pay as little attention as possible to bad behavior” and “occasionally it may be necessary to isolate the child, but this should be done in a quiet, objective manner.”

Again and again, we find this “quiet, objective” suppression of “bad behavior.” This leads, in fact, to an absence of conflict, to a condition where, as it were, the child is forced to cooperate voluntarily.

In the parts concerning older children there is quite a bit of good advice, but it is remarkable that a very important observation is not mentioned: the frequent loss of warm, spontaneous contact and its being replaced by a superficial, insincere pseudo-contact. The author also performs the not infrequent miracle of discussing puberty without mentioning that it has anything to do with sexuality beyond that “it has to do with the development of the sex glands to maturity.”

Then follows a very telling example of the author as educational counselor, in the form of an analysis of the situation of a child 15 months old. This child has a tendency to get hold of everything possible. To the parents’ question as to what they should do, the author answers: “Logically, there are the following possibilities of avoiding unnecessary conflicts . . .” and mentions the following: 1) To arrange the home in such a manner that the child cannot get at the things it should not get hold of, and give it plenty of things to keep busy with. 2) To put the child into the playpen every time it goes after something which is prohibited. 3) To give it “a slight but determined slap over the fingers if it reaches for the things that are forbidden.” These three possibilities are considered equally good and nothing indicates that the author would have any objections if the mother chose the last-mentioned, that of the “training-slap” as she called it elsewhere.

The next chapter deals with “Children’s Defects and Parents’ Ideals” and shows a positive tendency: one should not force children to be industrious, truthful, modest, etc. Nevertheless, one feels that the whole thing is so vague, not only in the way it is expressed but also conceived, that it leads nowhere. The pleasure principle, for example, is formulated thus: “The urge to avoid discomforts and to seek comfort is the basic motivation in any living organism.” As if it were just a matter of avoiding “discomforts,” not all the life-negative things which ruin the
child—and humanity. It is in accord with this that the author recommends a “family meeting” in which things are thrashed out in a “quiet, objective way.” Such meetings would undoubtedly be harmful most of the time, certainly if the real conflicts ever should come up, because they would either be enormous or be drowned in what in this book is called reason. That is to say, throughout the book, ideals and morality are contrasted to reason.

The conclusion is evident everywhere: not ideals, but reason. The right thing would be: not ideals that are forced upon the child from the outside, not ideals that are at variance with reason; but only ideals which grow from inside, which are in harmony with the whole individual, and with that, also with its reason. There is hardly any demand or prohibition in education which is not being justified by reason. Only, this is most frequently a tolerating or even a life-negative kind of reason, and not a life-affirmative one.

The following statement may illustrate the author’s concept of reason: “Now, the desire to procure as many of the goods of this world as possible, be it cake, praise, recognition or sympathy, is a quite natural and general human desire.” No, indeed. Fortunately, the natural desire is to procure as much as one needs, and at the same time to ask others what they need. What the author considers natural is found only in the poor fellows—as numerous as they may be—who are never satisfied, who never can get enough, in whom the feeling of having enough has been replaced by an urge to amass things.

The last chapters I shall review only briefly because they do not bring anything basically new. In the chapter on fear, the only sexual factors mentioned are the child’s sexual interest and curiosity. But of the child’s sexual activities and their prohibition there is not one word.

One chapter deals with the school child and its parents. It is written entirely from the point of view of the schoolteacher; thus, there is hardly a critical word concerning the school, and many things are presented upside down: “The parents are the child’s first teachers. They teach it, for example, every time they show it how it should eat, greet some one, how it should dress. They also teach by their whole behavior and example. The child’s next teachers are its playmates . . .” As will be seen, the author considers life a school, while in reality one might say that the school is a—frequently very poor—substitute for life. The author states that “doubtless, the reason behind the children’s fear of examinations is the parents’ apprehensiveness, nervousness and fear.” Some of us think that the school is not entirely blameless here. On the same page is a passage which, from a psychological point of view, is almost incredible: “For a healthy, well-balanced child it is both healthy and fun to concentrate on a task, even if that task is called examination and even if there is sort of a tradition that it is something to be afraid of.”

In contrast, here are two quotations from Neill who treats the problem of examinations very extensively:

“Exams very often have a bad effect on children. The dull child acquires an inferiority that life will find it difficult to rid him of, while the bright child may get a bee in his bonnet about his prowess.”

“I have no objection to voluntary exams in the school, but I cannot tolerate the idea of compulsion. The exam is the sequel to the over-evaluation of the school subject, but no good teacher judges his pupils by their aptitude for or progress in subjects: his standard is character and behaviour, qualities that cannot be and should not be measured by examinations. Exams are popular for the simple reason that they are easy methods of discovering what isn’t worth discovering.”

In a few words, the author takes a stand
with regard to Freud and Adler. As to Freud, this is done in the usual fashion: without a real understanding but with deep respect, and avoiding the central point, the theory of sex, because, "in this book we take the point of view that inhibitions of curiosity, activity and the urge for recognition can have as serious consequences for psychic health as inhibitions of the need for love and of sexuality." How one can manage to misinterpret Freud in such a superficial manner—as if these inhibitions were left out of consideration in his theory—I have never been able to understand.

Throughout the book, but particularly in the chapter on the school, mention is made of the development of children as social beings. All these statements presume that the average individual, school child or adult, is really social. There is no inkling of the fact that this sociality may be—and usually is—only an apparent one. The author cannot possibly be ignorant of the sexual and destructive chaos which practically always is hidden behind this polished surface of superficial sociality. After all, it is this chaos which creates all the inhibitions, which makes most seemingly healthy individuals incapable of really getting anything out of life, incapable of realizing more than a fraction of their potentialities, abilities and possibilities for happiness, and therefore thwarted in their work as well as in their personal lives.

It is from this point of view that the book has to be evaluated. It is entitled, "The Healthy Child," but it does not make the slightest attempt to distinguish between real and apparent health. If the author had contented herself with publishing a collection of good advice for educators, the result would doubtless have been highly valuable. But she has written about "the healthy child" from the point of view of its "social and biological needs." This without any real understanding of either biology or sociology.

I have given a great many quotations in order to show the author's style. When I read the book through the first time, I was inclined to believe that on the whole it was positive. This only shows the author's ability to write in such a manner as to please everybody. One really has to have a very definite standpoint of one's own to be able to see how over-tolerant and indefinite the author is. Practically everyone will find his point of view represented in the book. It seems that she herself has become a past master in the art of avoiding controversy. If one asks oneself, therefore, the decisive question, How do individuals turn out if brought up according to the principles laid down in this book, one can only say: they become balanced and attain a certain degree of independence. But what will be hidden behind these surface phenomena? No doubt, it may be any one of a thousand things. Only, there is no reason to believe that it will be freedom and health.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize again that the extremely important chapter on play is splendid; considering, in addition, the many pieces of good advice, the very critical reader can learn a good deal from the book.

PAUL MARTIN
Projeto Arte Org
Redescobrindo e reinterpretando W. Reich

Caro Leitor
Infelizmente, no que se refere a orgonomia, seguir os passos de Wilhelm Reich e de sua equipe de investigadores é uma questão bastante difícil, polêmica e contraditória, cheia de diferentes interpretações que mais confundem do que ajudam. Por isto, nós decidimos trabalhar com o material bibliográfico presente nos microfilmes (Wilhelm Reich Collected Works Microfilms) em forma de PDF, disponibilizados por Eva Reich que já se encontra circulado pela internet, e que abarca o desenvolvimento da orgonomia de 1941 a 1957.

Dividimos este “material” de acordo com as revistas publicadas pelo instituto de orgonomia do qual o Reich era o diretor.
01- International Journal of Sex Economy and Orgone Research (1942-1945).
02- Orgone Energy Bulletin (1949-1953)
03- CORE Cosmic Orgone Engineering (1954-1956)

E logo dividimos estas revistas de acordo com seus artigos, apresentando-os de forma separada (em PDF), o que facilita a organizá-los por assunto ou temas. Assim, cada qual pode seguir o rumo de suas leituras de acordo com os temas de seu interesse.
Todo o material estará disponível em inglês na nuvem e poderá ser acessado a partir de nossas páginas Web.

Sendo que nosso intuito aqui é simplesmente divulgar a orgonomia, e as questões que a ela se refere, de acordo com o próprio Reich e seus colaboradores diretos relativos e restritos ao tempo e momento do próprio Reich.
Quanto ao caminho e as postulações de cada um destes colaboradores depois da morte de Reich, já é uma questão que extrapola nossas possibilidades e nossos interesses. Sendo que aqui somente podemos ser responsáveis por nós mesmos e com muitas restrições.

Alguns destes artigos, de acordo com nossas possibilidades e interesse, já estamos traduzindo. Não somos tradutores especializados e, portanto, pedimos a sua compreensão para possíveis erros que venham a encontrar.
Em nome da comunidade Arte Org.

Textos da área do desenvolvimento infantil

Texts from the area of child development

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