EXCERPTS FROM
A. S. NEILL’S “THAT DREADFUL
SCHOOL”*

HISTORICAL

This is the story of a modern school, Summerrhill, a school that is fairly well known and one that is pretty widely talked about. Every now and then I hear wonderful stories about it. The latest is that I had a child of seven whose main interest in life was water-closets. I decided to cure this child by drastic means, so I shut him up alone in a W.C. for twelve hours, during all of which he screamed and... was of course cured for ever.

There are tales of myself—that I am a drunkard, a homosexual, a Communist, a red-haired rude Scot. Again there are tales of Summerhill’s being a home for imbeciles... Less fatuous stories tell of a school where children break windows all day long... Newspaper reports call it a Go-as-you-please School, and imply that it is a gathering of wild primitives who know no law and have no manners.

It seems necessary, therefore, for me to write the story of the school as honestly as I can. That I write with a bias is natural, yet I shall try to show its demerits as well as its merits. And possibly I shall find that its demerits are only my own inner limitations transferred to my work. Its merits will be the merits of healthy, free children whose lives are unspoiled by fear and hate.

Summerhill began as an experimental school. It is no longer such; it is now a demonstration school, for it demonstrates that freedom works and succeeds. When my wife and I began it we had one main idea: to make the school fit the child instead of making the child fit the school. I had taught in ordinary schools for many years, and knew the other way well, knew that it was all wrong. It was wrong because it was based on an adult conception of what a child should be and what he should learn. It dated—and dates—from the days when psychology was an unknown science. Obviously a school that makes active children sit at desks studying mostly useless subjects is a bad school when we consider the psychology of the child. It is a good school if we agree that it is desirable to have a population of docile, uncreative citizens who will fit into a civilization whose standard of success is riches and whose average of living is wage-slavery. The trouble is that while one stage of civilization passes, child nature continues. Our idea in founding the school was to find out what this child nature was.

There were—there are difficulties. We could only study children from the upper and middle classes, because our whole scheme depended on our being able to make ends meet... Sometimes it is difficult to see child nature when it is hidden behind too much money and too expensive clothes. When a girl knows that on her twenty-first birthday she will come into £500 a year it is not easy to study child nature in her. Luckily, however, most of the present and past pupils of Summerhill have not been spoiled by wealth; most of them know that they must earn a living when they leave school.

One drawback about the children of the middle-class is that they too are often given too much money... At our general meetings in school I have more than once advocated the pooling of all pocket-money... saying that it is manifestly unfair that one boy should get a pound a week while others get sixpence. In spite of the fact that the pupils with the big incomes are

always in a very small minority I have never had my proposals carried by general vote. Children with fivepence a week will defend hotly any proposal to limit the income of their richer neighbors. And when one gets up and points out that Neill has a car while none of the staff can afford a car I know that I must be a bit of a humbug. Children have a very strong sense of justice, a fact that will be shown more fully when I describe their methods of dealing with social offenders.

I must explain that children who come to school early—say, at three or even eight, never show bourgeois tendencies; it is the spoilt child of fourteen from the conventional school that is the trouble.

At one time many of the children were problems: thieves, truants, etc. That came about because we were practically the only school that would deal with such cases. But gradually we began to have normal children, so that today among our seventy pupils the proportion of problems is, I should guess, the same as obtains in Eton or Roedean.

Well, we set out to make a school in which we should allow children freedom to be themselves. In order to do this we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction. We have been called brave, but it did not require courage; all it required was what we had—a complete belief in the child as a good not an evil being. And during sixteen years this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; rather has it become a final faith.

Today, Summerhill pupils are mostly children whose parents want them to be themselves. In order to do this we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction. We have been called brave, but it did not require courage; all it required was what we had—a complete belief in the child as a good not an evil being. And during sixteen years this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; rather has it become a final faith.

The ideal parents are those who come down and say: "Summerhill is the place for our kids; no other school will do." No other school will do because we have gone farther than any other school in freedom (with the possible exception of Dora Russell's school).

It is necessary even at this late date to explain what is meant by freedom for the child. The usual argument against freedom for children is of this kind: Life is hard, and we must train the children so that they will fit into life later on. We must therefore discipline them. If we allow them to do what they like how will they ever be able to serve under a boss? How will they compete with others who
have known discipline? I shall leave the answer till later: perhaps the book will be a sufficient answer.

Freedom is necessary for the child because only under freedom can he grow in his natural way. I see the results of bondage in new pupils coming from prep. schools and convents. They are bundles of insincerity, with an unreal politeness and pseudo-manners. Their reaction to freedom is rapid and tiresome. For the first week or two they open doors for the staff, call me "Sir," wash carefully. They glance at me with "respect" which is easily recognized as fear. After a few weeks of freedom they show what they are. They become impudent, unmanierly, unwashed. They do all the things they have been forbidden to do in the past: they swear and smoke and break things. And all the time they have an insincere expression in their eyes and in their voices. It takes at least six months for them to lose their insincerity. They lose also their deference to what they think is authority, and in six months they are natural, healthy kids who say what they think without cheek or hate.

When a child comes young enough to freedom he does not go through the stage of insincerity and acting. The most striking thing about Summerhill is the absolute sincerity among the pupils... but I grant that it has its awkward moments, as when recently a girl of three looked at a bearded visitor and said, "I don't think I like your face." The visitor rose to the occasion. "But I like yours," he said, and Mary smiled.

No, I won't argue for freedom for children. One-half hour with a free child is more convincing than a book of arguments. Seeing is believing. Yet it is necessary to point out the difference between freedom and licence. The other day I sat with Ethel Mannin in Covent Garden. During the first ballet a child in front of us talked loudly to her father. At the end of the ballet Ethel and I found other seats. Said Ethel to me: "What would you do if one of your kids from Summerhill did that?"

"Tell it to shut up," I said. "You wouldn't need to," said Ethel; "they wouldn't do it."

And I don't think they would. I forget whether in any previous book I told of the woman who brought her girl of seven to see me. "Mr. Neill," she said, "I have read every line you have written, and even before Daphne was born I had decided to bring her up exactly on your lines." I glanced at Daphne who was standing on my grand piano with her heavy shoes on. She made a leap for the sofa and nearly went through the springs. "You see how natural she is," said the mother, "the Neillian child."

I fear that I blushed. It is the distinction between freedom and licence that many parents cannot grasp. In the disciplined home the children have no rights, and in the spoiled home they have all the rights. The proper home is one in which children and adults have equal rights. No one is allowed to walk on my grand piano, and I am not allowed to borrow a boy's cycle without his permission. At a general meeting the vote of a child of six counts for as much as my vote does.

But, says the knowing one, in practice of course the voices of the grown-ups count. Doesn't the child of six wait to see how you vote before he raises his hand? I wish he sometimes would, for many of my proposals are lost. Free children are not easily influenced. The absence of fear accounts for this phenomenon, and the absence of fear is the finest thing that can happen to a child's life. They do not fear our staff. One of the school rules is that after ten o'clock there shall be quietness on the upper corridor. One night about eleven a pillow fight was going on, and I left my desk where I was writing to protest against the row. As I got upstairs
there was a scurrying of feet and the corridor was empty and quiet.

Suddenly I heard a disappointed voice say: "Humph, it's only Neill," and the fun at once began again. When I explained that I was trying to write a book downstairs they at once agreed to chuck the noise. Their scurrying came from the suspicion that their bedtime officer (one of their own age) was on their track.

I emphasize the importance of this absence of fear of adults. A child of nine will come and tell me he has broken a window with a ball. There was a time not so long ago when the government resigned, and no one would stand for election. I seized the opportunity of putting up a notice: "In the absence of a government I herewith declare myself Dictator. Heil Neill!" Soon there were mutterings, and in the afternoon Vivien, aged six, came to me and said: "Neill, I've broken a window in the gym." I waved him away.

"Don't bother me with little things like that," I said, and he went.

A little later he came back and said he had broken two windows. By this time I was curious and asked him what the great idea was. "I don't like Dictators," he said, "and I don't like going without my grub." (I discovered later that the opposition to dictatorship had tried to take it out of the cook, who promptly shut up the kitchen and went home.)

"Well," I asked, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Break more windows," he said doggedly.

"Carry on," I said, and he carried on. When he returned he announced that he had broken seventeen windows.

"But mind," he said earnestly, "I'm going to pay for them."

"How?"

"Out of my pocket money. How long will it take me?"

I did a rapid calculation. "About ten years," I said.

He looked glum for a minute, then I saw his face light up. "Gee," he cried, "I don't have to pay for them at all."

"But what about the Private Property rule?" I asked. "The windows are my private property."

"I know that, but there isn't any Private Property rule now. There isn't any government and the government makes the rules."

It may have been my expression that made him add: "But all the same I'll pay for them." In lecturing in London shortly afterwards I told the story, and at the end of my talk a young man came up and handed me a pound note "to pay for the young devil's windows." That is two years ago, but even now Vivien tells people of his windows and of the man who paid for them: "He must have been a terrible fool, because he never even saw me."

Most lying on the part of children is prompted by fear, and when fear is absent lying diminishes. I do not say it disappears entirely. A boy will tell you he has broken a window but he will not tell you he has raided the larder or pinched his neighbor's cycle valve. The complete absence of lying would be too much to hope for. I am a pretty good liar myself on occasion, and so are you, reader. I am writing this book on a ship on my way to lecture in South Africa, and I fear I have used—or rather abused—this trip generously these last few weeks . . . "Dear Sir, I regret that I cannot answer your letter in full because I am sailing for South Africa tomorrow," and what a great opportunity when I return! . . . "Dear Sir, I cannot trace your letter. It must have gone astray when I was in South Africa."

Freedom will not do away with the phantasy lie in children. Too often parents make a mountain out of this agreeable moleheap. When little Jimmy came to me saying that his Daddy had sent him a real Rolls Bentley I said to him: "I
know. I saw it at the front door. Topping car.”

“Go on,” he said, “I was only kidding.”

Now it may seem paradoxical and illogical, but I make a distinction between lying and being dishonest. You can be honest and yet a liar, that is, you can be honest about the big things in life although sometimes dishonest about the lesser things. Thus many of our lies are meant to save others pain. Truth-telling would become an evil if it impelled me to write: “Dear Sir, your letter was so long and dull that I could not be bothered reading it all,” or if it forced you to say: “Thank you for playing, but you murdered that Etude.” Adult lying is altruistic (not always), but child lying is always local and personal. The best way to make a child a liar for life is to teach it to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

Speaking a lie is a minor frailty. Living a lie is a major calamity. The children brought up under discipline live one long life lie. They never dare be themselves. They become slaves to established futile customs and manners, and they accept without question their silly little silk hats and Eton jackets, their “crocodiles” and their black stockings and straw hats. The Old School Tie symbolizes all that discipline stands for. The headmaster of a large boys’ school said to me not long ago when I asked him what sort of boys he had: “The sort that goes out with neither ideals nor ideas. They would join up as cannon fodder in any war, never stopping to consider what the war was about and why they were fighting.” That hints at the benefits of discipline to the ruling classes, doesn’t it?

This business of being sincere in life and to life is a vital one. It is the most vital one in the world really... Possibly the greatest discovery we have made in Summerhill is that a child is born a sincere creature. We set out to leave children alone so that we might discover what they were. It is the only possible way of dealing with children, and the pioneer school of the future must pursue this way if it is to contribute to child knowledge and, more important, to child happiness. The aim of life is happiness. The evil of life is all that limits or destroys happiness. Summerhill is possibly the happiest school in the world. We have no truants and seldom a case of homesickness. We have no fights—quarrels, of course, but seldom have I seen a stand-up fight like the ones we used to have as boys. I seldom hear a child cry, and that is because children when free have much less hate to express than children who are down-trodden. Hate breeds hate, and love breeds love. Love means being on the side of approving, and that is essential in any school. You can’t be “on the side of” if you punish and storm and rage. Summerhill is a school in which the child knows that he is approved of. Mind you, I make no claim that we are above and beyond human foibles. I spent weeks planting potatoes in Spring, and when I found eight plants pulled up in June I made a big fuss. Yet there was a difference between my fuss and that of an authoritarian. My fuss was about potatoes, but the fuss a disciplinarian would make would drag in the question of morality—right or wrong. I did not say that it was wrong to steal my spuds; I did not make it a matter of good and evil; I made it a matter of spuds. They were my spuds and they should have been left alone. I doubt if I am making the distinction clear. Let me put it in another way. To the children I am no authority to be feared. I am their equal, and the row I kick up about my spuds has no more significance to them than the row a boy may kick up about his punctured bicycle. It is quite safe to have a row with a child, when you are equals. Now some will say: “That’s all bunk. There can’t be equality. Neill is the boss;
he is bigger and wiser.” That is indeed true. I am the boss, and if the house went on fire the children would run to me. They know that I am bigger and wiser (am I?), but that does not matter when I meet them on their own ground—the potato patch, so to speak. When Billy, aged five, told me to get out of his birthday party because I hadn’t been invited, I went at once without hesitation, just as Billy gets out of my room when I don’t want his company. It is not easy to describe this relationship between teacher and child, but every visitor to Summerhill will know what I mean when I say that the relationship is ideal. One sees it in the attitudes to the staff in general. Corkhill the Chemistry man is “Corks” or “George.” Other members of the staff are known as May and Cyril and Lucy and Ruth. Strangely enough the only person they have kept a title for is my wife, who is “Mrs. Lins” (Lindesay-Neill). I am “Neill,” and the cook is “Maisie.”

Visitors tell me that they find the children unusually friendly. They may be just as friendly at other schools, yet I recall the time when I was Joint Editor (with Beatrice Ensor) of The New Era round about 1919. Part of my work was to visit progressive schools, and I remember the difficulty I had in making contact with the children. They were standoffish, rather like the people on this ship who are just beginning to thaw on the seventh day out. The only children who accepted me at once were the boys in Norman MacMunn’s school then at Tiptree Hall. That may have been because Norman did all his teaching with a cigarette in his mouth. Today Summerhill is possibly the only school in Britain where the teachers can smoke while they teach.

Children make contact with strangers more easily when fear is unknown to them. English reserve is at bottom fear, and that is why the most reserved are those who have the most wealth. If I had traveled Third on this ship I should have found the people much more friendly, but as a bad sailor I chose First, and as a good Scot I chose First—paid by the Transvaal Teachers’ Association. If you really want to know the difference between the reserve due to class and the unreserve due to having no class, visit Harrow one day and an L.C.C. East End school the next. The fact that Summerhill children are as friendly as East Ham children is a source of pride to me and my staff.

It must be confessed, however, that many of our visitors are people of interest to the children. The kind of visitor most unwelcome to them is the teacher, especially the earnest teacher, who wants to see their drawing and written work. The most welcome visitor is he or she who has good tales to tell—of adventure and travel or, best of all, of aviation. A boxer or a good tennis player is surrounded at once, but visitors of theory, be it Communism or Oxford Groupism, are left severely alone.

It is worth mentioning that a free education does not produce Communists and rebels generally. It may be due to the class of pupils—they have never had to experience slavery or poverty—but more likely it is due to child nature itself. Childhood is playhood, and the play period lives longer than is generally supposed. Interest in politics is an adult interest. It comes to this that children live for the day. Tomorrow is too far away to be of importance to them. That is why time is long in childhood. When you are ten, a year is a long, long time, but when you are fifty the years pass at an alarming speed.

This playhood business has worried me a lot. I find it impossible to get youths of seventeen to help me plant potatoes or weed onions. They will spend hours decoking motor engines or washing cars or making radio sets, but anything to do
with weeding or shovelling sand is far away from their interest. It took me a long time to accept this phenomenon. "The lazy louts—when I was their age, etc . . . ." The truth began to dawn on me when one day I was digging my brother's garden in Scotland. I didn't enjoy the job, and it came to me suddenly that what was wrong was that I was digging a garden that meant nothing to me. And my garden means nothing to boys, whereas their motor bikes mean a lot. True altruism is a long time in coming, and it never loses its factor of selfishness.

Small children have quite a different attitude to work. Summerhill juniors, from three to eight, will work like Trojans mixing cement or carrying sand or cleaning bricks, and work with no thought of reward. They identify themselves with grown-ups and their work is a play phantasy worked out in reality. From the age of eight or nine until nineteen or twenty the desire to do manual labor of a dull kind seems to be wanting. I speak of the masses; individuals remain workers right through this fallow period.

Small children live a life of phantasy, but they carry it over into action. The phantasy life persists in adolescence, but action is less common. Boys of eight to fourteen certainly carry their phantasies into action, for if they aren't playing gangsters and bumping people off they are flying all the skies in their wooden airplanes. From fourteen onwards the fallow period is most apparent, both in boys and girls. Small girls go through a gangster age also, but it does not take the form of guns and swords. It is more personal. Mary's gang objects to Nellie's gang, and there are rows and hard words. Boys' rival gangs are play enemies, while girls' gangs are more apt to be real enemies. This makes small boys more easy to live with than small girls. The boys are primarily interested in things, the girls in people. On a good day you may not see the boy gangsters of Summerhill. They are in far corners intent on their deeds of derring do. But you will see the girls. They are in or near the house, and never far away from the grown-ups. But you will often find the art room full of girls painting and making bright things with fabrics. In the main I think that the small boys are more creative, at least I never hear a boy say he is bored because he doesn't know what to do, whereas I sometimes hear girls say it.

I possibly find the boys more creative than the girls because the school may be better equipped for boys than for girls. Girls of ten and over have little use for a workshop with iron and wood; they have no desire to tinker with motorcycle engines, nor are they attracted by electricity or radio. They have their art work, which includes pottery, linoleum cutting, painting, sewing work, but that is not enough. They need a better cooking outfit than they have (although boys are just as keen on cooking as girls are). The girls need—now, really, what do they need? As a mere man I don't know. I see them writing and producing their own plays, making their own dresses and scenery . . . Branwyn, aged nine, produces excellent ballets, and the acting talent of the girls is of a high standard. The girls appear to frequent the chemistry lab. just as often as the boys do, and when I come to think of it, the workshop is about the only department that does not attract girls from nine upwards. The girls take a less active part in school meetings than the boys do, and I have no ready explanation to give for this fact. A girl is usually more sensitive than a boy. She is easily squashed by ridicule or sarcasm. Girls are just as keen on general meetings as boys are, but, as I say, they take a less active part. The inferiority complex takes a different form in boys and girls. The girl retires behind her inferiority, while the boy overcompensates for his inferi-
ority by making a brave show of not caring. Thus at a meeting, when Jean is howled at she is likely to retire into her shell, whereas Dave will shout louder than his opponents, and in the end surmount his defeat. Humor comes into it. Girls have as much sense of humor as boys, but they seldom use humor to protect themselves as boys do. Some boys defend themselves in this way with success. I have seen Dave being tried for some anti-social act, but by giving his evidence in a hilarious way, he gets the appreciation of the mob, and succeeds in getting only a minor punishment. A girl never does this; she is ever too ready to see herself in the wrong. Even in the most enlightened homes the girls suffer from the general inferiority that our society forces on womanhood. In a capitalist world women are possessions, and the fact that most married women are economically dependent on their husbands must make all women feel inferior. The girls from Summerhill will, most of them, have jobs which they will carry on after marriage, so that their inferiority is not a personal one so much as a general one.

The usual criticism of co-education is that boys and girls have different capacities for learning. This criticism does not apply to Summerhill where learning is not a fetish, where indeed learning is optional. This subject of learning is important enough to have a new chapter for itself.

Lessons in Summerhill are optional. Children can go to them or stay away from them—for years if they want to. There is a time-table for the staff, and the children have classes according to their age usually, but sometimes according to their interests. Personally I do not know what type of teaching is carried on, for I never visit lessons, and have no interest in how children learn. We have no new methods of teaching because we do not consider that teaching very much matters.

Children who come as infants attend lessons all the way, but pupils from other schools vow that they will never attend any beastly lessons again. They play and cycle and get in people’s way, but they fight shy of any lessons. This sometimes goes on for months, and the recovery time is proportionate to the hatred their last school gave them. Our record case was a girl from a convent. She loafed for three years. The average period of recovery from lesson-aversion is three months.

Strangers to the idea of freedom in the school will be wondering what sort of a madhouse it is where teachers smoke while they teach and children play all day if they want to. Many an adult says: “If I had been sent to a school like that I’d never have done a thing.” Others say: “Such children will feel themselves heavily handicapped when they have to compete against children who have been made to learn.” I think of Jack who left us at the age of seventeen to go into an engineering factory. One day the managing director sent for him.

“You are the lad from Summerhill,” he said. “I’m curious to know how such an education appears to you now that you are mixing with lads from the old schools. Suppose you had to choose again, would you go to Eton or Summerhill?”

“Oh, Summerhill, of course,” replied Jack.

“But why? What does it offer that the Public Schools don’t offer?”

Jack scratched his head. “I dunno,” he said slowly; “I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence.”

“Yes,” said the manager dryly, “I noticed it when you came into the room.”

“Lord,” laughed Jack, “I’m sorry if I gave you that impression.”

“I liked it,” said the director. “Most men when I call them into the office fidget
about and look uncomfortable. You came in as my equal. By the way, what department would you like to change into?"

This story shows that learning does not matter, that only character matters. Jack failed in his Matric because he hated all book learning, but his lack of knowledge about Lamb’s *Essays* or the Trigonometrical Solution of Triangles is not going to handicap him in life.

All the same there is a lot of learning in Summerhill. I don’t suppose a group of our twelve year olds could compete with a State school class of equal age in, say, neat handwriting or spelling or vulgar fractions. But in an examination requiring originality our lot would beat the others hollow. We have no class examinations in the school, but sometimes I set an exam for fun. In my last paper appeared the following questions:

Where are the following: Madrid, Thursday Island, yesterday, God, love, my pocket screwdriver (but, alas, there was no helpful answer to this one), democracy, hate, etc.

Give meanings for the following—the number shows how many are expected for each:—Hand (3) . . . only two got the third right—the standard of measure for a horse. Bore (3) . . . club bore, oil well bore, river bore. Shell (3) . . . seaside, “That was Shell that was,” undertaker’s word for coffin. Brass (4) . . . metal, cheek, money, department of an orchestra . . . “The stuff that Neill is stingy with in his workshop” was allowed double marks as metal and cheek.

Translate Hamlet’s To be or Not to be speech into Summerhillese.

These questions are obviously not intended to be serious, and the children enjoy them thoroughly. New-comers, on the whole, do not rise to the answering standard of pupils who have become acclimatized to the school, not that they have less brain power, rather because they have become so accustomed to work in a serious groove that any light touch puzzles them.

This is the play side of our teaching. In all classes much work is done, and if for some reason or another a teacher cannot take his or her class on the appointed time there is usually trouble. David, aged nine, had to be isolated the other day for whooping cough. He cried bitterly.

“T’ll miss Roger’s lesson in Geography,” he protested furiously. David had been in the school practically from birth, and he has definite and final ideas about the necessity of having his lessons given to him. A few years ago someone at a meeting proposed that a culprit should be punished by being banished from lessons for a week. The others protested on the ground that the punishment was too severe.

My staff and I have a hearty hatred of all examinations, and to us the Matric. is anathema. But we cannot refuse to teach children their Matric. subjects. Obviously as long as the thing is in existence it is our master. Hence Summerhill staff is always qualified to teach to the Matric. standard. Not that many children want to take Matric.; only those going to the university do so. I do not think they find it especially hard to tackle this exam. They generally begin to work for it seriously at the age of fourteen, and they do the work in about three years. I don’t claim that they always pass at first go. The more important fact is that they try again.

Boys who are going in for engineering do not bother to take Matric. They go straight to training centres of the Faraday House type. They have a tendency to see the world before they settle down to business or university work. The story of Derrick Boyd may become typical of the adventurous spirit that free education encourages. He came at the age of eight and left after passing his Matric. at eighteen. He wanted to be a doctor, but his father
could not at the time afford to send him to the university. Derrick thought that he would fill in the waiting time by seeing the world. He went to London docks and spent two days trying to get any job—even as a stoker. He was told that too many real sailors were unemployed, and he went home sadly. Soon a fellow-schoolmate (of Summerhill) told him of an English lady in Spain who wanted a chauffeur. Derrick seized the chance, went out to Spain, built the lady a house or enlarged her existing house, drove her all over Europe, and then went to the university. The lady decided to help him with his university fees and living. After two years the lady asked him to take a year off to motor her to Kenya and there build her a house. He is there now, and the latest news is that he is to finish his medical studies in Capetown.

Larry, who came to us about the age of twelve, passed Matric. at sixteen and went out to Tahiti to grow fruit. Finding this an unpaying spec. he took to driving a taxi. Later he passed on to New Zealand, where I understand he did all sorts of jobs, including driving another taxi. He passed on to Brisbane University, and three weeks ago I had a visit from the Principal of that university, who gave an admiring account of Larry’s doings. “When we had a vacation and the students went home,” he said, “Larry went out to work as a laborer on a sawmill.”

But I promised to be as honest as I could, and I must confess that there are Old Boys who have not shown enterprise. For obvious reasons I cannot describe them, but our successes are always those whose homes are good. Derrick and Jack and Larry had parents who were completely in sympathy with the school, so that the boys never had that most tiresome of conflicts, the thought: Which is right, home or school? And looking at the children we have today I am convinced that the successes will be those whose parents are in agreement with us—when the child comes young enough.

Home and school must be a unity. Mental conflict will handicap a child for life. I think of one unsuccess, a boy whose parents were religious and moral. At school that boy could never settle the doubt about school vs. home, and he went out to face life with this doubt held ready to attach to every decision in life. The boy may have had natural ability, but he never showed it, he was so much inhibited.

Other comparative failures have been children who have been pushed on by their parents. In such cases the child becomes resentful, and unconsciously is determined that his parents will not win.

I suddenly see a brilliant opportunity for critics. Ah, this man claims the success for his school when they succeed, and when they are duds he blames the parents! It is not quite true, for as I have said the success is the product of home and school combined. What is true is that only the child without fears and conflict will meet life in the spirit of adventure, and if a home gives fears and conflicts it is a bad home.

In connection with the bad home I shall digress a little on to the question of homesickness. Homesickness is always the sign of a bad home, a home in which there is a lot of hate. The homesick child longs, not for the love of home, but for the strife of home, and for the protection of home. That sounds paradoxical, but it isn’t when we reflect that the more unhappy the home is the more the child seeks protection. He has no anchor in life, and he exaggerates the anchorage he calls home. Absent from it he idealizes it and longs, not for the home he knows, but for the home it has been to him in his wishes.

To return to learning, parents are slow in realizing how unimportant the learning side of school is. Children, like adults, learn what they want to learn in life, but all the prize-giving and marks and
exams sidetrack the personality. Only pedants can claim that learning from books is education. Books are the least important apparatus in a school. All that any child needs is the Three R's; the rest should be tools and clay and sports and theatres and paints—and freedom.

The question arises: Do girls really flourish under a system of freedom as easily as boys do? Do the girls show desires to see the world as stokers or taxi-drivers? So far we have had only two girls who came as infants and left as true products of Summerhill. One is a B.A. (Psychologist) and the other is a chemist. Whether it be that life holds less adventure for women than for men, our girls on the whole do not go off on wild schemes. We are still at a stage when life holds more for men than for women. The economic market for women is not a wide one. Dull jobs there are, of course, jobs in offices and shops. Economic necessity may send our girls into dull jobs, but they are more likely to go in for the stage or art or medicine. At the moment two old girls are at art schools in London, but today there is no living in art except the commercial kind—advertising and general poster work. I know of men well known in the poster world, who cannot live by their art.

Summerhill has had comparatively few girls who made, as it were, the whole course. This is not easy to account for. Up to a few years ago girls were apt to come late to school; we had lots of failures from convents and girls' schools, and we have never accepted a child who came late as a true example of a free education. These girls who came late were usually children of parents who had no appreciation of freedom (if they had had their girls would not have been problems), and when the girl was cured of her special failing she was whisked off to "a nice school where she will be educated." But for the past six or seven years we have been getting girls from homes which believed in Summerhill, and a fine bunch they are too, full of beans and originality and initiative.

We have lost girls occasionally for financial reasons, sometimes when their brothers were kept on at expensive schools. The old tradition of making the sons the important ones in the family dies hard. We have also lost both girls and boys through the possessive jealousy of the parents, who fear that the children should give their home love to their school.

But this chapter is one on learning. I have drifted away from the subject because it means so much to me. The most hopeful thing about the parents now is that they never ask me what Johnnie is learning. They do not have to ask how Johnnie is. They see—and hear.

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Editor's Note: In the last issue, we had to leave out a section of the Excerpts from A. S. Neill's "THE PROBLEM TEACHER" for reasons of space. This section follows here:

THE TEACHER AND EXAMINATIONS

Exams are a test of knowledge, and if one holds that knowledge is not the most salient feature in school, one is handicapped in treating the topic of examinations. Problem teachers magnify the importance of examinations, and the worst kind of teacher is he who boasts of his successes in the examination room.

Examinations are the means by which age controls youth. Every boy or girl who sits Matric is conforming to the laws of the old, because without conformation the door is shut to many a career. Because this
Exam is the bugbear of education let us consider it. The candidate must pass in five subjects, and pass them all at one sitting. That of course is a cruel and inhuman rule, for there is no rhyme or reason why a lad who fails in Maths should have to sit four other subjects when he tries again months later. The candidate has a choice of subjects within certain limits, and certain subjects are compulsory. English is one, so that a youth who is mathematical and whose only interest is in electricity has to study Lamb's Essays and a Shakespeare play before he is allowed to enter his life's subject.

The question arises: How are we to select our students for the universities if we abolish the Matric and the School Leavings? And if we do abolish it, how about the man who wants to be a doctor? Are we to let him loose on society without testing his capabilities and knowledge in any way? Awkward questions to answer.

Under a system that crowds students into large classes the examination way is possibly the only practical one. But if students could work always with their professors in small groups the examination might well give place to a system wherein the professor's estimate of the student would be the equivalent of the exam. In business we do not set exams: a man is promoted when he shows that he knows his subject, and the chief of a factory does not need to examine a youth when he promotes him from the lathe to the designing room. The chief objection to any such system would be that a professor might allow personal factors to warp his judgment, and might be unjust to the youth he did not like. One way out of this difficulty would be to have a freedom to change from one teacher to another.

This system is used in schools but not wholly. In the Leaving Certificate the teacher's estimation of a pupil is taken into account, and that is a real advance in measuring educational ability (within the narrow limits allowed to ability).

But what about Matric? I should abolish it lock, stock, and barrel. Failing that I should make it an oral conversation between examiner and candidate. In all humility I should take on the task of telling in ten minutes' conversation whether a youth is capable of taking a university degree or not.

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. In the larger life outside the school we are not judged by the percentage of marks we make.

Since exams are not likely to be abolished for a long time, I have a practical proposition to make. It is this: that every teacher be compelled to sit Matric every time his students go forward for that exam. That would give them a fresh, if fearful, orientation to the examination system. Personally I could not pass Matric. I might scrape through in English, Maths, and German, but could not possibly pass in any other subjects. How salutary it would be for the children of a secondary school to learn that their Maths master had failed in four subjects... including Maths!

Teachers should realize that success in life has little or nothing to do with trumpery little examinations. With the exception of university professors there is hardly a man of merit who has attained his eminence by passing exams. The great writers, the artists, the composers, the statesmen, the actors, the teachers... their success is due to factors that no examination can touch. Examinations may be useful in the selection of the second-best in life, but that is about all they can do.

The examination has a deep motive behind it: it concentrates the interest of the dispossessed classes on the minor successes
of life: it dresses up the pedagogical goose in the feathers of a swan. It distracts the attention of the people from things that matter. It is the gilt medal that royalty, in its munificence, bestows on the humble subject for loyalty: it is the gewgaw that the imperialist hands out to the ignorant savage, who values a glass bead higher than his pearls and gold. Examinations play a part in the keeping of the people down, for they form a link in the chain of snobbery that binds the lower orders so tightly.

They have too a religious significance, a moral element. The great and final examination takes place at the Judgment Seat, and the examination dream usually betrays a fear of death and punishment... I have found more than once in analyzing young students that the passing of an exam was linked up with the desire to overcome the habit of masturbation. This is an alarming discovery: it makes the exam ideal not only futile but soul-destroying and guilt-forming. I am convinced that, behind the rational idea that the exam selects the clever, is the unconscious moral idea that the exam separates the sheep from the goats. Children have the uncanny ability to ignore the rational and feel the irrational, and no child who has been taught to fear God can sit an exam without unconscious fears being aroused. We read sometimes of students who are so depressed after failing in an exam that they commit suicide. In such cases the exam itself is only the Serajevo shot that started the Great War: the suicide is the result of the moral failure that the failure in the examination symbolized. The self-destruction is punishment for sexual failure, or rather failure to overcome sex temptation.

That brings me to my final criticism of examinations. They concentrate on what is in the head, and the million times more important question of what is in the heart is ignored. They deal with the minor conscious, and sidetrack the major unconscious. This aspect requires a chapter to itself.

So long as ours is a class society I cannot see how the teacher is to rise above class. So long as Lady Bountiful lives in the manor, I cannot see how the village schoolmaster is to have a proper self respect. One of my painful memories is that of an interview with the local squireess who complained because a boy had not touched his cap to her. I tried to explain to her that I was astounded, because I had taught the boys to lift their caps to her and to the woman who did the school charring.

In a definite manner you are preparing the children for this outside standard of living; by making schooling competitive with marks and prizes and examinations, you are preparing the child for the destructive competitiveness of capitalism, where it is a case of deil tak the henmast. I have suggested earlier in this book the reason why this is so, the reason that the schools are made to subserve the motives of the ruling class. Naturally the ruling class has no intention of changing this system which produces servants and sycophants. But the teaching profession could change it if it were a united profession, conscious of its position and its exploitation, conscious that it was doing the dirty work of its masters. It could change it if the young men and women of the profession refused to allow it to be ruled by the old men, refused to elect only elders to the executive posts in the National Union of Teachers.
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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