EXCERPTS FROM

A. S. NEILL’S “THAT DREADFUL SCHOOL”

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THE PRIVATE LESSON (Continued)

There sometimes arises a jealousy about P.Ls. . . . “Why should Mary get P.Ls. and not me?” There have been cases in which girls have deliberately and consciously behaved as problems merely to be included in the P.L. list. One of them smashed some windows and when asked what her idea was, replied: “I want Neill to give me P.Ls.” It is usually a girl who behaves in this way, a girl whose father has not, in her estimation, paid sufficient attention to her. Naturally I am the father symbol for all the children, and my wife is the mother symbol. Socially my wife fares more badly than I do, for she gets all the unconscious hate of mother displaced on to her by the girls, while I get their love. The boys give their mother love to my wife and their father hate to me, but boys do not express hate so easily as girls. That is due to their being able to deal so much with things instead of with people. A boy kicks a ball while a girl spits catty words at a mother symbol. But to be fair I must say that it is only during a certain period that girls are catty and difficult to live with—the pre-adolescent and the first year of adolescence period, and not all girls go through the stage; much depends on the previous school and more still on the mother’s attitude to authority.

In the P.Ls. I point out relationships between reactions to home and school. Any criticism of me I translate as one of father; any accusation against my wife I show to be one against mother. I try to keep analysis objective, that is I do not enter into subjective depths in the Jung and Silberer manner. That would be unfair to children. There are occasions, naturally, when a subjective explanation is necessary, as in the case of Jane recently. Jane, aged thirteen, went round the school telling various children that Neill wanted them. I had a stream of callers . . . “Jane says you want me.” I told Jane later that sending others to me meant that she wanted to come herself.

What is the technique of a P.L.? How do I begin with a new pupil? I have no set method. Sometimes I begin with a question: “When you look in the glass do you like your face?” The answer is always no. “What part of your face do you hate most?” The invariable answer is: “My nose.” Adults give the same reply. The face is the person so far as the outside world is concerned. We think of faces when we think of people, and we look at faces when we talk to people. So that the face becomes the outside picture of the inner self. When a child says he dislikes his face he means his personality, so that my next step is to leave the face.

“What do you hate most in yourself?” I ask, and usually the answer is a corporal one . . . “My feet are too big.” “Too fat.” “Too little.” “My hair.” I never give an opinion, never agree that he or she is fat or lean, nor do I force things. If the body is of interest we talk about it until there is nothing more to be said. Then we go on to the personality.

With young children the technique is eclectic. I follow the child’s lead. A typical first P.L. with a six-year-old girl is that of Margaret. She comes into my room and says: “I want a P.L.”
"Righto," I say. She sits down in an easy chair.

"What is a P.L.?” she asks.

"It isn’t anything to eat," I say, "but somewhere in this pocket I have a carmel . . . ah, got it," and I give her the sweet.

"Why do you want a P.L.?" I ask.

"Evelyn had one and I want one too."

"Good. You begin it. What do you want to talk about?"

"I've got a dolly. (Pause.) Where did you get that thing on the mantelpiece? (She obviously does not want to wait for an answer.) Who was in this house before you came?"

Her questions point to a desire to know some vital truth, and I have a good suspicion that it is the truth about birth.

"Where do babies come from?" I ask suddenly.

Margaret gets up and marches to the door. "I hate P.L.s.,” she says, and departs, but a few days later she asks for another P.L., and so we progress.

Little Tommy, aged six, also did not mind P.L.s. so long as I refrained from mentioning "rude" things, and for the first three sessions he went out indignantly, for I knew that only rude things interested him. He was one of the victims of the masturbation Verbot.

It will be seen that the P.L.s. are really a re-education. Their object is to lop off all complexes given by morality and fear. Many children never have them and do not want them—the children who have been properly brought up without parental lies and lectures. I say that a free school could be run without them, for they merely speed up the re-education by a scavenging spring cleaning before the summer of freedom.

I find that analysis does not work at once. The analyzed person does not benefit completely for some time, usually about a year. Hence I never feel pessimistic about older pupils who leave school in what we might describe a half-baked psychological condition. There was Tom, sent to us because he had been a failure at his Public School. I gave him a year's intensive analysis, and there was no apparent result. When he left Summerhill he looked like being a failure all through life. But a year later his parents wrote that he had suddenly decided to be a doctor and was studying hard at the university. Bill seemed a more hopeless case. His analysis took three years. He left school apparently an aimless youth of eighteen. He drifted about from job to job for over a year, and then he decided to be a farmer. All reports say that he is doing well and is keen on his work.

The same sort of experience happens to adults who have been analyzed. It seems that after analysis has swept away the accumulation of dead litter that has warped life, there is a fallow period, a period of emptiness: the outworn emotions have been got rid of but nothing has taken their place. It is not the analyst's job to attempt to fill that void; the patient must do that for himself. And my experience is that he does it every time.

A DAY IN SUMMERHILL

Breakfast is from 8.15 to 9, and the staff and pupils fetch their breakfast from the kitchen hatch which is opposite the dining room. Beds are supposed to be made by 9.30 when lessons begin. At the beginning of each term a time-table is posted up. Children are divided into classes according to their age and interest; the classes being called by Greek letters. Thus Corkhill in the laboratory may have on Monday the Betas, on Tuesday the Gammas and so on. Max has a similar time-table for English, Cyril for Mathematics, Roger for Geography, my wife for History. There is, of course, no compulsion to attend lessons, but if Jimmy comes to English on Monday and does not make an appearance again until the Friday of the following
week, the others quite rightly object that he is keeping the work back, and they may throw him out.

Lessons go on until one, but the infants and juniors lunch at 12.30. The school has to be fed in three relays, and the staff and seniors sit down to lunch at 1.45. Afternoons are completely free for everyone. What they all do in the afternoon I do not know. I garden, and seldom see youngsters about. I see the juniors playing gangsters, but some of the seniors busy themselves with motors and radio and drawing and painting. In good weather they play games. Some tinker about in the workshop, mending their cycles or making boats or revolvers.

Tea is at four, and at five various activities begin. The juniors like to be read to; the middle group likes work in the art room — painting, linoleum cuts, leather work, basket making, and there is usually a busy group in the pottery; in fact the pottery seems to be a favorite haunt morning and evening. The wood and metal workshop is full every night.

There is no work, that is, no organized work, after six or six-thirty. On Monday nights the pupils go to the local cinema on their parents' bill, and when the program changes on the Thursday those who have the money may go again. Pocket money is given out on Thursday for this reason.

On Tuesday night the staff and seniors have my psychological talk. The juniors have various reading groups then. Wednesday night is lounge night, that is, dance night. Dance records are selected from a great pile, and as the lounge is next door to our sitting room I dread Wednesday nights, for the tunes that the children like are to me simply a dreadful noise. They are all good dancers, and some visitors say that they feel inferior when they dance with them.

Thursday night has nothing special on, for the seniors go to the cinema, and Friday day is left for any special event, such as play rehearsing. Saturday night is our most important one for it is General Meeting night. Dancing usually follows, and Sunday is our Theater evening.

There is no distinct time-table for handwork. There are no set lessons in woodwork. Children make what they want to, and what they want to make is nearly always a toy revolver or gun or boat or kite. They are not much interested in elaborate joints of the dovetail variety; even the older boys do not fancy elaborate joints.

A workshop is the most troublesome department of a free school. In the early days the workshop was always open, and as a result every tool got lost or damaged, for a child of nine would use a fine chisel as a screwdriver, or take out a pair of pliers to mend his bike and leave them lying on the path. I had my own private workshop separated from the main workshop by a partition and locked door. My conscience kept pricking me; I felt that I was being selfish and asocial, and at last I knocked down the partition. In six months there wasn't a good tool in what had been my division. One boy used up all the letter punches making cotter pins for his motor-cycle; another tried to put my lathe in screw-cutting gear when it was running. Polished planishing hammers for brass and silver work were used for breaking bricks. Tools disappeared and were never found. Worst of all the interest in handwork died away, for the elder pupils said: "What's the good of going into the workshop? All the tools are rotten now." And rotten they were. Planes had teeth in their blades; and saws had none. I proposed at a meeting that the workshop be locked again, and the motion was carried. But in showing visitors round I had a feeling of shame when I had to unlock the workshop each time. What! Freedom, and locked doors? It looked bad indeed, and I decided to give the school an extra workshop which would
remain open all the time. I got one fitted out with everything necessary—bench, vise, saws, chisels, planes, hammers, pliers, set squares, etc. One or two of the bigger lads sharpened up all the tools.

One day about four months later I was showing a party round the school. When I unlocked the workshop one of them said: “This doesn’t look like freedom, does it?”

“Well,” I said hurriedly, “you see the children have another workshop which is open all day long. Come along. I’ll show you it.”

There was nothing left in it except the bench. Even the vise had gone, and in what sundry corners of our twelve acres the chisels and hammers lay I never knew.

The workshop business continued to worry the staff, but myself most of all, because tools mean much to me. I concluded that what was wrong was that the tools were communal. “Now,” I said to myself, “if we introduce the possessive element, if each child has his own kit of tools.” I brought it up at a meeting, and the idea was well received. Next term some of them brought back kits of tools, and in two months these also were kicking about the grounds. I had to conclude that children are not interested in tools. Possibly it is the range of ages that causes most of the trouble, for assuredly tools mean almost nothing to small boys and girls.

Locking doors has increased recently at Summerhill. I brought the matter up one Saturday night.

“I don’t like it,” I said. “I took visitors round this morning and had to unlock the workshop, the laboratory, the pottery and the theater. I propose that all public rooms be left open all day.”

There was a storm of dissent.

“The laboratory must be kept locked because of the poisons, and as the pottery is joined on to the laboratory it has to be kept locked too.”

“We won’t have the workshop left open. Look what happened last time.”

“Well, then,” I pleaded, “surely to goodness we can leave the theater open. Nobody will run away with the stage.”

The playwrights, actors, actresses, stage-manager, lightsman—they all rose at once. Said the lightsman: “You left it open this morning and in the afternoon some idiot switched on all the lights, 3,000 watts at ninepence a unit.”

Another said: “The small kids take out the costumes and dress in them.”

The upshot was that my proposal to leave doors unlocked was supported by two hands—my own and a girl of seven, who, I discovered later, thought that we were still voting on the previous motion that children of seven be allowed to go to the cinema.

The hardest lesson we adults have had to learn is that children have no regard for property. They do not destroy it deliberately; they destroy it unconsciously. In our innocence we lined their bedrooms with beaverboard in order to make them warmer. Beaverboard is a kind of thick pasteboard, and a small child has only to see it to start picking holes in it. The beaverboard wall of the ping-pong room looks like Ypres after a bombardment. Boys seem to be more destructive than girls, possibly because they are less conscious, but destructiveness is seldom a senseless thing. The boring of beaverboard is similar to nose boring, and it is usually quite unconscious, but destruction often has a creative meaning and intention. If a boy needs a piece of metal for a boat keel he will take a nail if he can find one, but if he cannot find a nail he will use my precious Whitworth taps if one of them happens to be about the right size. A tap, like a nail, is to a child a chunk of metal. A bright lad once used a guinea whitewash brush for tarring a roof.

We have learned that children have values that are entirely different from adult values. If a school tries to uplift a child by giving it beautiful classical paintings on
the walls and beautiful furniture in the rooms, it is beginning at the wrong end. Children are primitives, and until they ask for culture they should live in as primitive environment as we can give them. Nine years ago when we came to our present house we had the agony of seeing primitive lads throwing their knives at beautiful oak doors. We hastily bought two railway carriages and made them into a bungalow with roof over all, and a sitting room between, and a bathroom overhead. There our primitives could chuck their knives as much as they wanted to. Yet today the carriages are not in a bad state. They are inhabited by boys from twelve to eighteen, and the majority of them have reached the stage of caring for comfort and decorations. Some of them keep their compartments beautifully tidy and clean; others live in untidiness, and they are mostly boys who have come from Public Schools. You can always tell the ex-Public School lads in Summerhill; they are the most un-washed and wear the greasiest flannel bags.

Girls, on the whole, are tidier than the boys. Seldom do we get a girl who won’t wash. We have one at present, age nine, just arrived from a home where Granny had a complex about cleanliness and apparently washed Mildred ten times a day. Her housemother came to me saying: “Mildred hasn’t washed for a week. She won’t have a bath and she is beginning to smell. What shall I do?”

“Send her in to me,” I said, and Mildred came in looking very dirty in hands and face.

“Look here,” I said sternly, “this won’t do.”

“But I don’t want to wash,” she protested.

“Shut up,” I said. “Who’s talking about washing? Look in the glass. (She did so.) What do you think of your face?”

“It isn’t very clean, is it?” she said with a grin.

“It’s too clean,” I said. “I won’t have girls with clean faces in this school. Now get out.”

She went straight to the coal cellar and rubbed her face black. She came back to me triumphantly.

“Will that do?” she asked cheerfully. I examined her face with due gravity.

“No,” I said. “There is a patch of white on that cheek.”

Mildred had a bath that night.

Parents too often attach far too much importance to tidiness. It is one of the seven deadly virtues, and the man who prides himself on his tidiness is usually a second-rate fellow who values the second best in life. The tidiest person has the most untidy mind. I say it with all the detachment of a man whose desk always looks like a heap of papers under a No Litter notice in a public park.

I sometimes daydream about the school I should build if I had money. It would be built by the village blacksmith, at least the department for boys and girls between eight and fourteen would be. Inspired by the wonderful pictures I used to see of school children in America building their own school, I used to think that such a way was the only way. It isn’t. Believe me it isn’t. If children build their own school be sure that some gentleman with a breezy, benevolent authority is standing by shouting encouragement lustily. When this authority is not present children simply do not build schools.

Last summer we needed a sanatorium, and we decided to build one ourselves, a proper san. of brick and cement. None of us had ever laid a brick. We started in, and a few pupils helped to dig the foundations and knock down brick walls for the bricks. But they demanded payment. We refused to give wages, and in the end the san. was built by staff and visitors. The job was too dull for children, and they had no self-interest in it. But at the beginning of this term when they wanted a
cycle shed they built one themselves without any help from the staff.

I am writing of children, not as we adults think they should be, but of children as they really are. Their real community sense does not develop until the age of eighteen or more. Their interests are immediate, and the future does not exist for them. They are so much more unconscious than we are. I know that much of the work I do has a dual motive; I dig in order to get potatoes, but I realize that I could use the time more profitably if I wrote newspaper articles and paid a laborer to dig the garden. I dig because the second motive is more important to me than newspaper guineas: I want to keep healthy. My friend, R. C. Watson, the Aldeburgh car dealer, stands and tells me what a fool I am to dig in an age of mechanics and I tell him that motors are ruining the health of the nation because no one walks or digs nowadays. He and I are old enough to be conscious of health problems, but a child is completely unconscious of health. No boy would dig in order to keep himself fit, so that in any work he has only a single motive—his interest at the time. He might justly reason thus: What’s the use of a san. to me? I’m not sick and ain’t going to be sick. But a bike shed, now, that’s different. My saddle will keep dry at nights.”

Boys and girls who would not lend a hand to mix cement, will spend days digging deep trenches in a phantasy warfare. That may be the reason why we get such good reports of the industry of our ex-pupils: they have lived out their phantasy self-centred stage in Summerhill, and can face the realities of life without any unconscious longing for the playground of childhood.

THE SEX QUESTION

Opponents of coeducation are those who fear that if you have boys and girls educated together they will sleep together. They do not say that this is behind their doubts and fears. They rationalize: girls have a slower tempo in learning, it makes boys effeminate and girls masculine, and so on. But deep down is the moral fear, which is a jealous fear. The old want the young to be moral because the old want to keep the best things in life for themselves. That is the only excuse for morality. All other excuses are evasions. Sex is the greatest pleasure in the world, and it is repressed because it is the greatest pleasure in the world.

So that every now and again an adult comes to the school and says: “But don’t they all sleep with each other?” and when I answer that they don’t, he or she cries: “But why not? At their age I would have had a hell of a good time.”

It is necessary to discuss sex as it appears at various ages. Freud has made us all familiar with the idea that sex is there from the beginning of life, that the baby has a sexual pleasure in sucking, and that gradually the erotic zone of the mouth gives place to that of the genitals. Thus masturbation in a child is a natural discovery, not a very important discovery at first, because the genitals are not so pleasurable as the mouth or even the skin. It is the parental Verbot that makes masturbation so great a complex, and the sterner the Verbot the deeper the sense of guilt and the greater the compulsion to indulge.

The well brought up infant should come to school with no guilty feeling about masturbation at all. There are few, if any, of our Cottage children who have any special interest in masturbation, because no Verbot has made the interest a guilty, hidden one. Sex to them has not the attraction of something mysterious: from their earliest time with us (if they have not been told at home) they know the facts of birth, not only where babies come from but how they are made. At that early age such information is received without emotion, partly because it is given without emotion. So it comes that at the age of fifteen or seven-
teen such children can discuss sex without any feeling of wrong or pornography.

It is the removal of the guilt complex about masturbation that makes Summerhill what a doubter would call "safe." It is this freedom from guilt that has given us a record of sixteen years without any signs of homosexuality. Some years ago a Public School boy tried to introduce sodomy, but he had no success, and was incidentally surprised and alarmed when he discovered that the whole school knew about his efforts. This absence of homosexuality is of the greatest importance. It suggests that homosexuality is masturbation on promotion: you masturbate with the other bloke and he shares the guilt with you and thus lightens your burden. When masturbation is not considered a sin the necessity to share the guilt does not arise. The root basis of the whole sex question is masturbation. When that is free the child naturally goes on to heterosexuality at the proper time. Many unhappy marriages are due to the fact that both parties are suffering from an unconscious hate of sexuality arising from buried self-hate due to masturbation Verbots. The question of masturbation is the super-eminent one in education. Subjects, discipline, order, games, all are vain and futile if the masturbation question remains unsolved. Freedom in masturbation means glad, happy, eager children who are not much interested in masturbation. Masturbation Verbot means miserable, unhappy children often prone to colds and epidemics, hating themselves and consequently hating others. I say that the happiness and cleverness of Summerhill children is due to the removal of the bogie of fear and self-hate that masturbation Verbots give.

I have said that there is no homosexuality in Summerhill. That is true, but there is in Summerhill, as in any other place where there are any children, an unconscious homosexuality during a certain stage of development. It is passive, negative. Our boys of nine and ten have no use for girls at all. They despise them. Their unconscious homosexuality makes them go in gangs, but gangs that are not interested in sex; their interest is making folks "stick 'em up!" So girls of that age go in girls' gangs; their interest is still in their own sex. Boys and girls are not much interested in each other until they are about fifteen or sixteen.

I am often asked if I have any fears that things may happen between the older pupils. I have no fears, because I know that I am not dealing with children who have a repressed and therefore unnatural interest in sex. Some years ago we had two pupils arrive at the same time, a boy of seventeen from a Public School and a girl of sixteen from a girls' school. They fell in love with each other. They were always together. I met them late one night, and I stopped.

"I don't know what you two are doing," I said, "and morally I don't care, for it isn't a moral question at all. But economically I do care. If you, Kate, had a kid my school would be ruined."

I went on to expand the theme.

"You see," I said, "you have just come to Summerhill. To you it means freedom to do what you like. You have, quite naturally, no feeling for the school, and if you had been here from the age of seven I'd never have had to mention it, for you would have had so strong an attachment to the school that you would think of it."

I never spoke to them again on the subject. It was the only possible way of dealing with the problem, for sex is not a moral problem at all.

Children who are freely brought up about sex matters have an open mind about what is called vulgarity. A week or two ago, I heard that clever artist, Max Miller, in the London Palladium. Max sails very near the wind in a breezy Elizabethan manner, but it struck me then that he gets laughs from his audience that he couldn't
have got from Summerhill. Women went off into shrieks when he mentioned ladies' undergarments, but Summerhill children would not see anything funny in them. Six months ago I wrote a play for the Cottage children, quite a "vulgar" play about a woodcutter's son who found a hundred pound note and showed it round ecstatically to his family—which included the cow. The cow swallowed it, and their efforts to get the cow to drop it were in vain. Then the boy had a brilliant idea: they would open a booth at a fair and charge a shilling for a two minutes' entry. If the cow dropped the money during your entry you got it. The play would have brought the house down in a West End music hall. Our children took it in their stride, and the actors (six to nine years old) saw nothing funny about it at all. One of them, a girl of eight, told me that I was silly not to use the proper words in the play; she meant what most people would call improper words.

Improper words! That brings us to swearing.

Swearing is of three kinds: sexual, religious, excremental. In Summerhill the religious kind does not count, because the children are not taught religion. Now most children (and most adults) swear. The army is famous for what a character of Kipling's called "the adjective," and universities and clubs (not only golf clubs) have a sexual and excremental language. Schoolboys swear secretly, and they tell dirty stories. The difference between Summerhill and a prep. school is that in the one the children swear openly, in the other secretly. It is not true that freedom to swear automatically takes all attraction away from obscene words. Our little children use such words freely and without proper context, whereas if a big boy or girl swears, a noun or adjective is used as an adult uses words, that is, appropriately. Sex words are used more commonly than excrement words. Our children have no feeling that water closets are funny things, and their lack of repression about excrement makes reference to it rather dull. It is different with sex. Sex is so important a thing in life that its vocabulary covers our whole life. In its mentionable form we see it in practically every song and dance. A film story without sex will not thrive. Sex appeal takes more of the national income than books and music; cosmetics sell better than concert tickets. But we must remember that underneath its mentionable form there is always the unmentionable. Behind the bridal carriage old shoe and the rice are the "unmentionables" that these symbolize. The vogue of the risqué story is entirely due to its unmentionableness. In a society that had no sex repressions the unmentionable would disappear. That is what is really happening in Summerhill: nothing is unmentionable. No one is shockable, because being shocked implies having an obscene interest in what shocks you.

Oh, but there are people who cry in horror: "What a crime to rob little children of their innocence!" Ostriches hiding their heads in the sand. Children are never innocent, thank God. They are often ignorant, and it is the depriving the child of ignorance that the ostriches fly into hysteric about. There should not be such a thing as ignorance, and the most suppressed child is never ignorant about much. His contact with other children gives him "knowledge," that dreadful knowledge that miserable little kids give to each other in dark corners. There are no dark corners in Summerhill, and the children have a really clean attitude to life.

One would think that being freely brought up the children would run about naked in summer. They don't. Girls up to nine will go nude on a hot day, but small boys seldom do. This is puzzling when one takes into consideration the Freudian statement that boys are proud of having a penis while girls are ashamed of not having one. Our small boys cer-
tainly do not want to exhibit themselves a lot, and the senior boys and girls never strip. In summer the boys and men wear only shorts without shirts, and the girls wear bathing dresses. There is no sense of privacy about taking baths, and only new pupils lock bathroom doors. Some of the girls take sunbaths in the field, but no boys ever think of spying on them. The boys are not Peeping Toms. Two years ago one of the men on the staff played tennis naked, but the government told him to put his pants on in case tradesmen and visitors came along the front drive. I saw Max, our English master, just before I sailed, digging a trench in the hockey field, assisted by a gang of helpers, ages from nine to fifteen, of both sexes. It was a hot day and Max had stripped. No child seemed to think anything about it.

I dislike any attempt to force nudism on children. They live in a clothed civilization, and nudism must remain something that the law does not permit; the very fact that the law does not permit it is bound to give children a warped attitude to the human body. I have used it myself, or got one of the women staff to use it, in order to satisfy the curiosity of a small child who had a sense of sin about nakedness.

Nine years ago when we came to Leiston we had a duck pond, and in the morning I would go out and have a dip. Some of the women staff and the elder girls and a few big boys used to join me. Then we got a batch of boys from Public Schools. The girls at once began to wear bathing costumes. I asked one, a pretty Swede, why.

"These new boys," she said. "Derrick and the old boys treated it as a natural thing, but these new boys leer and gape, and, well, I don't like it."

Since then I think that the only communal nude bathing has been done during evening trips to the sea.

Do the elder boys and girls fall in love with each other? Of course they do, but pairing off is seldom seen; if it takes place it is with those of seventeen or eighteen. There is no social attempt to jeer or rag a couple, nor are chalk marks put on the walls. The smallest children play that game sometimes, and when I came away there was a large chalked notice on the playroom outside wall: "James is in love with Sally." James is four, and Sally is three.

The frequent dancing is an excellent outlet for at least unconscious sex interest. I say unconscious because a girl may be a beauty, but if she is a bad dancer she will not get many partners.

We have found that girls who have just come to puberty do not run after the boys. It would appear that the unconscious homosexual component of girls lasts longer than it does with boys. They keep in their gangs, and their relations with the boys are ragging but quite friendly relations. At this age interest in the opposite sex takes an aggressive form. It does so with boys also, so that there is no natural propensity at the age of fourteen to pair off with each other. At this age the girls are jealous of their rights, and the superiority of the boys in strength and roughness makes them annoyed. It seems to be the age of the Masculine Protest.

The sex relations between boys and girls in Summerhill appear to me to be very healthy. One sex will not grow up with any illusions or delusions about the other sex. Not that Summerhill is a family and all the nice little boys and girls are brothers and sisters to each other. If that were so I'd become a rabid anti-coeducationalist at once.

Last night I was reading Aldous Huxley's Eyeless in Gaza, and came to a horrible chapter about a prep. school. Miserable little boys not only rag a stutterer, but also torment a boy whom they have caught masturbating. The atmosphere of that school is nauseating. The priggishness of the boys, their complete insincerity—they
seem to be sincere only in their farting exhibitions.

Our juniors have an interest in the Old English word for feces. They use it a lot—the ones from polite homes do, I mean homes that talk of No. 2 and “going to the House of Commons” (how appropriate a name!). Children like Anglo-Saxon words and more than one child has asked my why is it wrong to say “shit” in public but right to say “feces” or “excrement.” I’m gravelled if I know. I do know that excrement is to child a most important subject of study, and any suppression of the interest in the interests of “good form” is dangerous and stupid. Adults seldom realize that there is nothing shocking to a child in feces and smells. It is our shocked attitude that gives the child a conscience about them.

One persistent criticism of Summerhill is that the children swear. It is true that they swear—if saying Old English words is swearing. It is true that any new pupil will swear more than is necessary, and at our meetings a girl of thirteen who came from a convent was always being charged with shouting out the word “bugger” when she went bathing. It was impressed on her that she only did it when bathing, and that therefore she was swanking. As one boy put it: “You are just a silly little twirp. You want to swank in front of outside people and show that Summerhill is a free school, and you just do the opposite: you make people down on the school.”

In a P.L. I explained to her that she was really trying to do the school harm because she hated it.

“But I don’t hate Summerhill,” she cried. “It’s a topping place.”

“Yes,” I said, “it is, as you say, a topping place, but you aren’t in it. You are still living in your convent, and you have brought all the hate of the convent and the nuns with you. You identify Summerhill with the hated convent, and it isn’t really Summerhill you are trying to damage; it is the convent.”

But she went on shouting out her buggers until Summerhill became a real place to her and not a symbol. It is the floating population that makes swearing a social difficulty in Summerhill. Not that the old pupils are saintly in mouth, but the old-timers swear at the right time, so to speak. They use conscious control.

Children accept swearing as a natural language. Adults condemn it because their obscenity is greater than that of children. Parents must ask themselves the question: Shall I allow my children to swear openly, or shall I leave them to be obscene in dirty dark corners like the boys in Huxley’s novel? There is no half-way house. The hush hush way leads to the adulthood of tiresome commercial traveller stories and music-hall innuendoes, that is, to an obscene repressive state. The open way leads to a clear clean interest in all life. At a venture I say that our old boys and girls have the cleanest minds in England.

MANNERS

The enquiring mother sometimes expresses a grave doubt: “If I send my son here won’t he behave like a barbarian when he comes home for holidays?”

My answer is: “Yes, if you have made him a barbarian already.”

It is true that the spoiled child coming to Summerhill goes home as a barbarian for at least the first year. If he has been brought up with manners he will regress to barbarism every time—which only shows how little manners sink into a child. They are the first layer to be dropped under freedom. New children generally show marvellous manners, that is, they behave insincerely. That in Summerhill they come to have good manners is a tribute to the goodness of childhood, for we ask for no manners at all, not even a Thank You or a Please.

Again and again visitors say: “But their
manner are delightful!" Peter, who was with us from the age of eight to nineteen, has just gone to South Africa. His hostess writes: "Everyone here is charmed with his good manners," yet I was quite unconscious of whether he had any manners or not when he was with us. Clearly this business of manners should be looked into.

Firstly let us distinguish between manners and etiquette. Manners are unconscious, but etiquette is conscious. On this ship I should call the behavior good etiquette rather than good manners. We dress for dinner; we rise when a lady approaches our table; we say excuse me when we rise from a table (God knows why). It is all outer meaningless behavior. A Scot and his wife who sit at my table: they and I show real good manners. The dinner bugle goes at seven, and we sit down promptly, but many of the rich people on board do not begin to dress till after the final Roast Beef of Old England has been played for dinner, that is, they unthinkingly keep the tired stewards up till late at night. Manners are thinking of others, no, feeling for others. You must be socially conscious to have good manners. Scots, for some obscure reason, have better manners than the English, and the equality a Glasgow teashop lassie shows when she discusses the weather with you is one of good manners. Scots are poorer than the English, and it is among the poor that manners flourish. The etiquette of the rich is a protection of their possessions, but the manners of the poor are the expression of a love for one's fellows. A classless society would not need etiquette, but it would have manners.

Now, Summerhill is a classless society. The wealth and position of your father does not count. What counts is your personality. And what counts for most is your sociability, your being a good member of the community. Our good manners spring from our self-government, for in self-government you are constantly being compelled to see the other person's point of view.

It is unthinkable that any Summerhill child would mock a stutterer or jeer at one who was lame, yet prep. school boys sometimes do both—boys who say Please, and Thank You and Excuse me, sir. Manners are a matter of sincerity.

I never notice bad manners amongst small children, no doubt because I do not look for them. Yet I have never seen a child rush in between two visitors who were talking together. They never knock at my sitting-room door, but if I have visitors they simply retire quietly, often saying, "Sorry." A good compliment to their manners was recently given by Watson, who comes to see us often and always in a different car, for his trade is selling used cars. He said to me: "I've come here with cars for the last three years, and never once has a kid scratched a wing or attempted to enter a car. And this is the school where the kids are alleged to break windows all day long."

I have already mentioned their friendliness to visitors. This friendliness might be classed as good manners, for I have never heard the most antagonistic visitor complain of being molested in any way by any pupil who has been six months in the school. Our theater performances are marked by excellent audience manners always. Even a bad turn or play is applauded more or less—naturally less, but the general feeling is that the actor or dramatist has done his or her best, and should not be censured or despised.

In the dining room etiquette is not a strong point. Feeding is so intensive and instinctive an affair that children become more or less unconscious when tucking in. Table manners come later, come without forcing or encouragement. Parents who are strict at table simply give children hate complexes about food, and it is possible that the complexes children often have about certain foods are linked up with silly parental ideas of table manners. A child should have the same choice of food
that an adult has; he should never be forced to eat what he doesn’t like. In Summerhill we always give even the smallest child complete freedom to choose from the daily menu, and we always have a choice of three middle-course dishes for dinner. One result is, of course, that we have less wastage than most schools have, but that is not our motive: we want to save the child rather than the food.

Our dining room is a noisy place. Children, like animals, are loud at meal times. We only allow visitors without noise complexes to dine with us. Here I confess to cowardice, for my wife and I dine alone, but then my wife and I spend about two hours a day serving out their dinner.

Jealousy is something that has to be guarded against in the dining room. Even some of the staff are jealous when visitors receive any special dish, and if the cook gives one senior pupil asparagus the others will wax eloquent about kitchen favorites. Food is the most important thing in a child’s life, much more important than sex. This is natural, sex is something that has contact with the outside world. The sex organs are the only part of the body that requires another for fulfilment, so that all social feelings originate in the sexual organs. The stomach is egocentric, selfish, and children have not the urge to extreme social contact because their sex organs are not developed. Egoism belongs to childhood, and when allowed freedom to live itself out this egoism gradually becomes altruism. The boy of ten is far more possessive about his plate of mutton than the old tribal chief was about his women. The psychology of the child must be sought for in his guts. Naturally, for feeding comes first in life. Eating is as much a sexual pleasure as intercourse is, and in childhood it is the greatest pleasure of all. It is therefore too fundamental, too vital to be marred and perverted by table manners. The sad truth is that the children in Summerhill who have the worst table manners are those who have been brought up gently. The more Rolls-Roycey the home, the worse the table manners—and all other manners.

THE WEAR AND TEAR OF FREEDOM

I have suggested more than once in these pages that the adults in Summerhill are no paragons of virtue. We are human like everyone else, and our human frailties often come into conflict with our theories. An example is that of property. I have often said and written that parents seem to value their property more than they value their children, giving the illustration of how fuss is made if a chair is scratched or a plate broken. But in my own case I find that I sometimes put possession first. If a maid or a child drops a pile of plates I say nothing and my wife says nothing. Accidents are accidents. But if a child borrows a book and leaves it out in the rain my wife gets angry, because books mean much to her. In such a case I am indifferent, for books have little value for me. On the other hand, my wife seems vaguely surprised when I make a fuss about a ruined chisel, for I value tools and they mean nothing to her.

My wife and I are in a special and peculiar position with regard to possessions. Our only home is the school, and there we have hardly any privacy. Our sitting room adjoins the lounge, and we have to listen to every scrap and every painful dance record through the wall. And there is always a noise, for children are naturally noisy. Luckily we have grown accustomed to noise, and we are seldom conscious of it. Still, by the end of the term we are both rather tired not only of noise but also of the constant attention demanded from us. Our life is one of giving all the time, and visitors wear us out more than the children do, for they also want us to give; seldom, if ever, do we have a visitor who has something to give us. Visitors behave very much as children do. Recently
one lady sat herself down and said: "I hope you have the afternoon to spare, Mr. Neill, because I am sure you will be interested in the story of my life." I have been criticised for mentioning myself so much in my books, but it is my only chance to do so, for in daily life I cannot get a word in edgeways about myself. My life is one long give, and it should be. We must give to children. It may be better to give than to receive, but it certainly is more exhausting.

Hence it comes that the adults in Summerhill sometimes get annoyed. Not often, but occasionally. Children are not young adults; they are a different species. They love noise and mud; they clatter on stairs; they shout like louts; they are unconscious of furniture, and, if playing a game of touch, they would walk over the Portland Vase if it happened to be in their way, walk over it without seeing it. I once saw a normal happy girl burn holes with a red-hot poker on the walnut mantelpiece in the staff room. When challenged, she started and seemed quite surprised. "I did it without thinking," she said, and she spoke truly: her action was a symbolic one beyond the control of the conscious mind.

We must face the fact that adults are possessive and children aren't. Any living together between children and adults must result in conflict over things material. Children will mend the fire five minutes before going up to bed; they will heap it with coals, for coals to them are only black rocks, while to me they mean a bill of £200 a year. They will leave electric lights on because they do not associate light with electricity bills, but I cannot complain about the lights; the children, in the main, are considerate, possibly because of my frequent reminders that our district has the dearest electricity in England.

Furniture to a child is non-existent. We buy old car seats and old bus seats, but in a month or two they look wrecks. Every now and again some youngster, waiting for his second helping, will while away the time by tying his fork into knots. This is a chargeable offense, but it is usually done unconsciously or at best semi-consciously. And it isn't only the school property that they neglect or destroy: their new cycles they leave out in the rain when the newness had had three weeks' vogue. Their destruction at the age of nine or ten is not meant to be evil or antisocial: it is simply because things are not real to them. When the phantasy flight is on them they take their sheets and blankets and make pirate ships in their rooms, and the sheets get black and the blankets torn in the process. And what does a dirty sheet matter when you have hoisted the black flag and fired a broadside?

Really the man who tries to give children freedom should be a millionaire, for it is not fair that the natural carelessness of children should always be in conflict with the economic factor. The argument of the disciplinarian who says that children must be compelled to respect property does not appeal to me, for it always means some sacrifice of childhood's play life. My ideal is that a child should come to a thing of his own free will and choice, and as they leave the pre-adolescent indifference to property stage children become respecters of property. Our seniors, two of them came as crooks years ago, guard our property like watchdogs; the crooks are truly wonderful detectives, but then they know all the tricks of the trade. When children have freedom to live out their indifference to property they have little chance of ever becoming profiteers and exploiters. If Summerhill produces a millionaire I shall consider it has failed.

Our general meetings, alas, show the conflict between children and adults. That is natural, for to have a community of mixed ages and to sacrifice all to the early ages would be a complete spoiling of the child. The adults make bitter complaint if a gang of seniors have laughed and talked after we have all gone to bed, for
our rooms are on top of each other. Parsons
complains that he spent an hour planing
up a panel for the front door, went to
lunch, and came back to find that Billy
had converted it into a shelf. I make accu-
sations against the boys who borrowed my
soldering outfit and didn't return it. My
wife makes a fuss because three small
children came after supper and said they
were hungry and got bread and jam—and
Ivy found the pieces lying in the passage
next morning. Corkhill reports sadly that
a gang threw his precious clay at each
other in the pottery. So it goes on, the fight
between the adult point of view and the
juvenile lack of awareness of things. But it
never degenerates into personalities: there
is no feeling of bitterness against the in-
dividual. This conflict keeps Summerhill
very much alive; there is always something
happening, and there isn't a dull minute
in the whole year. And luckily the staff
is not too possessive. I myself am possessive
only about certain things. It hurts me when
I have bought a special tin of paint at
25s. a gallon and I find that a girl has taken
it to paint an old bedstead with. I am pos-
sessive about my car and my typewriter
and my workshop tools, but I have no feel-
ing of possession about books and furniture
and clothes and people. If you are posses-
sive about people you ought not to be a
schoolmaster. I used to find that I was irritated
when two young things fell in love, and
I rationalized my emotion and thought
that my irritation was really fear of
awkward consequences. When I realized
that it was nothing of the kind but a
possessive jealousy of the young, all my
irritation and fear went. The damnable
thing is that you have to be possessive in a
possessive civilization. Since our children
will be forced by environment to be pos-
sessive why should we try to make them
possessive before their time? Their job is
to create, and if their creation involves the
destruction of our precious belongings we
must grin and bear it, even when we do
make a fuss about it.

The wear and tear of materials in Sum-
merhill is a natural process. It could be
obviated only by the introduction of fear.
The wear and tear of psychic forces cannot
be obviated in any way, for children ask
and must be given. Fifty times a day my
sitting room door opens and a child asks
a question: "Is this cinema night?" "Why
don't I get P.Ls?" "Have you seen Corks?"
and most common of all: "Where's Mrs.
Lins?" It is all in the day's work, and I do
not feel any strain therefrom, but by the
end of a term my wife and I are fatigued,
fatigued by three months of giving. Then
there is the fatigue of showing round
visitors. Every summer I become a kind of
commissionaire without uniform. Scores
of times I walk with visitors. . . . "This is
the lab . . . yes, we built the san. ourselves
. . . and here is the theatre" . . . and so on.
And most of the questions visitors ask are
the same: "But how will children brought
up like this fit into life?" . . . "But is it
really necessary for a child to swear?" By
the end of the summer term I feel like
screaming if I see a strange car drive up.

The staff, on the whole, does not get
sucked dry as my wife and I do. That is
because my wife and I are symbolic figures
in the school. She is every child's mother;
I am every child's father. In some cases
we represent the ideal parents who seldom
scold and never moralize, and children
who have fear of their real parents haunt
our sitting room. The children of really
free parents never come near us. The others,
are always testing us out. One boy of eleven
whose father is a strict man opens my door
twenty times a day, looks in, says nothing
and shuts the door again. I sometimes cry
at him: "No, I'm not dead yet." He has
given me the love that his own father
would not accept, and he has a fear that
his ideal new father may disappear, a fear
that covers the wish that his unsatisfactory
father should disappear.
Sometimes my wife has weeks of wearing out when a spoiled little child comes new to school, especially the upper middle-class little girl of seven or eight who has had everything done for her by nurses. Such a child is a heavy burden, not only because of its demands, but also because of its hate: every spoilt child has a hell of a lot of hate in it.

Added to all this is the working out of the transference that comes from P.Ls. If you tell a child any vital truth, or if it confides its troubles to you, he or she gets a transference, that is, you get all the child's emotions showered on you. When I have cleared up a small child about birth and masturbation the transference is very strong. At one stage it may take the form of a negative transference, a hate transference, but with a normal child this does not last long, and the positive love transference soon follows it. A child's transference breaks easily. Soon he forgets all about me and his emotions go out to things and other children. Girls naturally get a stronger transference to me than do boys, but I cannot say that a girl gets a positive and a boy a negative transference.

It is much easier to live with children who fear you than with children who love you, that is, you have a quieter life, for when they fear you children give you a wide berth. My wife and I and our staff are loved by the children because we approve of them, and that is all they want. It is because they know that we will not give them disapproval that they often haunt us. Our sitting room is filled with children nearly every night, and we often have gramophone records on the super-radio-gram. Here disagreements arise. They want Duke Ellington and Ambrose and I hate the stuff... We make no attempt to lead them to higher tastes, whatever higher may mean. Our view is that every child should have the chance of hearing Duke Ellington and Pachmann. So we have no censorship of cinema-going. By seeing all films they find out for themselves what is good, and jolly good taste they acquire too.

On the whole, the adults in Summerhill sacrifice much for the children. We have no real private life, partly because the house is not a good one for a school, not good from the poor adult’s point of view, for the children are always on top of us.

One noteworthy fact is that seldom if ever does a member of the staff lose his or her temper. I have lost mine about three times in the last nine years, and then I only swore a lot. That says as much for the children as for the staff. Really they are delightful children to live with, and the occasions for losing a temper are few. If a child is free to approve of itself it will not be hateful, and it will not see any fun in trying to make an adult lose its temper. We had one woman teacher who was oversensitive to criticism, and the girls ragged her. They could not rag any other member of the staff, because no other member would react. You can only rag people who have dignity, and we have none. Ragging in a friendly fashion they naturally do. There is no element of wounding in their ragging; it is really an expression of love. Living with them is a full life, and the joys outweigh the annoyances so heavily that it is a happy life for adult and child.

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**The Psychology of Approval**

Last night I sat on deck and listened to a discussion on the treatment of the criminal. I took no part in the discussion, partly because I hate argument, partly because these people were talking in a different language. One good lady, obviously a firm believer in the mission of the English—the civilizing mission of imperialism—was of opinion that the only way to punish the criminal is to make him feel physical pain. "He should get what he gave, only more so," she said. And she looks like a nice, kindly, normal person. Most of the others appeared to agree with
her. Bored by the talk I rose to go to bed, and the lady said to me: "What would you do with the criminal, Mr. Neill?"

"Reward him," I said, and as I departed they all laughed at my joke.

These nice people were expressing the opinion that is held by the great majority. The usual belief is that if you give a boy a reward of sixpence for stealing your goods, he will of course steal more goods in order to get more rewards. It seems the logical thing to do, and most of us work by logic, forgetting that psycho-logic is something entirely different and something infinitely more important than mere logic. That the boy does not steal in order to get further reward proves that logic is not enough. He does not steal more, and he is likely to steal less. In fact he has an excellent chance of being cured by the reward method.

The logical person leaves out one mighty factor: the unconscious motive. In every case of juvenile stealing the child feels itself an unloved child. The theft is a symbolic attempt to get something of great value, and whether the theft is one of money or jewellery or whatnot, the unconscious wish is to steal love. Hence when I give a boy sixpence for stealing my baccy I am aiming at his unconscious feeling, not his conscious thought. He may think I am a mug, but what he thinks does not matter much: it is what he feels that matters, and he feels that I am his friend, his approver, one who gives him love instead of hate. Every child feels that punishment is hate (and it is, of course), and every punishment makes the child hate more and more. If you study the diehard who says, "I believe in corporal punishment. I got my share of it when I was a kid, and damme, sir, it did me a power of good"—if you study this man you will always find him a hater. The final truth is that hate breeds hate and love breeds love, and no child was ever cured unless by love.

Every child is not a thief, only the inferior child is. Yet every child requires the same love and approval that should be given to the crook proper. Symbolically every adult is a father or mother to the child, and, every time an adult punishes, the child acquires a fear and hate of the adult behind the symbol—father or mother. That is a disturbing thought.

I have said before, said for years, that many parents treat their children as if they hated them. On this boat there are children who are obviously loved by their parents, but there are others who are not loved. One mother nags her daughter of ten all day long: "Don't go in the sun, darling . . . dearest, please keep away from that railing . . . no, love, you can't go into the swimming pool today, you will catch your death of cold . . ." The nagging is not a love token; it is a token of the mother's fear that covers an unconscious hate. The girl fears and hates her mother, and is about as spoiled a darling as one can hope to see. For that poor kid I can see only an adult life of discontent and hate, for she gets no approval at all from her mother, and the father looks as if he could approve but fears to in his wife's presence.

You can only give a child love if you have remained a child yourself. The tragedy of adults is that they have grown up and have forgotten their childhood; the little girl on this boat will be glad to forget her childhood I should imagine, and her children will in turn suffer. To deal successfully with children, whether you are a parent or a teacher, you must be able to understand their thoughts and feelings. And you must have a sense of humor—childish humor. To be humorous with a child gives the child the feeling that you love it, but the humor must never be cutting or critical. It is wrong to treat a child with humor at the wrong time, and his little dignity should never be attacked. If he has a genuine grievance it must be taken seriously.

Children under suppression are cruel in
their jokes. I have hardly ever seen a practical joke played in Summerhill, and the ones I have seen were usually engineered by new arrivals from prep. or Public Schools. Sometimes at the beginning of a term, when the children return from the greater suppression of home, there are teasing displays, hiding bicycles and so on, but these do not last over the first week. In the main the humor of Summerhill is a kindly one, and the reason for that is the sense of being loved, approved of. It proves the point that the child is born good, and remains good when all opportunity to hate and fear is abolished.

**WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT SUMMERHILL**

I write this chapter in South Africa. In it I shall try to answer the many questions the people here have asked me when I lectured.

*If a child is doing something dangerous at Summerhill do you allow him to do it?*

Of course not. People so often fail to understand that freedom for children does not mean being a fool about children. We do not allow our little children to decide what food they will eat, or when they shall go to bed. We guard them against dangers from motors or broken glass or airguns or deep water. You should never give a child responsibility that he is not ready for. But remember that half the dangers that children encounter are due to bad education. The child who is dangerous with fire is one who was forbidden to know the truth about fire by being allowed to burn himself a little.

*What is your policy with a child brought up in a sincerely religious home? Do you allow it to practise religion?*

Yes, the child can practise religion without having any adverse comments made by staff or pupils, but I find that no child wants to practise religion when he is free. Some new pupils go to church for a few Sundays and then they cease going. Church is too dull. I see no signs that worship is a natural thing in children, and when the sense of sin is washed out prayer is never used. Generally children from a religious home are insincere and repressed. That is inevitable under a religious system that has lost its original love of life and concentrates on its fear of death. You can give a child fear of the Lord and that is all, a fear of the Lord that is the source of unhappiness and neurosis. Children do not need a religion because their life is a spiritual creative one.

*Why do so many adults express gratitude to a strict master of their childhood?*

Conceit mostly. The man who gets up at a meeting and says: “I was thrashed as a kid and it did me a hell of a lot of good,” is virtually saying: “Look at me. I’m a success in spite of, even because of my early thrashings.” And a slave does not really want freedom. He is incapable of appreciating freedom. Outside discipline makes men slaves, inferiors, masochists. They hug their chains. Safety First is a phrase that surely was coined by a man who thanked God that his teachers had given him it in the neck.

*In your school government is there competition for government posts? If so, is this a cause of jealousy?*

Being on the government is so strenuous a life that there is no competition for office. On the contrary, only the most advanced pupils will take on social duties. Even when the government members were paid officials there was no competition for offices.

*What would you do with a child who plays truant?*

In Pretoria I answered: “Shoot his headmaster.”
Under Summerhill system how does a child's will power develop? If allowed to do what he pleases how can self-control develop?

This question (a common one) shows how difficult it is to grasp the whole idea of Summerhill. A child is not allowed to do as he pleases. His own laws hedge him in on all sides. He is allowed to do as he pleases in all things that affect him and him only; he can play all day if he wants to, because working is a matter that concerns him alone, but he is not allowed to play a cornet in the Maths' room because his playing interferes with others.

But what, after all, is will power? The quality that Mussolini has? Or the power that makes a man give up smoking? To me the will is the deep unconscious, the ID. There is no Free Will, because what we will consciously is not of the greatest importance. I can "will" myself to give up tobacco, but I cannot will myself to fall in love with Greta Garbo, nor will myself to like botany. No man can will himself to be good, or, for that matter, bad.

You cannot train a person to have a strong will, but if you educate children in freedom they will be more conscious of themselves, for freedom allows more and more of the unconscious to become conscious. That is why most Summerhill children have no doubts about life: they know what they want, and I guess they will get it too. Remember also that what is called a weak will is usually a sign of lack of interest. The "weak" person who is easily persuaded to play tennis when he has no desire to play tennis, is a person who has no ideas of what his interests really are, and a slave discipline system encourages such a person to remain weak-willed and rather futile.

What is the cause of excessive worry about work, and why do so many young people commit suicide nowadays?

I question if any child has ever worried about work. The apparent worry has a deeper source, and almost invariably it is one arising from a sense of sin about masturbation. Children who have no guilt about masturbation are usually bright and keen in their work.

I imagine that the second part of the question deserves the same answer. The masturbation Verbot is one that causes a child to hate its body and soul, and suicide is a logical reaction.

What do you do when a young child contracts the smoking habit?

A child has no natural appetite for smoking, and if he smokes it is because he wants to be grown up. Owing to the inferiority complex that a child's small size gives him, he tends to identify himself with adults. Thus nearly every new pupil begins to smoke in Summerhill when he finds that he is free to do so. But the smoking does not last more than a day or two, and the child returns to something more enticing, his sweets. Some of the eldest pupils smoke, but others never smoke at all.

What do you do with a child who is obstinate and sulks?

I don't know. I never see one. There is no occasion for obstinacy when a child is free. Defiance in a child is always the fault of the adult. If your attitude to a child is a love one you will do nothing to make him obstinate. An obstinate child has a "grouse," and my job would be to find out what was at the root of the grouse. I should guess a feeling that he has been treated unjustly at home.

By showing that you are on the side of a young thief does he not interpret this as indicating your approval of stealing as a pastime? What causes him to discontinue a pastime which to him has your approval?

The question shows that the asker does
not think in terms of the Unconscious. A child symbolically steals love, and if re-proved or punished he realizes that he is being given hate. If I reward a thief for stealing I make him feel that I am on his side, that I approve of him, that I love him. When he has my love (and remember that I am a father substitute) he does not need to steal love in the symbolic form of money or fountain pens. If parents were on the side of their children there would be no young thieves.

Have you ever had any failures at your school?
Oh, yes. One or two girls from convents came too late, and could not realize what freedom meant. A few boys from public schools who also came too late. Some children turned out to be pathological and had to be sent elsewhere. One boy will possibly be a failure in life because his parents gave him a fear of the supposed evils of masturbation. He could not work because his whole interest was the morbid one: Am I going to hell? I tried in vain to get his parents to take off the masturbation Verbot. They wouldn't, and the boy will possibly go through life unable to settle down to anything.

One bright boy could not get over his antisocial stage. We sent him to live with the cowboys of Texas and then with the Red Indians. He lived out his primitive interests there, and returned to Summerhill a fine lad.

There is always a good possibility of failure when the parents are against the school. It sounds incredible that such parents send their children to Summerhill, but sometimes they do because other schools have failed, and they select Summerhill in desperation. That is partly why we gave up taking young crooks who had been expelled from the Public Schools. Their parents usually had no belief in freedom; if they had their children wouldn't have been crooks.

Do children ever attend church on their own?
No. New pupils may go to church to begin with, but after about three Sundays they cease going. No one comments on their going to church, and nothing is ever said against church-going. I expect a child soon senses that Summerhill believes in original virtue, while the churches believe in original sin.

What do you do with a child who answers back?
The question was apparently asked by a class teacher. No child ever answers back, because you only answer back when you are treated as an inferior by someone who is dignified. In Summerhill we speak the language of the children, and if a teacher complained of being answered back I should know that he or she was a dud.

How does a child react to home after being at school, I mean during the holidays?
That depends on the home. Some of the homes are like the school; the children are not suppressed, and they go home and return to school with pleasure. But in the main they prefer school because their playmates are there, and a holiday in a London flat is rather dreary. Consequently some pupils return to school before the holidays end. This is occasionally a matter for jealousy on the part of the parents.

Other children have suppression at home, and we can always tell what the home is like when they return to us after a long holiday. I have taken children by train to London at the end of the term and had a quiet journey. I have brought them back to school at the beginning of the term and had a wretched journey, for the suppressed ones let off steam and made themselves a damned nuisance.

How does the Summerhill government
insist on fines? Suppose a child refuses to pay the fine?

Children never do. I expect they would refuse if they felt they had been treated unjustly. Our appeal system overcomes any fear of injustice.

You told of a row you made when some children pulled up your potato plants. Why didn't you reward them by giving them the whole field of potatoes?

If I reward a boy for stealing I am dealing with a love-starved youth, who must be treated psychologically. But when a few normal children raid my potato patch it is a social problem of give and take. I stand up for my rights socially as a matter of course, and as there is no fear of me as a headmaster I can charge a group at a general meeting just as any child can charge a group. And as I am not a perfect person and do not want to be, I have a human reaction when the labor of hours is negated by the boyishness of campers-out. I have the same right to be protected by law and order as the child has, and I use this right when it is a matter of group action. If I were to make every law breakage a matter of individual psychology, social life would be impossible, and the children would throw up self-government in disgust.

Do you believe in home lessons?

I don't even believe in school lessons unless they are chosen voluntarily. The home lesson habit is disgraceful. Children loathe home lessons, and that is enough to condemn them.

Do you believe in corporal punishment?

This question came after I had spoken for over an hour on child psychology. It reminds me of the lady who was being shown over the engine-room of a ship. "I understand it all clearly," she said, "but there is only one thing that puzzles me: what is the use of the boiler?"

But perhaps the question should be answered. Corporal punishment is evil because it is cruel and hateful. It makes the giver and the recipient hate. It is an unconscious sexual perversion. In communities where masturbation is suppressed the punishment is given on the hand, the means of masturbation. In segregated boys' schools where homosexuality is suppressed the caning is given on the bottom, the object of desire. The religious hate of the "vile flesh" makes corporal punishment popular in narrowly religious regions.

Corporal punishment is always a projected act. The giver hates himself and projects his hate on to the child. The mother who spanks her child hates herself, and in consequence hates her child. If a school were a play-place with freedom to learn or not learn strapping and caning would automatically die out. Many schools do not use corporal punishment, but they are schools in which the teachers know their job.

Why do some boys only learn when they feel physical pain?

I expect that I could learn to recite the Koran if I knew that I'd be flogged if I didn't. One result of course would be that I should hate the Koran and the flogger and myself. The only thing that a flogged boy learns is that the cane is painful. I don't know what sort of a person asked the question. It may have been a South Africa magistrate, for caning of small children for "crimes" like playing marbles on the street seems to be fashionable in the Union. One doctor told me of supervising the caning of sixty small native children. He said that the second cut drew blood. Such a custom is unspeakable, but so long as we tolerate caning in the school we cannot say much about the barbarities of magistrates. Anyway, since learning is of no moment, why cane at all? We can only discuss corporal punishment as a branch of sexual perversion.
Why do children masturbate and how should we stop them?

We must distinguish between infantile masturbation and adult masturbation. Infantile masturbation is really not masturbation at all. It begins with curiosity. The infant discovers its hands and nose and toes, and mother crows with delight. But when it discovers its sexual apparatus mother hastily takes the hand away. The main effect is to make the sexual organs the most interesting parts of the body. The infant's erotic zone is the mouth, and when small children have had no moral Verbots about masturbation they have very little interest in their sexual organs. If a small child is a masturbator the cure is to approve of the habit, for then the child has no morbid compulsion to indulge.

With older children who have reached puberty approval will lessen the habit. But remember that sex must find some outlet, and because marriage is always late owing to the fact that the young cannot marry until they can afford to set up a house, the sexually ripe are faced with two alternatives: masturbation and clandestine sexual intercourse. The moralists condemn both, but they will not offer a substitute. Oh, yes, of course, they advocate chastity, which means the crucifixion of the flesh. But since only a few monastics can apparently crucify the flesh definitely, the rest of us cannot get away from sex an outlet. Until marriage is made independent of the financial element the masturbation problem will continue to be a big one. Our films and novels rouse sex in the young and lead to masturbation because proper sex is denied to youth. The fact that everyone has masturbated doesn't help much. The Companionate Marriage seems about the only way out. But so long as sex is attached to sin this is not a likely social solution.

But to return to the question: tell the child that there is nothing sinful about it, and if you have already told him lies about its alleged consequences, disease, madness, etc., be brave enough to tell him you were a liar. Then and only then will masturbation become something of less importance to him.

Do you honestly think it is right to allow a boy, naturally lazy, to go his own easy way doing as he chooses, wasting time? How do you set him to work when work is distasteful to him?

Laziness doesn’t exist. The lazy boy is either physically ill or he has no interest in the things that adults think he ought to do. I have never seen a Summerhill child who came before the age of twelve who was lazy. I have had many a ‘lazy’ lad sent from a desk school. Such a lad remains ‘lazy’ for quite a long time, that is, until he recovers from his education. I do not set him to work that is distasteful to him, because he isn’t ready for it. Like you and me he will have many a thing to do that he hates doing, but if he is left free to live through his play period he will face any difficulty later. No ex-Summerhillian has been accused of laziness.

How can I stop my child from sucking its thumb?

Don't try. If you succeed you'll probably drive the child back to a pre-sucking interest. What does it matter? Lots of efficient folk have sucked their thumbs. Thumb-sucking shows that the mother's breast interest has not been lived out, but as you cannot give a child of eight the breast, all you can do is to see that the child has as much creative interest as possible. But that does not always cure. I have had creative pupils who sucked their thumbs up to the age of puberty. Leave it alone.

If a child is given absolute freedom, how soon will it realize that self discipline is an essential of living, or will it ever realize that?
There isn't such a thing as absolute freedom, and anyone who allows a child to get all its own way is a dangerous person. Social freedom no one can have, for the rights of others must be respected. Individual freedom everyone should have. Put it concretely: no one has the right to make a boy learn Latin, because learning is a matter for individual choice, but if in a Latin class a boy insists on fooling all the time the class should throw him out, because he is interfering with the freedom of others.

As for self discipline, that is an indefinite thing. Too often it means a discipline of self that has been instilled by the moral ideas of adults. True self discipline is one that considers the rights and happiness of others.

Can a child be spoilt through too much love?

No, not if it is creative love. The spoiled child is one who receives too much possessive love, very often in the form of possessions, luxurious toys and too much money. But then parents often compensate for their lack of love by showering gifts on their children. I find that the most unloved children get the most expensive presents.

Why should a boy of sixteen be self-conscious in the presence of his friends and avoid their company?

Most likely a guilt about masturbation. He may fear that the others will see by his face that he indulges. Many children have this idea, needless to say an erroneous one. I have studied children for many years and I cannot tell by a child's face whether he masturbates or not.

Should one ever be sarcastic with children? Do you think this would help to develop a sense of humor in a child?

No. Sarcasm and humor have no connection with each other. Humor is an affair of love, sarcasm of hate. To be sarcastic with a child is to make the child feel inferior and degraded. Only a cheap and nasty teacher will ever be sarcastic.

What do you do with a child who won't eat?

I don't know. We have never had one. If we had I should at once suspect a defiant attitude to its parents. We have had one or two who were sent to us because they wouldn't eat, but we never saw any symptoms of fasting in the school. In a difficult case I should consider the possibility of the child's having remained emotionally at the breast stage, and would try a feeding bottle with milk. I should also suspect that the parents had been faddy about food, giving the child food that it did not want.

Do you approve of gifts to show one's love?

No. Love doesn't need outward tokens. But children should have gifts at the usual times, birthdays, Christmas and so on. Only no gratitude should be looked for or demanded.

What can be done to cure untidiness?

But why cure it? Most creative people are untidy. It is usually a dull man whose room and desk are models of neatness. I find that children up to nine are in the main tidy; between nine and fifteen they are untidy. They simply do not see untidiness. Later on they become as tidy as need be.

You say that the children in Summerhill have clean minds. What do you mean?

A clean mind is one that cannot be shocked. To be shocked is to show that you have repressions that make you interested in what shocks you. Victorian old women were shocked at the word "leg" because they had an abnormal interest in things leggy. Leggy things were sexual things, repressed things. So that in an atmosphere
like Summerhill where there is no taboo about sex and no connecting of sex with sin, you find that children have no need to make sex unclean by whispering and leering. They are sincere about sex just as they are sincere about everything else.

What would you do to a child who won't stick to anything? He is interested in music for a short period, then he changes to dancing, and so on.

I'd do nothing. Such is life. In my time I have changed from photography to bookbinding, then to woodwork, then to brasswork. Life is full of fragments of interests. A child is always eclectic in his tastes. He tries all things: that's how he learns. Our boys spend days making boats, but if an aviator happens to visit us a boy will leave a half-made boat and begin to make an aeroplane. We never suggest that a child should finish his work, because if his interest has gone it is wrong to force him to finish it.

Our boy is twelve. He won't wash before coming to table. What should we do?

Well, I am not the man to advise, for I seldom wash before coming to table myself, only when I have been in my workshop or gardening. But why do you attach so much importance to washing? Have you considered that washing may be a symbol to you? Are you sure that your concern about his being clean is not covering your fear that he is unclean morally? Don't worry about the boy; take my word for it that your dirt complex is a subjective personal one. If you feel unclean you will attach an exaggerated importance to cleanliness. If you must have him appear at table clean, I mean if Aunt Mary sits at table with you and there is a prospect of her leaving her clean nephew a fortune, well the best way is to forbid him to wash.

Should parents show any affection for each other in the presence of their children?

Why not? Only they should never have children sleeping in the same room as themselves. Overhearing or over-seeing sexual intercourse gives a child terrors. The child does not understand, and too often he thinks that father is hurting mother. I have seen some nasty phobias arising from the overhearing of intercourse.

Now do you seriously believe that the corrective in breaking bad habits is to let children continue their vices?

Vices? In whose opinion are they vices? Bad habits? You mean masturbation possibly. By breaking a habit forcibly you do not cure it. The only cure for any habit is to outlive its interest. Children who are allowed to masturbate indulge much less than children who have been forbidden to masturbate. Beating always prolongs trouser-messing. Tying up the hands makes an infant a perverted masturbator for life. Bad habits are not bad habits at all. They are the results of parental ignorance and hate. Summerhill children have no bad habits.

My daughter of twelve likes to read smutty books. What shall I do about it?

I should provide her with all the smutty books I could afford to buy. Then she would live out her interest. But why is she so interested in smut? Is she looking for the truth that you never gave her about sex? Something must have been lacking in her sexual education. My girl pupils can read anything they like. I have Kraft-Ebbing on my shelves, but they never want to read him.

What about your children's manners?

Do they eat peas with their knives?

I haven't the least idea. I wouldn't notice if they did. Eating peas with a knife is a small matter of a breach of etiquette. My pupils have such good manners that if they
saw one eat peas with his knife they would make no remark.

_What should I do with my child of six who draws obscene pictures?_

Encourage him of course, but at the same time clean your house, for any obscenity in the home must come from you. A child of six has no obscenity. You see obscenity in his drawings because you have an obscene attitude to life. I can only imagine that the obscene drawings deal with chamber pots and sexual organs. Treat these things naturally without any idea of right and wrong and your child will pass through this interest just as he will pass through other interests.

_There seems to have been a tacit implication in the speaker's attack on the theory of original sin, that hate is something foreign to human nature. Is hate not part of our instinctive make-up? Can't we admit hate without repressing it, and direct it to such things as exploitation?_

The end of the question suggests an amiable cynic. Freud holds that hate comes first, that love is a later development. I cannot follow the argument. I have never seen any signs of hate in a new-born infant. My belief in original virtue arises from my observation of children who hate. When they are loved they drop their hate. It is true that small children bicker with each other in their endeavors to find power. But the bickering is only a serious affair when the children are being made to hate themselves by being moralized to by adults. The bickering is not hate. Hate is love transformed, rather, it is thwarted love. It is not the opposite of love, for the opposite of love is obviously indifference. Thus small children are much more likely to quarrel with their brothers and sisters than with outside children, for in the home there is an emotional atmosphere which is allied to love. Hate in a child arises when he finds that he is not getting enough love from his parents. I have seen many a young hater come to Summerhill biting and scratching, but in six months our haters become social lovable characters.
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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