

# THE WORLD OF PAUL GOODMAN

Reviews of **COMMUNITAS, UTOPIAN ESSAYS**  
and **GROWING UP ABSURD**

Paul Goodman **THE CHILDREN AND  
PSYCHOLOGY**

Harold Drasdo **THE CHARACTER BUILDERS**

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## Anarchy 11

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST IDEAS

1s 6d or 25 cents

inside front cover

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Printed by Express Printers, London, E.1.

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*Anarchism has an archaic quality today. This is somewhat ironical for in many ways it has greater relevance now than it had in its heyday around the turn of the century. Witness, for example, the present disillusionment with government, the*

*questioning of the authority of the law; and the protests against the constraints of institutions and the trends towards the rationalisation of life both technically (for example, automation) and socially (for example, the organisation man ...)*  
*What is sadly lacking today is a statement of modern anarchist ideas in the light of the experience of a changed society and of the findings of psychological and sociological knowledge about the needs and behaviour of man.*

–IAN CANNON

in "Clare Market Review", Summer 1961.

## The World of Paul Goodman

WE QUOTE THESE REMARKS FROM MR. CANNON'S review of the new edition of Eltzbacher's *Anarchism* in the students' journal of the London School of Economics, because they express something very close to our own point of view and because the kind of restatement of anarchism which he calls for is what we conceive to be the function of ANARCHY. The American journalist Dwight Macdonald, in a much-quoted footnote ("the best footnote I ever wrote") remarked a few years ago that

The revolutionary alternative to the *status quo* today is not collectivised property administered by a "workers' state", whatever *that* means, but some kind of anarchist decentralisation that will break up mass society into small communities where individuals can live together as variegated human beings instead of as impersonal units in the mass sum. The shallowness of the New Deal and the British Labour Party's post-war regime is shown by their failure to improve any of the important things in people's lives – their actual relationships on the job, the way they spend their leisure, their child-rearing, sex and art. It is mass living that vitiates all these today and the State that holds together the *status quo*. Marxism glorifies "the masses" and endorses the State. Anarchism leads back to the individual and the community, which is "impractical" but necessary – that is to say, it is revolutionary.

Another American anarchist writer who has been discussing these precise issues for years is Paul Goodman, and the fact that two of his books have become available in this country during the last year, and another is about to be published in America, provides an opportunity to discuss his contribution. Goodman, who was born in 1911, is a novelist, poet, playwright, critic and psychologist, who has written many books – over the last few years they have included *Gestalt Therapy* (Julian Press), *The Structure of Literature* (Univ. of Chicago), *Our Visit to Niagara*

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(Horizon), and *The Empire City* (Bobbs-Merrill).

But for most of us his name brings to mind the articles of great distinction which he

has contributed to the minority, anarchist, or socialist magazines in America: in the years at the end of the war to *Politics, Retort, Why?, Resistance* and *Alternative*, and in the last few years his frequent contributions to *Commentary, Dissent*, and *Liberation*, of which he recently became an associate editor.

Some of the earlier group of articles, "On Treason Against Natural Societies", "A Touchstone for the Libertarian Programme" and "Revolution, Sociolatry and War" were gathered together in his book *Art and Social Nature* (Vinca Press, 1946) and some of the recent ones form chapters of his recent book *Growing Up Absurd* and his new one *Utopian Essays*, which are reviewed in this issue of ANARCHY together with the most important of all his books, written in collaboration with his architect brother Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*. You will see that he is a wideranging writer, and in ignoring his novels and poems and literary criticism, we are presenting only a part of the world of Paul Goodman. He says himself that

I have been severely criticized as an ignorant man who spreads himself thin on a wide variety of subjects, on sociology and psychology, urbanism and technology, education, literature, esthetics and ethics. It is true that I don't know much, but it is false that I write about many subjects. I have only one, the human beings I know in their man-made scene. I do not observe that people are in fact subdivided in ways to be conveniently treated by the "wide variety" of separate disciplines. If you talk separately about their group behaviour or their individual behaviour, their environment or characters, their practicability or their sensibility, you lose what you are talking about. What I see, rather, is community and community thwarted, culture and barbarism, ideal striving and anxious resignation; and all of this in conflict and motion.

Like many people whose horizons are very wide indeed, Goodman is firmly rooted in time and place. The place is his native New York, for which he is said to have attempted to do in his long novel *The Empire City*, what Joyce did for Dublin. Thus it is second nature for the Goodman brothers to conclude their far-ranging *Communitas* with a development plan for the New York riverside, and for Paul Goodman to return continually in *Growing Up Absurd* to the housing, education or delinquency problems of his city, and to include in his *Utopian Essays* a plan for eliminating motorcars from Manhattan. The time is *now* and this "utopian" thinker remarks that "I seem to be able to write only practically, inventing expedients ... My way of writing a book of social theory has been to invent community plans. My psychology is a criticism. A discussion of human nature is a programme or pedagogical manual of therapeutic exercises. A literary study is a book of practical and political reforms." He treats his subjects as *ongoing into the immediate future, requiring to be coped with*. His expedients are simple, day to day direct action, and this is one of the things which makes his approach of the greatest interest to those who, by way of the radical wing of the anti-bomb campaign in this country, are looking for the wider applications of the philosophy which is gradually emerging from their activities and experiences.

# Communitas revisited

**Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life** by Paul and Percival Goodman (University of Chicago Press, 1947). (*New revised edition*: New York, Vintage Books, 1960, \$1.25, London, Mayflower Books, 10s.).

A GREAT NUMBER OF BOOKS WERE PUBLISHED on both sides of the Atlantic in the years immediately after the war, on the problems and opportunities of "post-war reconstruction", especially on the physical planning of towns and cities. Few of them seem worth reading or remembering today, let alone reprinting. The one exception is *Communitas*, written during the war by the brothers Paul and Percival Goodman (the latter is now Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University). Out of print for a long time, it was a book so original and unusual, that it must have permanently affected the thinking of most of its readers, and, thanks to their continued advocacy, and the widely circulated commendations of American writers like David Riesman and Lewis Mumford, it has now appeared in a new paperback edition which lives up to the claim made by the publishers that it is one of the most fruitful and imaginative books on the building of cities that has ever been written.

The Goodman brothers see a "community plan" not as a layout of streets and houses, but as the external form of the activity going on. "It is more like a choreography of society in motion and in rest, an arrangement for society to live out its habits and ideals and do its work, directing itself or being directed. There is a variety of town schemes; gridirons, radiations, ribbons, satellites, or vast concentrations; what is important is the activity going on, how it is influenced by the scheme and how it transforms any scheme, and uses or abuses any site, to its own work and values." They examine in turn the three main types of plans which have emerged in the last hundred years, grouping them into three classes:-

A. THE GREEN BELT: Garden Cities, Satellite Towns, Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*, neighbourhood housing.

B. INDUSTRIAL PLANS: The Plan for Moscow (as debated in Russia in 1935), the Lineal City of Soria y Mata, Buckmaster Fuller's *Dymaxion*.

C. INTEGRATED PLANS; Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacres, Ralph Borsodi's Homestead, the Kolkhoz, the Kvutzah, the TVA.

Having discussed this miscellany of modern plans, the Goodmans turn to their own, and they state their approach in these terms:

Our concern in this book centres around the following conviction: that the multiplication of commodities and the false standard of living, on the one hand, the complication of the economic and technical structure in which

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one can work at a job, on the other hand, and the lack of direct relationship between these two have by now made a great part of external life morally meaningless. Economic plans to avoid unemployment, to raise the standard of living, to develop backward regions – these are useful, but they do not touch the essentially modern problems: the selective use of machine technology, the use of an available surplus, and the distance between means and ends. The concrete solutions of these problems are community plans. Our concerns are how to make the multitude of goods good for something, how to integrate the work and culture, and how to keep an integrated community plan from becoming a plan for complete slavery ...

Emphasising one aspect after another, they arrive at three completely different community formulae, communities for

*A. Efficient Consumption.*

*B. The Elimination of the Difference between Production and Consumption.*

*C. Planned Security with Minimum Regulation.*

Each of these three is presented as a regional scheme, but they are not meant to be taken as concrete plans at all: "In the first place, there is no planning without a physical site and a particular history and population. In the second place, our formulas are extremes and abstractions, but there is no particular place without a mixture ... Speaking very broadly we should say that the first formula is especially applicable to highly industrialised and populous places; the second, to places of sparse settlement, new industry and new culture; the third, to old and populous countries, with ancient cultures but relatively little modern technology."

### ***The City of Efficient Consumption***

The City of Efficient Consumption is presented as the logical environment of a consumer-centred culture. Its preliminary conditions, they conclude, are that

A population of several millions is the least economic unit. (Because the combination of mass production and variety of choice are required, and concentration of the market is the efficient solution to the problems of distribution and servicing under conditions of mass production).

Work and life centre around the market.

The moral drives are imitation and emulation.

The decoration is display.

Close by is the open country, for full flight.

The centre of the City is developed as one large air-conditioned cylinder:

In existing great cities, which have large buildings and congested downtown centres, there are

always three simultaneous systems of streets: the through highways, the old city streets proper, and the corridors of large buildings. It is the through highways, coming more and more to be elevated or depressed or otherwise isolated, which carry the main stream of traffic between the city and places outside the city. And it is wrongly thought that by increasing these highways and facilitating entrance to, and egress from, the centre the congestion of the centre will be thinned out. But in the end all the highways must pour their motorcars into the city streets; for it is the city streets that join building to building; and it is at a particular building, and not at downtown as a whole, that the motorist

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wants to arrive. But once he has arrived at the building, he is willing to leave his car, go indoors, and use the corridors and elevators of the building to bring him to the office or department of a store where he has business.

Now it can be seen at once that the city streets, under conditions of motor traffic, on the one hand, and of increasingly large buildings, on the other, are more and more becoming intermediaries, useless for travelling and also unfit for walking and window-shopping. At the same time they cover 35 per cent of the ground space and are the subject of perhaps the most costly and elaborate of the city services: paving, traffic problems, cleaning, snow removal, etc. For servicing they are neither properly in the open (so that snow, for instance, could be simply pushed aside) nor yet indoors (protected). These streets serve as the perfect example of the non-productive, non-consumptive services which waste away the social wealth and health.

Consequently, in the City of Efficient Consumption, the bull is taken by the horns, in making the city centre one immense container, in which (1) the intermediary streets vanish, (2) "the through driveways now carry out their function to the end, bringing passengers and goods directly to stations in the container, without two speeds and without double-loading for trucks and trains", and (3) "the corridors are transfigured, assuming the functions of promenade and display which the streets performed so badly. The city has become spacious, with the spaciousness of a great departmental store."

Outside the centre is the second ring of buildings, the university, theatres, museums and libraries, the "region of the things which have been created and discovered but are not consumed in the enjoyment", and beyond is the residential zone. The role of the neighbourhood in this scheme is already well-known in our society:

*In the City of Efficient Consumption, the neighbourhood is the unit of emulation and invidious imputation.* This is demonstrated as follows: It is in the end unsatisfactory and indelicate to emulate or to impute economic inferiority to one's family and friends; on the other hand, to do so with total strangers is pointless. Therefore, at least for domestic display, the unit of emulation, etc., must be the neighbourhood. The residents of the neighbourhood take notice; and they are not so well known that one is embarrassed, or two transparent to be effective.

On the question of houses-*versus*-flats, the authors observe that

The idea that 'a man's house is his castle' refers primarily to the situation in which the house and its

land maintain a productive relation of comparative self-sufficiency. Once the land is diminished, the idea is already seriously weakened. Now, as community domestic services, such as light, gas, and water, begin to invade the home, the reason for its architectural identity begins to vanish. Lastly, when these conveniences multiply, they can be provided efficiently only if the isolated unit vanishes and the services are provided for a block of units, an apartment house. These units are more and more mass-produced and larger and larger.

But we must establish also a contrary movement, to restore domestic freedom under the new architectural conditions. This can be done if we restrict the architectural imposition to its minimum function: namely, the provision of an efficient system of services. What must be provided for the family is an empty shell without partitions and (under luxury conditions) two stories high, completely serviced with light, heat, water, etc., through the columns of the building, as in a skyscraper. The uniform architectural practice has hitherto been to provide not only such services but also a standardised imitation of a house, with layout and fundamental decor-

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ation complete: partitions, panelling, and balcony, etc. But it is just these parts, which having no structural necessity, belong most to private taste, or caprice, that need not be imposed according to a standard.

And beyond the residential zone is the open country, which is "vacationland" where "there is exchanged for the existence where everything is done for one, the existence where nothing is done for one", and beyond this, because these conditions are too hard for the cityfolk, they are finally moderated (after fifty miles, which is to say, three-quarters of an hour by car on the super-highway or fifteen minutes by helicopter on the beam) into "the imitation wilderness of state parks and the bathos of adult camps."

The Goodmans' account of the City of Efficient Consumption is concluded with a description of the season of carnival, a Saturnalia of wild and playful destruction, fornication, and the remittance of instalment debts, whose principles

would be simply the satisfaction in the negation of all of the schedules and careful zoning that are so full of satisfaction in their affirmation; just as no one can resist a thrill of satisfaction when a blizzard piles up in our streets and everything comes to a standstill.

The social function of the carnival is of course to get rid of last year's goods, wipe out last year's hire purchase debts to permit new borrowing, and to engender children.

But before leaving the City of Efficient Consumption, something has to be said of its politics. The people, the authors explain, exercise no direct political initiative at all:

Try as one will, it is impossible to discover in an immense and immensely expanding industrialism a loophole where the ordinary man can intervene directly to determine his specific work on the shape of his community life; that is, to decide these matters directly on the basis of his own knowledge



and power. The reason is that such an expanding economy exists more and more in its inter-relationships; and individual knowledge and, especially, power, are less and less adequate. What the people "en masse" can do is to exercise a general control such as to determine the trend of their standard of living, up or down; and in the republican form this is done by periodic votes rather than by periodic rebellions. But the political scientists as initiators must be technologists and merchandisers and a kind of economists as directors; although the actually elected representatives will forever be experts in more popular arts.

Now an existence of this kind, apparently so repugnant to craftsmen, farmers, artists, and any others who want a say in what they lend their hands to, is nevertheless the existence that is satisfactory to the mass of our countrymen; and therefore it must express deep and universal impulses. These probably centre around what Morris Cohen used to call the first principle of politics – inertia; that is, the fact that people do not want to take the trouble to rule and decide, because, presumably, they have more important things to do.

The City of Efficient Consumption is presented half sardonically, half seriously. If you really want a society in which consumer values are supreme, they say, this is what it should be like. David Riesman remarked of their treatment of this theme:

the moral of the plan comes through without ambiguity: it is a criticism of proper culture, with its drive for less work, more pay and more play,

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it is also an effort to reveal certain hidden elements of moral worth in modern capitalism. The criticism – the air-conditioned nightmare theme – is familiar enough among radical writers, who sometimes tend to attack with equal fervour the worst abuses, such as lynching, and the most venal foibles, such as radio commercials. But the implicit ethical defence of capitalism on the ground of its provision of bounteous consumption is seldom found outside Chamber of Commerce circles.

In a number of the points they make about a society in which productive capacity is enormously greater than the rate of consumption, they anticipate some of Galbraith's observations in *The Affluent Society*, in others, their fantasies of 1947 anticipate the actual planning problems of America, in the nineteen fifties and sixties. For, in the absence of cities of Efficient Consumption whose centres are one vast vehicle-less departmental store, the new American institution of the out-of-town Supermarket has developed, and has become a new focal centre for the residential belt, while the property-owners and Chambers of Commerce in the old city centres which have been made unusable for efficient consumption by the volume of traffic, have sponsored projects for motorless city centres, like that prepared for Fort Worth, Texas by Victor Gruen, who, like the Goodman brothers, points out that "The land thus reclaimed for productive purposes would represent a value of about forty million dollars which would lower the cost of the underground service road system". Such "downtown revitalisation projects" bear a marked resemblance to the City of Efficient Consumption, even though they are not worked out with the same utopian logic. The Goodman model is a fascinating

mixture of satire and sensible suggestion. The notion which I have quoted of the basic apartments in which the tenant can arrange for himself the internal partitioning and fittings, which they reach through following out the idea of consumer sovereignty, has very much to be said for it. Open plan, or a series of rooms, balcony or more space inside; these questions which are determined by the whims of housing committees, speculators or architects, are much better decided by individual occupants. (Something similar is in fact being done in Italy today, simple for economic reasons).

### *The New Commune*

But the authors' own real preferences are evidently not for the City of Efficient Consumption, but for their second model, the New Commune, where they seek the elimination of the difference between production and consumption, in a decentralised society.

They had observed in discussing the Green Belt type of plan that the impulse behind the garden city idea was a reaction against the squalor and degradation of the urban environment in the industrial revolution. The garden city plans aimed at quarantining the technology and were based on "the humane intuition that work in which people have the satisfaction neither of direction, nor of wages, is essentially unbearable; the worker is eager to be let loose and to go far away."

Mindful of Daniel Burnham's injunction to "make no little plan", they decline to see the separation of work and the rest of life as

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immutable, and propose an "ideal type" in which they are re-united, not by scrapping the technology, but by re-shaping it closed to human needs:

Starting from the present separation of work and home, we can achieve their closer relation from two sides: (a) returning parts of the production to home-shops or to the proximity of the homes, and (b) introducing domestic work and the productive part of family relations, which are not now considered part of the economy at all, into the style and relations of the larger economy.

Like Kropotkin and some other anarchist thinkers, they seize upon the technical possibilities for decentralisation which industrial advances and new sources of power have brought:

As to home shops, we must think of the present sudden proliferation of machine tools. Previously it could be said that the sewing machine was the only productive machine widely distributed. But now, largely because of the war, the idea of thousands of small complete machine shops, powered by electricity has become familiar. And, in general, the change from steam power to electricity and oil has relaxed one of the greatest causes for the concentration of machines about a single driving

shaft. Which part of the manufacture requires a factory (for instance, an assembly line) and which does not (for instance, turning a small part) depends on the analysis of production and the proximity of plant and homes. And further, the new factories are themselves no longer nuisance buildings; many are neater and certainly handsomer than the homes and monumental buildings of some communities; therefore, the proximity of factories, home-shops, and homes is possible and desirable.

Ralph Borsodi, going back to the old conception of Aristotle, has proved, often with hilarious realism, that home production, such as cooking, cleaning, mending, and entertaining, has a formidable economic value. The problem is, without destroying the individuality of home production, to lighten and enrich it by the technical means and some of the expert attitudes which belong to public production. And *vice versa*, to restore to the home many services that are really most humanly satisfactory there, but are now unfeasible because of the drudgery, lack of tools, etc. But the chief part of finding a satisfactory productive life in the environment of homes and families consists in the analysis of person relations and conditions: *e.g.* the productive co-operation of man and wife, which exists on farms, or the productive capacities of children and old folk, now simply excluded from the economy. But this involves sentimental and moral problems of extreme depth and delicacy which could only be solved by the experiment itself.

A chief cause, declare the Goodman brothers, of the "living meaninglessness of industrial work is that each machine worker is acquainted with only a few processes not the whole order of production; and, even worse, that the thousands of products are distributed where the worker has no acquaintance at all" and they ask whether it would not prove to be more efficient in the long run *if the men were working for themselves and have a say in the distribution.*

'A say in the distribution' here means not merely economic democracy or even socialist ownership. These are necessary checks, but they do not give a political meaning to industrialism as such. What is required is the organisation of economic democracy on the basis of the productive units, where each unit, relying on its own expertness and the bargaining power of what it has to offer, co-operates with, and delegates authority to, the

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whole of society. This is syndicalism. And to guarantee the independent say of each productive unit it must have a relative self-sufficiency; this is regionalism and the union of farm and factory.

On the diversification of individual work, they note that within any one industry work can be divided on such grounds (for instance team work and individual work, or physical and intellectual work) and the right industries can be combined in a neighbourhood (for instance, cast glass, blown glass, and optical instruments, or most important of all, in their opinion. industry and agriculture).

The problem, they say, comes down to this, "to envisage a well-rounded schedule of jobs for each man and to arrange the buildings and farms so that the schedule is feasible", and this leads them to the integration of farm and factory in a context of regionalism and regional autonomy with (a) Diversified farming as the basis of self-subsistence, and therefore, small urban centres (of about 200,000 population);

(b) A number of mutually dependent industrial centres; so that an important proportion of the national economy can be under local control; (c) These industries developed around regional resources of mine, field and power.

Diversified farming alone, they observe, is economically independent, and this is why small farms have always been a root of social stability, though not necessarily of peasant conservatism. On the other hand, taking advantage of mechanisation, "they import power and small machines and pay with the products of domestic industry and cash crops farmed perhaps co-operatively with large machines. Such a farm then is the type of productive unit, independent in itself, but linked with the larger economy of the other farms and of the town."

In industry, the problem is the reverse, since every machine industry is dependent on the national economy. "But by regional independence of industries and by the close integration of factory and farm workers – factory hands taking over in the fields at peak seasons; farmers doing factory work in the winter; town people, especially children, living in the country; farmers making small parts for the factories – the industrial region as a whole can secure for itself an independent bargaining power in the national whole ..."

They follow this with diagrams of the physical planning of a region on this model, a glimpse of a piazza in the town centre, and of "a farm and its children" – the farmstead being a kind of extended family house combined with a youth hostel. But is planning on these lines worth while? Or rather, is the formulation of this kind of "ideal type" for a society, worth the effort? The Goodman's answer is this:

Now it might be said that all these provisions – small units, double markets, the selection of industries on political and psychological grounds, etc.– that all this is a strange and roundabout way of achieving a unified national economy, when at present this unity already exists with a tightness and efficiency that leaves nothing to be desired. But first, it is always a question whether the regional and syndicalist method is not more efficient and in the end, when invention, for instance, is not inhibited and the job is its own incentive. But most important of all, it must be remembered that we are here aiming at the highest and nearest ideals of external life:

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liberty, personal concern, responsibility and expertness; and to a say in what a man lends his hands to. Compared with these things, the present set-up, that does not even make the attempt to find living meaning in work, has nothing to offer.

### ***Maximum Security; Minimum Regulation***

In the third of their "ideal types" of community plans, the Goodman brothers describe an interim plan for "maximum security within minimum regulation". Up to about fifty years ago, they say, more than half the productive capacity of the United States was devoted to subsistence: "subsistence could be regarded as the

chief end of the economy and, although their motives were personal wealth and power, most enterprises were concerned with the subsistence market". But nowadays less than a tenth of the economy is concerned with subsistence goods (the exact figure depending on where the minimum is set, which as they point out, is a cultural rather than a medical question), and "the centre of economic interest has gradually shifted from either providing goods or gaining wealth to keeping the capital machines at work and running at full capacity, to increase further; and the social arrangements have become so complicated and interdependent that, unless the machines are running at full capacity, investment is withdrawn; and all wealth and subsistence are jeopardised". Since to neglect subsistence and security is "to breed war and social revolution", governments intervene to assure the elementary security which is no longer the first concern of the economy.

But since the forms and aims of these governments are given by the economy rather than by the elementary needs, the tack which they take is the following: to guarantee social security by subsidizing the full productivity of the economy. Or to put it financially, security is provided by insurance paid in the money that comes from the operation of the whole economy. The amazing indirectness of this mode of proceeding is brilliantly exposed by the discovery of a new human 'right' ... this is the 'right' – no! not to life and liberty – but to employment! Full employment is the device by which the whole economy can flourish and yet subsistence not be jeopardised – and therefore, the curse of Adam becomes a benefit to be struggled for, just because we have the means to produce a surplus, cause of all our woes.

But the immediate result of such a solution is to tighten even closer the economic net. Whatever freedom used to come from free enterprise and free market – and it is a freedom that at one time fought on the side of human rights – is caught in regulation and taxes. In a word the union of government and economy becomes more and more complete; soon we are in the full tide of statism. This is not a question of evil intention but follows from the connection of the basic political need of subsistence with the totality of an integrated economy. Such as the indirect solution.

The direct solution which they propose, is to divide the economy into two, separating whatever provides life and security for all from the rest of the economy which provides variety, interest, convenience, emulation, luxury, wealth and power. The principle is to assure subsistence by direct production of subsistence goods and services rather than by insurance taxed on the general economy. This involves a system of double money: the 'money' of the subsistence production

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and consumption, and the money of the general market. (Returning to this theme in a latter essay, Paul Goodman calls them hard and soft money). The hard money of the subsistence economy is more like ration coupons, not negotiable, since "a man's right to life is not subject to trade."

To the individual, they claim, the separation of his subsistence (employing a small fraction of his labour time) from the demands and values of the general economy

(employing most of his labour time), "should give a breath of freedom, a new possibility of choice, and a sense of security combined with perfect independence for he has worked directly for what he gets and need never feel the pressure of being a drain on the general society and of thinking that soon the payments will cease."

Comparing the systems of social security offered (in 1947) in Britain and America with their suggested plan, they find that the governmental plans offer:

1. Security of subsistence.
2. A tax on the general economy.
3. The necessity to maintain the economy at full production to pay the tax, therefore, governmental planning of all production, pump-priming, made work, and subsidies; a still further tax and, possibly, a falling rate of profit.
4. The insistence on the unemployed worker's accepting the third or fourth job available, in order to prevent a continuing drain on the tax fund.
5. The protecting of the workers thus coerced by regulation of the conditions of industry and investment.

As against these, they claim that their plan offers:

1. Security of subsistence.
2. The loss to the industrialist of the subsistence market and of a small fraction of the social labour.
3. The coercion of a small fraction of the social labour to produce the subsistence goods and services.
4. Economic freedom in all other respects. The authors admit, with a twinge of conscience, that their plan in effect requires a form of industrial conscription for the "universal labour service" even though it is for a short period, or for short periods of an individual's working life. ("We are touching," they remark, "on a political principle of vast importance, far beyond our scope of analysis here, namely, the principle of purity of means in the exercise of the different powers of society. Government, founded essentially on authority, uses mainly the means of personal service; economy, founded essentially on exchange, uses mainly the means of money."). They claim in fact that

This plan is coercive, but, in fact, if not in law, it is less coercive than the situation we are used to. For the great mass of wage earners it fixes a limit to the coercion to which, between capital and trade-union, they are unavoidably and increasingly subjected; for the wealthy enterpriser, who would buy substitutes, it is no more coercive than any other tax. On

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constitutional grounds the crucial objections to forced labour have always been either that it subjects the individual to a private enterpriser without contract (a form of slavery) or that it broadens the power of the state in abrogation of the rights against tyranny; but neither of these objections is here valid.

The minimum subsistence economy (they note that if freedom is the aim, everything beyond the minimum must be excluded) provides and distributes food, clothing and shelter, mass produced in enormous quantities and without variation of style, while medicine and transportation are provided by a financial arrangement between the subsistence and the general economies.

Now supposing that such a system, of assured subsistence and of almost complete freedom of economic ties, were put into effect; there is no doubt that for millions of people, no matter how much they might resist the idea in prospect, the first effect would be a feeling of immense relief – relief from that pressure of a daily grind and relief from the anxiety of failure in short, the feeling expressed by so many persons that they wish their vacations could last on and on. But, after this first commonplace effect had worn off, then, it seems to us, the moral attitude of a people like the Americans would be profoundly disturbed. They would be afraid not only of freedom (which releases the desires both creative and destructive, which are so nicely repressed by routine) but especially of boredom for they would imagine themselves completely without cultural or creative resources. For in our times all entertainments and even the personal excitements of romance seem to be bound up with having ready money to spend: all emotional satisfaction has been intricately into keeping the entire productive machine in motion: it is bound up with the 'standard of living', it is created by, and gets its economic role through advertising.

After the period of salutary boredom which *makes* people discover what they want to do with their time rather than succumb to a widely advertised suggestion, they envisage the growth of schools teaching *avocations* – jobs adopted for their own satisfaction rather than by economic necessity.

The authors enjoy themselves working out the architectural implications of their double economy – the "production centre" and minimal settlements of the subsistence economy. Throughout the book, they are forced by the nature of their approach, to stray out of the field of town-planning into that of economics, and it is with the views of an economist, J. K. Galbraith, that their three schemes invite comparison. In *The Affluent Society* (see ANARCHY 1), Galbraith argues, with the same reasoning about the small proportion of the American economy devoted to subsistence, for the divorce of production from security. In this respect he goes further than the Goodmans, but by the use of a mechanism which they reject as the indirect method. Galbraith suggests breaking the connection between income and production, not, like them, by separating subsistence from the rest, but by introducing what he calls cyclically graduated compensation – unemployment compensation which, as unemployment increases, is itself increased to approach the level of the normal weekly wage, and diminishes as full employment is approached. Each of these authors would regard the proposals of the other as a cumbersome way of achieving the same

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object. All their suggestions release a speculative faculty in the reader's brain, so

that he conceives other solutions for himself – like making subsistence items 'free' and reserving a money economy for luxuries.

Or he may conceive of a three-decker society in which the three schemes which the Goodmans formulate co-exist. Indeed, since one of the subtle fascinations of their book is that their three "paradigms" are part-parodies as well as part-utopias, he may actually see them co-existing in a distorting-mirror image, in the contemporary world. We have the big brassy metropolitan consumer city in any world capital, we have the "intentional community" in the form, for example, of the kibbutz (the subject of some penetrating paragraphs in the new edition of *Communitas*), and we may even trace elements of the life of security with minimum regulation in the economic aspects of the life of America's disaffiliated beatniks (which Paul Goodman has discussed in another book), living in the interstices of the affluent society by undertaking a minimum of humble but often useful work, in order to devote the rest of their time to the pursuits of *their* choice.

## Youth and absurdity

**Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organised System**, by Paul Goodman (New York: Random House \$4.50; London: Victor Gollancz 21s., 1961).

THIS IS THE ONLY ONE of Paul Goodman's books to be issued in an English edition, and although Mr. Gollancz launched it royally, it did not get a royal reception in the British press. Cyril Connolly complained in the *Sunday Times* that "reading Mr. Goodman is like swimming in cotton wool", the *Times Educational Supplement* reviewed it under the headline "Transatlantic Tosh", Geoffrey Gorer demolished it in *The Listener*, declaring that "the publisher misleads the purchaser, and insults Professor Riesman by claiming in bold type on the dust-cover that this book is in any way comparable to *The Lonely Crowd*", and finally D. W. Brogan observed in *The Guardian* that

It is lavishly praised by Sir Herbert Read and Mr. A. S. Neill, praise that I, for my part, can take or leave. I leave it. What is more serious is that it is praised by Mr. Norman Podhoretz and Professor J. K. Galbraith. Neither Mr. Podhoretz nor Professor Galbraith is an anarchist, neither has contracted out of society as Sir Herbert Read and Mr. Neill have done. I have the greatest respect for both these social commentators, but I am totally baffled as to why they think highly of this book.

This chorus of bafflement and disparagement is very different from the book's original reception in America, for we learn from Richard Mayes that there it has "been reviewed extensively and favourably in a large variety of publications ranging from arch conservative to extreme liberal, and I'd like to say immediately, with some annoyance, that it



is about time Paul Goodman is at last getting some of the credit he has so richly deserved for over twenty years."

You will see from all this that people are sharply divided on the merits of this book, and before describing its theme, I would like to express a modicum of agreement with its English critics. It has been badly put together by author and publisher: the reader has difficulty in finding his way around the book because the contents page is twelve pages away from the title page, and because 55 of its 296 pages consist of appendices A to F, most of them interesting in themselves but lacking immediate relevance to the text. It is not very well written and for us has the added irritation of colloquialisms whose meaning we have to guess at. But its worst fault is that it does not all speak with the same voice. Sometimes we are listening to the writer for the radical minority press, sometimes the didactic lecturer arguing from common premises, sometimes we hear the tone of a moralising leading article addressing the general public before last year's American elections:

Politically, what we need is government in which a man offers himself as a candidate because he has a new program that he wants to effectuate, and we choose him because we want that good, and judge that he is the best man to effectuate it. Is that outlandish?

Yes, Mr. Goodman it is, as well you know, For politics does not work that way. But perhaps the reason why *Growing Up Absurd* has not had here the impact that its theme demands is that, superficially it falls into a category of American current literature with which we are over-familiar. For there has been a steady flow during the last decade of books from the other side of the Atlantic criticising the state of the American nation, Some have been good, some bad, and many of them have given us phrases which have gained a general currency: *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Organisation Man*, *The Hidden Persuaders*, *The Shook-Up Generation*, *The Status Seekers*, *The Waste Makers*, *The Affluent Society*, *The Holy Barbarians* – how their catchy titles roll off the tongue! As Richard Hoggart remarked, there is an endless future for this kind of thing, and in fact we have already got our homegrown English versions: *The Stagnant Society* and *The Insecure Offenders* – both of them far inferior to the best of the American species.

Goodman's book brings together several of the themes of the orgy of American self-criticism. It is sub-titled "problems of youth in the organised system" for he argues that "it is desperately hard these days for an average child to grow up to be a man, for our present system of society does not want *men*. They are not safe. They do not suit." And he studies the reactions of several dissident groups in American life: the juvenile delinquents, the hipsters (or cynics) and the beats. He starts by considering the changing concept of human nature and of the

"socialisation" of the individual human being. A curious thing has occurred: unlike their predecessors, contemporary social scientists are no longer interested in fundamental social change, for they

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have hit on the theory that you can adapt people to anything, if you use the right techniques:

Our social scientists have become so accustomed to the highly organised and by-and-large smoothly running society that they have begun to think that "social animal" means "harmoniously belonging." They do not like to think that fighting and dissenting are proper social functions, nor that rebelling or initiating fundamental change is social function. Rather, if something does not run smoothly, they say it has been improperly socialised; there has been a failure in communications.

The question that Goodman asks is "Socialisation to what? To what dominant society and available culture?"

He thinks first of jobs. American society he declares "has tried so hard and so ably to defend the practice and theory of production for profit and not primarily for use, that now it has succeeded in making its jobs and products profitable and useless." We may readily assent in the examples he cites from salesmanship, entertainment, business management and advertising, but what about a job like teaching – a job which is necessary, useful, real, creative and obviously self-justifying? Well, he asks, why do many teachers suffer first despair and then resignation? It isn't only because it is carried on under impossible conditions of overcrowding and public parsimony, but because the school system has *spurious aims*: .

It soon becomes clear that the underlying aims are to relieve the home and keep the kids quiet; or, suddenly, the aim is to produce physicists. Timid supervisors, bigoted clerics, and ignorant school boards forbid real teaching. The emotional release and sexual expression of the children are taboo. A commercially debauched popular culture makes learning disesteemed. The academic curriculum is mangled by the demands of reactionaries, liberals, and demented warriors. Progressive methods are emasculated. Attention to each case is out of the question, and all the children – the bright, the average, and the dull – are systematically retarded one way or the other, while the teacher's hands are tied ...

Or take the job of motor mechanic: it is useful, interesting, satisfying to watch the car that was towed in rolling out on its own. What happens when a young man who takes on this job discovers that the manufacturers do not want their cars to be repaired or repairable, and that "gone are the days of keeping the jalopies in good shape, the artist-work of a good mechanic", since car repairs have become a matter of cosmetics and not mechanics.

It is hard for the young man now to maintain his feelings of justification, sociability, serviceability.

It is not surprising if he quickly becomes cynical and time-serving, interested in a fast buck. And so, on the notorious *Reader's Digest* test, the investigators (coming in with a disconnected coil wire) found that 63 per cent. of mechanics charged for repairs they didn't make, and lucky if they didn't also take out the new fuel pump and replace it with a used one (65 per cent of radio repair shops, but *only* 49 per cent. of watch repairmen "lied, overcharged, or gave false diagnoses").

He concludes that the majority of young people in America are faced with the alternative that society is either a benevolently frivolous racket in which they will manage to get by, or else that society is serious and it is *they* who are useless and hopelessly out. "Some settle for a 'good job'; most settle for a lousy job; a few, but an increasing

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number don't settle." This is the main theme of his book: "The simple plight of these adolescents could not be remedied without a social revolution. Therefore it is not astonishing if the most well-intentioned public spokesmen do not mention it at all." Writing about the organisation men, Goodman tells us little that we have not been told suavely by William H. Whyte; about the urban juvenile delinquents he is, because of his own condemnation of the society to which they have failed to "adjust", more enlightening than most writers. Instead of looking for a concept of delinquency, he suggests we expand the subject as "a series of possible punishable relations obtaining between the boy struggling for life and trying to grow up, and the society that he cannot accept and that lacks objective opportunities for him." This series he sets out thus:

1. Acts not antisocial if society had more sense.
2. Acts that are innocent but destructive in their consequences and therefore need control.
3. Acts antisocial in purpose.
4. Behaviour aimed at getting caught and punished.
5. Gang fighting that is not delinquency yet must be controlled.
6. Delinquency secondarily created by society itself by treating as delinquents those who were not delinquent, and by social attempts at prevention and reform.

But by far his most illuminating thoughts are about the Beats. (So much has been written on *this* theme that it is hard to be interesting about them.) He is not really an enthusiast for their art and literature, but he recognises that some of their habits "like being unscheduled, sloppy, communitarian, sexually easy-going, and careless of reputation," are "probably natural ways that most people would choose if they got wise to themselves – at least so artists and peasants have always urged." And he makes this telling point about the jobs they choose:

Many of the humble jobs of the poor are precisely not useless (or exploiting). Farm labour, hauling boxes, janitoring, serving and dish washing, messenger – these jobs resist the imputation of

uselessness (or exploitation) made against the productive society as a whole. These *are* preferred Beat jobs. For one thing, in them no questions are asked and no beards have to be shaved. Nor is this an accidental connection. Personal freedom goes with unquestioned moral utility of the job, for at the level of simple physical effort or personal service, the fraudulent conformity of the organised system sometimes does not yet operate; the job speaks for itself.

In his chapter on The Missing Community, Goodman talks about the "missed revolution that we have inherited", the fundamental social changes that have failed to occur, or have half-occurred. These range from syndicalism to "permissiveness". His argument is that "the accumulation of the missed and compromised revolutions of modern times, with their consequent ambiguities and social imbalances, has fallen, and must fall, most heavily on the young, making it hard to grow up." Goodman, contrasting the "organised system" – its role playing, its competitiveness, its canned culture, its public relations, and its avoidance of risk and self-exposure, with the simple "fraternity, animality and sexuality" of the disaffected young, feels, as a revolutionary of an older generation, heartened by these "crazy young allies." I hope he will not be disappointed.

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## Practical proposals

**Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals**, by Paul Goodman (New York: Random House, \$5.00, 1962).

THIS IS A COLLECTION OF TWENTY ESSAYS divided into five sections. The first ten are on topics which might be called sociological or psychological, the next two are architectural: a discourse on seating arrangements, and a scheme for banning cars from Manhattan, not merely as the only genuine solution to the city's traffic problems but as one essential step towards making it – and any other great city – a collection of integral neighbourhoods sharing a metropolitan centre and metropolitan amenities. The trafficless city precinct, with through arteries, is the solution which every metropolis will eventually have to choose: the tragedy is that the city fathers will only settle for this utopian and practical solution after they have spoilt whatever amenities still survive, through expensive and hopelessly impractical stopgaps. Goodman thinks of the neighbourhoods having responsibility for their own municipal services – school, market, playground, etc. (noting that in New York today there are more school administrators than in the whole of France). When we talk about restoring the human-scale community in big cities, critics observe that many people come to the big city precisely in order to have the anonymity and freedom from neighbours which they could not find in a small

community. Goodman with his usual paradoxical acuteness points out that it is precisely these individualistic people who came to New York to escape small-town mores, who form the only real community in the city, the intellectual and artistic stratum of Greenwich Village.

The next five essays are on literary themes, and the final three are about the young. One of these, on "vocational guidance", returns to the topic of Growing Up Absurd. The criteria which Goodman proposes should guide the educator advising school-leavers about jobs are all, he finds, in collision with the values of the world around:

The criterion of socially useful work attacks our profit system. The criterion of a job that exercises capacities and offers a field for real training and subsequent initiative is pretty close to Syndicalism, it threatens management. The need for sincere criticism and energetic performance undermines the conformity of our bureaucratic corporate system and the feather-bedding of labour unions. To support our poor youth requires a better community than we have. Naturally, then, an educator to whom these are basic considerations is in conflict.

His essay on youth work camps envisages a transformation of the residential camps, which, allowing for their limitations, are the only useful thing to come out of the massive American programmes for coping with young delinquents, into something fulfilling the same social

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role as the Youth House of some primitive societies.

To go back to the essays at the beginning of the book: there is some brilliant and subtle writing here: a splendid essay on "Pornography and the Sexual Revolution", and a witheringly denunciatory one on "Dr. Reich's Banned Books" – the suppression of the writings of Wilhelm Reich by the Food and Drug Administration on the grounds that they were labels or advertisements for a contraband commodity. There is also a thoughtful paper "On the Intellectual Inhibition of Explosive Grief and Anger", full of insight for those who like Goodman wonder how it comes about that people decline into apathy and conformism. And there are two essays on the theme which we associate particularly with him: "My Psychology as an 'Utopian Sociologist'" and "Utopian Thinking". He remarks that after a long spell of Marxian "scientific" realism and businessmen's "hard-headed" realism, American social scientists have begun to praise "utopian thinking". And he asks what this change means and what it conceals. The new praise of utopian thinking, he notes, "occurs in the context of our surplus technology." Is it merely a notion for mopping up the surplus? But *his* utopianism is something different from David Riesman's urging the youth of Kansas to build a mountain so that they can have manly work and enjoy skiing! Goodman's utopianism is that "on problems great and small, I try to think up direct expedients that do not follow the usual procedures." To illustrate them he gives us half a dozen thumbnail ideas, of which I

reproduce two:

In our educational system, too much is spent for plant and not enough for teachers. Why not try, as a pilot project, doing without the school building altogether for a few hundred kids for most of the day? Conceive of a teacher in charge of a band of ten, using the city itself as the material for the curriculum and the background for the teaching. Since we are teaching for life, try to get a little closer to it. My guess is that one could considerably diminish the use of present classrooms and so not have to increase their number.

The problem with the old ladies in a Home is to keep them from degenerating, so we must provide geriatric "occupational therapy". The problem with the orphans in *their* Home is that, for want of individual attention, they may grow up as cold or "psychopathic personalities". But the old ladies could serve as grandmothers for the orphans, to their mutual advantage. The meaning of community is people using one another as resources.

But when he proposes these and other direct action solutions, people "who *in fact* have little control of the means of production or power, but are nicely habituated to the complicated procedures of the moment, and get satisfaction by identifying with them", quickly put him wise on why this manner of thinking is utopian. It is risky, someone might get offended, it confuses administrative divisions, it creates conflict, it is probably illegal anyway.

This is a fair picture of our dilemma. A direct solution of social problems disturbs too many fixed arrangements. Society either does not want such solutions, or society is not up to them – it comes to the same thing. The possibility of a higher quality of experience arouses distrust rather than enthusiasm. People must be educated slowly. On the other hand, the only way *to* educate them, to change the present tone, is to cut

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through habits, especially the character-defence of saying "nothing can be done" and withdrawing into conformity and privacy. We must prove by experiment that direct solutions are feasible.

Now this *style* of thinking, which in Goodmans' words "aims at far-reaching social and cultural advantages by direct and rather dumb-bunny expedients" is highly topical for us. It is part of one important tradition in anarchist thought, it is part of the "breakthrough" propagated by some of the thinkers of the New Left in this country, and of the "make-it-yourself social revolution" towards which some supporters of the Committee of 100 are groping. Goodman himself, in *Art and Social Nature* outlined the philosophy of this here-and-now utopianism, with these words:

A free society cannot be the substitution of a "new order" for the old order; it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of social life ... The libertarian is rather a millenarian than an utopian. He does not look forward to a future state of things which he tries to bring about by suspect means; but he draws now, so far as he can, on the natural force in him that is no different in

kind from what it will be in a free society, except that there it will have more scope and will be immeasurably reinforced by mutual aid and fraternal conflict.

Against the slavishness and conformism which dominate his society – and ours – Goodman's is a voice which seeks the extension of the spheres of free action. That is why he deserves to be heard.

(Drawing omitted here)

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# The children and psychology

**PAUL GOODMAN**

WHAT IS MOST SIGNIFICANT, it seems to me, is the earnest attention paid to the Children and Family as a subject, the desire of parents to be informed and thereby do their best, rather than following their wit and impulse; or to say this another way, what is significant is the importance assigned in our society to Psychology itself, for Psychology is still by and large the family-psychology that Freud made it, discussing the problems of jealousy, infantile dependency, authority, submissiveness and rebelliousness, and sibling competition; and problems of spite, moral prejudice and other reaction-formations springing from instinctual deprivation. This interest in the Children is of course hopeful, for the increase of wisdom cannot fail to remedy abuses, and has already done so quite spectacularly. But this interest is also itself a symptom of an unfortunate social situation. Earnest folk pay such special attention to the children, and in general to their Inter-personal Relations, because there is not enough objective man's work or woman's work to put themselves to. I do not mean that there is not enough absolutely (it's a large universe); but that in our present social and technical arrangements there are not enough exciting and *available* and unquestionably self-justifying enterprises, where a lively human being can exercise initiative and use his enormous psychic and physical powers to anything like capacity. This problem goes, I think, deeper than any of the current differences in political or economic arrangements, and I cannot think of any immediate change that could alleviate it. We are in a phase of collective enterprise that does not, and probably cannot as yet, much use and stimulate such remarkably gifted animals as individual people, especially if we consider them (as children) before they are discouraged and become rusty, and in addition to our powers all the knowledge and equipment of our culture. So more

and more are likely to blow off steam in religious exploration; and the brunt of the burden falls on pre-occupation with the Children and Interpersonal Relations, for these at least are things that one can individually try to do something about.

*PAUL GOODMAN, whose books are discussed in this issue of ANARCHY, wrote 'The Children and Psychology' for Liberation magazine a few years ago.*

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Good parents work to preserve and give more available energy to their children; the children in turn grow up and find they have not much field of action for this energy, but they can expend some of it on their children.

The helping of children has the prime advantage that it can be disinterested, compassionate, and *noblesse oblige*; it is our nearest equivalent to the old chivalry. The bother is that, except for those who have a calling, who are born teachers, it is stultifying as a steady occupation. We also need some dragons to kill and planets to visit, or goods to produce that people unquestionably need. A psychiatrist friend of mine says that the right care of children is: Let them alone and be around; where "be around" means I suppose, to provide safety, audience for the exploit, consolation for the hurt, suggestion and material equipment for the next step, and answers when asked. This simple formula will not fill up a twenty-lecture seminar on Children.

### ***The Family as Battleground***

As our families are, the children in both their present satisfaction and the free growth of their powers, are certainly crushed, thwarted, pushed, hurt, and misled by their hostile and doting grown-ups. Frankly, I doubt that you can find one child in a dozen who is not being seriously injured, in quite definite and tangible ways, by his family. I would say this indignantly, as an indictment of the Family and *écrasez l'infame*, let's fight to get rid of it! if I thought that the available substitutes were not even more disastrous. But consider also the other side, that the parents are tied to and tyrannized over by the little Neros. You cannot put them in their places for several reasons: 1. You can't, try it; 2. It's bad for them to slap them down, and if they are injured it bounces back on you in the end; and 3. Most fundamentally, in the good cases you can't deny the imperious demands of the children because most, and perhaps all, of the hard things they really want are justified: they want space, excitement, sexual freedom, noble models to grow up to, wise saws of experience, real arts and crafts to learn, animals to hunt, an unknown to explore, and comprehensible answers to direct questions. But it is not the case that our housing, our economy, our style, our frontiers, and our sciences are amenable to these



justified childish demands. Our arrangements have become so objective that few grown-ups and no children any longer have an available objective world. So a sensitive parent feels justly guilty; he tries anxiously, in impossible conditions, not to rob the children of their natural rights as the free heirs of nature and man. Do not many of us suffer from what we could call the Lear-complex? We are abashed by the free unspoiled power of the very young, we have no right to withstand it, we resign and give up our own rights.

As a striking example of parental guilty good intentions, notice in community planning, how every adult requirement of quality, style, and efficiency, is sacrificed to suburban utilities of safety and playground.

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### ***Being Master with Authority***

Contrast it to make the point clear – with a master and his disciples, whether an artist or an artisan or a scholar: he uses the kids for his purposes, he says do and don't with a clear conscience, because his soul is fixed on the work; he teaches them out of his compassion to prevent error and advance the future. They, in turn, are neither humiliated nor browbeaten nor exploited. They are growing into the work and are growing through him because he is a master of the work; and the compelling proof of all this does not come from authority but from the work. Now regarding the Family as a school of growth in the art of personal life and of exploration and inspiration towards a career, what experienced mother or father feels like a master of the subject and can command and forbid with conviction, except in some elementary issues of health and safety and perhaps grammar and manners? (As Yeats said, "The best lack all conviction – the worst are full of passionate intensity.") We do not know the method to reach the goal we do not know. This is often expressed by the sentence, "I don't care what my children do or become, so long as they will be happy." An honest, humble, and sensible sentence, but it puts parents in the impossibly anxious position of trying to fulfil an indefinite responsibility. So instead of improvising with wit and love on a foundation of experience and unquestioned personal achievement, they necessarily rely on Psychology and Mental Hygiene.

Another cause of preoccupation with the children is that children have become the only colourable excuse for existence of the monogamous family. Economically, women make money and own most of it. As a way of life, with the general breakdown of the old sexual conventions and the weakening of the old inhibitions, monogamous marriage is felt as a trap and a frustration; people are exposed to, and allow themselves to feel, temptation but are not able to take satisfaction, so there is

plenty of resentment and guilt, projected resentment. Frankly, again, it is my observation that if many marriages (maybe most) could be simply dissolved after a few years, the partners would suddenly become brighter, rosier, and younger. And again I would therefore urge, change the whole institution, except that the situation is not simple: we are still in the toils of jealousy of our own Oedipus-complexes, and in the present social fragmentation the companionship of marriage, such as it is, is a safeguard against isolation and loneliness. (The Family was a bulwark of the private economy, and now it is a refuge against the collective economy.) But these grounds for the continued existence of the institution cannot stand much ethical scrutiny, considering the cost. It is the children that make the effort unquestionably worthwhile; and of course with the two or three children now standard, the burden of justification that must be borne by each little darling is great indeed.

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### *Salvation through Sex-technique*

As a defence against it, it has become the highest aim in life of an entire young generation to "achieve" a normal happy marriage and raise healthy (psychologically healthy) children. This is, what was always taken as a usual and advantageous background for work in the world and the service of God, is now regarded as a heroic goal to be striven for. This is preposterous. Yet, I should like to repeat it, the sentiment is deeply justified by the fact that at least this goal *can* be personally striven for; it is connected with real, not merely symbolic satisfactions and responsibilities; and the same cannot be said for other goals for most people, which are either fictions of prestige and power, or are managed collectively. Consider, as a test, when the goal cannot be achieved or when the marriage cracks up: it is the exceptional case where the person's work or social role is important enough and real enough to occupy his thoughts and keep him going with manly fortitude. Viewed in this light, the thousand manuals of sex-technique and happy marriage have the touching dignity of evangelical tracts, as is indeed their tone; they teach how to be saved, and there is no other way to be saved. The well-intentioned loving and resentful parents make a vocation of the children until finally they can send them off, at increasingly early times, to nursery-schools and schools. Perhaps the schools will provide "exploration and inspiration toward a career". But the situation of the teachers in the schools is fundamentally no different. For always the question is, What to teach? What is realistically *worth* teaching? The curriculum becomes poorer and poorer, because an honest educator cannot seriously believe that the solid sciences and humanities are life-relevant to the average of this mass of pupils. Nor is so-called "vocational" training the answer. (The name tends to be applied precisely in the absence of vocation.)

Neither the jobs trained for nor the kill-time training add up to what could enliven a human soul. The answer of the school is again Psychology; what the teacher has is not a subject-matter but a Method, and what he teaches is Inter-personal Relations. The only art that is essential is to read simple words, for production and distribution depend on reading. (So there has been universal free primary education for a hundred years, and the earmark of the delinquent who won't fit into the economy is that he won't or can't learn to read.) But the savage and intolerable irony is the current raving for more mathematics and physics, lest our bombs, radar, and rockets fall behind Russia's – these beautiful studies that have been transcendent goals for many of our best! now advocated so basely and the professors greedy for the subsidies and students on any conditions.

### ***Success without Achievement***

Brought up in a world where they cannot see the relation between activity and achievement, adolescents believe that everything is done with mirrors, tests are passed by tricks, achievement is due to pull,

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goods are known by their packages, and a man is esteemed according to his front. The delinquents who cannot read and quit school, and thereby become still less able to take part in such regular activity as is available, show a lot of sense and life when they strike out directly for the *rewards* of activity, money, glamour, and notoriety, which will "prove" in one fell swoop that they are not impotent. And it is curious and profoundly instructive how they regress, politically, to a feudal and band-and-chieftain law that is more comprehensible to them. The code of a street-gang has many an article in common with the Code of Alfred the Great.

It is disheartening indeed to be with a group of young fellows who are in a sober mood and who simply do not know what they want to do with themselves in life. Doctor, lawyer, beggar-man, thief? Rich man, poor man, Indian chief? they simply do not know an ambition and cannot fantasize one. But it is not true that they don't care; their "so what?" is vulnerable, their eyes are terribly baulked and imploring. (I say "it is disheartening", and I mean that the tears roll down my cheeks; and I who am an anarchist and a pacifist feel that they will be happier when they are all in the army.)

### ***The Psychology of Abundance***

This is a sad picture. Naturally; for it is always sad when you write about something, rather than to something. (Poetry is not sad, it is an action.) I do not

think there is cause for indignation, nor for despair. Not for indignation, because so many people are doing their best and many of these difficulties that have arisen are surprising and must simply be addressed patiently. Not for despair, for my feeling is that we are in a strange transition: to finding some kind of collective arrangements what will be rich with animal vitality and creative spontaneity and will be without Interpersonal Relations. Of course I cannot imagine such an apparently contradictory thing or I would be writing that instead of this. Meantime we psychologically-informed parents are doggedly (and out of our own hides) contributing to the explosion of it. By the millions – soon by the vast majority – we have let up on toilet-training, we have been liberating sexuality, we have honestly relinquished an old-fashioned authority because we do not know right principles. Then in the new generation there is more and more health and available energy, and less and less to do with it; more and more unprejudiced, not-class-ridden and good-humoured kids who are, yet, more and more stupid. This is the psychology of abundance that goes with the economy of abundance.

With the alleviation of the anxieties of poverty, there naturally loom vaster and at first vaguer anxieties of destiny. Our present task, it seems to me, is just to get rid of a few more ideas, to get rid of *Life* so we can have a little life, and finally to get rid of Psychology so we can have a little contact and invention. As Laotse said, "Good government is to empty the people's minds and fill their bellies."

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# The character builders

## HAROLD DRASDO

THE SYMPOSIUM ON ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS which formed the seventh issue of ANARCHY might well have been complemented with a discussion of what is, in one sense, one of the same problem's other faces: education through adventure in open country. For the directions in which this work has been moving should enlist the attention of anarchists. Anyone uninformed in these affairs might assume that what we could call the informal sports – camping, mountaineering, sailing, and their derivatives – that these normally non-competitive activities must be admirably free from the tendencies we make note of in education and in social affairs. Since the war, however, instruction in these skills has become involved with public and private money through the establishment of permanent centres by the Outward Bound Trust, the Central Council for Physical Recreation, several Local Education Authorities, and other interested bodies. And already we can distinguish libertarian

and authoritarian attitudes at work.

Of these ventures the Outward Bound Trust is the most publicised and makes claims for its four-week courses different in kind from those made by the other centres. It has indirect liaisons with the Services and the Churches. A glance at any literature about the work of the Trust will help to identify its position provisionally. The vocabulary is characteristic: relating to its aims – spiritual awareness, leadership, loyalty, character training, self-discipline, clean living; to its methods – competition, supreme exertion, shock treatment, honours and merit badges. It doesn't seem essential to outline the whole mystique of Outward Bound here but you can see immediately that there must be points for discussion in this idea. Taking it for granted that were we to resolve the more obvious of the semantic problems in the stated aims – matters of definition in such abstractions as "character", for instance – we might still find grounds for hostility, it seems necessary to suggest briefly what values the activities themselves, from any viewpoint, might be agreed to have.

To begin with, we must remind ourselves that most of the adolescents attending these courses are unacquainted with the natural world to an extent difficult for us to grasp. There are factors that have operated towards and against this but for proof talk to a representative group of them for about ten minutes. It isn't necessary to raise

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a complicated theory of value in order to insist that simple sense-experience, in and for itself, is good. And at this lowest level there is the sheer visual shock of this new world, its colours and space, whether you care to describe it in aesthetic or physiological terms; the feel of rock, snow, heather; the silences and sounds; the new information for every mode of sense perception. For some reason this never seems to be emphasised despite the fact that we admit the discoveries of the senses to be the basis of knowledge. And in synthesis, the earth, after all, is our planet and its landscapes, experienced directly, can arouse sensations only remotely stirred by second-hand parade upon the screen. Of course, some of this applies to older people too. Any week-end you can see families getting out of their cars for a roadside picnic with the trepidation of the first astronauts disembarking on a new star: suspiciously on the watch for dangerous rain, untrustworthy animals, the risk of getting dirty.

Then there are the skills acquired. It is a surprise to many to find how peculiarly natural such an activity as canoeing, for example, feels even today. In the same way, the apparently specialised equipment of the mountaineer – ice-axe, rope, climbing boots, piton hammer – is often felt to have an almost instant familiarity; perhaps because these articles are really only types of the basic instruments of man's emergence. For whatever reason, and scores could be advanced, it is observable fact that these skills satisfy richly, that in some way the body recognises them. To many youngsters they are ecstatically exciting. Indeed, with increasing frequency and with justice the question is raised: why is so much money and effort spent on teaching children games which the majority never practise after leaving school? It can't be supported with the reasons used to justify algebra or Greek.. On the other hand, if an interest is awakened these informal sports can be, and often are, followed as participant, not spectator, until late in life; because, sooner or later, it becomes apparent that satisfaction in these sports has small reference to any external standard but relates rather to an internal balancing of ability and desire. Also, aside from pleasure and apart from fitness, there are indisputable benefits to the general health, sometimes visible at the end of a week.

Then there is the social aspect. There can be no easier way of demonstrating the necessity for co-operation than by an expedition in rough country, a microcosm in which the consequences of actions are seen immediately and without complication. Indeed, simplified to a level appropriate to any age-group and mentality, we can show as if with the force of an experiment: we must love one another or die. If wisely arranged, the communal life of the centre can support this lesson strongly. Ought not these possibilities to be enough in themselves? Many of us would maintain that with some obvious resultants they are more than enough. But at this point we must dissociate ourselves from the theorists of Outward Bound. For what is the connection between these benefits and the promises not to swear, not to smoke, not drink? What

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has "clean living" got to do with this? Why should it be thought necessary to teach co-operation competitively? Why the cult of leadership, the sermons and homilies, the heavy expense of spirit? Clearly, because we are in Montgomeryland, the Trust is training Christian soldiers, and, to a larger or smaller extent, is simply using the sea and mountains instrumentally. It is using these activities, like it or not, in a way analogous to that in which Germany used them: to fit the child to the State. A different idea of the State, a different ideal for the citizen, but beneath it the same principle.

It appears that, aside from any disagreement about what defines character, we can now make two major criticisms of the work of the Trust. Firstly, owing to the stress

on extreme fitness, competition, the "conquering of self", and so forth, it seems that in many activities the youngsters are pressed far past the point of enjoyment.

Anyone who has talked to a number of unaccompanied Outward Bound parties on the fells will agree that, even allowing for temporary despondencies forgotten in retrospect and for the astonishing resilience of youngsters, a proportion of the boys is disenchanted forever with these pastimes. What proportion this may be it would be very difficult to determine but (of the "conscripts" from industry, at any rate) some estimates put it at a majority. And if you believe that the activities are good in themselves and not simply as means there is an unanswerable failure here.

Secondly, for normal adolescents even these neutral pastimes may be given distasteful and irrelevant associations by the clumsily overt emphasis on "character" and example. Youngsters tend to judge a sport by its practitioners and the way they talk. In mitigation of these criticisms it is important to add that when one is in unspoiled country a sense of freedom is often conspicuously present and a resistance to authority and its precepts may be encouraged by contrast; if the trainees are sent out unchaperoned, Nature subverts the intentions of the character builders at every step. Nonetheless, it seems certain that the basic merits of the activities are in many cases, if not negated, at least severely limited by this general approach.

Whilst none of the other experiments has been based on professedly libertarian principles, some of them do stand at a noticeable remove from the authoritarianism of Outward Bound. The Derbyshire Education Committee's centre at Buxton, which has been running for more than ten years now, is amongst these. Its establishment was to the credit of the Director of Education for Derbyshire, Jack Longland, whose influence in this field has been very considerable and entirely to the good. He has, it is true, inevitably become involved in Outward Bound affairs but has, at the same time, firmly rejected facile theories of character-transference – the playing fields of Eton stuff. He has drawn attention to the loose identification of "character" and "morals". And he has exercised a nice restraint, suggesting gently that the whole concept of character is a more elusive and complex subject than the more exuberant of the outdoor educationists seem to assume. The following notes, however, don't pretend to represent official policy but simply

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a few aspects of the working rules evolved at White Hall.

The consideration which underlies all others is safety. It might not seem necessary to state this but it's worth mentioning since some of the ends and means we criticise operate against it. Where others' lives are concerned no-one has the right even to think about so-called "calculated" risks. This said, the obvious first principle is that the youngsters and adults who visit the centre should enjoy themselves. The

obvious test is whether they want to come again or not. The aim is the stimulation of a permanent interest in any of the activities. We are persuaded that we have been very successful with this approach and this success must largely result from the general absence of pressure. In detail, there is almost always complete freedom of choice as to which of the specialised activities – rock-climbing, canoeing, caving, and so on – are taken and if anyone wishes he can just go fell-walking instead. We do not assume that everyone *must* like these pastimes. No-one is pressed to do anything he finds difficult or alarming. There is no element of competition and, accordingly, there is no obstacle to the co-educational course which is common. Potential leaders are not sought and relations between instructors and pupils are nearly informal. Indeed, the atmosphere at the centre has always been so friendly that there has been no difficulty in securing the assistance of as many unpaid volunteer instructors as has been thought useful every weekend since the centre was opened. Some of these instructors first came to the centre as novices. The cost of running this kind of service is not exorbitant in comparison with the sums spent on large playing fields for formal games and athletics. Many of us feel that such centres present the ideal forms of physical education and that where geographically possible – almost everywhere – whatever sorts of natural facilities are available ought to be used.

In conclusion, we must revert to the question of character and morals. It would require a long essay to separate and define these concepts adequately enough for useful discussion. Briefly, however, of this whole complex of attitudes some aspects we might dismiss as comparatively trivial affairs of habit or manners. Some of the religious and sexual content, as propounded in this context, we might wish to reject entirely. Some abstract qualities such as loyalty and self-confidence we might feel disinclined to class as virtues. But some sort of nucleus is left behind and towards the development of this we can offer certain non-verbal lessons, related to the benefits mentioned earlier, which assuredly are a part of the experiential basis of any higher qualities. In particular, it may reasonably be claimed that such slight tastes of loneliness, hunger, or apparent hazard as may occur incidentally in these activities serve to make evident the primary values of company, food, security. And, above all, if it is possible for the youngster to visit the same centre at different seasons there is the nourishment of release and continuity and certainty that the natural world can give; with, in completion, the very important sense of process and impermanence that underlies it, a tragic sense, perhaps, but one of the foundations of humanism and real education.



# versus standard education

## A. S. NEILL

I HOLD THAT THE AIM OF LIFE is to find happiness, which means to find interest. Education should be a preparation for life. Our culture has not been very successful. Our education, politics, and economics lead to war. Our medicines have not done away with disease. Our religion has not abolished usury and robbery. Our boasted humanitarianism still allows public opinion to approve of the barbaric sport of hunting. The advances of the age are advances in mechanism – in radio and television, in electronics, in jet planes. New world wars threaten, for the world's social conscience is still primitive.

If we feel like questioning today, we can pose a few awkward questions. Why does man seem to have many more diseases than animals have? Why does man hate and kill in war when animals do not? Why does cancer increase? Why are there so many suicides? So many insane sex crimes? Why the hate that is anti-Semitism? Why Negro hating and lynching? Why back-biting and spite? Why is sex obscene and a leering joke? Why is being a bastard a social disgrace? Why the continuance of religions that have long ago lost their love and hope and charity? Why, a thousand whys about our vaunted state of civilised eminence!

I ask these questions because I am by profession a teacher, one who deals with the young. I ask these questions because those so often asked by teachers are the unimportant ones, the ones about school subjects. I ask what earthly good can come out of discussions about French or ancient history or what not when these subjects don't matter a jot compared to the larger question of life's natural fulfilment – of man's inner happiness.

How much of our education is real doing, real self-expression? Handwork is too often the making of a pin tray under the eye of an

*ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND NEILL, born in Scotland, 1883, was the only one of a family of eight who was not sent to a secondary school, because of an inability to learn. Starting work at fourteen he failed in various occupations before graduating with honours in English literature from Edinburgh University in 1912. Today he is our greatest and best-loved educator, whose influence, through his seventeen books, and translations in eight languages, has spread far beyond Summerhill School, which was forty years old last year. His article is extracted from his book Summerhill which will be published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. in 1962.*

expert. Even the Montessori system, well known as a system of directed play, is an artificial way of making the child learn by doing. It has nothing creative about it. In the home, the child is always being taught. In almost every home, there is always at least one ungrown-up grownup who rushes to show Tommy how his new engine works. There is always someone to lift the baby up on a chair when baby wants to examine something on the wall. Every time we show Tommy how his engine works we are stealing from that child the joy of life – the joy of discovery – the joy of overcoming an obstacle. Worse! We make the child come to believe that he is inferior, and must depend on help.

Parents are slow in realising how unimportant the learning side of school is. Children, like adults, learn what they want to learn. All prize-giving and marks and exams sidetrack proper personality development. Only pedants 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 theatre and paint and freedom.

Most of the school work that adolescents do is simply a waste of time, of energy, of patience. It robs youth of its right to play and play and play; it puts old heads on young shoulders.

When I lecture to students at teacher training colleges and universities, I am often shocked at the ungrownupness of these lads and lasses stuffed with useless knowledge. They know a lot; they may shine in dialectics; they can quote the classics – but in their outlook on life many of them are infants. For they have been taught *to know*, but have not been allowed *to feel*. These students are friendly, pleasant, eager, but something is lacking – the emotional factor, the power to subordinate thinking to feeling. I talk to these of a world they have missed and go on missing. Their textbooks do not deal with human character, or with love, or with freedom or with self-determination. And so the system goes on, aiming only at standards of book learning – goes on separating the head from the heart.

It is time that we were challenging the school's notion of work. It is taken for granted that every child should learn mathematics, history, geography, some science, a little art, and certainly literature. It is time we realised that the average young child is not much interested in any of these subjects.

I prove this with every new pupil. When told that the school is free, every new pupil cries, "Hurrah! you won't catch me doing dull arithmetic and things!"

I am not decrying learning. But learning should come after play. And learning should not be deliberately seasoned with play to make it palatable.

Learning is important – but not to everyone. Nijinsky could not pass his school exams in St. Petersburg, and he could not enter the State Ballet without passing those exams. He simply could not learn school subjects – his mind was elsewhere.

They faked an exam for him, giving him the answers with the papers – so a biography says. What

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a loss to the world if Nijinsky had had to really pass those exams! Creators learn what they want to learn in order to have the tools that their originality and genius demand. We do not know how much creation is killed in the classroom with its emphasis on learning.

I have seen a girl weep nightly over her geometry. Her mother wanted her to go to the university, but the girl's whole soul was artistic. I was delighted when I heard that she had failed her college entrance exams for the seventh time. Possibly, the mother would now allow her to go on the stage as she longed to do.

Some time ago I met a girl of fourteen in Copenhagen who had spent three years in Summerhill and had spoken perfect English here. "I suppose you are at the top of your class in English," I said.

She grimaced ruefully. "No, I'm at the bottom of my class, because I don't know English grammar," she said. I think that disclosure is about the best commentary on what adults consider education.

We have found that the boy who cannot or will not learn to read until he is, say, fifteen is always a boy with a mechanical bent who later on becomes a good engineer or electrician. I should not dare dogmatise about girls who never go to lessons, especially to mathematics and physics. Often such girls spend much time with needlework, and some, later on in life, take up dressmaking and designing. It is an absurd curriculum that makes a prospective dressmaker study quadratic equations or Boyle's Law.

Caldwell Cook wrote a book called *The Play Way*, in which he told how he taught English by means of play. It was a fascinating book, full of good things, yet I think it was only a new way of bolstering the theory that learning is of the utmost importance. Cook held that learning was so important that the pill should be sugared with play. This notion that unless a child is learning something the child is wasting his time is nothing less than a curse – a curse that blinds thousands of teachers and most school inspectors. Fifty years ago the watchword was "Learn through doing". Today the watchword is "Learn through playing". Play is thus used only as a means to an end, but to what good end I do not really know.

If a teacher sees children playing with mud, and he thereupon improves the shining moment by holding forth about river-bank erosion, what end has he in view? What child cares about river erosion? Many so-called educators believe that it does not matter what a child learns as long as he is *taught* something. And, of course, with schools as they are, just mass-production factories – what can a teacher do but teach something and come to believe that teaching, in itself, matters most of all?

When I lecture to a group of teachers, I commence by saying that I am not going to speak about school subjects or discipline or classes. For an hour my audience listens in rapt silence; and after the sincere applause, the chairman announces that I am ready to answer questions. At least three-quarters of the questions deal with subjects and teaching.

I do not tell this in any superior way. I tell it sadly to show how

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the classroom walls and the prison-like buildings narrow the teacher's outlook, and prevent him from seeing the true essence of education. His work deals with the part of a child that is above the neck; and perforce, the emotional, vital part of the child is foreign territory to him.

I wish I could see a bigger movement of rebellion among the younger teachers. Higher education and university degrees do not make a scrap of difference in confronting the evils of society. A learned neurotic is not any different than an unlearned neurotic.

In all countries, capitalist, socialist, or communist, elaborate schools are built to educate the young. But all the wonderful labs and workshops do nothing to help John or Peter or Ivan surmount the emotional damage and the social evils bred by the pressure on him from his parents, his schoolteachers, and the pressure of the coercive quality of our civilisation.

I have not spent the last forty years writing down *theories* about children. Most of what I have written has been based on observing children, living with them. True, I have derived inspiration from Freud, Homer Lane, and others; but gradually, I have tended to drop theories when the test of reality proved them invalid.

There is a comical aspect about age. For years I have been trying to reach the young – young students, young teachers, young parents – seeing age as a brake on progress. Now that I am old – one of the Old Men I have preached against so long – I feel differently. Recently, when I talked to three hundred students in Cambridge, I felt myself the youngest person in the hall. I *did*. I said to them: "Why do you need an old man like me to come and tell *you* about freedom?" Nowadays, I do not think in terms of youth and age. I feel that years have little to do with one's thinking. I know lads of twenty who are ninety, and men of sixty who are twenty. I am thinking in terms of freshness, enthusiasm, of lack of conservatism, of deadness, of pessimism.

I do not think that the world will use the Summerhill method of education for a very long time – if it ever uses it. The world may find a better way ... the world *must* find a better way. For politics will not save humanity. It never has done so. Most political newspapers are bristling with hate all the time. Too many are socialistic because they hate the rich instead of loving the poor.

How can we have happy homes with love in them when the home is a tiny corner of a homeland that shows hate socially in a hundred ways? You can see why I cannot look upon education as a matter of exams and classes and learning. The school evades the basic issue: All the Greek and maths and history in the world will not help to make the home more loving, the child free from inhibitions, the parent free of neurosis.

The future of Summerhill itself may be of little import. But the future of the Summerhill idea is of the greatest importance to humanity. New generations must be given the chance to grow in freedom. The bestowal of freedom is the bestowal of love. And only love can save the world.

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