UNIVERSAL LIBRARY
OU_162476
UNIVERSAL LIBRARY

OUP—23—4-4-69—5,000.

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 154.3 H8HS Accession No. P.G. 1515

Author Hourd, M. L.

Title Some Emotional Aspects of Learning.

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

SOME EMOTIONAL AS'ECTS OF LEARNING

THE HEINEMANN EDUCATION SERIES

General Editors

VERNON MALLINSON, M.A., PEGGY VOLKOV, Ph.D., M.A.
ALAN HILL, M.A.

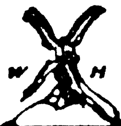
EDUCATION FOR SANITY:	*W. B. Curry*
TEACH THEM TO LIVE:	*James Hemming*
RUSSIA GOES TO SCHOOL:	*Beatrice King*
HOMER LANE AND THE LITTLE COMMONWEALTH:	*E. T. Bazeley*
TALES OUT OF SCHOOL: A Critical Survey of Contemporary Juvenile Fiction	*Geoffrey Trease*
THE ADOLESCENT AT SCHOOL:	*Vernon Mallinson*
THE EDUCATION OF THE POETIC SPIRIT:	*Marjorie L. Hourd*
ON NOT BEING ABLE TO PAINT:	*Joanna Field*
HEALTH EDUCATION: A Guide to Principles and Practice	*Cyril Bibby*
A GROUP OF JUNIORS:	*Frances Tustin*
PLAY, DREAMS AND IMITATION IN CHILDHOOD:	*Jean Piaget*
SOME EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING:	*Marjorie L. Hourd*
THE EDUCATION OF THE PERSONALITY:	*Donald Maclean*

Other Titles in preparation
(Detailed list on request)

SOME EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

by

MARJORIE L. HOURD



WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD

MELBOURNE :: LONDON :: TORONTO

Made in Great Britain. Printed at the St Ann's Press
Park Road, Altrincham

To my Mother

and

To the Memory

of

My Father

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been the constant encouragement and guidance of Mrs. P. Volkov which have enabled me to bring these studies together in this form.

If any of my friends notice a phrase or an idea which they feel to be theirs, I hope they will find acknowledgement in the statement of the last chapter that all good things were made to be stolen from.

CONTENTS

	Introduction The Teacher: Artist and Psychologist	9
I.	Learning Health and Learning Illness	12
II.	Devotion and Doubt	19
III.	Humour and Criticism	30
IV.	Fact and Phantasy	35
V.	Exploitation and Exploration	46
VI.	Confidence and Diffidence	55
VII.	Principle and Prejudice	70

INTRODUCTION

THE TEACHER: ARTIST AND PSYCHOLOGIST

THERE are many approaches to the subject of learning, some of which deal chiefly with what is learnt and others with the mode of learning it. Although in this book we are more concerned with how we learn than with what we learn, we shall see that they are closely related. And there are many angles from which to regard this ' how ' and its relation to ' what '. Here the emotional aspects are considered. But such a study can either be made on the level of conscious psychology or the influence of the unconscious can be taken into account as well. These essays are studies in the unconscious motivation of learning. It is, of course, an endless topic; but one has to begin somewhere.

Then why have I chosen to dwell upon the particular emotional aspects of learning represented here? I have to confess that I do not know any more than a poet knows why he wrote upon certain subjects at certain times, except that his experience caused him to think and feel like that. But, someone might object, an essay on education is not the same thing as a poem. In a sense it is. Each is the result of one person's thought and, therefore, the expression of one person's feelings, because every general idea that the mind entertains contains also a core of individual significance, and in the same way every personal experi-

ence holds as part of its meaning what is true for all people. So that in order to bring living and learning together we need constantly to have the individual-near and the universal-remote in ideas in a state of interchange. The teacher needs to do this as well as the poet, but with a greater degree of consciousness. He has to be both an artist and a psychologist, and to allow a rich unconscious life to flow within him but at the same time to be enough aware of its direction to harness its power to the work he has to do.

It is wise too to be conscious of the fact that when we are writing about children we are also writing about ourselves. This is another aspect of the interchange between nearness and remoteness. Such understanding may involve important changes in the personality because one cannot come into close touch with one's own unconscious without some re-direction of the self's taking place. Less damage would have been done by educational philosophers if they had realized more clearly how personal their theories were. Plato might not have banished the poet and Madame Montessori the fairy tale had they known how far their conclusions were derived from their own fears. Yet if the educationist is to express himself freely, he is bound to produce prejudice along with inspiration. This is the poet in him. Then it is that he needs the guiding principles of psychology to enable him to put his thinking at the service of his pupils.

Does this seem to ask too much of the teacher? A great deal has always been demanded of him. Now more than ever. He is expected to be a human creative person and yet also to have this scientific knowledge of the sources of his powers. But perhaps the task is not as formidable as it sounds; perhaps he became a teacher because this is what he always wanted to do, because he was a person who

both wanted to get to know himself and also to get to know children.

Certainly it is not possible to say anything important about children unless one is prepared to know oneself in relation to them. For some time we have recognized the importance of the teacher-child relationship as a factor in learning, but we are only just beginning to understand that if the teacher is to put himself in the right position with children, he must be in contact with the child in himself. This is something quite different from being 'child-like' or being 'fond of children'. Sometimes, in fact, child-study can be a way of avoiding the claims of the child inside, by focusing attention on the one in the classroom. But knowing what it is to be a child, by coming to terms with the child in ourselves, is knowledge of another kind because it involves recognising the aggressive roots of personality. As a result of this awareness, radical changes are bound to take place, changes which are long overdue. All this requires a great deal of courage. But most teachers are very courageous and they are not likely to shirk their responsibilities once they know what they are. It is to these teachers that this book is addressed.

CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING HEALTH AND LEARNING ILLNESS[1]

PEDAGOGISTS at one time taught us that learning was a method of impression, consolidation and expression. It would seem in this way as though the health of the mind were attained through a kind of digestive process of taking in, assimilating and giving out. There is a good deal in this way of looking at it, though it does not, of course, tell the whole story of how we learn. Nor perhaps were these educationists fully aware of the extent to which emotional factors were involved.

First there is the process of taking in. How intricate this is in the classroom. So much depends on the teacher and the way he gives out; on how he presents materials to work with, ideas to fasten upon, facts to absorb. This will be determined by his attitude to learning as a whole. He should be a presumptuous kind of person like Bacon who took all knowledge for his province; for it is from such arrogance that the humility of the generous giver develops. This does not mean that he must presume to know everything as some teachers imagine, but he must be able to feel within himself a capacity for knowing most things, which is quite different. Most of us have not seen the Pope,

[1] The substance of this chapter appeared in *The Bulletin of Education* (Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education), May, 1950, under the title of 'Knowing about Knowing.'

nor do I myself know much about him, but I feel that I could see him if I wanted to and find out all about him in so far as his presence and these facts were available. We do our best teaching, not from limited supplies of knowledge but from the potential of all knowledge.

Let knowledge be to a teacher a kind of birthright in an aristocratic sense. Then let him select from it what he requires and hand over what is needed in a democratic sense. Thus learning asserts its aristocratic rights before it becomes a democracy. Teachers are in great danger of losing this understanding and so are some of our universities. They are making parcels of ideas to send to starving nations instead of helping them to develop their own resources. This scheme and that is being tried out and magical words invoked in the jargon of the text-books: integration, socialization and so on. These are not the teacher's primary concern. The integrations of knowledge emerge slowly as part of the process of cultural evolution. His concern is first with that province of learning which has given him personally most profound satisfaction, and this will have produced a feeling for the provinces which his mind reaches out towards, but which may only become his in awareness as they become the possession of those whom he teaches and with whom he comes into contact. It is thus that arrogance changes to humility because it is through our own greatness that others are made great. How well teachers know this, who watch their pupils outstrip them, but have the satisfaction of recognizing seeds that they sowed.

The teacher who teaches from the capacity for all knowledge and the one who uses the scrapings and bits and pieces of knowledge will influence children's learning differently. If we deal in limited supplies, either we are likely to feel afraid lest we run out, in which case we may

become rigid and dictatorial, or else, for fear of exposing our ignorance, we may attribute to what we know special powers, and become precious and hold our methods inviolable. But the teacher who is in possession not only of what he knows but of what he does not know, will be able to treat knowledge not as something either exhaustible or inexhaustible, but as always replenishable. He will be able to reserve facts and also to be generous when necessary without fear of loss. From him children will gain the ability to wait for knowledge and to luxuriate in it as well. They will ask sensible questions because they know they will get adequate answers. In this way a kind of learning health is established.

Once ideas have been taken into the mind, the teacher's responsibility to some extent alters. They are now the child's possession in a way in which they could never belong either to the writer from whom they were taken, or to the teacher who from his own store has handed them over. The democratic act of sharing has established a new aristocracy; and so it goes on. If we attempt to interrupt this rhythm, then we are disturbing the give and take between individual minds which is the most valuable source of life and learning. But what happens in the child's mind whilst this process of assimilation it taking place is not easy to determine, because it will be different for every one. Here the teacher needs to be content to wait and to watch to some extent, and to attend to his own resources. 'Always reading, never to be read,' said Pope. 'Always teaching, never to be taught,' would be just as true. The more we are assured of our own learning health, the more we can allow the child to develop at his own pace without constant anxiety and interference. It is the teacher who is anxious about his own giving who cannot trust the gift to be satisfactorily accepted. He has to keep asking questions and

testing children to find out how much has gone in, in order to reassure himself. This is disastrous for the growing faculties of children. If we can wait for consolidation the child too can be more patient. He needs time and space in which to become aware of himself as a person, for he knows that within himself a kind of reconstruction of the universe is taking place. He feels more and more confident in relation to the great macrocosm outside as his own little microcosm shapes and re-shapes itself to his needs. This gives him a feeling of immense potentiality from which perhaps springs that capacity for all knowledge.

But I do not want to suggest that the teacher has no responsibilities whilst these reconstructions are going on. Because changes cannot take place in the mind without many corrections having to be made—errors and wrong judgements rectified, and often cherished phantasies rejected, and parental standards repudiated. None of this is easy; and here the teacher needs to know how to treat discards lovingly, and to accept ignorance as a part of knowledge. For we cannot expect children to relinquish their strongholds without some resistance. They share the reluctance of all true thinkers to give up old beliefs before the new ones are part of themselves. But in all this they will be greatly helped if the teacher is a person who can recognize muddle as a stage in clarification. We must respect chaos if we are to understand meaning.

Nevertheless, in all children reactions against learning are to be expected at times. A child may become difficult on his own, or he may look round for some one to be led astray by, or to lead astray. It is often very difficult for a teacher to know what to do in these cases, because so often he sees in the child or the group the reflections of his own resistances. It is a good thing therefore if he looks at himself first and asks: Did I go too fast? Did I keep them

waiting too long? Was I not sure enough of my material? Did I only know it in a dead kind of way? Was I unable to accept their mistakes? But even if a class gets quite out of order owing to these miscalculations we must not consider that our control is lost or even weakened. Because, as well as these faults in ourselves, it is likely that the child is exploiting them for his own purposes. He needed the opportunity to resist us. We gave it to him. If we can understand this in time and regain the confidence thus temporarily lost, we are likely to grip the class with a new control coming this time from a mutual breaking down of resistance.

But all rebellion is not of this healthy kind, and most teachers have to deal in their classes with a certain number of children whose learning digestions are so impaired that these re-adjustments are not possible. Such children we can say are learning-ill. They have not a strong enough framework within which to know and find out. It is not a case of not knowing yet and being prepared to wait, nor even of putting off knowing until they gain more confidence. They dare not know at all. It may be that their illness has advanced so far that they are quite out of control. A child may become very aggressive, unbearably noisy and cheeky, make constant messes of his work or other people's, scribble on the lavatory walls, mutilate his desk, use obscene language, and so on. Sometimes there is an epidemic of this kind of behaviour and we can feel so discouraged that we want to give up teaching altogether. When a child has reached this degree of illness, he needs skilled treatment, which cannot be given within the classroom or school situation.

It is obvious that these children will find adequate expression of themselves impossible, but others will have a great need of it, whilst it will help the ailing child to get on his

feet again and regain confidence. All expression is a gesture to the world outside—asking permission to take it into ourselves, and also to become part of it. When our expression is accepted within the expression of someone else, then our value to ourselves is greatly increased. In a lesson both teachers and children should share each other's satisfactions —for every child is to some degree a teacher, and every teacher learns from the experience of a lesson.

So we see that the old slogan 'No impression without expression' had some truth in it, but many teachers made the mistake of thinking that this was a progress which they had to engineer. Half the lesson was taken with giving out, and the other half with taking back, so that monstrosities of expression work resulted which had nothing whatever to do with mutual experience. We all know those lessons where a story was told, or a poem read, and the class was directed immediately to draw or paint their idea of what it meant without any effort on the teacher's part to give a choice of time or material, or to participate in the work through suggestion, interpretation or encouragement. All work which is genuinely individual also bears marks of the teacher's personality. A child writes a poem which is his own, but it is not quite the same as the one which he would have written for another teacher. Everything we are given in class which is the child's real possession, will be in the nature of a special offering. The more we fail to see this, the more will the originality fall off, and children will give what they think is expected.

I have tried to suggest in this essay that the process of learning in some of its aspects moves through impression and assimilation to expression, but that this can happen well or ill. At the same time I have suggested that health and illness are not entirely separate conditions, and that learning health is dependent upon our ability to deal with

the difficulties which are part of its nature. The inability to recognize the inter-relation of these states of mind causes us to seek for escapes and avoid the pain of illness, especially when we think society has become sick. This is what is happening too in education. We feel that we are in a dilemma and so a frantic search is going on for a way out. What has gone wrong here, we ask, and what has gone wrong there. We want to pin down the responsibility. Would it not be wiser to realize the inevitability of conflict, and instead of seeking the precisions of this and that new system allow ourselves some of the privileges of doubt and uncertainty! For knowledge will only come to us whole, if we are prepared to submit to the chaos and travail of knowing.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVOTION AND DOUBT[1]

NO TEACHER can escape the responsibility of being one, which means that he must have the courage to face young suggestible minds with the power of his own suggestiveness. It is no doubt because this is such a daring thing to do that some teachers seek ways of escape. They become instructors and hide behind facts, or organizers and hide behind methods (this latter is the more fashionable form of escape at present). But the true teacher knows that there is no way out. He accepts the paradox that genuine individuality is gained through suggestion, independence through dependence. He is neither an instructor, therefore, nor a director, but he is both an actor and a producer.

Socrates was this kind of a teacher. We are so familiar with the socratic method of reasoning that we are inclined to overlook the very subtle way in which the arguments were presented. Socrates had a dramatic instinct, with a feeling for the unities. He knew just where to molest a man in the street, just when to nudge him at a feast, at what point anyone was ready to listen to him. Far too much learning takes place in classrooms and lecture rooms. An educational institution of whatever kind should have a courtyard, quadrangle, garden or common-room where both teachers and taught can be rightly and properly molested. But the influence of Socrates had also a psychological foundation.

[1] This essay appeared in *The New Era in Home and School*, January, 1951, under the title, 'Suggestion in the Class-room.'

He produced in men two attitudes of mind, one of devotion, and one of doubt, and these are the pre-requisites of learning. The art of suggestion depends very largely upon a combination of this dramatic and psychological insight, and this is why poetic treatments of the subject so often bring us closer to the heart of the mystery than the descriptions of the scientific investigators.

It has struck me that *The Tempest* is perhaps the most eloquent comment on suggestion in our literature, as well as being many other things besides, for it is an allegorical play, containing many meanings and yieldings to many interpretations. In one aspect of his personality, Prospero is the arch-teacher. The fact that he worked on a magic island in a special robe and conjured spirits shows just how well Shakespeare understood the job.

All schools should be enchanted islands both to teachers and taught, and whether the master dons a gown or not, the children will regard his clothes as belonging to him in a special way. I can remember the clothes of nearly all my mistresses, and in particular the very beautiful overalls of one of the Froebel staff. She had at least half a dozen of these magic robes, and I think I regarded her as a conjuror. I was very much afraid of her, and I hated her; but I have to remember that throughout my life I have loved bright embroidery on grey linen, and this was the colour scheme of the pinafore I admired most. But I could not recognize the love that was mixed up in my hate, because she was not the kind of person to understand it. She was a moralist, which was a great pity, for she might have done much with that conjuring personality and those overalls.

It is the teacher like Socrates who can unite our doubt and our devotion from whom we can learn most. Prospero was a teacher like this, too, but he could not have got anywhere in his work of re-education were it not for Ariel.

Ariel is the embodiment of the power of suggestion. In fact Socrates and Ariel were very much alike in the way they went about things. They worked with a mixture of ruthlessness and grace. Let us watch Ariel at his job.

After he had sunk the vessel in which the Neapolitan wedding party were sailing, he dispersed the company about the island, and then went round whispering things in their ears when they were in the right mood to take what he had to say. Ferdinand, it will be remembered, was in a particularly sorry state because he had just seen his father drowned, or so he thought. There he sat in an odd angle of the isle, cooling the air with sighs and his arms folded in a sad knot: a faithful picture of depression. Ariel chose this moment to draw him to contemplate his sorrow to some purpose. But he did not go up to him and shake him by the shoulders and say: 'Your father is at the bottom of the sea, so get up and do something.' That 'pull yourself together' attitude never does any good when we are in a deep state of anguish. He used suggestion. First he sang about the fairies dancing on the yellow sands. He put his pupil into an enchanted state of mind, but with a warning that he would have to wake up from it; just as all the spirits of the night are called in from play at cock-crow when watch-dogs bark and the daylight world takes precedence.

But what a difficult stage in our education this is, that stage when we do not quite know whether we sleep or wake, when sometimes the dream is so sweet that, like Caliban, we cry to dream again; at other times the dream has so disturbed us that we are only too glad to join the waking world. And that is the stage a child is in when he listens with rapt attention to a fairy story which has both entranced and disturbed him, and he asks: 'Is it true?' 'Did it really happen?'—one of the most difficult questions we are ever

asked to answer. Ariel knew how to use this moment, for whilst with the devotion of enchantment Ferdinand followed the music that crept by him upon the waters, Ariel decided to strike deeper, to reach the doubt that lay at the bottom of his mind, a doubt about his filial reactions to the thought of his father's death; for as soon as he takes the suggestion that his father is not only drowned, but is also re-fashioned into the coral and pearl of the ocean-bed, then he is able to permit a sea-change to take place in the depths of his own mind, and to join the sea-nymphs in sounding the knell of that ugly doubt.

> 'Full fathom five thy father lies
> Of his bones are coral made
> Those are pearls that were his eyes,
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich, and strange
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
> Ding-dong.
> Hark now I hear them. Ding-dong, bell.'

Now he is ready for action. He sees Miranda, suffers the transfixation of love at first sight, but is very soon offering her the throne of Naples so recently vacated by his father. This behaviour, as we discover from the rest of the play, is entirely in keeping with his character. Ariel did not put any ideas into his head that were not there already. And this is just what happens in the mind of a child when he listens to fairy stories and poetry, when he paints and draws; phantasy thus released does not render him powerless, but makes it much more possible for him to encounter the real world and its problems, and to do this in accordance with his own personality.

As we watch the power of suggestion in the world we discover what a complicated task it fulfils, which this incident from *The Tempest* so exquisitely condenses. We see that it works from person to person through devotion and doubt, that it stirs the memory in unconscious sources, and that it results in expression and action.

Everybody is open to suggestion, but some people are more suggestible than others, and in different ways and at different times. We know for example that people who are ill are very suggestible, but so are people who are creative and imaginative, and also people who are in love—'the lunatic, the lover and the poet.' Suggestion is at its best educationally when neither our devotion nor our doubt is too strong, for we know how possible it is to love someone so devotedly that we do everything to prevent contrary feelings from gaining admittance, or we can put up such strong resistances that we will not give reason and understanding their rightful place. Every child in a classroom or student in a lecture room needs to feel that the teacher is speaking to him alone with special intent, but he must also be able to feel that he can refuse what is said to him if it does not seem to suit him. Inattention and the deaf ear are as appropriate in the classroom as rapt attention. And it is a good thing if the same person calls forth both attitudes. But it is unlikely that a child will feel safe in expressing his doubt or in breaking down resistances to learning if he cannot first express his devotion. The teacher with the fine overalls thought she had to improve and instruct me without realizing that first she had to relieve my fears and anxieties so that the sea-change could take place. We inhabited a magic island together to no purpose because she failed to accept the responsibilities of the magician.

Indeed, sometimes these responsibilities are very great, and especially when we are dealing with learning-illness,

for it is at such times that suggestion may have a disintegrating effect. It is often the fear of this which prevents the teacher from using his personality to the full. And yet in all learning a certain amount of this disintegration must take place. Prospero knew this and so he caused Ariel to produce the tempest. His methods were certainly drastic. He boarded the king's ship and 'flamed amazement', so that they all felt 'a fever of the mad'; a few indeed 'played some tricks of desperation'. This was the thorough shaking up they got before they were submitted to the witchery of the island. Nor was this entirely pleasant, for Prospero played many tantalizing tricks upon them. He would spread forth a banquet and just when they thought they could eat their fill, he would find some quaint device to make it vanish. Or he would entertain them with insubstantial pageants and then melt them into air. All this before he chose that moment when he could 'bass their trespass' and work upon the guilt in their minds. 'Methought the billows spoke and told me of it', says Alonso after the feast has disappeared, and he is so moved that he goes out with intent to drown himself, to do the thing which Ferdinand thought had already happened to him, which he thought had happened to Ferdinand.

> 'I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,
> And with him lie there mudded.'

But Prospero knew what effect his suggestions were having. He knew that the memory needs to be deeply stirred before

> 'Understanding
> Begins to swell, and the approaching tide
> Will shortly fill the reasonable shore
> That now lies foul and muddy.'

It is, however, only with very sick people that such measures become necessary; but it may be that before any of us can remember and recollect our true selves a certain amount of dismembering and dispersal has to take place, and some teasing and tantalizing as well. If doubt and contra-suggestibility gain the upper hand in a class this may be an important stage to be gone through, for so often such a period is followed by one of intense concentration and understanding, that is if the teacher has his Prospero robes on, and knows how to use his Ariel qualities to the best advantage.

Thus it was upon the memories of the Neapolitan lords that Ariel's suggestions worked so that they began to see the world around them in terms of their own moods and wishes. What seemed lush and lusty grass to the guileless Gonzalo was dried up and tawny to the guilty Antonio. And this was another necessary stage in their re-education. Not until they had so experienced things did their vision clear. Any suggestions which we make to children will most certainly have the same effect. We shall not put ideas into their heads, but make clearer and more conscious what is already there; but not before they have first worked through the shows and phantasies which are parts also of their natures. This is why we can never go very far if we expect children to turn out what we think we have put in. Such an attitude breeds impatience too. 'I've said this once, I won't repeat myself.' 'How many times have I to tell you?' If you are a conjuror or an actor you will not mind how many repeat performances you give because no two audiences are ever the same, nor are any two contexts in the classroom, not even if you repeat yourself immediately, for suggestion works with Ariel-swiftness.

> 'Before you can say come, and go,
> And breathe twice.'

And the second time you say the same thing, if you are careful to 'do your spriting gently' and not show impatience, the mind takes the suggestion differently, because more deeply. We should, however, realize that it is much more difficult for children to repeat themselves in class. Their answers are so often discoveries to themselves which they feel nervous of asserting, or what they say is a personal communication which if repeated seems to lose the joy of its immediacy. How frequently one has to bend over a child in class to catch the whispered answer. I think teachers resent having to say things over and over again because they feel that their prestige is threatened. But the contrary is true. Only where authority reigns can suggestion work through to freedom. Ariel had to obey 'the strong bidding' and 'high charges' of his task-master. Frequently he jibbed, was sulky or openly rebellious, but his sense of loyalty and service prevailed because his chief desire was to be free, and this he was promised when the educative task was over.

Here we meet again the paradox with which we began. The greater the dependence of the child upon the suggestiveness of the teacher whilst he is learning, the greater will be the independence which finally he gains; but that dependence must always admit doubt and resistance. Children cannot come into their own unless the Ariel quality of living is given its full rein. But this means that we must recognize, as Prospero did, the conflict in the minds of those we seek to educate, and more than this allow, too, for the conflict which is a quality of thought itself; a struggle between service and freedom which was part of Ariel's nature. For in every idea which comes into the mind, one part of it is seeking to return to the limbo of the elements where it had its beginning, and another part is seeking to gain consciousness and share in the work of culture and

education. It is because of the existence of this conflict that we can never be liberated from the power of suggestion, but are subject to it, and will seek to subject it as long as we live. Prospero was not expressing a purely romantic idea, but a fundamental fact about the relation between unconsciousness and consciousness when he said:

> 'we are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.'

No doubt it has occured to you that in emphasizing the personal level upon which suggestion works I have neglected the influence upon the child of materials and things, that also in thus laying stress upon the phantasy element in life, I have neglected the realities of the external world as a source of education. I have looked too long upon the dreams and have not given sufficient attention to the stuff upon which they are made, which not only consists of these unconscious wishes and needs, but also of the facts and happenings of our everyday lives. I once gave a class of children who were reading *The Tempest* the task of preparing a picture map of the island, depicting all the natural features of the place. As I watched the work grow and listened to their remarks I realized that whether we treated the 'still-vext Bermoothes' as one of the Bermuda islands or thought of them as only a dreamland washed by

> 'the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn'

they nevertheless had the local habitation and the name which Shakespeare claimed for all products of the imagination: that if one landed on Prospero's island with text in hand one could find one's way about among 'the fresh

springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile' and not get lost, because one had a kind of compass. And these children soon began to see that although there was a wealth of detail to go into the map, yet all the time they were not able by this means to portray 'the subtleties of the isle'.

These came from the effects of Prospero's art working on the imaginations of the inhabitants. In the same way the materials that we put before children in the shape of paint and paper, pen and ink, wood and clay, specimens of all kinds and aids visual and auditory—all these will not yield their suggestions unless we not only select them but watch and help the child at work with them, praise and blame him and know how to answer when like Ariel he creeps up and says, 'Was't well done?' 'Have you corrected my essay?' We cannot leave him alone without a compass and this we regulate primarily from a knowledge of his natural instincts and understanding, too, of the 'sea-sorrow' he is bound to suffer. True we govern him also by our knowledge of the external world and its laws, but it was Caliban who showed Prospero where to find everything and Ariel who adapted it to his purposes. Try how we will we cannot escape the realities of psychic existence into the material world, which does not mean that this world is non-existent, nor that it has not purposes of its own. It is indeed one of the chief aims of education to discover what these are and to adapt to them.

I have been guilty in this article of belabouring *The Tempest* for the purposes of the argument and of neglecting the many other meanings in the text. A play can play many parts and so, of course, can a teacher. He is not likely to do really well in his magic robes if he wears them all the time. I have on occasions maliciously observed how reluctantly schoolmasters doff their gowns when they enter their own homes, where they know that authority and

glamour are worn with a difference. Prospero wisely took his off when he talked with Miranda.

Let us get rid of the myth that the schoolmaster is the same person in the classroom and outside. He is not. The danger lies in his inability to recognize his duality. There is always something a little unreal about the teachers who never leave their magic islands, and this is a problem for boarding schools to solve. But those who never feel any magic are in a worse position because they are not teachers at all, but either usurpers of the dukedom like Antonio or academic pedants like the one-time Prospero, whose books were 'dukedom large enough'. For every day to a teacher is like the time-span of a play. In the morning he sets out for the enchanted island, puts on his robes, opens up his bag of theatrical tricks, releases Ariel and begins. Then at the end of the day, he folds up his staff, takes off his gown, abjures his rough magic and goes home to Milan.

CHAPTER THREE

HUMOUR AND CRITICISM[1]

WHEN I was discussing the Prospero role of the teacher with a group of students, one of them remarked: 'But if one is conjuring one's own way in a classroom, and anyone comes in to observe the lesson, then it goes flat immediately because it is not so easy to joke it down as one always tries to do if the spell breaks.' What an important thing she has said. It does not appear that Prospero had a very highly developed sense of humour, nor were there any inspectors or supervisors on his island. But we know that a sense of humour and an ability to take criticism from outside are very valuable assets in a teacher, so it is obvious that the Prospero side of him does not tell the whole story.

How well teachers know that feeling when their omnipotent position is beginning to fail. In one part of themselves they are relieved because they know they are not really very powerful, but in another part they are fearful because authority must be maintained. If things have gone too far, something quite dreadful happens. The children laugh at them before they can get the joke in. They have to be very skilful if they are to rescue this situation by sharing the joke against themselves, because so often neither they nor the children have the least idea what it is about.

It seems as though in every classroom there exists a rather tricky situation between teacher and child. In general there

[1] This essay arose from the concurrence of a student's remarks and my reading of Freud's paper on 'Humour' published in *Collected Papers*, Vol. V, No. xx.

is a tacit agreement between them that one is to expect obedience and the other is to obey. Yet in each child there lies a certain cunning desire to seize the throne whenever an opportunity presents itself, to triumph if only for a brief time over this kingly being, whilst in each teacher lurks the fear that his underlings will usurp his power. Therefore in spite of the devotion and willingness to learn which a good teacher receives from his class, he knows all the time that these rebellious forces are present. So a tension develops which if properly regulated provides a most valuable stimulus to learning.

It is more than anything a sense of humour which achieves this balance of forces, so that incentives are not lost and yet energy is properly distributed. A teacher can exercise this humour in several ways:

1. He can make a joke about somebody outside the classroom whom it is safe to ridicule or about something that occurs in the material of the lesson; or he can allow the children to do this.

2. He can laugh at himself and so give the class a chance to join in, and thus save himself the humiliation of the joke arising without his permission.

3. He can laugh at the child or the class with the understanding that they can use the same weapon against him with impunity.

Now in all this a play is being acted which is a representation on an external stage of the drama which is going on inside us most of the time, the chief actors of which are parents and children. In the first case the teacher puts

the class in the adult position along with himself and the outsiders become the children over whom together they gain the ascendancy. In the second place he creates within himself a child at whom another part of himself laughs, and allows the children to identify themselves both with this child and the adult. It is as though he places himself as a child with the child upon the throne, and then steps back as an adult and watches, knowing that he can remove the little imposters at any moment, and he incites the child to usurp an adult role and watch the game as well. 'See', the teacher is saying, 'what a great joke this is—this rivalry between you and me. There is nothing terrifying in it at all.' If he uses the third method, it must include the possibility of the second or he is not playing the game, because he is assuming a superiority which he already has and at the same time takes from the child the right to rebel. This humiliation will cause the child to dam up energy in anger and revenge which should be free for the purposes of the lesson.

Let us see what happens when the joke fails altogether, and yet the parental authoritative role has also been abandoned. Something rather frightening occurs. The joke turns into a ghost. Sometimes this is so alarming to a class that they have no power to whip their rebellious feelings into laughter. They become silent and fall back as if they had indeed seen the spectre. The teacher has failed them on two counts. He is not the all-powerful parent who will protect their rebellious feelings, neither is he the good human parent who will turn their ogres into playthings. So the child is left alone with all his wicked intents. There is nothing to stop him from seizing the throne in reality not in sport. This is certainly no position for him to find himself in. We have indeed deserted him. It is not surprising that in the old miracle play the devil became a comic character,

for we take every opportunity of reducing the pain of fear by gaining the pleasure of laughter.

Perhaps we can now understand why this healthy tension between jokes and ghosts is upset if a person goes into the classroom in the position of Headmaster or Inspector. The teacher may become a child in his feelings and rebel against the position, especially when he is with his own class. For nothing upsets parents more than to be made to feel small with their own children. And this is where the head or inspector needs great understanding. Let him be sure when he goes to observe a lesson that he has the child within himself ready at hand so that his self-criticism and sense of humour can humanise the situation. Bacon wisely remarked that it was reserved for God and the angels to be lookers on in this world. It is indeed a role we should only adopt with care and thought. The fear of inspectors is lessening in schools, partly because they are understanding their job better. The reason for this fear does not always lie with the inspector. There is a human tendency to put upon an outside authority deficiencies we find in ourselves. And what a vicious circle this can become. We can blame the head who does not leave us alone or the authority which denies us the right opportunities, or the ministry for making such and such regulations, or the government for appointing such a ministry. The larger the body the easier a scapegoat it makes. At last we may only be left with the power of evil in the world, and then we know that evil can exist nowhere but in man's heart, and so we are back where we began. There we must look for reformation. But even so we may seek to reform others rather than ourselves. All this does not mean that these people and authorities are innocent of using their power in the wrong way, but until we have examined our own motives in relation to them we are not in a position to estimate the extent of this influence.

There is undoubtedly still far too much patronage on the part of heads and inspectors. Authorities who treat their teachers as though they were children with orders and regulations mixed with condescending pats on the back, are putting themselves in an illogical position. They are expecting teachers to exercise a role in the classroom which they are denying them in the school and educational system as a whole. Such bodies deserve what they get, resentful and dissatisfied workers. If less time were spent administratively supervising financial and material losses, and more were given to the wastage of the spirit, not only would the former take care of itself, but the profession would gain in status and dignity.

A teacher should be left by the head to govern his classes according to his own standards and to use his gifts to the best of his abilities. The function of the outside authority is to provide the materials and the room physically and mentally for this to happen. If the teacher fails, then he needs help and guidance and the exercise from the head or the inspector of the same sense of humour within the whole school situation as he himself is expected to use in the classroom. I sometimes think that this sense of humour is the most precious gift that a teacher can have, and people should certainly summon all they possess of it before they enter a school building, or any other section of the educational services.

CHAPTER FOUR

FACT AND PHANTASY

A WINDOW CLEANER came to the house where I was staying one day, and I noticed how the children of the neighbourhood followed him. They watched with bated breath and wide-open eyes as the ladder went up and the man with sure steps climbed to the top; and then slowly a few toddlers attempted the bottom rungs. One little boy was taken right up and looked in at his mother through the window to her intense delight and anxiety. I remarked on how he gathered the children of the neighbourhood round him and he smiled a Pied Piper smile and replied: 'I don't know what it is, but there's something about window cleaning for children; they follow me wherever I go.' He picked up his ladder and moved on to the next house, calling the children by name who trotted after him to see the mysterious rites once more performed. I knew that this window cleaner was a fortunate man because he was conscious that he had a job with something special about it. Also I felt that he was an educator. He had not heard of Dr. Freud and yet he was aware of a symbolic significance to his trade without being able to specify it. In his Pied Piper heart the world of phantasy and the world of reality were not separated but grew together in his understanding.

If only Plato had known what the window cleaner knew, but he did not. Somewhere in his mind he was muddled about fact and phantasy and he would have begun to argue about real ladders and symbolic ladders, as he did about

tables. He would only have been satisfied that watching the window cleaner was an *education* for children if they were instructed as early as possible in the manufacture and right use of ladders! Not that he was a materialist nor a philistine: far from it. He admired the poets on this side idolatry, yet, because he esteemed what he called 'truth' more, he shut them out of his commonwealth. There was no alternative for a true citizen. Either one must close one's ears to their siren voices or be lost to a lotus land.

'But why bring Plato into this argument?' It might be asked by the modern educator. 'And even if the window cleaner had not heard of Freud, we have. With our knowledge of the unconscious, we are not likely to fall into the platonic trap. Our nursery and infant educators are well aware of the meaning of phantasy for the child. We have introduced activity methods on a large scale, and poetry and art are not banished from our Primary and Secondary schools. In fact, we are encouraged in these ways of teaching.' All this is true; but if educationally we had shed this Platonic fallacy I suppose there would be little need to write this book. We have not. It persists in many ways, and it is difficult to overestimate the confusion which has entered our thought through this dualism of mind. But of course we cannot blame Plato for it. It was there long before him. In fact not one of us can stand wholly outside this problem and feel that we have entirely solved it. It is because it reaches down to what a modern psychologist has called 'the primary human predicament',[1] that it constitutes the central issue in education. To state this predicament simply we can say that all our lives we have to deal with a world outside and a world inside, and it is because these two worlds are not identical that we find ourselves always striving to understand the relationship between them. Plato in the

[1] Joanna Field in *On not being able to Paint*, p. 75.

ninth book of *The Republic*, in which he discusses reality and appearance, is concerned with this predicament. His argument displays a strong fear lest the world of outside things, of tables and chairs, should be destroyed by the inner world of phantasy. He was unable to recognize the close inter-action between them in the design of every-day life.

Indeed it is significant to note that as soon as people begin to think about fact and phantasy they are very soon arguing about goodness and badness. And Plato's fear again was lest free expression of all kinds of feeling would involve a conflict between good and bad in which the bad overwhelmed the good. If we allowed this to happen we should be behaving 'like one who gives a city into the hands of villains and destroys the better citizens'. And so he recommended the poets to be purged of all expressions of weakness and violence before they were put into the hands of children. The bad must be driven out, and the good preserved.

Many parents and teachers have these fears; as a parent expressed it to me: 'I want to know where self-expression ends, and discipline begins.' I think he was willing to allow for a certain amount of phantasy expression in the infant, but then his thought was: 'When can I begin to feel that my child is safe?' He was, of course, asking the same question about himself. The poets whom Plato exiled lodged uneasily in his own heart.

These problems concern the educator very closely whatever age he is dealing with, but it is in the nursery and infant schools that they appear most acutely. No teacher watching children in the playground or during free activity time can fail to appreciate the reality of the conflicts in their minds, between the real and the unreal, the good and the bad. If these are very severe the child will have to

find some way out, because the threat to his personality is too great for him to stand the strain. This is when he becomes very difficult to manage, and is in great need of help. Let us take a close up view of a child in the classroom caught in one of these struggles, and let us discover how this particular child tried to escape.

I was visiting a poetry lesson in an infant class. The student read two poems, one on a postman and one on a dustman. Then she put words on the board for the children to copy. But there was a little girl of five who found concentration quite impossible. She came over to me in the corner of the classroom, pushed her paper in front of me and said, 'Do me a "d", I can't do "d's".' I made a row of 'd's in which she was not at all interested. She began to prattle: 'My father is a postman and the other day he put his socks in the dustbin, and do you know the dustman took them out again, and went home with them. How my father laughed.' I began to admire her grasp of dramatic unity and symbolic truth. Once this framework was established, she was able to say what she had to say. There was a pause, such as every artist takes in front of his work, and then very quickly: 'I've got a baby. His name is Douglas: [no wonder she could not do a 'd']. Do you know what my brother did to the baby? [I shake my head and go on making 'd's.] He bit him when my Mother went shopping. He bites me too. I don't bite him, my Daddy says I mustn't.' And so it went on. I repeated the details to the student, who made daily inquiries about the new baby, until one day Millicent burst out, 'We want to get rid of that baby. He cries and keeps Mummy awake, and he does his toilet in his nappies.' In the next free activity time a picture was painted in which there was the typical framework of this age, the blue sky above, green earth below, and the bright yellow cart-wheel

sun; inside this was the story. The house occupied the centre of the drawing, on one side of which was a furious scribble, and on the other side was a little rabbit-like creature. She explained that the scribble was Douglas being sent out of the house because he was so naughty, and the good little drawing was herself watching him go, ready, of course, to enter and take possession.

Millicent had chosen the Platonic way out of her predicament. The bad was driven away, and the good preserved and idealized. Plato did not ask where the bad, which he wanted to purge, went to. In this picture we find that it was put upon somebody else. Douglas was blamed for her jealousy. No doubt this opportunity to externalize her feelings in the classroom, which she had sought herself, helped her to lessen the pain of her feelings. But what mattered most was the parental attitude. If she had a mother and father who could understand the inevitability of these feelings and gradually help her to cope with them by sharing the care of the baby, then she would be able to draw a picture where they all lived together in the same house; if it needed to be drawn at all. But unfortunately the the world is not full of loving mothers and good educators working together in this way. If it were, it would be a very different place. Even so it is doubtful whether we should entirely avoid 'the primary human predicament'; whether there would ever come a time when what is inside us in our feelings were so harmonized, that we developed a full capacity to see the world outside in its true proportion. Yet this is a state towards which we should be tending, and this then is surely the main function of the teacher, not to separate in children the good and the bad, but to allow them both to grow to the recognition of each other. In achieving this he will have to allow for the expression of subjective phantasy along with the growing apprecia-

tion of external values. But it is so easy to be appearing to do this and yet to be doing something different because we have not fundamentally grasped the significance of the task.

The modern educator cannot escape his doubts and fears through the strong light of conviction in the way that Plato did. Besides there was so much in the Greek way of life that made for balance and sanity. We have inherited a different world, a world of twilight and dawn in which we move about uneasily. Sometimes teachers rush with open arms to embrace progressive methods as a solution of all difficulties without realizing that the closer we are to our fundamental conflicts the more we need to test every inch of the way. With this exuberance often goes a passion for one method above all. Others give lip-service to new ideas and discoveries but their hearts are with the old ways. To such a group belonged the teacher who would not allow a child to draw himself in an aeroplane for 'news' because it was not a fact; but who was prepared to allow the same drawing to be done in a free expression time. But so strong were the immediate feelings of Millicent that there was no escape for her into a world of postmen and dustmen. She had to break through the whole routine and convention of the lesson to find someone to tell her story to. And just as when a little child needs his mother to attend to his wishes, he ceases to regard her as someone who has to cook the dinner for father, so this little girl had no idea of me as a tutor who had come in to watch a lesson, and when I left her to go round the class, she gave me a look of anger and fury. No more could the little boy escape from the interest in the aeroplane at that moment into an account of the everyday happenings of his life. Millicent's action was not divorced from the purpose of the lesson for her, because not until she had coped with

her feelings to some extent could she attend to her work at all. And what is a little boy doing when he studies the mechanics of an aeroplane but trying to find out about his own powers of control? How blind we are too if we think that a man's interest in trains which often lasts through life is only an interest in metal and steel and the laws of mechanics. In short, we cannot parcel out our time-table into periods for fact and periods for phantasy and imagine that we have catered for the child's needs, because life is not a pattern of black and white, but an infinitely complex network of differing strands and to a large extent we must leave the child to do his own weaving.

Before then we decide what methods to employ in the classroom let us get a clearer picture of what it is we are allowing children to do. We need to know what a child is freeing himself *from* as well as what he is freeing himself *for*. We need to study release as well as purpose, and what different demands these make upon the scheme of a lesson. For the teacher who complains that free activity methods result in licence and lack of discipline is not satisfactorily answered by another who says: 'But in my school I provide plenty of material, organize very carefully and I can stand any amount of noise. Besides everyone is so busily engaged that the question of discipline does not arise.' How often in discussions among teachers is one side pitched against another in this way, and little is gained except that a new kind of jargon is developed. 'Formal' comes to mean 'bad' by the activity teachers, and 'activity' to mean 'bad' by the formal teachers. What is probably being missed by both is the value and danger of conflict, as it is worked out by children inside themselves and in relation to the world outside. To have everybody busily engaged is often very good—very good too, to be able to stand noise and mess; but that does not mean that the

teacher can 'liquidate' himself, as I heard this one recommend. No child will be able to come close to these feelings of love and hate and jealousy unless he knows that the teacher is very near, that in fact he has the same courage.

When we go up to a child expressing his inner phantasy in whatever medium, we should neither expect him to stop because we are there; nor to go on as if we were not there. We are there, and this fact becomes part of his expression. He asks us to share with him a kind of truth; he wants us to enter his world without losing our position in our own. If in a fit of depression he is painting a grey sun in the sky, we should not say: 'I've never seen the sun that colour, and I don't think you have either', neither should we say: 'How wonderful, do you know I think I saw a grey sun the other day.' Both attitudes confuse him. Through us he needs to gain the trust which will enable him to hold two certitudes in his mind at once—one the truth of his sadness, the other the truth of the world which exists in spite of it. As he grows older and becomes more sure of his ability to combine fact and phantasy in his feelings he will relinquish the cart-wheel sun and come to know the one that warms and lights the world. He will become a scientist, but never entirely. There will always remain enough doubt to keep him a poet. And one day perhaps in later life when a cloud passes over the sun, he will feel the chill finger of depression, or when it bursts out suddenly, he will give a skip in the middle of the road; and he does not know in such moments how far back he has travelled.

No matter what age we are teaching we are always dealing with both scientists and poets. However far we progress in our knowledge of the physical sciences, we shall also need to provide for that 'willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith'; for that interplay of fact

and phantasy whereby we neither assert that the sun is a great eye watching us in the sky, nor that it is this and that in scientific fact, but whereby we make it possible to say, 'it seems like'. When Hamlet declared: 'It is: I know not seems', he was in the pit of despair. To allow for likeness and difference is, as Aristotle declared, the true mark of a poet. It is also a criterion of sanity.

But if the mobility of 'it seems like' is to be maintained, then we must also allow for movements backwards and forwards from fact and phantasy. The best methods educationally will be those where the question of objectivity and subjectivity hardly arises because neither is stressed in allowing for both. But at some moments in the classroom one may assert itself to the apparent exclusion of the other, as phantasy did with Millicent. If we allow for this to happen, we shall soon find that the categorical 'it is' will change again into 'it seems like', and the happy growth of personality will continue.

There are those who, in reacting against formal and logical methods of teaching, would place all the accent upon the development of subjective feeling. They would put the child completely in the position of the man in Ralph Hodgson's poem:

> 'Reason has moons, but moons not hers
> Lie mirrored on her sea,
> Confounding her astronomers,
> But oh! delighting me.'

But surely we are not out to confound astronomers for the delight of narcissistic moon-gazers. And yet not until we have recognized the mirrored facets of ourselves are we in a position to test the validity of astronomical discovery. Subjectivity may be a condition for a truer estimate of the world; but it is not a state to be cherished for its own sake;

nor of course is objectivity. For one can be imprisoned in either fact or phantasy. In poetry lessons, children can be lulled through the incantations of verse into complete insensitivity to the poet's meaning; in science lessons, there can be left no room for wonder and 'wild surmise'.

But it is the ability to keep our feelings whole that enables the scientist and the poet to live together within us. The children watching the window cleaner were working out symbolically their deepest curiosities; they were also widening their social interests. To live fully is to know everything at once, but, as we have seen, if in the act of knowing the painful arises as well as the pleasurable, the jealousy and hatred as well as the love and tenderness, and if we find that these impulses are too much at war for us to keep them together, then it may also be impossible for us to preserve our learning whole. We may have to lose pieces of it by the way. And so the purpose of education is not only to provide means of keeping learning whole as we go along, but also of regaining what has been lost.

The task is no easy one. The child will need plenty of material of all kinds—opportunities for busy activity, and the time too to waste time. But most of all he needs us and our creative understanding. What we say and do as we walk round the room may be more important to some children than what they are doing; to others it may be an interference. We have to watch and judge. We cannot possibly always be right, but a child will go by our intentions, and overlook a clumsy moment, because of the ease he more often experiences in being with us.

But as well as all this, there are times at every age when it is a good thing for him to pack up and listen. The wholesale condemnation of academic learning and so called formal methods fails to recognize that words are not mere abstractions but symbols for the most primitive parts of

our being and that a teacher for whom words are powerful agents can lead a class sitting in their desks to bring their feelings into harmony just as successfully as the one who turns the classroom into a hive of industry. Not only are words potent things, but so are the spaces between them. No good teacher ever talks all the time, and every lesson moulds itself to the listening qualities of a class as well as to their questions and replies. Bad activity teachers can be very much afraid of this mental space. They grow anxious if a child seems to be left high and dry, and hurriedly move him on. They remind me of the parents of a small boy I met in the bus, who kept on asking him: 'Who do you love?', 'Who do you love best?', 'What have you got to give me?'. So anxious were they about their child's identity that he was not allowed a moment in which to know himself. Children will only realize who and what they are from parents and teachers who know themselves in relation to them.

Moreover whether children are listening or doing, they are always selecting from what they hear and have to do whatever suits their own needs. Millicent picked out of the poetry lesson just what she wanted to symbolize her anxiety and curiosity. She used my advent for her own purpose. She directed me to serve her. She led the student to take note, and she chose paint and paper to say what she had to say. She had an acute problem, and she turned the environment in her direction to help her to solve it. And she did all this because she knew that learning is a means of bringing together the inner and outer aspects of things, a way also of coming to terms with the good and the bad. For we cannot know a thing to be true in fact, until we no longer have any need for it to be otherwise.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPLOITATION AND EXPLORATION

IN A SENSE I have been writing this all my life. The roots go a long way down; growth has at times been retarded and checked by frosts and storms of circumstance. But in an unobtrusive corner of the mind, the idea has been growing very slowly yet steadily.'

This was how an adult student began the preface to her inquiry into one corner of Shakespeare's life; and I think it is a good description of how most of our interests work. There is a persistence about them. 'I feel I have laid a ghost' was what another student remarked when her study was finished. One of them admitted to feeling guilty about having a strong interest at all at her age. Perhaps she thought all her ghosts ought to have been laid. But we can also become very secretive and possessive about our interests. 'I would not choose my real burning interest', one person said, 'because I don't see why other people should pry into my mind'. More often however we are torn between wanting to share our interests and wanting to keep them to ourselves. This was expressed by the student who, when thanking me for more or less leaving her alone during the year, added: 'if you had interfered and tried to make it go your way, I should have felt like murder. Now I don't mind who reads it.'

Yet none of this is very surprising when we recollect that there is nothing new under the sun; and that the unsatisfied curiosities and unquietened fears of our childhood go their hungry, stealthy ways throughout our lives;

that the friendships we make, the social groups to which we belong, the jobs we choose (if we are lucky enough to choose), the books we read, and all the other interests we follow are in part the pursuits of lovers and the pursuit of ghosts. But how exciting this makes the whole business. And when we talk about interest in education, which we do a great deal nowadays, let us make sure that we have no patched up affair, no artificial imposition, but the 'mad pursuit' and 'the wild ecstasy' which all learning sets going.

In fact, whenever an interest is aroused we move both forward and backward: backward to pick up our old loves and fears; forward into the realm of facts and other people's experience; and this mobility is a sign of learning health. But that does not mean that we must keep moving for fear of standing still. There are times in learning when we seem to be getting nowhere at all, a kind of necessary stage of bewilderment. This state can be very painful indeed. We can feel like someone caught in revolving doors seeing the way back and the way forward, and yet not going one way or the other. But often these doors connect our different ways of knowing, and what seems like a mad whirl of thought and feeling is a movement in the process of clarification.

This confusion stage reminds me of Peer Gynt's meeting of the Boyg in Ibsen's play. When Peer came to the dark hill where the Boyg lived, he felt he did not know where nor who he was; and so he began to slash and beat about. But whenever he demanded that a way should be made clear for him, he always received the same reply:

> 'Go round about Peer, the hill's roomy enough.'

The root idea of this Norwegian word 'boyg' is sinuous, bending, which certainly gives the lie to the interpretation sometimes given of this scene, that it represents the spirit

of compromise. The Boyg admits no compromise but he is nevertheless complete master of a roundabout situation. And when at every point Peer expects to be given battle and finds only that he is met by this paradoxical creature, he is confused and distressed. We can sense the revolving doors situation in the lines:

> 'Forward and back, and it's just as far;
> Out or in, and it's just as strait.
> He is *there*! and *there*! And he's round the bend.
> No sooner I'm out than I'm back in the ring.
> Name who you are! Let me see you. What are you?'

To this question the Boyg has always the same uncompromising reply:

> 'Myself. Can you say the same?'

We can only escape these states of bewilderment as ourselves if we can stand the distress of having to look in several directions; to go roundabout, and yet still make our way along. No wonder, in order to avoid this pain, we have in the last few generations become so obsessed with the idea of progress as something which is continual movement forward. But true progress is not like this; and in order to find out what it is we must have room enough in which to get lost. It becomes the teacher's concern to make this room, and also to develop a sinuous quality of direction.

For five years I was in close contact with a scheme of individual studies for adult students to which I have already made reference.[1] They were asked to choose any topic in

[1] This experiment was made at Borthwick Women's Emergency Training College—1946–1951. References to it have occurred elsewhere, viz.: *Into the Breach*, Loveday Martin, pp. 46–50; *Challenge and Response*, H.M.S.O., p. 114; *Modern Trends in Education*, M. L. Jacks, p. 59; and my own article in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 'Training College Experiment,' Dec. 14th, 28th, 1946, and Aug. 16th, 1947.

which they were deeply interested and to follow it for a year wherever it led them. The tutor's function in relation to these studies had a 'boyg' quality, because however much the study veered in this or that direction, often changing its title many times, and sometimes its topic, she tried to remain bending and quiescent; to guide without direction and to suggest without prescription. But very few students escaped the painful stages of bewilderment and the diaries in which they recorded the progress of their work reflected the whirl of ideas in which they were caught from time to time, particularly just before a new piece of understanding was reached. This they came to suffer because they found that the onslaught tactics availed very little. I think that the majority of them would have found Peer Gynt's outcry an echo of their state of mind, because they came to see that the pursuit of a genuine interest is a method of self-discovery.

The best of these investigations from the onlooker's point of view (they were not all verbally presented), were those in which the need to express and know themselves kept time in the students with the acquisition of facts and ideas. The worst were those where the energy driving towards discovery was so strong that it overwhelmed the ideas, or where the fear to follow an interest was so great that it caused them to seek refuge in the accumulation of facts. They dared not risk the revolving process of clarification. Such students were of course learning-ill; they had not enough sense of their own identity to yield to the sinuous quality of interest. No wonder that these studies gave us the best single measure of the student's capabilities and personality development that we had discovered.

However, we recognized as the work went on that not only was it necessary in order to preserve a learning-health for the acquisition of knowledge to keep pace with

the inner curiosity, but that they were interdependent. In fact I was often reminded of Dryden's reply to the question whether poetry should please or instruct. ' It instructs as it pleases'. There it is in a nutshell. We cannot go out as explorers of reality until we have exploited it, and yet we explore as we exploit, and often vice-versa. Watch the baby who, when he has exploited his mother's body for food and warmth, begins to explore it with his hands and mouth. He pulls her hair, pokes her eyes, kisses her one minute, pinches her the next, and allows himself this orgy of discovery because he is aware of her capacity to feed and love him. So a child learns, and the degree of his success in this learning will be in direct relation to his primary satisfactions and frustrations. To alleviate the pain of not having, and to repeat our moments of satisfaction are both incentives to learning. A teacher's success, therefore, is measured not only by his ability to widen a child's horizons but also by his skill in leading him back to regain his lost provinces, to recapture his old delights. We might put it another way and say that our horizons only become clear as the work of consolidation of gains and replacement of losses takes place.

In this way regression becomes a necessary part of learning. ' Has made good regress ' might be as apt a remark for a report as ' has made good progress '; anyhow for the one we keep in our own files. Perhaps at this moment the teacher is ready to protest that a class moving in opposite directions presents too much confusion to be coped with. In fact this fear is generally behind the criticism that activity methods make for licence. By a strict control of the lesson and a rigid dictation of work, the teacher often labours under the illusion that he has these conflicting tendencies in check. Fortunately the mind is a freer agent than he thinks, and there are sometimes windows to look through, pages to doodle upon, and even behind the alert,

attentive look a child can train his mind to wander. If we do not allow him a true mobility of mind, he will have to produce a false one, through rebellion and cussedness. But whatever the attitude of the teacher, there will be days when, like Peer, some children seem to be fighting with darkness and unknown voices. They appear cantankerous, peevish or perhaps develop a physical symptom. They may be clumsy and upset the ink by accident. Here again we need the Boyg's response; and the more the child finds that we can stand his groping attacks, the sooner will he realize that there is room enough for him after all and get on with things.

There is, I have found, little difference fundamentally between the way children and adults pursue their interests, because in order to regain the lost provinces, the grown-up will have to regress to childhood to some extent, whilst the child is in many ways exceedingly mature. At all events, I cannot think of anything more contrary to the facts of development than the fine and false distinctions which some educationists make between projects and centres of interest, where one is supposed to arise from the child's idea and the other from the teacher's plan and suggestion. In wanting to teach others, how can we know how much we want to be taught? In wanting to be taught, do we not also want to teach? We are all teachers and learners together but not in any sentimental way in which sometimes adults pretend to be like children, but out of a very real and urgent human need to share what the world offers. What as teachers we are concerned with is not to protect the sources of ideas, but to ensure that an interest is flexible enough, roomy enough to allow teachers and taught to go round about.

A friend of mine recently deplored the fact that the modern child has lost the desire, or more likely the per-

mission, to roam. How true this is. He seems to be taken everywhere; all his explorations are so planned that there is little chance for exploitation. We must allow for a child's delight in the feeling of not knowing what is round the next corner, and be able to let him go off on his own, being sure that he'll come back at bedtime. And so we should in learning, for most knowledge comes to roost sooner or later. If the dangers of modern large cities make this 'roaming' more difficult physically, all the more reason why we should provide room enough mentally in schools.

And what prompts boys and girls to go off on such expeditions with a few chosen pals? Not their desire to improve their knowledge of certain social conditions, to study transport systems, to find out about their own towns and localities, though all these curiosities are no doubt there as well. Chiefly they are impelled by a lust for adventure, a need for the illusion that their horizons are boundless. Even on a school expedition a child with his charts and plans will with one part of his mind learn about his country's trade and resources from a visit to the docks, but another part of it will fasten on one particular ship, and there do business of its own, maybe 'trafficking for strange webs with Eastern merchants', and gaining we know not what sense of peculiar possession from the transaction. I once had a very chastening experience when I took a group of adolescent girls on a reading party to Keswick. One evening they persuaded me and another member of the staff to take them down to the lake at midnight when the moon was full. We sat together on the rock at Friar's Crag, but soon they began to separate to find ledges and nooks of their own from which 'to drink the spectacle'. Every now and again I chivvied them to go back. I tried all the arguments. They were getting cold. I was getting cold. Someone was waiting the other end to lock the door. At last one of

them turned to me and said: 'Look here, you've seen this many times before and you'll see it many times again. We shall never see this again.' The protest I was going to make that of course they'd come to Keswick again, died on my lips. Suddenly I knew that the girl was right. This particular experience would never happen again, and not only was it unique but intensely each one's own.

So it is with every deep interest. It is always individual, which does not mean that the time will never come when it can be shared. Here again I cannot imagine anything less likely to arouse the personal sources of interest than the false impositions which so often masquerade as local and social studies. Let this not stand as a condemnation of these methods when they are taught so that they are the fruit of genuine inquiry, but because his interests sometimes run in the direction of local place-names, the coal industry, food distribution and so on, it does not mean that every child will be absorbed in these things for the same length of time. The centre of interest has one great advantage over the subject curriculum. It can often be more roomy. But not necessarily. Every subject has vast sources of interest if taught properly, whilst a centre of interest mismanaged can be more impaling than anything. A child can be encouraged to fritter away his energies in the service of what looks like a communal effort, when in fact it is a welding together of bits of interest often spasmodically invoked to fulfil the teacher's aim of producing a good citizen. But a child can only become a good citizen in as far as he is a whole and integrated person and that integration comes from the deep emotional levels we have been considering; it does not arise from artificially constructed schemes.

What we need is flexibility in the time-table, a sinuous quality of mind in the teacher and roominess in the

educational system as a whole. We are in serious danger of losing these things and with them a sense of luxury in education. Let us spread rich wares from many markets before children and then watch where the eye glitters. An interest is only local in any true sense if it begins in the child's mind, where the lover and the ghost wait unsatisfied and unlaid; only social in the true sense if it is so passionately pursued that when he has felt his own possession of it, he can then share it with others.

Peer Gynt ranged many lands but never became a good citizen anywhere because nowhere did he feel at home until out of bitter experience he regained himself in the love of Solveig. This is a consummation to be wished for learning also. For we can only share what we have no longer any fear of losing, and do only know what we have found out for ourselves.

CHAPTER SIX

CONFIDENCE AND DIFFIDENCE

DR. JOHNSON thought that the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* was justly admired because it abounded 'with images that find a mirror in every mind and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.' I think it is easy to understand why this poem appealed so strongly to a man who in his own personality revealed such a complex mixture of pride and humility, dogmatism and fear, for this is the main subject of the elegy. It reaches down through many levels of understanding to the confidence and diffidence which are essential aspects of human nature. Through the exquisite plaint of the poem runs the theme which is also a theme of tragedy: the waste of sweetness and the loss of good.

> 'Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.'

It is against this waste that education wages a ceaseless war, for one of its chief aims is to give children the opportunity to come into their own. But perhaps if we realized more imaginatively the delicacy of the task, we should try to discover finer tools with which to effect it.

Nowhere does the fundamental lack of confidence show itself more clearly than where the question of self-expression crops up. I was brought very closely into touch

with the intricacies of the situations involved in such work when conducting a class in original writing for adults.[1] I realized that grown-ups and children have to face similar difficulties and that it is perhaps easier to study the issues involved where the former are concerned; so I will describe some of my findings from this class.

It was a voluntary group in which we created plenty of room for manoeuvre. Work was given in when and how the students liked. They could be in spate for a season and then dry up or contribute regularly. They could follow suggestions from the classes or find their own themes. They could write prose or verse. The group itself was spacious in that the age range was very wide (about 21–45 years); the students were married and unmarried, with and without children. Some had experience in writing, others had not written in any creative sense since they were at school, if then. On the whole there was mucn more diffidence than confidence in the group. My chief problem was to discover how 'to break up a long-continued frost'.

At first many defences and disguises were adopted. These were mainly of a literary kind. One student wrote Miltonics, another imitated eighteenth century pedantries, another adopted journalese and so on. I now see how significant these masks were, and also how painful and slow in some cases was the losing of them. When they found that their efforts were not meeting with my approval, they began to ask: 'What is wrong with my style?', or 'What is wrong with your judgment?' After this stage was reached the questions changed to 'Why haven't I got anything original to say?', or 'Why don't you like what I have to say?'. Then two kinds of expression came to the surface. There was a bevy of apologies, and several outbursts of frustration. Some responded by shrinking from the task of

[1] At Borthwick Women's Emergency Training College.

self-expression; others made excuses for their inadequacies by blaming circumstances; or felt that the demands of everyday life prevented them from getting into touch with themselves. Here is a sampling from these pieces:

1. Seething thoughts riot and race
   In an effort to tumble into place
   But fear to say what the heart dictates.
   Holds still the pen in empty space.

2. Here is my soul for all the world to see,
   Here is, not they, we, you, but me.

3. Alas. To generations
   Unborn may I reveal
   No poet's inspiration
   All I may do is—feel.

4. Shall I be a dilettante
   Playing at writing verse?
   Shock my hair
   And sneer at Swinburne?
   No . . . nothing could be worse.

   The imagery is getting cloudy
   The metaphors are mixed
   I sear my soul
   And echo mouthings.
   But . . . my limits here are fixed.

5. *City Cramp*

   Leave me alone. Let me feel the air
   Unused by the presence of anyone else;
   The quiet hush peopled only by my thoughts;
   The solace of inanimate table and chair.

Let me commune with myself—I've no time to
spare.
The bed-sitting room, the perpetual rush,
The demands of the child, the everyday chores—
No lebensraum here, no great out-of-doors.
Leave me alone!

Inside the neat and comfortable flat
There's just room for this, there's a place for that,
But no room to grow—to be on one's own,
No solitude left for the innermost self.
Leave me alone!

The Brontës had a heath out of doors:
We've pavements, electricity, a suburban street.
No place for a soul winging fleet
To the horizon where earth and sky meet.
Leave me alone!

Leave me alone, then never fear.
Restored in spirit and refreshed in mind
I'll return again gracious and kind.
But now, for God's sake, my dear,
Leave me alone!

6. *The Awful Truth*

I'm fairly certain that I could compose
A masterpiece in poetry or prose
If only kindly fate would grant to me
Relief from sordid domesticity.

My verse should flame with all the spirit's fire,
Its singing glory star-ward should aspire.
My prose should be a grave and lovely thing,
Each word a jewel on a silver string.

Not more relentlessly the Heavenly Hound
Pursued the trembling Francis, than the round
Of household duties clips my fancy's wings
That fain would soar above such mundane things.

With pen upraised and inspiration near,
I will the deathless phrases to appear—
Alas! What have I written? 'Get the bread,
Ring up the laundry, urgent, make the bed.'

My genius is dead, with no uprising.
But can it be that I am rationalizing?
I'd better face the truth, it's plain to all,
And just admit—I cannot write at all.

But she was wrong. She could write; in fact during the year in different ways she won a good deal of confident expression of her diffidence—but she never achieved an *original* piece of work. She had not brought together within herself the shyness and boldness of her nature. I felt that she could with more awareness have reached this point had the course been longer, but it is difficult to say.

This was my next problem; how to show the students that until they had taken a look at all sides of themselves they would not be able to say what they wanted to. I tried a little discussion. I suggested that 'beautiful' in the artistic sense was not the same as the more popular use of the word. A poet could describe 'garbage' and produce something beautiful. I read Spenser's description of the revolting dragon in the den of error, and proclaimed it a beautiful passage. Some agreed, some were mystified, others outraged. Then a few 'garbage' poems appeared, and quotations from the poets in this kind. I knew however that this intellectual approach could only touch the surface of opinion. They needed some kind of sanction to come closer

to those earlier frustrations which lay at the root of their inarticulateness. Then I read two essays on quite different levels of self-revelation—Abraham Cowley's *Of Myself* and D. H. Lawrence's on *Thinking about Oneself.* The ice cracked more loudly than I had anticipated, and it was Lawrence's passage about the skeletons that did it.

> ' It is perfectly natural for every man and every woman to think about himself or herself most of the time. What is there to be afraid of? And yet people as a mass are afraid. You'd think everybody had a skeleton in the cupboard of their inside. Which of course they have. I've got a skeleton, and so have you. But what's wrong with him . . . if he wants to have a chat with me, let him.'

This was taken as my request for their skeletons. Lawrence escaped most of the blame. Then came a few protests:

> ' Each one of us is only supremely important to himself, and his entirely personal outpourings seldom satisfy the needs of others. By all means when the grief and disturbance is rampant let it be tamed by a timely utterance; but as there are other sources of inspiration but the need to fetter tigers, we do not need to summon real or imaginary beasts from a real or imaginary jungle in order to write.
>
> Permit us please to let sleeping skeletons lie.'

I remarked on how much I had enjoyed her protest, and that it was the most vigorous piece of writing she had given in so far.

In most cases however there was less resistance than relief, and I noticed more ease and sincerity in the writing after this. There was one writer who in her poems and stories showed a very keen sense of the skeleton in the cupboard. She knew too of the nearness of the need for

comfort to the sense of desolation. Some of her work we were unable to understand; but much of it gave us a great deal of pleasure. We knew she was genuinely a poet. Here is one of her poems that comes very near the bone:

Identification

Throughout all things, the little delving flowers
With crying faces, the deadly potato
With his split-nosed grin,
Even aspirin,
I search
As your dear sad heart
Searches.
And there I miss the message as it leaps.
And while I scurry thither
Through all the churches
With all their lacy arches
Of faith,
Grace grows tired and sleeps.
If you are gone then all my life is lived,
And driven snow or fire shall find me there,
And all the gentle tears shall ever flow
Where you were once the testament of prayer.
For what you were to me is written in that place,
And I know you in that hour, and I must learn your grace.

It should be mentioned that some students went on writing all the time in the same vein as they had begun, and they were untouched by the apology—garbage—skeleton line of thought. A few of the best writers belonged to this group as well as a few of the worst. I am developing in this essay the theme of confidence and diffidence, using this class to illustrate some of the problems involved,

but it will be realized that the work which went on illustrated many other aspects of expression which it is not my purpose to go into here.

At the outset most of the students decided that they would rather remain anonymous when their work was read and discussed. If they did not want it to be made public at all, they wrote to that effect on the top. But slowly as their confidence in me and in each other developed, this diffidence almost disappeared. One piece of intimate autobiographical writing was given in which I praised very highly, but remarked that the student would probably not want me to read it out as its anonymity was unlikely to be preserved. I was astounded at her complete surrender when she remarked: 'If you like it as much as that I don't mind.' This was a turning point in the development of her work.

So it became clear that secrecy and diffidence were closely connected with approval and disapproval. But why were these grown-up women, who were most of them running homes and rearing families, still so dependent upon the glance of the tutor? When at the end of the year a selection of the work was put out at 'open day', a few of them wanted to withdraw their contributions in case their husbands and family saw them. A kind of safety zone had been constructed at college, which however did not extend in every case to their own homes. They had not yet gained the courage which every artist needs when he turns his products into the world. But our sternest critics are the parental voices which so often remain inside us, and we are inclined to invest the people around us with these judging roles, which does not of course mean that those people are always innocent of assuming them. How well in the light of all this one can understand the mixture of trepidation and delight which most children feel when they bring their parents to school to see what they have done, and

in their glances of anxious expectation one can discern that point of balance between advance and retreat which is so momentous for the development of our trust in the world.

The students had placed me also in a parental role. I decided at the beginning of the course to throw my efforts in with the rest to come up for criticism. But I found that I had made a mistake. I became unusually 'touchy'; moreover it was obvious which my pieces were. I discussed the matter with them and they agreed that it was better for me to keep out. It helped them to know that I could write; it was also a good thing for them to realize that there were better writers in the group; but whilst they were creating they felt they needed the illusion of my invulnerability. I noticed however that, as confidence grew in the class as a whole, this lessened. It would not have been possible for me without such an illusion to have brought about the re-direction of guilt which was necessary in some cases in order to reach those spots where 'the genial current of the soul' had been frozen into inarticulateness.

And yet I could also see that it was not wise for me to remain as an omnipotent judge. In any case this was impossible as my own unconscious attitudes were bound to operate in my criticism, and these the students had every right to challenge. I found it easier to give scope for this challenge in relation to my criticism than in relation to my own creative efforts and apparently the students also felt one attack more permissible than another. I think it likely that with more experience of this kind of work, it would have become possible to break down some of these resistances on both sides. All this opens up an extremely important aspect of the teacher–child relationship, which it is not possible to go into here, but I would put forward the suggestion that both the students and myself were prob-

ably reflecting an important stage in our early reactions to our parents, where we found it disturbing to question their uniqueness and yet at the same time were bound to rebel against their judgments, especially when we had other and perhaps better standards before us. It seems necessary therefore for the teacher to adopt a method whereby he can foster some illusion of omnipotence and at the same time give space for rebellion against it. But as soon as the children can come into their own expression, the conflict will be to a large extent solved, and the disguises and subterfuges can drop away.

Another interesting point from this class, which can only be touched upon now, arose in relation to 'style'. After the students lost the suits and trappings which they had adopted (some of these had been encouraged at school), they used all manner of loose forms as well as following stricter patterns of verse. We saw that style and meaning were inevitably linked, and we respected the author who said, 'What I have written, I have written', even though we indulged in some tinkering here and there. Expression is a forcing outwards into the light of recognition not only our most perfect achievements but the agonies and inadequacies which are part of them. We shall have to re-write many of our aesthetic theories when we come more thoroughly to understand that form itself is as much a part of unconscious motivation as the meanings which it enfolds. But this points to a most fascinating line of inquiry out of the scope of this essay.

What I felt had come out most clearly from this class was that the building up of confidence in expression was very closely connected with the coming to terms with guilt in the personality. If we are not sure what will come out if we express ourselves freely, then we are likely to find ways of concealing what is there; and so we go through

our lives avoiding the realities which give us life. How well Viola understood the dangers of this concealment:

VIOLA: My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be perhaps were I a woman
I should your lordship.

DUKE: And what's her history?

VIOLA: A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought;
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was this not love indeed?

DUKE: But died thy sister of her love, my boy?

VIOLA: I am all the daughters of my father's house
And all the brothers too;—and yet I know not.

In this exquisite passage Shakespeare has not only reproduced those shy movements and bold intents which possess us all when coming near to the acknowledgement of our deepest feelings, but he has also described most accurately the jealousy and sterility which results from repression. Gray in the last stanza of the Elegy comes close to the same truth of feeling, but failing to find for his melancholy poet recognition in this world, he looks for it in the next:—

'No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.'

With less piety but more conviction Shakespeare has shown in the creation of Viola that expression can come into its own *in this life*, if love can.

Now let us discover what we have learnt from all this which can be applied as an educational principle. We saw that some students could express themselves fairly easily; what they wanted was the opportunity; with others a more tortuous route was necessary. Defences had to be broken down, and I had to exercise a double function. I had to provide the class with material to study, and at the same time to give a moral sanction. It meant giving the good things of literature, but not minding at first what was given in return. It meant showing that true expression only results from a fearless attitude towards what is inside one. The authentic poem or essay is the one in which concealment is not necessary because what had to be concealed has become part of what has to be revealed. This does not mean that expression is nothing but the letting of skeletons out of cupboards. When we know what is in a room, cupboards and all, we can give our attention to living in it as we want to. If we have to keep an eye all the time on some part of it to control what might be there, then what we want to say is perpetually under the influence of what we dare not say. To begin with, before our courage has fully developed it is a great help if there is somebody else in the room to help with the situation.

I was taking a class I had not met before for original composition. I had no idea how to begin the lesson so I asked them what age they were. One child said lugubriously: 'I am fourteen.' I replied: 'You sound as though you don't like being fourteen.' Another child broke in: 'Oh, I think it's a lovely age. You can go out with boys without it being serious.' A heated discussion arose in which many skeletons popped out of their cupboards. I then read some poems chosen by myself and the class, after which I asked them to write a poem. (They were unused to this kind of work, but some free expression

appeared, although much remained stilted or inarticulate.) I believe that there was an indirect relation between the discussion and the work which was produced, though the subject matter was very different. In the same way the work which results in any lesson is intimately connected with the way the school is run as a whole. School for so many children is the place where you learn a great many valuable things and some that are no use at all; but on the whole it is not the place where you can say what you really think; unless you get a chance to be cheeky or find some other improper mode of delivery. And unfortunately some homes are like this too. But the child in this class who wrote

> 'I'm tired of being kind,
> And I haven't got a mind
> For anything except for being
> BORED.'

had found a way of bringing her feelings to the notice of herself and others through the effectiveness of rhyme. The discussion had produced the moral sanction to say what they wanted to, the reading of the poems gave permission of another kind; permission to think and feel in the company of fellow poets. I believe that this class was producing a movement similar to that of the adult group—a movement through the acknowledgement of guilty feelings to an honesty of thought and expression.

In every class we have children who are shy and slink into a corner and others who show off all the time. We are just as likely to receive good expression from one as the other, if we show that we are the kind of audience that can allow for advance and retreat. In one case we have to give the child's diffidence the benefit of his confidence, in the other his confidence of his diffidence. In all this we

are re-enacting towards him what happened to him at a much earlier age when the quality of his courage was first developed. The parents are the child's first audience and he finds his feet in time to their loving glances, their imaginative sympathy with his gains and losses. The baby soon learns to scan his mother's face to find in the creases and furrows there, in the changing lights in her eyes, where his own value lies. At one moment perhaps he turns to her with a passionate desire to possess her love entirely, and she may thoughtlessly turn away or bring an impatient note into the voice, because the door-bell rang or there were so many things waiting to be done. At such times a child can develop a deep depression, for he may think that it was his greed and desire that caused her to turn away; a sense of guilt stirs in the fertile caves of his creativeness, he breathes the sterile dust of the desert air. Here both parents and teachers will no doubt show some impatience and exclaim: 'Then we had better give it up. The home and school make too many demands upon us to allow us to respond to such acute sensitivity.' But we do not alter the facts of feeling because we have developed a feeling for fact. We have to weld them together as best we can. The good mother in attending to her baby's emotional needs learns to create a safety zone round herself in which the child can show both his daring and his hesitancy; a place where there is room for advance and retreat to find their own rhymn. Then gradually he will be able to allow her to go away or to rebuke him and still feel that his expression has not been damaged. He will begin to play games of bo-peep with her, he will laugh when she frowns and frown when she laughs just to prove that he has gained enough confidence in the world to test it out in sport So much of our learning in later life is built upon these patterns, and the teacher, too, needs to create zones

of safety. In many ways this will be more difficult than it is for the mother; so much defence has been constructed in the older person that more conscious methods will be needed to break it down.

The glance of the teacher then and the mother must show the child that he is acceptable; but also it must allow for the exposure of the greedy worm if the sweetness is to be divulged. Good mothers and good teachers have always known this. It is only because we have failed so miserably in our upbringing of children that we have to formulate our intuitions. But—

> 'He who can open the bud does it so simply.
> He gives it a glance, and the life sap stirs through its veins.
> At his breath, the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.
> Colours flush out like heart-longings, the perfume betrays a sweet secret.
> He who can open the bud does it so simply.' [1]

I think we need to learn in education how to recapture simplicity. Civilization and the complexities of modern life have made natural methods of child rearing more difficult. Schools are in any case artificial places. Now it is our task to cultivate what once was taken for granted; but the cultivated plant need not be forced; it can still take the soil and feel the air and warmth the same as its more wayward brother, and the loss of profusion can be compensated for by careful pruning, so long as we keep in mind how many varieties there are.

[1] Rabindranath Tagore—*Fruit-Gathering*, No. XVIII.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRINCIPLE AND PREJUDICE

As I look back upon these essays it seems as though I had invited the reader into a junk shop. What an oddly assorted group of people are here: Viola making common cause with Gray's melancholy poet; the sardonic and unprepossessing Socrates consorting with delicate Ariel; dragons, ghosts and skeletons brushing against the fragrant rose of the Indian poet; and Plato sacrilegiously compared to a window cleaner. I feel sure that critics will rise and say that I am using the gems of literature very badly by taking them out of their fine and original settings and flinging them into this medley assortment. I make no apology for treating the people I admire in this way. All good things were made to be stolen from and literature is no exception. But so steadfast in their own intentions are the great masters that I do not think that my delinquencies will disurb them; whereas perhaps they will gain some enhancement here and there from finding themselves in these unfamiliar lights.

However, I am not at all sure that it was I who brought all these creatures together. I believe that their arrival happened to me unawares. Not that I was not attending to what I was saying. I was thinking very hard, and my thoughts ran into paradoxes over and over again. It was, I think, the paradox in my mind that caused this junk shop to appear. For more and more I came to realize how rarely a thought occurs all by itself; on its heels there

appears another one that looks so different at first and then on closer inspection, they seem to merge. But the birth of a paradox is nearly always a little painful. It is painful to have to look at the ugly as well as the perfect, so that beauty can arise; to look at destruction along with the ideal, before we can know what is good; to fall into error before we can reach the truth. How much easier it is to raise these words—truth, beauty and goodness—like so many monuments, without acknowledging the worm in the bud which they conceal, and the grief which they avoid. We have lived far too long in education at the feet of these pedestalled values.

Most of this book deals with paradox, and I can see that much of it is rather painful. I have stressed the importance of so many things we have been taught to avoid: chaos, muddle, conflict, depression, rebellion, incoherence, phantasy, getting lost, looking for skeletons and all manner of distressing things. In fact I have asserted the value of illness. But we have discovered that illness can best be described relatively. There may be a stage in learning when to realize our difficulties is most beneficial to our progress, but sometimes these may have gone too far for the teacher to be able to turn them to account. And this can happen sometimes to the best material there is. Was there a nobler mind than Hamlet's to be overthrown?

Some of the things which troubled Hamlet were not unlike those which caused distress to the little girl, Millicent.[1] We saw how she was dividing her picture in two because she could not bear to look at herself as a whole; how she put the bad in one half and the good in the other, and identified herself with the good. This is just what Hamlet did when he compared his father with his uncle:

'First look upon this picture, and on this.'

[1] See p. 38.

and how the passionate prejudice of his language betrayed the under-lying jealousy. It becomes an important part of the teacher's task to recognize these things and to try to keep learning whole by helping the child to solve his conflict. This he does not do by encouraging the dissociation through strengthening the identification either with good or bad, but by accepting within his own love and care the expression of both together. In this way they can catch up with each other, and then perhaps to our surprise we shall find we are not dealing with good or with bad, but with a love enriched by both qualities. Or as I rhymed it for myself:

> 'The black and the white
> Weave them together
> Through darkness and light
> In foul and fair weather.
>
> Keep the thief on the run
> And where find the lover?
> But overtake one,
> You'll pick up the other.'

There must be a reason why I have to express such ideas in these rhyming incantations.

I was teaching a class of fourteen year olds in which there was a very tiresome child. Everyone found her difficult, and she was constantly being exhorted to be good. She achieved this state occasionally, and then fell from grace. I was interested in the first piece of work she gave in to me in a verse writing lesson because it expressed so clearly the conflict she was in, and also her inability to make a sustained effort. There is interesting material for the psychologist here, but the interpretation of this need

not concern the teacher. His understanding is needed in order to discover the value of such expression for the child's personality development and also for his progress in school work; which we have seen throughout these essays are inseparable factors.

The Naughty Witch

'There was a naughty witch, and a naughty witch was she.
She ran away to love-land for the lovers there to see.
And she found on the ground a little golden ring
Which she gave to her mother who gave it to her sister
Who put on a blister which burst into a bubble
And made a lot of trouble.
And that is how this story ends.'

Such writing as this serves the same purpose as phantasy drawing for the infant. When this has been worked through, children are ready to meet reality not with bravado as this girl was doing, but with genuine courage.

I am wondering whether the nervous exhaustion which teachers so frequently suffer from is not closely connected with the efforts they feel bound to make in order to keep children up to their own very high standards. They rarely notice how unsuccessful they are in any long-term sense. They are following the platonic lead and expecting the bad to disappear in some miraculous way, the more they put the accent on the good. But it does not work like that. After one of the familiar moral exhortations from the platform by the head teacher, things can seem quite different for a time. Behaviour improves and the general tone of the school is uplifted. Everything is cleaned up, and everyone is exalted. But not for long, unless real creative love is at

work, and a tolerance which touches the roots of human nature, and is prepared to take it for what it is. Here the teacher is no doubt ready to exclaim that surely he is not there to encourage wrong-doing and naughtiness. But the sources of these things are not under his control as much as he thinks, nor are they likely to get out of his control as much as he fears. Difficult children in class are difficult, and to try by disciplinary measures to hide this does not in any way alter the situation. But this does not mean that no discipline should be used. What matters is how we use it. Do we control the child because we are afraid of what will result if we do not—are we trying to suppress inner badness? Or do we control him because we know that close to the heart of that badness lies the value he has for the world, and our control is the expression of the love that recognizes this?

The inability to distinguish between these two kinds of discipline leads to much confusion of thought and practice which shows itself very clearly in the attitude which sections of the general public take towards delinquency. Modern educators are blamed for letting children do what they like, and psychologists, it is thought, are their aiders and abettors. Unfortunately there is enough bad education going on under progressive banners, and a large enough number of misguided psychologists for these accusers to find the culprit they so desperately need. But the best teachers who base their methods upon psychological principles, clinically tested and proved, know much better than their arraigners that it is disastrous to let a child do just what he likes, and so does the teacher who has never heard of psychology, but who works from the love that is in him; because they know that pleasure and pain are inseparable in rich and courageous living. This, however, is a very different thing from saying, as some magistrates

and others have been known to say, that pain is good for a child. Let these magistrates recall their own delinquencies and realize that the children before them differ from themselves chiefly in the *measure* of their difficulties; and let them look for causes not in the school, which is a handy and easy scapegoat, but in the complex structure of human nature and society, which it should be their humble and patient task to study.

As well as in the school, the cause for delinquency is sought in the bad conditions of the home, and in the unhappy relationship of parents. This is nearer to the heart of the matter. But it should be realized that a child gets beyond parental control in one sense as soon as he casts doubt upon his parents' love, and this can happen very early in his life and in homes where everything on the surface seems all right. Nor is it easy to blame parents for actions which they themselves are unaware of committing—and for an inability to respond to the acute sensibilities of children, which their own upbringing has rendered them incapable of doing. Here again they should join the magistrates and patiently learn about these things. For the criminal in court is the child who is still testing out his parents—the child who never gained the confidence of his criminality at a time when he should have found his mother good enough to steal from and loving enough to want his greed. To ignore these facts behind which lies an increasing body of clinical data is like refusing to take the right attitude to physical disease either because we are afraid we have it, or because we think it is a just punishment.

There is little then that a teacher can do when neurosis has gone beyond a certain point, but I have tried to show that there is much he can do for the ordinary child by giving free play to the inter-actions of feeling which takes place in a class-room, and by control through loving under-

standing, whilst there is a large number of difficult children with which he can also accomplish much in the way of healing.

It was with these thoughts in mind that I attempted a re-examination of some of our educational methods. I have suggested that *activity* is an indispensable technique if it allows the balance of forces in a child so to express itself, that by getting to know himself, other people and the outside world gain in value for him. But we have to realize that this principle underlies all good teaching of whatever kind, listening, writing, speaking, acting, moving and so on. We must be careful not to set up an altar to something called *activity*, and imagine that any other method is under suspicion, without testing the principles upon which all of them are based.

So it is with *interest*, which stands in danger of becoming another marble monument. We have learnt to understand through psychological discoveries a great deal about children's interests, but little that inspired teachers have not always known. But in talking of 'the child's need', we must realize that this is not the same thing as 'Mary Brown's need'. This latter is something we can begin to guess at from her behaviour over a long period, but never really know. Only she knows where her genuine interests lie. We can cater for what they are likely to be; but to do this knowing our limitations is a very different thing from planning with a false belief in our powers of prophecy. This places us in a difficult position. We have to plan for the unknown, and yet know something about what we plan for. No wonder teachers who lack the necessary flexibility for such methods bring them into disrepute. Because what we are really saying is that every lesson should be a creative act, and this is something that both activity and interest teachers often overlook. They know that

material must be produced for the child's mind to act upon, but they fail to realize that children also construct within themselves material upon which they act.

This creative aspect of education is the one which in all the centuries of our civilization has been most neglected. At last, however, the recognition of its importance is growing. But courage is needed here from the teacher, because it is not an easy thing to leave children face to face with their own chaos. This means being prepared to receive expressions of violence, distortions of reality and incoherence of many kinds before there gradually emerge satisfying shapes and forms. Appreciation and making things from directions are both valuable activities because we learn much through identification and emulation, but to fashion something right out of ourselves is a much more satisfying thing to do. I wonder whether to submit a child thus to the hazards of creation is not the best educational opportunity that we can offer him.

Of course every healthy child assumes that it is the only way to set to work, before education with all its confusion of aims impinges upon him and teaches a different approach. A friend of mine asked her little boy what he was drawing and he wisely replied: 'How can I tell you until I have finished?' In some measure this book illustrates this method. I began without a plan, and yet the plan was there before I began, and slowly I came to recognize it. I knew I had something to say but was never sure until the pen was on the paper what it would be. As the design began to take shape, I began to shape the design. But I notice how much I have been under the influence of rhymes and alliterations. And why did there have to be seven chapters?[1] Occult philosophers would provide explanations of these things, and others would say I was acting in

[1] See footnote, p 78.

obedience to a universal principle of pattern, to artistic laws. This I do not know; but I feel pretty certain that my predilection for repetitive forms and for the rhythms of verse arose from a need, whilst experimenting with ideas and exploring the mind, to have the solace of something embracing and recurring. I find that I was exercised in mind about which chapter would fall into the middle of the seven. Would it be the core chapter, the centre and heart of it all? It may be argued that because a need for comfort operates in the creation of pattern, this does not preclude the existence of more general objective laws. True, but not until we know what is fashioned from our illusions, can we know what lies outside them. And one must allow for the great temptation there must be to acclaim a oneness with the universe in order to escape the painful recognition of our dependence.[1]

We should not overlook the extent to which theory and philosophy can become an escape from creativity; and much also that goes under the name of appreciation. Learning provides us with many ways of vicarious living, and it is often difficult to know whether we are cheating or not. For example to read in the *Iliad* of Priam's grief

[1] After writing this chapter, I realised that the book needed an introduction and so I wrote the comment on 'The Teacher: Artist and Psychologist.' This upset the mystic seven design, which had dominated me to some extent. I found some difficulty in losing the core and centre chapter. I was then reminded of a passage I had read in Groddeck, the full meaning of which I did not grasp until now. It is worth quoting it here because these considerations have important bearings upon our aesthetic theories.

> 'We all of us fancy we must have a core at the centre, something that is not merely shell; we would like to hold within us some specially dainty kernel, or nut, protecting the future, the everlasting. And we do not realize, cannot realize that we have in fact no kernel, but are made up of one leaf on top of another from outermost to innermost, that in fact we are onions.' (He is referring in the whole passage to a scene from *Peter Gynt*, Act V, scene 3.)

From *Exploring the Unconscious*, Georg Groddeck, p. 177.

over the body of his son may provide an experience of different kinds; we may recognize our own griefs and so come to understand 'sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.' No one would doubt that this is an experience of great value, but there is a way of weeping Priam's tears in order to escape from our own which perhaps we fear, if we gave place to them, might shatter all our being. But not until we can endure the full extent of our own suffering will the 'lacrimae rerum' be of much creative value to humanity.

Are there then no standards outside ourselves? Must we reach all our principles through the dangerous mazes of prejudice? What is there that we can be sure of? These questions seem now to press for attention. I have always felt a great sympathy with Pilate who, when he asked 'What is Truth?' as Bacon expressed it 'did not stay for an answer'. It is surely significant that although these questions have found various answers from time to time, few people stop asking them. However, as we have seen, the need for assurance does not prove the validity of the truth that is offered, neither does it disprove it. I have tried to show in these essays that one of our educational aims is that we should come to recognize our prejudices and illusions so that we are in a better position to test out reality. But we have seen also that owing to the great complexity of the task for most of us, all we can hope for is an approximation to this aim; whereas the more we try to invoke certainty, the more we shall retard even this approximation.

When I was engaged upon the work in individual studies already referred to,[1] I was struck by the attitudes of the many different people to whom the students applied for help. The response they met with on all sides was extremely generous, because I think the sincerity of the purpose was

[1] See Chapter Six.

recognized; but sometimes they came upon the fear, especially among the more learned bodies, that these studies would be inaccurate and lack standard if approached from such a subjective angle. In fact the finished products varied as much as the students. Some reached the standard of university theses, others were little better than schoolgirl essays. But there were even among these bodies those who recognized that the standard was inherent in the work as well as part of scholarship itself. This is surely what scholarship is—an insatiable demand for the satisfaction of curiosity by means of a patient sifting of evidence, and when in this process meaning seems to dawn, it comes with the light of revelation, because we recognize both what we have always known, and what we have just come to find out. I think that we must recognize the scholarship which cannot allow for error and wrong judgment as in itself a defensive structure.

This book has dealt mainly with the emotional aspects of learning, and it has by no means encompassed all of these. On the whole it has been more concerned with the process of knowing than with the supply of knowledge But perhaps we have seen that these are not such separate entities as we might at first have thought. For we want to enrich the world's stores as well as to take from them. Our need is to be satisfied but also to give satisfaction. And when finally we deposit what we have gained upon the lap of earth I wonder if at that moment of dissolution we feel very close to the mother from whom we first began to learn. 'The truths that wake to perish never' have a disconcerting way of having to be found out afresh in every life. But both the young and the old have their special privileges, for one it is to inherit, for the other to bequeath. Between these lies the teacher's function, in the exercise of which he has to be careful to balance responsibilities; for he

must not out of respect for the dead neglect the living, neither should he from an enthusiasm for his urgent task, ignore the rights of knowledge patiently acquired. It is for him to ensure that the residues of learning bring to the child comfort and enrichment, but also he should regard them as so much junk with which to begin all over again: for were they not achieved as the result of conflicts and satisfactions similar to his own?