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# Radical Democratic Education as Response to Two World Wars and a Contribution to World Peace: the inspirational work of Alex Bloom

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**ABSTRACT** A key contributor to the 1948 New Education Fellowship *The Teacher and World Peace* submission to UNESCO, Alex Bloom is one of the most remarkable pioneers of radical democratic education of the twentieth century. In many important respects, Bloom's internationally renowned work from 1945-55 at St George-in-the-East Secondary Modern School in the East End of London can be seen as an iconic example of education for peace. Wounded in World War I, a teacher and then head teacher between the two World Wars and during World War II, this article explores key aspects of his commitment to a form of democratic education that was both a response to two great conflagrations of the twentieth century and a contribution to the possibility of less destructive ways of living and learning together in the future.

## Introduction

From the end of World War II (WWII) until his untimely death in September 1955 at the age of 60, Alex Bloom developed what is arguably the most radical democratic state-funded secondary school England has ever seen. Much of my current work [1] is devoted to researching the nature and origins of this remarkable school and the life and work of its remarkable head teacher.

In this article I set out to explore the possibility that some of the school's most important democratic features owed their vibrancy and integrity to Alex Bloom's experience as a soldier in World War I (WWI), as a London East End teacher and head teacher between the wars and during WWII, and to the post WWII educational zeitgeist which took democracy more seriously and, with the possible exception of some radical comprehensive schools of the 1970s and

80s, explored its grounded realities more imaginatively than subsequent generations.

Whilst there is currently too little evidence from my research to suggest an overt, causal link, there is enough about his pioneering work from 1945-55 as the founding head teacher of St George-in-the-East Secondary Modern School in Stepney, London that exemplifies a view of schooling dedicated to education for peace within the context of democracy as a way of life, as a way living and learning together.

I take as my starting point the New Education Fellowship's response to UNESCO's 1948 invitation 'to prepare a memorandum on "Techniques of Attitude Change", applicable at school age, having a positive influence upon tensions between nations' (New Education Fellowship, 1948, p. ii), the result of which was a 12 page document, *The Teacher and World Peace: a preliminary survey of fundamentals*. Not only was Alex Bloom one of the distinguished group of New Education Fellowship authors of the document [2], hallmarks of his then growing international reputation are clearly evident.

Having drawn out some of the key arguments of the New Education Fellowship submission to UNESCO, I go on in the second section of this article to suggest a number of further resonances with Bloom's ground-breaking work. Here I emphasise the importance of the emergent statement of values – *Our Pattern* (Bloom, n.d.) – which served as the school's moral and educational touchstone and, in section 3, I illustrate a number of aspects of its lived realities.

The two short concluding sections of the article underscore Bloom's commitment to international understanding and education for peace, firstly, through his work with the New Education Fellowship and, secondly, through his commitment to traditions of democratic thought and praxis that pay particular and pervasive attention to the most neglected, but, I would argue, the most important element of the emancipatory trinité of the French Revolution – namely 'fraternity' or, as English political traditions often have it, 'fellowship'.

### **The Teacher and World Peace**

The New Education Fellowship submission argues that 'The problem of averting war, reducing tension between nations and positively promoting peace is a problem of changing human attitudes' and firmly insists that if we are to make progress with these intractable issues we must work towards 'the abandonment of current ways of thinking and feeling and acting' (1948, p. 1). Here the role of education is seen as crucial and, in an observation we in England would do well to take seriously at a time when performance in various kinds of league tables dominates contemporary discourse, the authors argue that:

Of all the things that education does none is so important as this formation of basic attitudes. Information obtained at school may be forgotten or superseded, but fundamental attitudes are built into the

personality and often persist long after their usefulness has gone.  
(p. 2)

Schools in general and teachers in particular are seen as key influences in the development of basic attitudes and both have a responsibility to encourage flexibility and adaptability. Key here is a foundational insistence on a holistic educational orientation:

If education is to make its contribution to world peace, it must never lose sight of the total personality of the whole child ... It is the total personality that matters. No amount of information, no wealth of gadgets or equipment, can compensate for poverty or disintegration or a festering sore within the personality. We educationists do wrong if we regard as frills on the timetable the activities which foster emotional, social, aesthetic and religious experience, which cultivate the imagination and aptitude for creation and appreciation. They should rather be regarded as the foundation, for they go deeper and have more lasting effect than what we offer on the intellectual plane. They play a more decisive part in the development of the personality than do any of our academic subjects. Only by recognizing and catering for these other elements in personality can schools fulfill the growing personalities of their pupils.  
(New Education Fellowship, 1948, pp. 3-4, original emphasis)

It is argued that schools should not be regarded simply as a preparation for later life, but as places that are fulfilling and satisfying in the here and now of a child's experience: 'Paradoxically perhaps, the more satisfying they are as present experience for its own sake, the better preparation they are for later life' (1948, p. 4). Considerable attention is paid to the arts with emphasis on the fullest possible engagement of the child's personality.

The parochialism of many history textbooks and much history teaching is deplored and it is suggested that 'It might be useful to revise the traditional ways of dividing up school subjects' (1948, p. 6). Emotional stability and good social relationships within the school are seen as important counters, not only to nationalistic myopia, but also to a deeper parochialism of disposition. There should thus be a 'welcome towards the "new" – whether to a stranger visiting the school, to a new member of staff, to "foreigners" in general, to a new idea or a new way of presenting ideas' (p. 7). Parental involvement and contact with the local community are seen as important reinforcements in the development of these attitudes.

The submission concludes with some interesting suggestions about foreign travel and residential youth centres. However, before doing so, two particularly resonant arguments are made which bear the distinctive hallmark of Alex Bloom's pioneering work. The first concerns the importance of human relationships in schools. Here it is argued that:

Children should take part in the corporate life of the school and learn self-discipline gradually through taking responsibility upon themselves. By means of school councils they should learn to share in their own administration, to know and understand what is going on, and be governed by their own consent.

Indeed:

Experience of co-operative living can only be gained if the school is run on non-authoritarian lines ... Discipline imposed from above, and without the child's consent, can only breed hatred and fear. A quiet and orderly classroom bought at such a price is mortgaging the future. (1948, p. 8)

The other key section concerns 'competition and group work', anticipating Bloom's remarkable article 'Compete or Co-operate?' published the following year in *New Era* (Bloom, 1949). Here it is argued that 'Competition need not be used as an artificial stimulus to effort'. Indeed:

In such a non-competitive atmosphere achievement becomes sufficient reward for effort. It can be measured by a variety of standards – by comparison with the child's own previous best (he should have access to his own records), by comparison with the success of others in his group. Where mistakes are not penalized, but used to indicate points for further improvement, guilt is not stored up but discharged in more appropriate action. (1948, p. 8)

### **Starting with Values**

In many respects the core issues to which I have just referred were exemplified in the approach to education Bloom developed in his 10 years at St George-in-the-East.

In making these aspirations real one of the most important and distinctive aspects of Alex Bloom's approach was an ongoing process of reflection and dialogue in which staff engaged with and developed a living set of aspirations encapsulated in a document which became known as *Our Pattern* (Bloom, n.d.).[3] Echoing much that we have just alluded to in *The Teacher and World Peace* it is reproduced in full (a single side of paper) in the Appendix to this article.

It was, as I have suggested, a key orienting device to help staff at St George's feel their way forward, collectively and individually, to a form of educational practice that enabled teachers and students to 'abandon ... current ways of thinking and feeling and acting' argued for in the opening passages of *The Teacher and World Peace* and develop a different way of being in the world.

It opens with Bloom's characteristic insistence on the interdependence of our personhood, on the necessary and profound reciprocity of individual persons and the commensurate obligations of a community to enable and

encourage the free space, open dispositions and companion opportunities necessary for their mutual flourishing.

At school the child has two loyalties which we aim at making two accepted duties ... one to himself the other to his community. We must give him the freedom to develop himself as fully and as finely as he can for his own sake and for the sake of his community.  
(Bloom, n.d.)

Freedom, in Isaiah Berlin's sense of positive liberty (Berlin, 1969), is at the heart of community and a touchstone of individual and wider human flourishing. However, for it to be so in ways that are real, creative and fulfilling, Bloom reminds us, in imagery and argument redolent of *The Teacher and World Peace*, that 'The art of compromise is thus, an essential lesson in learning to live dynamically, but at peace, in and with a community' (Bloom, n.d.).[4]

Warming to themes for which he was to become internationally well known, he goes on to insist that what he calls 'objective' rewards and punishment have no place within an educational institution that takes its ethical responsibilities seriously:

To get the child to appreciate these two duties objective rewards and punishments are false stimuli, for, unless the right thing is done for the right reason one lives unethically.

He further argues against the use of competition as a motivational device, not only because it is morally repugnant, but also because it denies the virtues and satisfactions of intrinsic motivation and their companion heuristic equivalents which invariably accrue.

Similarly, objective competition is wrong; it is not only unethical but it tends to destroy a communal spirit. Of course, the ultimate stimulus should be the inner joy that, alone, comes from disinterested creation ... but mankind is not yet ready for this.

Taking stock of the moral and intellectual line of argument pursued thus far, Bloom then suggests two mutually conditioning imperatives at the heart of the school's aspirations:

For our aims I suggest these two stimuli: -

1. the child must feel that, however backward he may be, he *does* count, that he is wanted, that he has a contribution to make to the common good;
  2. the child must feel that the school community is worthwhile.
- (Bloom, n.d., original emphasis)

Three things strike me forcibly about such a formulation. Firstly, there is a robust insistence on the necessity of human significance – what in my own work I have called 'democratic fellowship' – that at once presumes and transcends the necessary and proper requirements of rights. We matter in an

existential sense as persons, not just as citizens. Secondly, that sense of care, of warmth, that in part characterises democratic fellowship invariably invites and elicits an individual response, a 'contribution to the common good'. Thirdly, and radically, the logic of reciprocity demands that the community itself deserves the individual allegiance it seeks and on which its moral and instrumental health and legitimacy depend.

This last point is pursued and extended in the document's penultimate paragraph which opens by insisting that 'We cannot demand of the child that he accepts these urges, nor can we force them on him'. Instead, Bloom suggests that:

Peaceful penetration will, I feel sure, succeed, so long as our approach to the child and his problems is consistent, kindly and tolerant, and the attitude of each one of us is in harmony with the general design.

Saturated with imagery of humanly supportive exchange and the overarching requirement that all involved are guided by the framework of values and human priorities with which the document began, the tone, direction and enacted realities of *Our Pattern* are entirely at one with *The Teacher and World Peace*. Adult guidance is there, but its manner and orientation are shaped by the lived eventualities of wisdom rather than the prescribed imperatives of role and regulation: 'the child must also be helped to comprehend the freedom given him. He needs wise guidance in this, and unobtrusive supervision' (Bloom, n.d.).

The document ends with a reaffirmation of the creative nexus between individuality and community, insisting once again, that we develop ways of working together that celebrate and enact its daily possibility.

Perhaps the crux of things, now, lies in the realisation of the individuality of each child with all that this implies of individual treatment, individual approach, individual work. And, since the majority of our children are not of the academic mould, individual work should be as practical as possible.

### **Living Democracy: inclusion in action**

Alex Bloom's contribution to radical democratic, state-funded secondary school education is one of national and international significance. Although little known today, his work at St George-in-the-East, Stepney gained a widespread, international reputation, iconically exemplified by Dr Gertrude Panzer, a concentration camp escapee and one of the key figures in the educational reconstruction of post-war Germany, who, after visiting the school in 1948, insisted that 'If I could have in Berlin three schools like St. George-in-the-East, Stepney, I could revolutionise the education of this city' (Birley, 1978, p. 63). In September 1955, a month short of its tenth anniversary, Bloom died at the school. His passing was marked by an obituary in *The Times* (Anon., 1955c) and a front-page article in the *London Evening News* (Anon., 1955b). The mass

circulation *Daily Mirror* ran a double-page spread with vivid pictures of distraught adults and children mourning his passing (Anon., 1955a), an event which prompted Roy Nash, education correspondent of another national daily, the *News Chronicle*, to remark, 'It was an incredible thing to happen, absolutely unique in State education history. In my time I've reported funerals of prominent people, but I've never seen such genuine grief as on that day in the East End' (Berg, 1971, p. 37).

Elsewhere [5] I have begun to explore a number of radical dimensions of Bloom's work, in particular his refusal to allow competition or prizes of any kind; his refusal to label young people by the then common practice of placing them into different 'streams'; his insistence, not only that there be no corporal punishment in the school, but no punishment at all; the development of a creative curriculum with flexible timetables prompting a *Times Educational Supplement* reporter to suggest 'school work goes where it will' (Anon., 1951b), and for Bloom himself to insist that 'I never give an analysis of a typical day spent by the children at school – life being much too individual and varied to make this possible' (Bloom, 1949, p. 10); and, pre-eminently, the highly sophisticated development of joint student and staff involvement on a weekly basis in the decision-making, ensuing action, and communal accountability that shaped the aspirations and actions of the school as a living democratic community.[6]

Within the context of this article on the interface between Bloom's commitment to democratic ways of living and learning and education for peace, I want, briefly, to explore one other dimension of his practice that exemplifies the richness and creativity of this double commitment and the school's radical approaches to inclusion.

St George's commitment to inclusion, in particular to what we might now call special educational needs, earned it both notoriety and fulsome praise according to the standpoint and circumstance of those offering the judgements. The school soon developed such a strong reputation for an inclusive and highly creative approach that students who lived considerable distances from the school were happy to make the daily journey across London to attend the school. One interviewee who was a selective mute made the daily journey from his home in the South-Western borough of Chelsea to Cable Street, Stepney in London's East End where St George's was located. Other students with special needs came from surrounding boroughs. There seem to have been strong links with the fortuitously named St George's Hospital in the West End of London and also with the pioneer of residential therapeutic education, Marjorie Franklin.

In a remarkable, anonymously-written article (Consultant Psychiatrist, 1962) celebrating the work of David Wills, there are glowing passages about Alex Bloom's work at St George-in-the-East. Particularly pertinent to this article, Franklin mentions commitment to:

'shared responsibility' and each child has an individual timetable  
(which Mr Wills also advocates), vital 'centres of interest' methods

and a world outlook, with astonishing achievements in art, drama, poetry [7] and towards the attainment of what Bloom called 'a harmonious atmosphere in which right personal relations may come about through experience of living'.

Interestingly, Franklin also alludes to the fact that:

Mr Bloom could not select children for his school. Besides children of the locality he was asked to take some from outside who were especially difficult. These included a number of backward readers, and opponents of his methods criticized the non-reading as if it were a result of the teaching at St George's, which seems unfair as they were not admitted until about 11 years old. (Consultant Psychiatrist 1962, p. 141)

In similar vein, some remarkable observations emerge in an interview Maurice Ash (Ash, 1969) conducted with Hubert Child – in Bloom's time Senior Educational Psychologist for the London County Council and later joint head teacher of the famous private progressive school, Dartington Hall. Without naming him, Child praises Alex Bloom as someone who 'Was an astonishingly courageous man and, I think, a very successful man' (p. 125). However, revealingly, he then goes on to corroborate the drift of Franklin's judgement by adding:

But he was attacked by the local magistrate – a very well-known person – who took every opportunity he could, if a child from this school appeared in Court, to say something about how awful the school was. All this duly appeared in the Press.

Distressingly, he adds:

Now, when that headmaster died of heart-failure (and I am not surprised that he did so) it was very carefully seen to that a similarly progressive-minded headmaster was not appointed in his place, simply because of all the resultant difficulties for the Council. (Ash, 1969, p. 125)

### **Alex Bloom and the New Education Fellowship**

In researching and reflecting over many years on Alex Bloom's life and work one of the enduring questions to which I return again and again concerns how he managed to do what he did, how he managed to pioneer work of such integrity and emancipatory vision in what appear to be such unpromising times. What I am slowly coming to understand is that the times were, perhaps, not as unpromising as they first seemed. There was much about the immediate post-war zeitgeist that was positive, optimistic, and even inspiring.

What I am also coming to understand a little better is the sustaining importance of national and international organisations like the New Education



Fellowship whose UNESCO submission (1948) frames the heuristic direction of this article. Post the publication of his 1948 *New Era* article and the glowing Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) Report of the same year (Ministry of Education, 1948), Bloom not only contributed further articles and book reviews to *New Era*, he spoke by invitation at a number of national and international New Education Fellowship conferences, became a key member of various committees and projects and, perhaps most important of all in the context of this article, became a key player in the re-emergence of the German Section of the New Education Fellowship. Along with Raymond King, he was amongst a small number of invitees to the key 1950 Guggenheim Conference, his article 'St George-in-the-East' was published in German in their journal *Bildung und Erziehung* (Bloom, 1950). In 1951 he became the English New Education Fellowship representative to the remarkable organisation, German Educational Reconstruction. An article entitled 'Education Specialist for Germany' published in the June 15, 1951 edition of the *Jewish Chronicle* announces that 'Mr Alex Bloom has been invited by the United States High Commissioner in Germany to serve for a period as a European specialist in the field of education' (Anon., 1951).

Visitors from all over the world flocked to the school and St George-in-the-East began to attract progressive young teachers emerging from teacher training colleges. An increasingly vibrant synergy between the school and the New Education Fellowship developed remarkably quickly in a number of interesting ways. James Hemming – a hugely influential figure – became one of the governors of the school and authored a fine article on St George's in the symbiotic collection of papers that appeared in the same 1948 issue of *New Era* in which Bloom produced his seminal 'Notes on a School Community' (Bloom, 1948). James Porter, later to become Principal of Bulmershe College of Education, Reading, a member of the 1972 James Committee on Teacher Education and Training, and subsequently Director of the Commonwealth Institute, taught at St George's between 1948 and 1950 and became a member of a number of New Education Fellowship Committees. His wife Dymphna, an enthusiastic young teacher who became Senior Mistress at the school, authored a fine article (Porter, 1955) on her teaching of creative writing at St George's. The distinguished US academic, Samuel Everett, a long-term supporter of St George's and eventual Executive Board member of the World Education Fellowship, published one of the most interesting accounts of the school's ground-breaking work in his little-known, but crucially important *Growing Up in English Secondary Schools* (Everett, 1959).

Within the parameters of education for peace these networks of interconnection and influence between St George-in-the-East and the national and international work of the New Education Fellowship suggest a propitious synergy of values, approach and commitment. Central to all this is the personhood and presence of Alex Bloom. All of the published and unpublished personal and professional accounts of his work and his being-in-the-world suggest he was a very remarkable man whose commitment to the advocacy and

argument of *The Teacher and World Peace: a preliminary survey of fundamentals* (New Education Fellowship, 1948) was profound.

### **Democratic Fellowship – how we live together**

Thus far I have not, as I had originally hoped, been able to discover enough about Alex Bloom's early life, his experience as a rifleman in WWI, as a teacher and then head teacher in the inter-war period, and as a London head teacher who must have experienced the blitz and its aftermath to help me form a view about the origins and influences that shaped his remarkable work at St George-in-the-East. However, my sense is that his national and international work with the New Education Fellowship, his significant involvement with post-WWII educational reconstruction in Germany, and his co-authorship of and distinctive contribution to the New Education Fellowship submission to UNESCO, *The Teacher and World Peace* (New Education Fellowship, 1948) have within them traces of a deep love of humanity and a companion concern that we learn lessons from the two World Wars he experienced at first hand.

Certainly his profound opposition to competition in all its forms, evident in his pre-St George's days as a London head teacher in the early years of WWII (Bloom, 1941), has at its heart a concern that community, the deep and necessary bond between human beings as persons, should not be violated or treated with scant attention. Bloom's understanding of and commitment to the development of democracy as a way of living and learning together provided its positive corollary. One of his great contributions, both to our public education system and to our struggle to sustain and further develop a truly democratic society, lies in his exemplification of what a democratic secondary school looks and feels like. Our task and our responsibility is to better understand what this entailed, utilise those insights as best we can in quite different contexts, and in so doing keep alive and further nourish radical democratic traditions of public education in our own countries and across the world.

Influenced in part [8] by the philosophy of Martin Buber and the psychology of Alfred Adler, Bloom's view of democracy rested on generosity and openness of encounter between persons which honours and enables the reciprocal need for freedom and equality within the context of care. For this to become real within the context of public education these desiderata need to be enunciated and enacted on a daily basis. Hence his commitment to the creation of a 'consciously democratic community' (Bloom, 1948, p. 121). For him:

It is a vital part of our belief that the *modus vivendi* claims paramount importance. We are convinced that not only must the overall school pattern – the democratic way of living – precede all planning, but that it proclaims the main purpose of education in a democracy. Our aim is that children should learn to live creatively, not for themselves alone, but also for their community.  
(Bloom, 1949, p. 170)

Education must be a way of being and living in the world, and:

since this *ars vivendi* cannot be taught, it must be learnt. And it can be learnt only through and by actual living. Through living one learns to live. School therefore should be a place where such learning is not merely possible but is made possible.  
(Bloom, 1952, p. 136, original emphasis)

Echoing the line of argument developed in *The Teacher and World Peace* (New Education Fellowship, 1948), four years later he underscores the relational foundations of democratic education:

Our school climate of freedom and responsibility, with the minimum of interference and the maximum of friendliness, peacefully penetrative, promotes emotional stability and consideration for personality. Because the children are themselves respected, they learn to respect themselves and each other. (Bloom, 1952, p. 141)

At the heart of democracy is ‘a binding together (*religare*) of human beings within a community for a moral purpose’ (Bloom, 1952, p. 137, original emphasis). It exemplifies and contributes to a tradition of moral, political and educational thought at the heart of which lies the notion of fraternity or, in line with writers like Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, R.H.Tawney, Gabriel Marcel, G.D.H. Cole, and John Macmurray, ‘fellowship’.[9]

Although, so far as I know, Alex Bloom did not draw on the work of William Morris, I feel sure he would have approved of my drawing this article to a close by echoing Morris’s insistence that:

fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship’s sake that ye do them.  
(1968, p. 51)

Bloom’s work was a remarkable instantiation of what those aspirations might look and feel like in the context of educational practice. We have much to thank him for in helping us on our way to more fulfilling alternatives to the current hegemony of neo-liberalism that shrouds our present and blights our future.

### Notes

- [1] This article draws on a paper presented at a conference on ‘Education, War and Peace’ organised by the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) at the University of London Institute of Education, July 23-26, 2014. My thanks to the Leverhulme Trust for an Emeritus Fellowship (EM-2013-054) which has enabled me to investigate many of the issues and events explored in this article.
- [2] Other members of the group included James Hemming, later to become a well-known BBC radio broadcaster, author and President of the British Humanist

Association, and Ben Morris, at the time Chair of the Management Committee of the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, subsequently Director of the National Foundation for Educational Research, and Professor of Education at the University of Bristol, and Peggy Volkov, Editor of *New Era*.

- [3] The document was never published and provides, as I have suggested, a living set of aspirations that were subject to interrogation, development and renewal within the rhythms of the school's working life. The example given in the Appendix replicates the version (circa 1945-49) held in Tower Hamlets Public Library. It forms part of a collection of documents relating to Alex Bloom that originally belonged to Judith Parris (née Joyce Studd) who taught at St George-in-the-East in the first four years of its life as a secondary modern school.
- [4] For further use of Berlin's notions of positive and negative liberty and my advocacy of a third form – democratic fellowship – uniting and fulfilling both, see Fielding (2014a).
- [5] See, for example, Fielding, forthcoming 2014.
- [6] See, for example, Hemming (1948); Bloom (1952, 1953); Fielding (2005); Fielding & Moss (2011).
- [7] Although considerations of space preclude its exploration here, in future work I intend to pursue Franklin's comment about the school's 'astonishing achievements in art, drama, poetry' exemplified, in part, by Dymphna Porter's (1955) account of her approach to creative writing. The nurturing of the arts has a strong, arguably even a necessary, link to democratic flourishing and to education in and for peace. Here I am particularly indebted to my College of Education tutor and later dear, good friend Anthony Weaver. See especially Weaver (1988, 1989).
- [8] My sources of information were a number of conversations with James Porter who taught at St George's between 1948 and 1950. See also Bloom (1952).
- [9] See Fielding, M. (2014b)

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## **APPENDIX Our Pattern**

At school the child has two loyalties which we aim at making two accepted duties ... one to himself the other to his community. We must give him the freedom to develop himself as fully and as finely as he can for his own sake and for the sake of his community. The art of compromise is thus, an essential lesson in learning to live dynamically, but at peace, in and with a community.

To get the child to appreciate these two duties objective rewards and punishments are false stimuli, for, unless the right thing is done for the right reason one lives unethically. Similarly, objective competition is wrong; it is not only unethical but it tends to destroy a communal spirit. Of course, the ultimate stimulus should be the inner joy that, alone, comes from disinterested creation ... but mankind is not yet ready for this ...

For our aims I suggest these two stimuli: -

1. the child must feel that, however backward he may be, he does count, that he is wanted, that he has a contribution to make to the common good;
2. the child must feel that the school community is worthwhile.

We cannot demand of the child that he accepts these urges, nor can we force them on him. Peaceful penetration will, I feel sure, succeed, so long as our approach to the child and his problems is consistent, kindly and tolerant, and the attitude of each one of us is in harmony with the general design. But the child must also be helped to comprehend the freedom given him. He needs wise guidance in this, and unobtrusive supervision.

Perhaps the crux of things, now, lies in the realisation of the individuality of each child with all that this implies of individual treatment, individual approach, individual work. And, since the majority of our children are not of the academic mould, individual work should be as practical as possible.

*Note:* In retyping this document I have tried to remain true to the way it was originally set out. There are only a few differences of minor importance. The punctuation and underlining replicate the original.

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