

EDUCATION: THE ENGAGEMENT AND ITS FRUSTRATION

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Education in its most general significance may be recognized as a specific transaction which may go on between the generations of human beings in which newcomers to the scene are initiated into the world they are to inhabit. Thus, for example, when in a late-medieval formulation of the duties of human beings there appeared the precept that parents should educate their children, education was being recognized as a moral transaction, something that may (but ought not to) be neglected, and distinguished from the unavoidable natural processes in which all living things grow up and either accommodate themselves to their circumstances or perish.

Consequently education is recognized as something to be thought about; and in the course of reflection two topics in particular have emerged. The first is concerned to distinguish this transaction, to discern what is going on in it, to identify the relationships it involves, in short, to understand it as a specific human engagement. The concern here might be said to be with the question 'What is the character of the world which a human newcomer is to inhabit?' The second is the consideration of the procedures, methods and devices believed to be appropriate to the engagement. The second of these topics is clearly subordinate to the first, and all who have thought profoundly about it have recognized this subordination. I shall have little to say about it, except to notice, later on, how in recent times procedures and devices have broken loose from this subordination and have imposed themselves upon our understanding of the transaction itself, with unfortunate conse-

quences. My concern is with the first of these topics. I want to display education as a human engagement of a certain kind and as a transaction upon which a recognizably human life depends for its continuance; and I want, then, to go on to consider some of the obstacles which now hinder and may even frustrate this transaction.

Human beings are what they understand themselves to be; they are composed entirely of beliefs about themselves and about the world they inhabit. They inhabit a world of intelligibles, that is, a world composed, not of physical objects, but of occurrences which have meanings and are recognized in manners to which there are alternatives. Their contingent situations in this world are, therefore, what they understand them to be, and they respond to them by choosing to say or to do *this* rather than *that* in relation to imagined and wished-for outcomes. They are creatures of want. Their wants are not biological impulses or genetic urges; they are imagined satisfactions, which have reasons but not causes, and are eligible to be wished-for, chosen, pursued, procured, approved or disapproved.

A human life is composed of performances, and each performance is a disclosure of a man's beliefs about himself and the world and an exploit in self-enactment. He is what he becomes; he has a history but no 'nature'. This history is not an evolutionary process or a teleological engagement; there is no 'ultimate man' hidden in the womb of time or prefigured in the characters who now walk the world. Human beings pursue satisfactions which they believe to be desirable, but human conduct is not the flowering of a settled potentiality.

The wished-for satisfactions of human beings lie, for the most part, in the responses their utterances and actions receive from others, responses which are themselves utterances and actions related to the wished-for satisfactions of those who make them. Thus, human satisfactions are the outcome of transactions, and to seek them is to enter into a relation with another or with others. These associations are not physical 'interactions' like chemical processes; they are chosen and understood relationships. Human beings do not merely 'communicate' with one another; they speak words which have meanings and are understood (or misunderstood) by those to whom they speak. To hear is to listen, and to listen is to think; and the responses they make to one another are replies or rejoinders governed by the wished-for satisfactions of those who make them. Thus, human conduct subscribes to procedures, but it does not constitute processes. These procedures are not causes which determine what is said or done; they are composed of rules

and rule-like considerations to be subscribed to in choosing what to say or to do. They are, moreover, multiple (there is no one comprehensive procedure to correspond to the word 'society' as it is commonly used); and each is an historic achievement which might have been different from what it is and which requires to be understood in order to be used in conduct.

Being human is recognizing oneself to be related to others, not as parts of an organism are related, nor as members of a single, all-inclusive 'society', but in virtue of participation in multiple understood relationships and in the enjoyment of understood, historic languages of feelings, sentiments, imaginings, fancies, desires, recognitions, moral and religious beliefs, intellectual and practical enterprises, customs, conventions, procedures and practices, canons, maxims and principles of conduct, rules which denote obligations and offices which specify duties. These languages are continuously invented by those who share them; using them is adding to their resources. They do not impose demands to think or to 'behave' in a certain manner; they are not sets of ready-made formulae for self-disclosure and self-enactment; they reach those who share them as various invitations to understand, to admire, to approve or to disapprove; and they come only in being learned.

In short, a human being is the inhabitant of a world composed, not of 'things', but of meanings; that is, of occurrences in some manner recognized, identified, understood and responded to in terms of this understanding. It is a world of sentiments and beliefs, and it includes also human artefacts (such as books, pictures, musical compositions, tools and utensils) for these, also, are 'expressions' which have meanings and which require to be understood in order to be used or enjoyed. To be without this understanding is to be, not a human being, but a stranger to a human condition.

Now, I have begun with this characterization of a human life because, if it were not like this, education would be a redundant engagement. If a human life were a process of growth in which a potential became an actual, or if it were a process in which an organism reacted to its circumstances in terms of a genetic equipment, there would be no room for a transaction between the generations designed expressly to initiate a newcomer into what was going on and thus enable him to participate in it. But such is not the case. A human life is composed of performances, choices to do *this* rather than *that* in relation to imagined and wished-for outcomes and governed by beliefs, opinions, understandings, practices, procedures, rules and recognitions of desirabilities and undesirabilities, impossible to engage in merely in virtue of a genetic

equipment and without learning to do so. Even the dexterities of human beings have to be learned because they, like everything else in a human life, are governed by desirabilities. For a child to learn to walk is not like a fledgling taking to the air: do I not remember being told to 'walk properly' and not shamble along as if I were an ape? The March Hare's dance and the song of a blackbird may be attributed to genetic urges, but a waltz and *Dove sono* are historic human inventions which have to be learned and understood if they are to be known, enjoyed or responded to. In short, the educational engagement is necessary because nobody is born a human being, and because the quality of being human is not a latency which becomes an actuality in a process of 'growth'. The human newcomer is not an organism in search of an accommodation to circumstances favourable to its continued existence; he is *homo dissens*, a creature capable of learning to think, to understand and to enact himself in a world of human enactments and thus to acquire a human character.

In considering what is going on in this transaction between the generations, then, the first thing to recognize is that it is a transaction between human beings and postulants to a human condition in which newcomers are initiated into an inheritance of human achievements of understanding and belief.

If this inheritance were composed of natural 'things' or artefacts, then its transmission would be hardly more than a mechanical formality, a handing over of physical objects. But it is not. It is composed of human activities, aspirations, sentiments, images, opinions, beliefs, modes of understanding, customs and practices; in short, states of mind which may be entered into only in a procedure of learning.

If this inheritance were merely states of mind, then the initiation might be achieved by hypnosis, by therapy, by means of subcutaneous injections or electric shocks or in so-called 'sleep learning'. But it is not. It is composed of states of mind which, because they constitute understandings, can be enjoyed only by virtue of their being themselves understood. To be human is to engage in activities knowing what you are doing, and consequently initiation into this condition can be only in an engagement in which the newcomer learns to understand.

What is going on in this transaction, then, is not the transfer of the products of earlier generations to a newcomer, nor is it a newcomer acquiring an aptitude for imitating current adult human performances; it is learning to perform humanly. Education is not acquiring a stock of ready-made ideas, images, sentiments, beliefs

and so forth; it is learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish. It is a postulant to a human condition learning to recognize himself as a human being in the only way in which this is possible: namely, by seeing himself in the mirror of an inheritance of human understandings and activities and thus himself acquiring (in the words of Leibniz) the character of *un miroir vivant, doué d'action interne*, acquiring the ability to throw back upon the world his own version of a human being in conduct which is both a self-disclosure and a self-enactment.

This transaction between the generations will, however, be inhibited unless there is a contingent belief in the worth of what is to be mediated to the newcomer, and unless this conviction is somehow also transmitted. Everything human exists in terms of the recognition of its desirability, and this civilized inheritance, this world of meanings and understandings, will be transmitted only where it inspires the gratitude, the pride and even the veneration of those who already enjoy it, where it endows them with an identity they esteem, and where it is understood as a repeated summons rather than a possession, an engagement rather than an heirloom.

I am not concerned with that mysterious accommodation to the world which constitutes the early history of a human being; activity emerging imperceptibly and intermittently from passivity; movements becoming actions; urges giving place to wants and wants to choices; presentations becoming representations, remembered, recollected, recognized and gradually identified; occurrences coming to be recognized as events; 'things' emerging from characteristics; 'objects' perceived as signs and signs revealing alternative significances; sounds coming to be recognized as words with meanings determined by contexts; human procedures distinguished from natural processes – all the fluctuations which go on in the morning twilight of childhood, where there is nothing that, at a given moment, a clever child may be said exactly to know or not to know.

At home in the nursery or in the kindergarten, in the early years of childhood, attention and activity, when they begin to be self-moved, are, for the most part, ruled by inclination; the self is inclination. Things and occurrences (even when they have been expressly designed or arranged by adults) are gifts of fortune known only in terms of what can be made of them. Everything is an opportunity, recognized and explored for the immediate satisfaction it may be made to yield. Learning, here, is a by-product of play; what is learned is what may happen to be learned.

But education, properly speaking, begins when, upon these casual encounters provoked by the contingencies of moods, upon these fleeting wants and sudden enthusiasms tied to circumstances, there supervenes the deliberate initiation of a newcomer into a human inheritance of sentiments, beliefs, imaginings, understandings and activities. It begins when the transaction becomes 'schooling' and when learning becomes learning by study, and not by chance, in conditions of direction and restraint. It begins with the appearance of a teacher with something to impart which is *not* immediately connected with the current wants or 'interests' of the learner.

The idea 'School' is, in the first place, that of a serious and orderly initiation into an intellectual, imaginative, moral and emotional inheritance; an initiation designed for children who are ready to embark upon it. Superimposed upon these chance encounters with fragments of understanding, these moments of unlooked-for enlightenment and those answers imperfectly understood because they are answers to unasked questions, there is a considered curriculum of learning to direct and contain the thoughts of the learner, to focus his attention and to provoke him to distinguish and to discriminate. 'School' is the recognition that the first and most important step in education is to become aware that 'learning' is not a 'seamless robe', that possibilities are not limitless.

Secondly, it is an engagement to learn by study. This is a difficult undertaking; it calls for effort. Whereas playful occupations are broken off whenever they cease to provide immediate satisfactions, learning, here, is a task to be persevered with and what is learned has to be both understood and remembered. It is in this perseverance, this discipline of inclination, that the indispensable habits of attention, concentration, patience, exactness, courage and intellectual honesty are acquired, and the learner comes to recognize that difficulties are to be surmounted, not evaded. For example, in a profuse and complicated civilization such as our own, the inheritance of human understandings, modes of thinking, feeling and imagination is to be encountered, for the most part, in books or in human utterances. But learning to read or to listen is a slow and exacting engagement, having little or nothing to do with acquiring information. It is learning to follow, to understand and to rethink deliberate expressions of rational consciousness; it is learning to recognize fine shades of meaning without overbalancing into the lunacy of 'decoding'; it is allowing another's thoughts to re-enact themselves in one's own mind; it is learning in acts of constantly surprised attention to submit to, to understand and to

respond to what (in this response) becomes a part of our understanding of ourselves; and one may learn to read only by reading with care, and only from writings which stand well off from our immediate concerns: it is almost impossible to *learn* to read from contemporary writing.

The third component of the idea 'School' is that of detachment from the immediate, local world of the learner, its current concerns and the directions it gives to his attention, for this (and not 'leisure' or 'play') is the proper meaning of the word *scholē*. 'School' is a place apart in which the learner may encounter his moral and intellectual inheritance, not in the terms in which it is being used in the current engagements and occupations of the world outside (where much of it is forgotten, neglected, obscured, vulgarized or abridged, and where it appears only in scraps and as investments in immediate enterprises) but as an estate, entire, unqualified and unencumbered. 'School' is an emancipation achieved in a continuous redirection of attention. Here, the learner is animated, not by the inclinations he brings with him, but by intimations of excellence and aspirations he has never yet dreamed of; here he may encounter, not answers to the 'loaded' questions of 'life', but questions which have never before occurred to him; here he may acquire new 'interests' and pursue them uncorrupted by the need for immediate results; here he may learn to seek satisfactions he had never yet imagined or wished for.

For example, an important part of this inheritance is composed of languages, and in particular of what is to be the native language of the newcomer. This he has already learned to speak in its contemporary idioms and as a means of communicating with others of his kind. But at 'School' he learns something more which is also something different. There, studying a language is recognizing words as investments in thought and is learning to think more exactly; it is exploring its resources as themselves articulations of understandings. For to know a language merely as a means of contemporary communication is to be like a man who has inherited a palace overflowing with expressions, intimations and echoes of human emotions, perceptions, aspirations and understandings, and furnished with images and emanations of human reflection, but in whose barbaric recognition his inheritance is merely that of 'a roof over his head'. In short, 'School' is 'monastic' in respect of being a place apart where excellences may be heard because the din of worldly laxities and partialities is silenced or abated.

Further, the idea 'School' is that of a personal transaction between a 'teacher' and a 'learner'. The only indispensable equip-

ment of 'School' is teachers: the current emphasis on apparatus of all sorts (not merely 'teaching' apparatus) is almost wholly destructive of 'School'. A teacher is one in whom some part or aspect or passage of this inheritance is alive. He has something of which he is a master to impart (an ignorant teacher is a contradiction) and he has deliberated its worth and the manner in which he is to impart it to a learner whom he knows. He is himself the custodian of that 'practice' in which an inheritance of human understanding survives and is perpetually renewed in being imparted to newcomers. To teach is to bring it about that, somehow, something of worth intended by a teacher is learned, understood and remembered by a learner. Thus, teaching is a variegated activity which may include hinting, suggesting, urging, coaxing, encouraging, guiding, pointing out, conversing, instructing, informing, narrating, lecturing, demonstrating, exercising, testing, examining, criticizing, correcting, tutoring, drilling and so on — everything, indeed, which does not belie the engagement to impart an understanding. And learning may be looking, listening, overhearing, reading, receiving suggestions, submitting to guidance, committing to memory, asking questions, discussing, experimenting, practising, taking notes, recording, re-expressing and so on — anything which does not belie the engagement to think and to understand.

Finally, the idea 'School' is that of an historic community of teachers and learners, neither large nor small, with traditions of its own, evoking loyalties, pieties and affections; devoted to initiating successive generations of newcomers to the human scene into the grandeurs and servitudes of being human; an Alma Mater who remembers with pride or indulgence and is remembered with gratitude. The marks of a good school are that in it learning may be recognized as, itself, a golden satisfaction with needs no adventurous gilding to recommend it; and that it bestows upon its alumni the gift of a childhood recollected, not as a passage of time hurried through on the way to more profitable engagements, but, with gratitude, as an enjoyed initiation into the mysteries of a human condition: the gift of self-knowledge and of a satisfying intellectual and moral identity.

Thus, this transaction between the generations cannot be said to have any extrinsic 'end' or 'purpose': for the teacher it is part of his engagement of being human; for the learner it is the engagement of becoming human. It does not equip the newcomer to do anything specific; it gives him no particular skill, it promises no material advantage over other men, and it points to no finally perfect hu-

man character. Each, in participating in this transaction, takes in keeping some small or large part of an inheritance of human understandings. This is the mirror before which he enacts his own version of a human life, emancipated from the modishness of merely current opinions and released from having to seek an exiguous identity in a fugitive fancy, a duffle-coat, a CND badge or an 'ideology'. Education is not learning to do *this* or *that* more proficiently; it is acquiring in some measure an understanding of a human condition in which the 'fact of life' is continuously illuminated by a 'quality of life'. It is learning how to be at once an autonomous and a civilized subscriber to a human life.

Now, this is not a merely fanciful or visionary characterization of education. Of course, in the long history of the apprenticeship of newcomers to an adult human life other ideas than this of education have often intruded. Peoples with less complex inheritances of beliefs and understandings have had appropriately simpler notions of this transaction between the generations, and, of course, there are and have been better and worse schools, and better and worse periods in the history of any school. But what I have been describing is what the ancient Athenians understood as *paideia*; and, sometimes more narrowly and sometimes more generously, it was what was passed on (with appropriate changes) from the schools of the Roman Empire to the cathedral, the collegiate, guild and grammar schools of medieval Christendom. Moved by a vivid consciousness of an intellectual and moral inheritance of great splendour and worth, this was the notion of education which informed the schools of renaissance Europe and which survived in our own grammar and public schools and their equivalents in continental Europe.

In later times, however, this understanding and practice of education has been invaded from two somewhat different directions. In both cases the forces of invasion have been gathering themselves over a period of some centuries, and both have been rewarded with considerable temporary success. Their common enterprise is to substitute for education some other and almost totally different idea of apprenticeship to adult life, and for 'School' some other and almost totally different practice of initiation.

The first of these invasions is to be recognized as an assault upon education directed against the idea 'School'. It is designed to abolish 'School', first by corrupting it and then by suppressing it.

The engagement to educate is a transaction between the generations in which newcomers may enjoy what they can acquire only in a procedure of learning; namely, an historic inheritance of human understandings and imaginings. The idea 'School' is that of a place

apart where a prepared newcomer may encounter this inheritance unqualified by the partialities, the neglects, the abridgements and the corruptions it suffers in current use; of an engagement to learn, not by chance, but by study in conditions of direction and restraint designed to provoke habits of attention, concentration, exactness, courage, patience, discrimination and the recognition of excellence in thought and conduct; and of an apprenticeship to adult life in which he may learn to recognize and identify himself in terms other than those of his immediate circumstances.

The doctrine we are now to consider is that for all this there should be substituted an arena of childish self-indulgence from which all that might contain impulse and inclination and turn them into deliberate and knowledgeable choice has been purposely removed: a place where a child may be as rude as his impulses prompt and as busy or as idle as his inclinations suggest. There is to be no curriculum of study, no orderly progression in learning. Impulse is to be let loose upon an undifferentiated confusion called, alternatively, 'the seamless robe of learning' or 'life in all its manifestations'. What may be learned is totally unforeseen and a matter of complete indifference.

Each child is expected to engage in such individual projects of so-called 'experimental' activity as he feels inclined, to pursue them in his own way and for so long as his inclination to do so lasts. Learning is to be a personal 'finding out' and consequently it becomes the incidental, exiguous and imperfectly understood by-product of 'discovery'. To 'discover' nothing is to be preferred to being told anything. The child is to be shielded from the humiliation (as it is thought) of his own ignorance and of intellectual surprise, and sheltered in the frustrating womb of his own inclinations. Teaching is to be confined to hesitant (preferably wordless) suggestion; mechanical devices are to be preferred to teachers, who are recognized not as custodians of a deliberate procedure of initiation but as mute presences, as interior decorators who arrange the furnishings of an environment and as mechanics to attend to the audio-visual apparatus.

'Discoveries' may become the subjects of 'free' group discussions; or they may be written about in compositions to be esteemed, not on account of their intelligibility, but for their 'freedom' of expression. It does not matter how they are written so long as they are 'creative': to stutter independently is a superior accomplishment to that of acquiring the self-discipline of a mother tongue. Fancy will have no encouragement to flower into imagination, or impulsive expression to acquire the intellectual virtue of grace, let alone

exactness. Seeing and doing are preferred to thinking and understanding; pictorial representation is preferred to speech or writing. Remembering, the nursing mother of learning, is despised as a relic of servility. Standards of understanding and conduct are not merely ignored; they are taboo. The so-called 'inner discipline' of impulse, coupled with persuasion and physical intervention, takes the place of rules of conduct. In short, 'School' is to be corrupted by having imposed upon it the characteristics of a very different kindergarten: 'Secondary schools', it is announced, 'will follow the lead already taken by primary schools'.

Now, it may be doubted whether anything exactly like this exists. What we have to consider is not a current practice, but a doctrine now loudly preached by persons in positions of authority.

Many of the writers who believe this condition of things to be both desirable and unavoidable are of no account. They affect to believe that 'School' as a deliberate initiation of a learner into an inheritance of human understandings and proprieties of conduct is, and must be, children condemned to a prison-like existence in cell-like classrooms, compelled by threats to follow a sordid, senseless and rigid routine which destroys all individuality, dragged into learning what they do not and cannot understand because it is remote from their 'interests' and from what they have hitherto encountered, the victims of a conspiracy against 'life' who acquiesce in their degraded condition only because to revolt would be to forfeit the subsequent opportunity of profitable employment. A volatile revulsion from this delusion, eked out by rubbish about the 'pursuit of truth' and what purports to be a superior understanding of the current generation of children, is all that these writers have to sustain their pretence of having thought about education.

There are, however, others who have (or who are reputed to have) more substantial reasons for promoting this abolition of 'School'. There are, for example, those for whom *any* inheritance of human understandings, so far from being something to be esteemed and which should evoke gratitude and make a child glad to be alive and eager to become human, is an insufferable burden. 'I say to myself,' writes one such would-be exile from the human condition, 'What happiness it would be to throw myself into the river Lethe, to erase completely from my soul the memory of all knowledge, all art, all poetry; what happiness it would be to reach the opposite shore, naked, like the first man.'

It seems appropriate that such a person should see in education and in 'School' (however well managed) nothing but a frustrating intrusion upon blessed innocence, proper only to be abolished and

replaced by the 'experimental' activity of unguided explorers with virgin intelligences. But this is an illusion. This aspiration, so elaborately expressed in terms of a recollected human mythology, is itself an historic human sentiment. What is being celebrated here is not a wish to be released from an inheritance of human under-standings, but a sentiment which is one of the most moving and most delicate components of our inheritance of human understandings: that tender nostalgia at the heart of all European poetry, that image of impossible release, which we encounter only in being educated. What is being expressed is an understanding of the human condition which could never itself be a reason for abolishing education.

A more modish defence of this enterprise to abolish 'School' springs, not from the belief that *any* inheritance of human understanding must be frustrating, but from the persuasion that what is alleged to be the only significant inheritance we have (namely, that which is called 'scientific knowledge') is both so recent and in process of such rapid transformation that 'to cram children with this formal body of knowledge which will quickly become antique' is clearly a lost endeavour. Where there is no 'relevant' inheritance of human understandings, where yesterday's frontier of knowledge is tomorrow's rubbish-dump of ideas, when we are in the middle of a technological revolution where skills and standards of conduct are evanescent, there is no room for learning which is not 'creative enquiry' or for 'education' which is not an engagement to solve a technological problem. 'School', no doubt, was appropriate enough for those obliged to seek understanding from their ancestors, but now both education and 'School' are anachronisms: there is nothing to learn.

But this enterprise of abolishing 'School' is not a new adventure, and these aspirations and announcements do less than justice to its antiquity and to the beliefs in terms of which it is defended. The current notion that 'School' and education should be replaced by an apprenticeship to adult life in which the newcomer is engaged in an activity of 'discovery' and 'finding out' for himself is the somewhat tattered relic of the error that the only inheritance which one generation has to transmit to the next is an inheritance of information about 'things' conveyed in words, and that it is, on this account, to be mistrusted.

Knowledge, so the doctrine ran, derives solely from the experience and observation of 'things'; and it represents 'the empire of man over things'. And where it is knowledge about ourselves, it is not a moral understanding of the 'dignity' of man, but knowledge

of psychophysical processes. This knowledge is recorded in words, and in words it is passed on. No great damage would be done if these words were always accurate reports about 'things', but for the most part this is not the case; words are distorting images of 'things' and they corrupt the information they purport to convey. 'Words obstruct understanding.' If, then, we are in earnest about knowledge, it is 'solid things', and not words, which should be 'the objects of our attention'. The first distemper of learning is when men study words and not things. If we are concerned to educate, we must not try to convey our observations to others in words, for 'knowledge ought to be delivered and insinuated by the same method whereby it was achieved', namely, by an enquirer engaging for himself in the observation of 'things' and making his own discoveries. Moreover, this is not only the proper way of learning, it also holds out the promise of genuine discovery; for important 'discoveries' are often made accidentally by people of no great intelligence: they may come to a child following an impulse to 'find out'.¹

I have been quoting from the writings of Francis Bacon, who may be recognized as the father of this project to abolish 'School'. Indeed, it is not without interest that he did his best to prevent the foundation of what became a famous school, The Charterhouse, on the ground that it would concern itself, like other grammar schools, with the misconceived engagement of initiating new generations of boys into an inheritance of human understandings. There is, of course, much in Bacon's writings besides this doctrine, and something to modify it; but at that now distant date there was set on foot, not merely a suggestion which might be recognized as a valuable addition to our methods of educating the very young (for example, 'encourage children to look and to touch'), but this misunderstanding of the educational engagement itself, with its often quoted slogan 'Things, not words',² with its taciturn teacher, its erroneous belief that 'language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known', its total neglect of literature, its absence of curriculum, its accent on crude information, its elevation of inclination, its pragmatic aspirations and with its conviction that a man's identity is to be found, not in his relation to an inheritance of

¹ 'The student with an external vocational referent for his studies always has the possible justification for his most outrageous ideas - that they work.' E. Robinson, *The New Polytechnic* (London: Corgmarket, 1968).

² This nearly meaningless expression, which runs through the history of modern so-called educational theory, has done more than anything else to corrupt our understanding of the educational engagement.

human understandings, sentiments and beliefs, but in relation to a world of 'solid things' – all of which I have identified as the first of the current projects for the abolition of 'School' and the destruction of education.

In the doctrine of Bacon and his near contemporaries, Comenius, Hartlib, Milton *et al.*, 'education' stood, not for a transaction between the generations of human beings in which the newcomer was initiated into an inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, imaginings, and so forth, but for a release from all this in which he acquired 'objective' knowledge of the workings of a 'natural' world of uncontaminated 'things' and 'laws' and of himself as a feature of this world. This doctrine was early embalmed in a set of clichés, the repetition of which over the succeeding centuries constituted one of the 'progressive' strains in modern educational theory. It made no immediate impact upon the educational engagement of European peoples, but it emerged later as the rationale of a design to abolish education.

But the current invaders of the educational engagement do not stop at this project to corrupt schools by depriving them of their character as 'School'; they design and foresee their suppression.

The more hesitant of these reformers imagine the dissolution of schools in terms of a dissolution of the distinction between 'School' and the world outside. Their moderate vision embraces merely the abolition of the child and of 'School' as a place apart. What is to take its place is a 'community centre', a combination of a local parliament, a people's court, a village hall, an information centre, a clinic, a social guidance organization, a sports club, an amusement park, a polytechnic and a 'cultural centre'. Hither, children and adults will repair when they feel inclined to do so. There they may together exercise their inclinations and their impulsive energies which, in the case of children, will have 'burst out of the classroom box'. There, at the age of twelve or thereabouts, and emancipated from the alleged superstition that knowledge is diverse, they will become equal participants in the local world of adult activities and win their 'education' from the open book of life. In this community centre the child-adult will find, not teachers, but 'trained social workers'; he will find a 'structured environment' which will provide endless opportunity for 'self-expression' and for making unforeseen 'discoveries'; and rooms equipped with 'technological devices', programmed teaching machines and apparatus to relay pictures and talks, broadcast from a central School of the Air. There, a stranger to duties, relieved from frustration, allegedly emancipated from the 'intrusion of adult interference', he will

enjoy a self-determined 'education', limited only by the decreed exclusion of any alternative. For, of course, this suppression of 'School' will come about only in a dissolution of schools comparable to the dissolution of monasteries in sixteenth-century Europe; it will be the work of 'enlightened' governments.

Others have seen beyond this still homely vision of an amusement arcade and playground for all ages. Inspired by the promise held out by recent mechanical invention, they foresee a future in which each home will become 'the basic learning unit'. It will contain 'an electronic console connected with a central computer system, a videotape and a microfilm library regulated by a computer, and with a national television network'. All 'education' will be dispensed from a 'central educational hub'. No longer will children have to 'go to school', or have 'to jostle their way into class'. Each child, at the touch of a button, will have access to a 'learning package' programmed for individual use. He will 'type on a surface resembling a television screen in response to recorded instructions regulated by a computer'; and, 'at the touch of a button, "teachers" may call up profiles of his progress and advise accordingly'. He will be able 'to choose his own educational goals' and pursue them at his own pace.

But the residual recognition of education which survives in these proposals or forecasts is absent from the plans of the most intrepid of our 'educational' projectors, who look forward to a final dissolution of both 'School' and schools. They design not merely the abolition of the child but the abolition of man. The child who asks himself 'What shall I learn and where is the machine to teach me?' is to be replaced by the social engineer concerned with the question 'What sort of a "human being" do we want and how may he be most easily manufactured?' 'The possibilities', writes one of these visionaries, 'virtually defy our imagination'. Here, in spite of the claim to be concerned with education, any pretence of teaching, learning or understanding has been abandoned. Desirable children will be the outcome of controlled genetic selection, and their 'behaviour' will be determined by brains stimulated by electrical currents and by the injection of extracts from other more distinguished brains, by inoculation with chemicals and by other irresistible processes of conditioning. With the emergence of this race of zombies, who behave impeccably, who are strangers to neuroses, plagued by no frustrations, unworried about their own identities (because they need none), but who can neither understand nor act, 'Man's best dreams', says this same professor of education, 'seem almost within our grasp'.

To corrupt 'School' by depriving it of its character as a serious engagement to learn by study, and to abolish it either by assimilating it to the activities, 'interests', partialities and abridgments of a local world, or by substituting in its place a factory for turning out zombies, are, then, two sides of the current project to destroy education. It is an enterprise for abolishing man, first by disorienting him, and secondly by annihilating him. That some of the persons engaged in this enterprise should represent their doctrine as an improved understanding of the educational engagement, and that they should claim to be the friends and emancipators of children, is not unexpected; but the representation is false and the claim fraudulent.

But, although this enterprise and the doctrines which support it are the most carefully contrived of the current projects to abolish the educational engagement, they do not exhaust the current threat to education. I will conclude with a brief consideration of another enterprise which has increasingly hindered this engagement and now threatens to obliterate it.

The engagement to educate may be frustrated by the conviction that there is no inheritance of human understandings and beliefs into which to initiate a newcomer; or by the belief that there is such an inheritance, but that, since it is necessarily worthless, the apprenticeship of each new generation to adult life should be a ceremonial rejection of what it would be corrupting even to inspect, followed by 'a disturbed and disturbing argument of a creative kind' in which each generation originates its own understandings, governed (one must suppose) by a self-denying ordinance not to inhibit 'progress' by divulging it to the next.

It may, however, also be hindered (and indeed, in an important respect, utterly frustrated) by the belief that, although there may be a considerable inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, beliefs, etc., in terms of which a newcomer might be released from the grip of his immediate world and come to understand and identify himself as a civilized human being aware of standards of excellence in thought and conduct little or not at all reflected in the current enterprises and activities of that world, this identity is both distracting and 'socially dangerous'. It distracts from the ordinary business of life and, since it is an identity not equally attainable by all, it is more apt to be socially 'divisive' than integrative. Hence, the apprenticeship of the newcomer to adult life should be an initiation, not into the *grandeurs* of human understanding, but into the skills, activities and enterprises which constitute the local world into which he is presently and actually born. The postulant to adult

life is bidden to seek himself and to learn to enact himself in terms of an assigned or a self-chosen role in an association of *fonctionnaires*.

This I will call the substitution of 'socialization' for education. It is to be recognized as a frustration of the educational engagement and a destruction of 'School' because it attributes to the teaching and learning which compose this apprenticeship an extrinsic 'end' or 'purpose'; namely, the integration of the newcomer into a current 'society' recognized as the manifold of skills, activities, enterprises, understandings, sentiments and beliefs required to keep it going; in short, 'to rear the most "current" men possible, "current" in the sense in which the word is used of coins of the realm'.³ It may be recognized as a different frustration of the educational engagement from those which I have already noticed; although, of course, there may be contingent connections between them.

The belief that what I have called 'socialization' should be substituted for education is to be distinguished, first, from the belief that we live in societies which, because they are associations of human beings, depend upon their members being human, that is, being in some degree educated persons. For, to believe this is not to attribute an extrinsic 'purpose' to the engagement in which these persons acquire a human character; 'being human', here, is recognized, not as a means to an end (i.e. living with other human beings), but as a condition for which it is meaningless to ask for a justification in respect of human beings. What else should they be? Second, it must be distinguished from the recognition that the qualities of educated persons may often be valuable in the performance of 'social' functions. For, while an educational engagement is not designed to *produce* performers of 'social' functions (this is what is meant by saying it has no extrinsic 'purpose'), neither is it designed to *produce* 'socially' valueless persons.

The enterprise we are concerned with now may be most accurately described as that of substituting 'social' for educational consideration in the apprenticeship of newcomers to adult life. Of course, this substitution of one set of considerations for another is hostile to the educational engagement and to the idea 'School', not because it necessarily excludes everything which might have an educational value, but because whatever is allowed properly to belong to this apprenticeship is admitted solely in respect of its alleged 'social' value and is recognized solely in relation to an alleged 'social' purpose. 'Service to the community' is an expression susceptible of a variety of interpretations in relation to 'education' – it

³ Nietzsche, *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, I.

may favour rare ability or commonplace equality – but wherever preparation for it is substituted for education 'socialization' has taken the place of the educational engagement.

The current project of substituting 'socialization' for education and instruments of 'socialization' for schools emerged, so far as Europe is concerned, from a somewhat different enterprise, promoted or undertaken, for the most part, by the rulers of modern European states beginning in the late seventeenth century. What I refer to here is not the activities of these rulers (both Catholic and Protestant) in respect of the educational engagement itself when, beginning in the sixteenth century, they gradually usurped the *auctoritas docendi* of the medieval church. These activities were often extensive and were, of course, designed to promote the integration of those over whom they ruled. They included the imposition of confessional qualifications upon both teachers and learners in schools and universities, but they did not otherwise seriously modify the educational engagement. They were, for the most part, the exercise of the ecclesiastical authority which had fallen to civil sovereign, and the many schools and universities founded at this time under royal or ducal charters or by private benefactors were institutions similar to those which already existed. They were novel only in reflecting the changes in the educational engagement which sprang from the 'new learning', changes concerned with the new appreciation (afloat since the fifteenth century) of the significant inheritance of human understandings to be passed on. Furthermore, in later times governments have acquired extensive control over the education of their subjects, over the curriculum of schools and the appointment of teachers, but without imposing considerations hostile to the educational engagement and to the idea 'School'. What I am concerned with now is not any of this, but a project which lies to one side of it; namely, the provision of an *alternative* to education.

In many of the States of Germany (notably Prussia), in France, in the British Empire and elsewhere, what was set on foot in the early eighteenth century was not any attempt to change the character of existing schools and universities, nor to modify the educational engagement; it was the project of providing some alternative apprenticeship to adult life for those who, mainly by reason of their poverty, enjoyed little or nothing of the kind. These, the *canaille*, as the 'enlightened' rulers of continental Europe so gracefully called them, were coming to be regarded as a liability. Stuck fast in traditional ways, outflanked by economic and technological change, unable to provide successfully for themselves, they were convicted of

making an inadequate contribution to the productive enterprise of the societies into which they were born. The project was to equip their children with some humble but more modern skills by virtue of which they might become an asset rather than a liability to 'the nation'. They were to be taught to read, to write, to figure, to measure, to 'take directions', to read and to draw diagrams, to understand transactions in money, and religious instruction was usually added to this curriculum. Thus furnished, it was thought that they would be able to make a larger contribution to the well-being of 'the nation' and begin to recognize themselves more clearly as intelligent components of its natural resources, its 'human capital'. It was even recognized that a totally ignorant soldier was something of a liability, and the standing armies of the Continent at that time were large. Moreover, this undertaking to 'integrate' the poor into 'the community' by equipping them to be more useful members of it was seen to promise a national system of so-called 'education', an *education publique* or an *education nationale*, itself the emblem of the emergent doctrine that rulers have a right to instruct their subjects and that subjects (particularly the poor) have a duty to contribute to the well-being of 'the nation'.⁴ In England there was a similar recognition of the waste of resources entailed in the ignorance of the poor, but this sort of instruction had been unevenly provided since the late seventeenth century in parish and charity schools and in schools set up or taken over by such organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and later the National Society. It was not until later that the Government began to play some part in it, and even then the continental doctrine that children (especially poor children) belong to 'the State' was slow to take root.

Thus, parallel to the collegiate and grammar schools of England and to their equivalents on the Continent, there emerged an apprenticeship to adult life distinguished both by its brevity and because it was governed by 'social', not educational, considerations. It was geared to satisfying what were already thought of as 'the needs of the nation', and the well-being of 'the nation' was recognized to require that this instruction of the children of the poor should be appropriate to their future occupations. The institutions in which this instruction was dispensed were, everywhere, a mixture of new and old and reflected local inheritances. This alternative to education emerged from the surviving village schools of

⁴ Hobbes had earlier suggested that this alternative for education should be devoted merely to teaching the duty of 'obedience' to the civil sovereign.

medieval Christendom which had depended upon the uncertainties of local charity and the energy of the parish priest, and, no doubt, it long remained subject to these hazards. But it emerged clearly when, usually under the direction of a ruler, these were diminished, when attendance was made compulsory and when its extrinsic purpose was more exactly understood and formulated.

This alternative to education, designed originally for the poor and as an undertaking of 'socialization', was, of course, sensitive to 'social' changes, and with the emergence of industrial occupations it was considerably extended. In England, for example, in the early nineteenth century, besides the parish and charity schools, there appeared private schools and 'academies' established to provide, not for the poor, but for the numerous postulants for the clerical and other occupations of an industrial and commercial society; and since that time there has gradually emerged, in every European country, as an alternative to education, a systematic apprenticeship to domestic, industrial and commercial life in a 'modern' State.

It has been continuously thought about, rearranged, redesigned and improved. It has been enlarged in response to new 'needs'; the period of time it covers has been extended and the qualifications it confers have become more precise and require to be earned in more exacting achievements. But its general character has remained unchanged. There is now, in most European countries, a primary stage in which literacy and numeracy are learned and practised; a second stage in which these accomplishments are extended and some general knowledge (particularly what is called 'scientific knowledge') is acquired; and a third stage in which some specialized skill or technique is learned in an apprenticeship, a Trade School, a Technical College, a Polytechnic or a private establishment where attendance may be full-time or in the intervals of employment. It has come now to embrace nearly all the skills, techniques, crafts, trades and occupations in which the 'needs of the nation' are satisfied. During the last fifty years or so the whole of it (and not merely the earlier stages) has fallen more and more under the direction and control of governments; and in so far as this has been the case it has become susceptible to the sort of calculation entailed in a 'manpower budget' where 'the nation' is understood as a collection of interlocking skills and occupations each with its optimum establishment. Since it has long ago ceased to be merely the equipment of the neglected poor to make a greater and more various contribution to the well-being of 'the nation', other reasons have had to be found in terms of which to defend and to make intelligible this alternative to education, especially its second stage.

For the most part these have drawn upon the beliefs that the 'needs of the nation' can be satisfied in no other way and that there are children for whom the arduous of education would be an unprofitable engagement; but in some quarters these have been supplemented by the assertion that this is itself education and not an alternative to it.

This apprenticeship to domestic, industrial and commercial life was, in its beginning, independent of the educational engagement being pursued in schools and universities. There were, of course, connections between them. Many of the entrants to grammar schools (and, before the invention of 'preparatory' schools, to collegiate schools) came from 'petty' and parish schools, and both in Germany and in France the *Gymnasia* and the *lycées* drew their pupils from the *Gemeinder* and the *communaux* schools. Those who supplanted what were distinguished as the 'professional' needs of 'the nation' (lawyers, doctors and so forth), as well as many who engaged in industry or commerce, were persons who qualified for their profession or who learned their trade after having been to school and perhaps university. But little of this was reflected in the educational engagement itself: the appearance of an 'Army class' or a 'mathematical side' was an insignificant modification.

Moreover, in spite of its 'social' design, the alternative to education was never totally devoid of educational features. In its beginning, when it was concerned with children up to the age of about eleven, perhaps the only significant element of culture it contained, the only suggestion it made to those who enjoyed it that they might recognize themselves as something more and other than potential units in what was coming to be thought of as a 'productive system', was the religious instruction, frowned upon in France, but elsewhere part of the curriculum. This catechetical teaching cannot have been very inspiring, but it at least intimated an identity and a 'quality of life' beyond the 'fact of life'; in biblical stories something like an inheritance of human understandings was at least dimly to be discerned; and for many the Bible was the only 'literature' they were acquainted with. Long ago this 'primary' stage became the main field of educational experiment which has had the ambiguous outcome of making it, in most European countries, both more and less appropriate as a preparation for 'School'. Similarly, when the period of time covered by the second stage of this apprenticeship to adult life was somewhat extended,⁵ its 'socially' designed curri-

⁵ In England, even in the early nineteenth century, some of the schools of the National Society and other educational organizations provided for children up to the age of fourteen; and where this was so, foreign languages and even some Latin were sometimes taught.

culum acquired some features which, although they might be there for 'social' reasons, held some promise of being educational; for example, a glimpse of the current myth of the history of the nation.

Our concern, however, is not with whatever tenuous educational features there may have been in this historic alternative to education (the second stage of which, so far as England is concerned, was re-examined by the Hadow Committee in 1926)⁶ but with the invasion which the educational engagement as it has existed in the schools and universities of Europe has suffered from this alternative. For, after a brief but not wholly ineffective attempt to extend the opportunity of education to more of those who had not hitherto enjoyed it, this has become the most notable feature of the recent history of European 'education': the enterprise of *substituting* 'socialization' for education.⁷

By 'socialization' (let me repeat) I mean here an apprenticeship to adult life – teaching, training, instructing, imparting knowledge, learning, etc. – governed by an extrinsic purpose. The most common version of this alternative to education has been that which emerged from the efforts of rulers and others to equip the poor to make a more effective contribution to the well-being of 'the nation', and which has since been elaborated into more or less systematic arrangements for imparting to successive generations the knowledge and the skills required to sustain the enterprises and provide the satisfactions characteristic of a modern industrial and commercial society. Here the project of substituting 'socialization' for education is that of imposing upon the educational engagement the considerations which comprise this extrinsic purpose. The other notable version of a 'social' alternative to education is a more recent appearance and pulls in a different direction, namely, that of an apprenticeship to adult life governed by the 'social' consideration that it shall be the same for all children. The design here is

⁶ It will be remembered that the terms of reference of the Hadow Committee required it to consider what had come to be called 'secondary education', that is, a 'post-primary' alternative to education up to the age of fifteen. Every page of the Report (and not least its historical review) shows its concern with an apprenticeship to adult life which should be agreeable to those who were to enjoy it in reflecting the 'interests' they were imagined to bring with them and their local 'social and natural environment', should be appropriate to what were assumed to be their limited intellectual capacities, and should reveal the connection between 'life and livelihood'. The Hadow Report was, perhaps, the last to be concerned expressly with an alternative to education.

⁷ Later inquiries promoted by governments (notably the Newsom Report and the Report on Higher Education, and many of the Working Papers of the Schools Council, e.g. nos. 7 and 11), while sometimes purporting to be concerned with the educational engagement, have been chiefly concerned with this substitution; that is, with the corruptions of the engagement and the extensions of the alternatives required to make them serve the current 'needs of the nation'.

to reduce or to abolish disparities of opportunity and thus to generate a 'fully integrated' society. Here, however, the design and its imposition upon the educational engagement are inseparable: the design itself requires that all schools shall be the same and that none shall be 'School'.

In pursuit of this enterprise of substitution, the chief agents, of course, have been governments; and it has been pursued in legislative proposals of various dimensions and different degrees of directness. It is a concomitant of that 'enlightened' understanding of government in which rulers are recognized as the managers of an association bent upon the achievement of some substantive 'purpose' or the enjoyment of substantial satisfactions and in which 'education' is regarded as merely a means to the chosen end. In one version of this enterprise, it is, for us, an old story. In 1821 a bill was promoted in Parliament designed to require the collegiate and grammar schools of England (with the exceptions of Eton and Westminster) to provide the sort of elementary and vocationally directed training which was being provided in the parish and charity schools and in private 'academies' and institutions of all sorts set up for the purpose. There are examples of grammar schools at that time departing from the terms of their foundation in order to engage in this activity. The other and more recent version of this enterprise, the project of replacing education with an apprenticeship to adult life governed by the consideration of 'social integration', may be illustrated in the proposals of one of its promoters. 'It is time', he writes, 'to ask more rigorously whether the present curricular differences between schools are socially divisive', and he suggests that what he calls 'the linguistic discipline' of Latin is divisive and should *on that account* be abolished. When he goes on to speculate on the 'common culture' to be disseminated in this alternative to education, his project is unmistakably the abolition of 'School': it is to be based upon 'flexible, exact and sensitive speech, creative writing, a cultivation of the living arts, an appreciation of the mass media and a concern for world affairs'.

I do not propose to follow the history or to forecast the fortunes of this design to replace education by 'socialization'. In most parts of Europe it has been a plodding engagement, enlivened by some dramatic moments and directed by the characteristic imbecility of political fanaticism. It was a project long before it became a policy; and in it those who might have devoted themselves to making the opportunity of education available to more of those who had hitherto enjoyed only an alternative to it, have devoted, themselves, instead, to its abolition. Where governments already controlled

whatever there was of a genuine educational engagement, as well as the current alternative to it, the task of assimilating the one to the other has not been difficult. The outcome (as in Russia) has been a single 'system' of apprenticeship to adult life which, while it may allow considerable internal diversity, is wholly subordinate to 'social' considerations. In England, a considerable part of the educational engagement (including all the universities) has sold itself over the last fifty years to what it supposed was a benign government genuinely concerned for its survival in difficult circumstances, only to discover that it had sold itself into 'socialization' and abetted its own destruction. What remains are impoverished fragments which have to endure the threat of dissolution. Modern governments are not interested in education; they are concerned only to impose 'socialization' of one kind or another upon the surviving fragments of a once considerable educational engagement.

This situation, however, is not solely the outcome of a legislative policy bent upon denying to any what (it is supposed) some do not want or can make no use of. It would never have acquired its present dimensions had it not been promoted by contingent circumstances and abetted by intellectual confusion. The enterprise of abolishing education by substituting some version of 'socialization' has found an ally in some features of those other, concurrent, projects for the destruction of the 'School' which I have already noticed; it has been promoted, often inadvertently, by innovations in the educational engagement; it has been obscured by the noisiest of the controversies of the last fifty years (that concerned with the measurement and distribution of so-called 'intelligence'); and it has been confirmed in a corrupt way of thinking about the educational engagement itself. Something must be said about each of these self-betrays of the engagement.

The alternative to education, invented for the poor as something instead of virtually nothing, was designed (for the most part by politicians) as an apprenticeship to adult life which, far from offering a release from the immediacies, the partialities and the abridgements of the local and contemporary world of the learner, reproduced this world in its already familiar terms and provided the learner with more information about what was already within his reach and with skills in which he was reckoned to be 'interested' because he was already aware of them in use or in his own talents. The engagement was not to initiate him into a difficult and unfamiliar inheritance of human undertakings and sentiments, but to give him a somewhat firmer grasp of what he recognized to be 'relevant' to himself as he was and to the 'facts of life'. He was not

to be put in the way of understanding himself in a new context or of undergoing a palingenesis in which he acquired a more ample identity; he was merely to be provoked to see himself more clearly in the mirror of his current world. Those who promoted this alternative to education believed that its products would be 'more useful members of society'. They no more confused this apprenticeship to adult life with the educational engagement than they confused the parish with the grammar school, the *école communale* with the *lycée*, the 'public' school with the Boston Latin School, the *Realschule* with the *Gymnasium*, the 'secondary school' (in the Hadrow sense) with the grammar or collegiate school, or the technical college with the university.

Nevertheless, the design of this alternative to education is both conceptually and historically connected with what purported to be a better understanding of the educational engagement itself. It was allied with the Baconian notion of 'education' as a concern with 'things, not words', as 'learning from life' and the discovery of 'how it works'; with the absence of a curriculum (each day may be relied upon to provide 'experiences' to be looked into) which might disturb the learner by suggesting unfamiliar distinctions; with the reluctance to 'foist upon children problems which do not develop from their own interests' and with the desired and foreseen abolition of 'School' which comes from the dissolution of the difference between 'School' and the local world. In short, the political project of *substituting* 'socialization' for education has been sustained by beliefs about the educational engagement itself in which the alternative appeared, not as a valuable but admittedly inferior article, designed originally for the poor, but as an *educationally* superior article. Without this support (spurious though it is) this enterprise of substitution would, no doubt, have been more difficult.

These beliefs made little impact upon the educational engagement of Europe; they were hostile, not to the contingent vices of schools, but to the virtues embedded in the idea 'School'. The engagement (represented in the *Gymnasium*, the *lycée*, the grammar and collegiate schools and elsewhere) had educational traditions capable of resisting the enterprise of destroying it by assimilating it to the alternative. But in recent times there have been changes in curriculum and in methods of teaching which, sometimes inadvertently, have pushed the engagement in the direction of the alternative by allowing 'social' considerations in some measure to oust educational ones. The emergence of 'science' in the curriculum of schools and the study of languages are two examples out of many of this self-corruption of the educational engagement.

If 'science' had entered the educational engagement as an initiation into an intellectual adventure recognized as a component of an inheritance of human understandings and beliefs it would, no doubt, have constituted a benign and an appropriate addition to what was already there. But it did not. 'Science' belonged, instead and in the first place, to the alternative for education, designed to 'socialize', where it was recognized as useful information about the world related to some skill, craft or fabricating activity – what the Hadow Report was later to call 'practical science'; and when, thus understood, it was allowed to graduate to compose part of an educational engagement it was clearly eccentric to the engagement. Becoming established in this naïve Baconian idiom as an alleged knowledge of 'things' not words, of objects not ideas, of observations not thoughts, as the Rousseauistic *leçon des choses* which still appears in the *lycée* programme, it was confirmed in its eccentricity: its intellectual despicability could not be concealed.

Nevertheless, 'science' did find a place for itself in 'School'. It was, with some difficulty, detached from immediate vocational considerations; it remained for a long time 'useful information' about the natural world with which every educated man should be acquainted,⁸ but in the course of time (within living memory) something has been done to give it recognition as one of the great intellectual pursuits of mankind: but without notable success. It is now taught and learned more seriously, but its place in current educational arrangements remains ambiguous: chemistry, for example, has never outgrown its character as a sophisticated kind of cookery, and 'science' is still defended in terms of 'social', not educational, considerations: 'We need first-class surgeons, engineers, chemists, psychologists, social scientists, etc.', and unless they are started on their way in school we shall not get what our hope of affluence requires for its fulfilment.

Flattered by circumstance and linked with ancient heresy, an attempt was made to promote 'science' itself as a 'culture' in which human beings identified themselves in relation to 'things' and to their 'empire over things',⁹ but it now deceives nobody; boys do not elect for the 'science sixth' expecting to achieve self-knowledge, but for vocational reasons. Regrettably, this is not yet the case

⁸ When Thomas Huxley regretted the absence of 'science' from the school curriculum, what he regretted was the absence of the opportunity for a learner to acquire an 'outfit drawn from the stores of physical science', 'a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century'.

⁹ Renan opposed 'positive science' to the 'superficial humanism' of school education and recognized it as a moral culture.

with the no less fraudulent claims of the so-called 'social sciences' which have been pushed into the curriculum of schools and universities, but the reckoning cannot be far off. For a generation now they have remained in business only on account of their technological pretensions.

The educational engagement in respect of languages is to initiate learners into a language as a source and a repository of human understandings and sentiments, and it was this which the collegiate and grammar schools of England and their equivalents elsewhere undertook in respect of Latin and Greek and, to a lesser extent, in respect of a native language. What the learner submitted himself to was not a 'linguistic discipline' but an initiation into exactitudes of thought and generousities of feeling, into literatures and into histories in which the 'fact of life' was illuminated by a 'quality of life'. When modern languages became part of our educational engagement (first, perhaps, in schools for girls) they were chosen for their literatures and they were designed to provoke the learner to identify himself in terms of a larger European culture: it was to read Lessing and Goethe, Molière and Racine, Dante and Leopardi, Cervantes and Calderón.

The counterpart to this in the alternative for education was, however, a different kind of undertaking, dominated by the belief that 'language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known'. The languages taught were chosen in respect of 'social' (that is, commercial or local), not educational, considerations; and they were learnt merely as a means of communication. It was this extrinsic 'purpose' which made appropriate the methods of learning from which have emerged audio-visual language machines, 'language laboratories' and 'language laboratory assistants' instead of persons who had a profound knowledge of the languages, the literatures and the histories concerned. The alleged virtue of language machines is that 'they teach people to speak languages with confidence, and they do it fast', a virtue appropriate to the enterprise; and no harm would have been done if what was appropriate to the alternative to education, both in choice of languages and in methods of learning, had not been taken into the educational engagement and corrupted it. When it is said that a child should learn a foreign language as he learns his native language, 'by hearing it spoken', what is being overlooked is that in the educational engagement of 'School' what he learns of his native language is precisely what never could be learned by 'hearing it spoken'.

The self-corruption of universities exceeds that of any other part

of the educational engagement of European peoples. In times past English universities have often been indolent guardians of the engagement to educate and as often they have recovered, but for a generation now they have anticipated almost every design of governments to transform them into instruments of 'socialization', hardly needing to be bribed to undertake this destruction of themselves. Nevertheless they have, of course, received a considerable push in this direction, not least in the Report of the Committee on Higher Education (1963), which assimilates them into a system of so-called 'higher education', understood as an investment in learners who have acquired certain qualifications, designed to equip them with the specially complicated skills and versatility increasingly required if the nation is to satisfy 'the aims of economic growth' and 'to compete successfully with other highly developed countries in an era of rapid technological and social advance'. No doubt universities are intended by the Committee to have a place of their own in this 'higher education', but they are to submit to the extrinsic purpose, the 'social' considerations, which identify it as an alternative to education. In the event, the disaster is not that they are being swamped by persons in search of almost anything but education, but their almost total destruction as an educational engagement.

The design to substitute 'socialization' for education has gone far enough to be recognized as the most momentous occurrence of this century, the greatest of the adversities to have overtaken our culture, the beginning of a dark age devoted to barbaric affluence. It emerged from a project, embarked upon about three centuries ago (which was neither stupid nor itself menacing to the educational engagement) to provide an alternative to education for those who, for whatever reason, fell outside the educational engagement. Since those times this alternative has been adjusted to respond to changing circumstance; it has been improved and extended to compose an apprenticeship to adult domestic, industrial and commercial life, it has generated a variety of versions of itself, and for the most part it has submitted to the direction of governments. Indeed, it has become what the world it has helped to create can recognize as a 'service industry'. It was designed as a contribution to the well-being of 'the nation'; it has been welcomed or endured on account of the affluence it is alleged to be about to procure, and attempts have been made to calculate its product in terms of costs and benefits; and it has been defended on the ground of what it is designed to produce and upon the more questionable plea that it is the most appropriate apprenticeship for certain sorts of children.

This makeshift for education, however, was permitted to corrupt the educational engagement of European peoples, and it is now proclaimed as its desirable successor. The usurpation has everywhere been set on foot.

But the victim of this enterprise is not merely an historic educational engagement (with all its faults and shortcomings); it is also the idea of education as an initiation into an inheritance of human understandings in virtue of which a man might be released from the 'fact of life' and recognize himself in terms of a 'quality of life'. The calamity of the enterprise is matched by the intellectual corruption of the enterprisers.

There were, in the past, naïve promoters of the most common version of this enterprise who believed it to be unfortunate that there should be schools not expressly designed to impart to learners information about the world they were about to enter and in fact often failing to impart this information in sufficient quantity because of their concern with an inheritance of human understandings; but they did not deny that such schools existed. Like Bacon they recognized Westminster College and probably recognized it to have some virtue, but they preferred Gresham College; and even Mr. E. Robinson recognized the existence of what he calls 'academic' education, although he deplores it as a grossly imperfect apprenticeship to adult life when compared with the excitement offered by 'the new polytechnics'.

There are others who do not deny the difference but who mistake the distinction; while intending to defend the educational engagement against one version of 'socialization' they use arguments which merely identify it with another, and in this manner, inadvertently perhaps, banish education from the scene. For example, there are writers who are opposed to that version of 'socialization' in which the considerations which govern the apprenticeship to adult life are an overriding concern for 'social integration'. But the reason they give for their opposition is not that the project is destructive of the educational engagement, but only that its outcome will almost certainly be a lowering of the standards of achievement and a consequent failure to satisfy the need of society for a constant supply of first-class engineers, doctors, economists, teachers, mathematicians, chemists, technicians, and so on. So far as anyone can foresee, their expectations are likely to be fulfilled; at all events, these writers are correct in recognizing what they oppose as a calculated indifference to scholastic achievement and an earnest desire to impose a *solidarité de soltise*. But to oppose it on the grounds that it will hinder the appearance of 'a succession of adults who

possess the advanced skills upon which our survival depends' is to have surrendered to the false doctrine that education is to be understood as an investment of the human resources of the nation in an attempt not to be outdistanced in affluence by America, Russia or Japan. In short, these writers recognize a difference between education and its alternatives, but mistake the distinction as one of the standards of achievement in the pursuit of an extrinsic 'purpose'.

But the determined promoters of the enterprise to destroy education are restrained by no such lingering recognition of an educational engagement. They represent themselves as persons who have perceived a 'truth' which prejudice has concealed from others; namely, that everything has a 'social function', that everything is what its 'social function' declares it to be, and that, consequently there never were and never could be educational as distinct from 'social' considerations in respect of the apprenticeship of newcomers to an adult human life. Thus, it is said that 'the function of the public school and university system [*sic*] has been to train a ruling élite, that 'the public school was developed to run an empire', that 'the ancient universities of Europe were founded to promote the training of the clergy, doctors and lawyers', that the function of a modern university is to impart 'skills which demand special training' and that most undergraduates know this to be the case and go there to acquire such skills, and so on.¹⁰ It is said, in short, that education has never been anything other than a 'social investment' related (often imperfectly) to 'the needs of a society in respect of instruction'. Consequently (they continue), intelligent reflection about education must be reflection about the appropriateness of a current educational engagement to the needs of a current society; and educational reform (when it is not concerned merely with methods of teaching and learning) is detecting what are the 'functions' which together constitute a current society and devising a 'system of education' which will produce most economically the most adequate performers of these functions. When these projectors settle upon 'economic development', 'the fight for economic survival' or 'keeping up in the economic race' as the engagement to be provided for, and represent themselves as the designers

¹⁰ In the confusion of para. 25 of the Report of the Committee on Higher Education it is allowed that a few undergraduates may go to a university for the marginally different extrinsic purpose of acquiring 'pure knowledge' (which also has to be found a 'social function' in order to become visible); but no one is credited with going for no extrinsic purpose at all but merely to continue his education, because the possibility of any such activity as being educated is ruled out in advance.

of an apprenticeship to adult life in which every child learns to identify himself as a (perhaps functionally distinguished) member of a development corporation, they have no difficulty in appearing as benign reformers, doing no more than releasing the educational engagement from antiquated 'social' considerations and bringing it up to date. The fact that their design for 'education' corresponds (with, of course, the appropriate enlargements) to the alternative for education devised in the seventeenth century for the poor is regarded as a tribute to the genius of the inventors of that alternative, who may be criticized only for not at once setting about the destruction of schools and universities which were, even then, providing performers for functions of declining significance. Thus, the destruction of an educational engagement proceeds behind a veil of conceptual nonsense and historical rubbish, now called 'the sociology of education', and designed to persuade us that what is being destroyed never existed.

Education, I have contended, is the transaction between the generations in which newcomers to the scene are initiated into the world which they are to inhabit. This is a world of understandings, imaginings, meanings, moral and religious beliefs, relationships, practices – states of mind in which the human condition is to be discerned as recognitions of and responses to the ordeal of consciousness. These states of mind can be entered into only by being themselves understood, and they can be understood only by learning to do so. To be initiated into this world is learning to become human; and to move within it freely is being human, which is an 'historic', not a 'natural' condition.

Thus, an educational engagement is at once a discipline and a release; and it is the one by virtue of being the other. It is a difficult engagement of learning by study in a continuous and exacting re-direction of attention and refinement of understanding which calls for humility, patience and courage. Its reward is an emancipation from the mere 'fact of living', from the immediate contingencies of place and time of birth, from the tyranny of the moment and from the servitude of a merely current condition; it is the reward of a human identity and of a character capable in some measure of the moral and intellectual adventure which constitutes a specifically human life.

Consequently, education is not to be confused with that accommodation to circumstances in which a newcomer learns the latest steps in the *danse macabre* of wants and satisfactions and thus acquires a 'current' value in the world. Some of these steps, the 'especially complicated skills and versatilities' of which the Report on

Higher Education speaks, have become intricate, and to learn them is an exacting task. But nothing a man may learn in this respect has anything whatsoever to do with education.

It is now about two centuries since our educational engagement began to be corrupted by having imposed upon it the character of a school of dancing. This usurpation has been promoted by confused beliefs about the transaction itself, and it has been procured by 'enlightened' governments. It is now far advanced. Fragments of an educational engagement, however, remain: relatively uncorrupted schools, universities which have not entirely surrendered the character of educational institutions, and teachers who refuse to become dancing-masters. Moreover, with some at least, the urge to destroy 'School' by depriving it of its character of a serious engagement to learn by study may, perhaps, be interpreted as a misdirected attempt to escape the enormities of 'socialization': when to teach is identified with 'socialization', education becomes the engagement to teach nothing. Caught between these destructive winds of obliquely opposed doctrine our engagement to educate is torn asunder.