



Contents of No. 94 December 1968

The machinery of conformity	
<i>Antony Fleming</i>	353
Education in 1980	
<i>David Downes</i>	365
Freedom and learning: the need for choice	
<i>Paul Goodman</i>	372
Daniel Guerin's anarchism	
<i>Nicolas Walter</i>	376
The instant new society	
<i>Paraic Marren</i>	382
Index to ANARCHY	
Volume Eight	384
Cover by	
<i>Rufus Segar</i>	

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Vol. 8, 1968: 83. Tenants take over; 84. Poverty; 85. Anarchist conversations; 86. Fishermen; 87. Penal System; 88. Wasteland culture; 89. France; 90. Students; 91. Artists; 92. Two schools; 93. Radio.

The machinery of conformity

ANTONY FLEMING

IN THE CONFLICT OF ANARCHIST AIMS with the existing social structure it is clearly of vital importance to be fully aware of the tools at the disposal of the State in inducing conformity, and to attempt to work out positive alternatives.

I propose to discuss two central means of bringing about conformity. The first is upbringing, the second the activity of the State towards the adult nonconformist. The child has to cope with two environments—home and school. Both these, as we shall see, are remarkably potent forces for conditioning conformist behaviour patterns. No doubt anarchists are aware of this anyway, but I think it is crucial that we recognize the full depth and extent of it.

In adulthood, the State copes with deviation in two ways—by sending the offender to prison, or giving him psychiatric treatment. Again it is obvious that this is so, but again I feel we must recognize just how important it is.

CHILDHOOD

The parents provide love, in particular the mother. She provides too frustration. At one time she allows the child to feed: at another time she denies him this possibility. The child reacts, reasonably enough, by loving her in the first case and hating her in the second. As he grows older, however, he must adapt to these conflicts. At the same time, he is totally dependent for the satisfaction of his needs on his mother. He must conform: if he does not he is threatened by the withdrawal of the very thing he depends on.

Clearly it is not difficult for the parent to exploit this dependence on her. Progressively she introduces patterns of behaviour that represent conformity to what she wishes for the child and of it. It starts

with training it to defecate in the appropriate place: it ends with indoctrinating it with the attitudes of the parents. Sartre remarked: "Long before our birth, even before we are conceived, our parents have decided who we will be." (Foreword to *The Traitor*, by Andre Gorz.) But the attitudes of the parent may contradict with those of the society in which they live. And let us remember that however we try not to impose our attitudes on the child, we give them away by our approval or otherwise of their behaviour.

It is well worth noting in all this that the most successful method of conditioning to our society is love—at least to the more "liberal-minded" sections of our society. But at the same time a certain frustration probably helps to produce the more successful businessman. He is less concerned for his fellow man, more with getting what he wants. The petted child though is the same; having got everything from his parents, he intends to get it from society.

Society however produces various child-rearing techniques. These the parent will tend to adhere to. In a society where the middle-classes, at least, have a variety of techniques to choose from, generally running in fashions—as much for the progressive parent, so-called, as for anyone else.

It is more revealing to study the child-rearing techniques of more static societies, as they stand out clearer. But we should not assume from this that our techniques don't produce conformity: the rapid changes in technique are equalled by changes in technological methods and every other aspect of our culture, if not the basic system of competition—though even this is converting from the direct struggle of the 19th century to competition within an increasingly bureaucratic system of management that is likely to become more so as time goes on and at the same time increasingly state-controlled or private monopolist (see, e.g., Paul Cardan: *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*).

Erikson in *Childhood and Society* provides a good deal of information on two particular examples of the relationship between child-rearing techniques and the demands of the societal structure. It is worth summarizing part of it—the part on the Yurok people. The newborn baby is not breast-fed for ten days: it is then generous and frequent, but it is terminated at the sixth month, the time of teething. The Yuroks' sweets are salty foods, while pregnant the mother does heavy work, with the general aim of preventing the child from resting against the spine! A taboo on sex until the child can creep vigorously ensures the parents do their best to bring this about. Even during the breast-feeding period, a number of devices are used to prevent the child from feeling too comfortable during this activity.

The supernatural providers arrange that the Yurok salmon fisherman be successful. "The Yurok attitude towards the supernatural providers is a lifelong fervent 'please' which seems to be reinforced by

a residue of infant nostalgia for the mother from whom he has been disengaged so forcefully."

The child was taught to slow down his eating, to carry out the whole process rather laboriously, and at the same time to think of getting rich—to concentrate on money and salmon. But he must also be convinced that he means the salmon no harm, and it is said that the fish only leaves its scales, which then turn into salmon on the nets—surely a throwback to the deprivation of the breast when the desire to bite arose, and thus guilt feelings for having wished harm, one might suggest. "All wishful thinking," says Erikson, "was put in the service of economic pursuits." He adds: "Later, the energy of genital day-dreams is also harnessed to the same economic endeavour. In the 'sweat house' the older boy will learn the dual feat of thinking of money and *not* thinking of women." Apparently in fact the wife is paid for: the status of the wife and her children is determined by the price the would-be husband offers her father for her. Deviant behaviour among the Yurok is explained solely in terms of the father having made a worthy girl pregnant prematurely—before he could pay for her—or simply married her on a down-payment, and being unable to pay off the instalments. Thus money is even necessary to marry.

The association between the frustration of oral satisfaction and the wish for money and salmon is, as we have seen, made clear. The removal of the breast at the time of biting, reinforced by the general atmosphere of frustration, at the time and later—the whole system of making the child feel uncomfortable, frustrated and thus anxious—is directed into economic gain energy. And thus the Yurok are a money-fixated tribe. But the anxiety has also the effect of making life a long plea—especially the anxiety-invoking situation surrounding oral satisfaction at the breast.

It has been said that "conformist individuals in abnormal cultures—such as the Yurok or the Dobuan—are in fact abnormal in an absolute sense, even though they find complete acceptance within their own culture." (Andrew Crowcroft: *The Psychotic*.)

But as Laing in particular brings out very clearly, our own culture does not qualify as the ideal-type. "We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world—mad, even from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt. We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but in an alienated state, and this state is not simply a natural system. . . . What is to be done? We who are still half alive in the often fibrillating heartland of a senescent capitalism—can we do more than reflect the decay around and within us?" (*Politics of Experience*.) A point that is accepted by anarchists anyway, so hardly needs stressing.

School is also a crucial means in the process of turning the child into an obedient conformist. This is done, not only by such methods

as Citizenship Classes and Religious Instruction. Far more relevant and effective is the indoctrination by the very method in which the teaching is carried out.

Ours is a competitive society. Ninety per cent accept this situation and act out their desires for self-improvement in this atmosphere. Surely it is not irrelevant that the whole system of schooling is one in which success is rewarded and failure punished. Not only this, but the success of one person is the failure of another—the failure, and the humiliation of having failed in front of the whole class. This latter technique is especially effective where the teacher is popular. The more traditional technique of a public punishment for failure served to frighten people into conformity—with the result that they were a much more aggressive type, taking out their sufferings on those who stood in their way.

But we are discussing the modern, and much more effective techniques. For in the traditional method there was the inherent danger that resentment would be transferred from the master to the ruling class. In the modern method this danger is dealt with. The children feel solidarity with the teacher against the failure. The shame is therefore far greater. J. Henry describes a concrete example of this technique of linking competitive success with praise and failure with shame.

A teacher invited a pupil to reduce 12/16 to the lowest terms. He had trouble with it. She ignored the other pupils howling to supply the answer and concentrated on him, telling him to “think”, although he was probably mentally paralysed. Finally she turned to the rest of the class, asked the question, and selected one of the children to supply it. Henry comments: “Boris’s failure made it possible for Peggy to succeed; his misery is the occasion for her rejoicing. . . . Such experiences force every man reared in our culture, over and over again, night in, night out, even at the pinnacle of success, to dream not of success, but of failure.” (*Culture Against Man.*) One could point out that Peggy’s success would make a dream of this: the two dreams seem to me likely to co-exist. Admittedly Henry is describing an American school, but there seems at least a chance that, as time goes on, we may adopt this kind of technique.

Henry also observes another phenomenon in education. The teacher did not ask who had the answer to the next question, but who would like to provide it. “A skilled teacher sets up many situations in such a way that a negative attitude can only be construed as treason.” Thus the shame is added to by the sense that in failure one has betrayed the group: and how many children want to feel an outcast?

Perhaps, though, the method of the future will be that now present in some primary schools and secondary moderns—the permitting of the child to tackle the subjects it wants at the rate it can cope with. This does seem possible, perhaps more so than the method discussed by Henry. It has one setback—that it is less compatible with society, apparently.

But it is necessary to ask whether in fact this is so. For it does seem unlikely that such a system would develop if it were incompatible with society. In the most modern schools, the teacher, as I understand it, is just there to help. The child decides what it is interested in, and works on this basis, seeking advice from the teacher from time to time, but also using books and other sources of information.

Society can only accept this as a total system if the end is seen as contributing to a career, or to spare-time compensatory activities. Thus the poet and writer of mediocre standard, or better than average, who is not good enough to make the market, has a means of fulfilling himself in his spare time. His leisure horizons are widened. And the gradually shrinking time spent at the factory will thus be less unbearable. The budding scientist is likely to be far better at his job in the end if he has been allowed to work it all out for himself, with just advice and information—he is likely to be a better scientist if his profession springs out of an inner “vocation”.

But these free development techniques are at present confined to primary schools and secondary moderns. In the latter, the assumption is anyway that the children are of average intelligence or below. It may well be that we will get the same techniques in bottom streams in comprehensives, but for the higher levels it seems reasonable to expect a firmer direction being provided by the teacher—a job to aim at being selected and worked towards, particular standards to be reached to get into University.

It does seem possible, on the other hand, to see psychological techniques being introduced more and more, and the use of these to achieve the desired effect (desired by society) even in a supposedly free-development situation. Even now it is obvious that the child is largely reliant on the teacher for advice, and especially in the early stages for information and recommended books. It is in these early stages that the basis for development is laid. Clearly the choice of books and the type of advice and information will be strongly affected by the personality of the teacher—and teachers are not a noticeable revolutionary section of society!

Robert Jay Linton records a faculty seminar discussion following his having given a talk on the relationship of education to thought reform and ideological totalism. One professor declared that there was no difference, that at this college they did brainwash the children. Another declared that “We do not care what the girls believe when they graduate. Our main concern is that they learn something from their college experience”, but questioned more closely it emerged that she did care what her students believed and what they would become.

A third professor concluded a solution: “Perhaps we can avoid this by holding our beliefs with a certain amount of tension . . . with an attitude that ‘I believe in this, but recognize that there can be other beliefs in opposition to it’. In this way we can subject any belief which we hold to the tension and pressure of its own limitations and of other alternative beliefs.” Linton comments that this third professor “grasped

the necessity for both commitment and flexibility". (*Thought Reform and Psychology of Totalism.*)

But the skilled teacher has succeeded in persuading the child to accept him as someone to be looked up to, like a parent. Therefore the child is more likely to accept his views. The skilled teacher will be able to maintain her authority through the troubled years of adolescence, but being prepared to talk out dissident views.

And it seems not unreasonable to expect that teachers' training colleges will, in providing techniques, evolve those most likely to induce conformity. The very act of becoming a teacher, indeed, implies a sense of responsibility to the community (whatever the psychological basis for this sentiment), which can be reinforced, and dissident views negated. The teachers would be encouraged to look forward, but within the context of the existing structure—thus any idealistic tendencies would be turned up the blind alleyway of reformism.

Another point that it is important to remember is that adolescent revolt is only a passing phase: we can be sure those who operate the education machine are aware of this. Even in revolt the teenager often continues to hold the same views: but those who move on to the plane of ideological rebellion (a small minority, unfortunately, especially in this country) will move back to earlier conditioned patterns of behaviour and thought. The adult nonconformist will continue to be something of a rare being. In this connection a recent *Daily Mail* survey of teenage opinion is interesting: it gave surprisingly high figures for the percentage of those who stood by outdated prejudices. Even among the teenagers, a referendum would, apparently, bring back hanging and make life uncomfortable for residents of other pigments.

Even if the next generation are going to be more liberal, this doesn't mean much for us—it is only faintly comforting to think that the social services will be improved. Indeed, this is likely to happen—care from the cradle to the grave, with legislation constantly being introduced, as it is now in the motoring sphere, to reduce loss of life, regardless of the cost to what liberty there is left.

Laing supplies a very relevant comment to round off the discussion of both home child-rearing and educational techniques. "Children do not give up their innate imagination, curiosity, dreaminess easily. You have to love them to get them to do that. Love is the path through permissiveness to discipline: and through discipline, only too often, to betrayal of self."

And thus we conclude with the adolescent entering adulthood, his conformist patterns of behaviour reasserting themselves. But what happens if for various reasons the conditioning fails? It may be that the family environment has contradicted the societal, or that pressures within the family have made a conformist reaction impossible and provoked radical and lifelong revolt or escape from reality, as certainly happens in many cases. We call such family environments abnormal—but some at least are too normal to be compatible with societal structure,

if most are bizarre to a degree, as Laing has shown present in the genesis of schizophrenia (cf. *Divided Self: Sanity, Madness and the Family*, Vol. 1), not forgetting of course that it seems feasible that the schizophrenic experience involves a certain amount of truth apart from the projections and dissociations.

THOUGHT REFORM

We have seen how, under certain circumstances, cultural conditioning can break down. Our particular form of society recognizes two types of deviant—the mentally ill, and the criminal. Up till recently it has regarded them as separate groups. Now increasingly the more liberal at least are taking up the cry that criminality too is a sign of mental disorder. Instead of punishment, therefore, the prisoner must be helped to become a productive member of society. He must be rehabilitated. His attitudes must be revised to a position compatible with the society in which he lives. So the prisons follow the lead of the mental hospitals in attempting to fit our failures to become acceptable and responsible citizens.

The libertarian must be quite clear on his attitude to this. He has no common ground with the liberal. Our basis is totally opposed to theirs. They say society is sane, even if it needs humanizing a little: we say, as the Marxists do, that society is of its nature dehumanizing and degrading. The liberal sees modern techniques in rehabilitation as an advance: we must see them as, in the hands of society, lethal. Never before has the State been able to use so much knowledge of man to bring about his conformity. It is increasingly recognizing this: the deviant must be helped, not by punishment, which reinforces inner alienation, but by the psychological manipulation of our very being—to twist us so we are no longer alienated from society. We cease to be human beings in the process but the liberals, seeing welfare capitalism as the epitome of freedom, are blind. They are so wrapped up in their middle-class cotton wool they do not realize they are caricatures of the whole man they idealize yet know nothing about.

Thought reform is a euphemism for "brainwashing". But ours is an open society, protests the liberal. We do not brainwash people. We only coerce them to prevent them hurting themselves or others. How blind can you get. You are free to do as you like as long as you conform, as long as you remain within acceptable limits. Step out of them and we will incarcerate you. Mind you, we will persuade you to change your mind. We would not use physical violence as they did in China. We will just lock you up in a cell and feed you drugs and electric shocks to block what is inside you and allow our carefully conditioned patterns of conformist behaviour to reassert themselves.

What if I do not conform then, the outcast replies. We'll just do the whole thing all over again. We do not care how petty your revolt. If you persist in it, we will make you suffer—at the same time of course we're glad to say we'll try and show you the Light, the Way of Truth and Honesty. The way of truth for the liberal—and so we die.

Or we eke out our lives incarcerated, like the recidivist who stole a total of £178 over a long period, and has spent 26 years of his 48 in Her Majesty's Prisons (cf. Tony Parker: *The Unknown Citizen*).

PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT

Psychiatry defines three types of mental illness—neuroses, psychoses, and psychopathy. In the first of these, the patient accepts that he is ill and wishes to be cured. He has accepted the validity of his cultural conditioning and wishes to have those experiences and patterns of behaviour felt as incompatible with “normality” corrected. In the second, the patient was withdrawn into an inner world, which includes personified projections of those parts of himself he cannot face, and perhaps some valid experiences, as we have mentioned before. Unlike the neurotic, the psychotic is convinced that his mode-of-experience is valid and that of the culture invalid. The psychopath, too, does not recognize his mode-of-experience as abnormal. Society defines him as someone suffering from persistent mental disorder resulting in abnormally aggressive or seriously irresponsible behaviour, requiring medical care and training.

Psychiatry has a number of approaches to the deviant, of whom the neurotic is the easiest to cure, except if obsessional. However, this type of illness, obsessive neurosis, is in fact usually a symptom of some underlying, deeper problem, such as depression or latent schizophrenia.

The first of these is drugs. The effect is to chemically counteract the deviant behaviour patterns, thus allowing the culturally conditioned patterns to reassert themselves. This is brought out especially in schizophrenia, where after a long time they can produce apparent “normality”, but the removal of the drug brings about a rapid return to the former state of mind. In depression—in less fundamental deviations generally—the drug seems often to get the person over that particular bout, as part of a medical programme.

The second is electro-convulsive therapy—electric shock treatment. We know very little about the effects of this, but it was found that dream-starved rats could be relieved by electric shocks: they showed less need to catch up on REM (i.e. dream) sleep than those that were not given shocks. One could hypothesise that, since dreams are our unconscious problem-solving technique (cf. J. A. Hadfield: *Dreams and Nightmares*), the psychosis is, as is the neurosis, solved.

However, an experience with one psychotic patient suggests an alternative. He had, up till his first ECT, insisted that he must play for real, that he was not going to act any more (backing up Laing's environmentalist explanation of schizophrenia). After the first ECT he said he had been fooling us for too long and would go on doing so. He also, having up to then begged for a shock so that he could break through “the sex-barrier”, when told that he was getting a second ECT said he did not want that kind of shock.

It is possible, on this basis, to tentatively suggest that in fact the

sheer power of the ECT-induced dreaming was unbearable—in normal life he would have dreamed about it much slower—and drove him to return to his earlier false self-true self split, to protect himself from this overpowering annihilation. The schizophrenic's basic problem is a sense of insecurity of being. The power of such an experience as ECT, which would overwhelm him, clearly could propel him into such a reaction.

Either through the solving of the problem in dream, or a return to pseudo-sanity, the culturally conditioned patterns of behaviour would be restored—which after all is the object of treatment.

Occupational and industrial therapy are another standby in psychiatric treatment. These, like habit-training with geriatric patients, are ways of easing the patient back into work—a combination of group pressure and psychological satisfaction. Occupational therapy allows for rather more creativeness than industrial, but even so it is rather limited in the scope it provides. The general aim is to help the patient to concentrate, and indeed to get them back into the general habit of work. The psychological needs of companionship, security, stimulus and even very occasionally, when advice is asked, of independence, are satisfied, and thus the deviant is drawn into the net. If his cure is long term, he may then be moved to industrial therapy.

This is nothing more or less than the factory brought to hospital. The person is of course helped to adapt to it and so on, but the whole purpose is to get him so that he can go out of the hospital, if not on to the labour market, at least into a sheltered workshop, where he is making his contribution to the perpetuation of the system, and helping the capitalist to keep up his rate of profit. Or, in the terminology of the System, so that he can make a useful contribution to society.

In fact, both these forms of therapy have the objective of making the patient ready to work. The former, as we have noted, also stimulates concentration—not always a requisite of factory work but perhaps one the System would like to see in it. Concentration is of course important in such things as keeping yourself smart, and in fact generally fitting into the culture, if you are inclined to lapse.

Finally, we have the various types of analysis, and group psychotherapy. We will deal first with group psychotherapy.

This is a method of “resocializing” the patient by providing the use of group pressure as well as the satisfaction of psychological needs. As in occupational and industrial therapy, the ability of the group to provide or withhold psychological satisfaction is a potent force for coercion into conformity. The patient is able to talk out his problems in communication with the others and assist them to work out theirs. Both by the advice of the psychotherapist and by the fact that it is something all the participants, or most of them, share, it is culturally conformist patterns of experience and behaviour that are worked towards. Group psychotherapy is in fact probably the closest thing we have to thought-reform brainwashing. For the lonely psychotic, the

person who does not regard the culture as valid, is subjected to tremendous group pressure. And the very fear of the psychotic is that he will be overwhelmed and engulfed by other people, and the total loss of identity in the overwhelming of self by the other. A high-pressured group psychotherapy could, if kept up consistently, drive the psychotic into superficial conformity. And society only requires that we conform: it is not worried about what goes on inside us provided it does not influence our relationship to reality.

Analysis, whether direct, or with the aid of drugs or hypnosis, is aimed at discovering the primary causes of the "disorder". It works on the principle that every symptom has a traumatic origin, which is correct, but ignores the fact that the cultural conformist pattern of behaviour is equally abnormal—since analysis takes conformism as the ideal. It also, by its nature, treats the person as a collection of parts, rather than a whole. This must be so, because to liberate the whole person from inhibition and repression is to make him human, and thus incompatible with a dehumanized society. The analyst can only release what is incompatible with society. Modern psychoanalysis sees a place for the superego—yet the sole function of the superego is to inhibit our natural instincts.

And, as we believe, a person is only fully human if he is free to seek his own fulfilment unrestricted and unconditioned—and that in a free environment with such inner freedom he will not indulge in a complete free-for-all.

PRISON TECHNIQUES

The main technique throughout the prison service is of course the traditional one, emphasizing punishment. We have recently added to this the shock treatment of the Detention Centre, a spreading phenomenon aimed at shaking the deviant so much he will cower in terrified conformity, and the terror will last long enough for the cultural conditioning to reassert itself in the depths of the person, instead of just on the surface.

Group psychotherapy has also appeared, in particular, in "special prisons". The violence of the aggressive psychopath criminal is stimulated by the sense of imprisonment, the desire to escape, and directed into tremendous group pressures to conformity, as each feels that his way out is to pretend conformity, and in interacting, inauthentic psychological violence on each other to which is added the unavailability of the situation. For the psychopath is prepared to use any means to achieve his aims and each affects the other possibly more than superficially.

In its crushing of his positive emotional being his family situation has made him the ultimate caricature of the capitalist ideal—it has shown in him all that goes to make up the successful businessman, the successful politician, that society prefers to close its eyes to. But it cannot face its ideal gone too far. It must tone him down, make him less extreme, his crude self-interest less apparent, his lack of concern

for others less obvious. And in the meantime it must mark him out as horribly evil, even if his evil is a product of his sickness.

People always turn most violently on those who epitomize their own being, the being that they cannot face. So it is with capitalism. But with capitalism the horror that it cannot face is the very ground of its being—not some repressed and contradicted element.

As time goes on we can see the invasion of the prison service by psychiatric techniques, in spite of the rearguard struggle of the upholders of free will and morality. The crude system of punishment is a failure: it works with a few, but compared to the increasing possibilities of psychological manipulation it is archaic. The System simply says the criminal is sick. Perhaps it does not even realize that its methods are manipulation, or will not face it. It is just the product of the social environment, and as such it meets its needs, irrelevant of who produces it. The Chinese Communists too regard thought reform as a purging of abnormal behaviour patterns.

We see in thought reform the increasing use of psychological knowledge to achieve conformity. The purpose of this manipulation is to negate the nonconformist, deviant patterns of behaviour, even modes of experience, though this is a joy in store still a little in the future on the whole, and to allow the conditioned, conformist patterns of behaviour to assert ourselves. For it is vital to remember that thought reform already has these patterns of behaviour instilled in the deviant: it simply has to activate them. They need reinforcing as well, but the groundwork has already been carried out. It only needs to be elaborated on.

ANARCHIST SOLUTIONS

We have seen, then, the effectiveness of cultural conditioning. It is therefore clearly insufficient to simply usher in a free society, because it will simply revert back to cultural conformity. We do not introduce freedom simply by providing a free environment: we must also set ourselves free psychologically. We must set out to decondition ourselves, so that the natural man that now lies suffocated by an accumulation of indoctrination can be released.

And we must remember the problem of our conditioning especially in dealing with ways of bringing up our children.

But a contradiction arises here. We must at the same time create a free environment and liberate ourselves. The process must in fact be an interacting evolution. To liberate ourselves before we have a free society is to face ourselves with the impossible task of working within a coercive structure—that is the quickest way to a mental breakdown. What is necessary is to establish a libertarian environment as far as we can, and then work towards setting ourselves free, at the same time with the environment evolving to this change in situation.

But this requires that everyone wants to be free, whereas most are successfully conditioned. How do we break out of this?

Surely it requires, in fact, the establishment of libertarian environments within the coercive society, started by people wishing to be free,

evolving situations relative to their own evolving humanization, presenting an alternative to existing society. I, at least, can see no other way.

The most essential basis, then, is the will to be free, and to accept that, conditioned as we are to a coercive, stratified society, we have only a faint inkling of what it means to be fully free and human. To be prepared to accept that the community we form in the beginning may appear free to us, but it is only so in terms of our largely culturally conditioned being. And thus, as I have said, to evolve inner and outer freedom in the interaction of one with the other.

In our study of cultural coercion, we dealt first with the techniques of child indoctrination, and secondly with thought reform on its various levels. In our study of anarchist solutions it is clearly necessary to reverse the scheme, since it is adults with the will to freedom that one expects to set up these potentially free communities.

As has been made clear, the evolution of freedom is an interaction of increasing psychological freedom with increasing environmental freedom. But since the outer reality is moulded, ideally, to the inner image, the start must be with psychological freedom. The expression of this growth in the environment will influence the inner evolution by showing certain lines of development valid and others, at that stage, invalid.

Such a liberatory process demands extensive involvement of the identity and the personality with the group, a source of potential pain as well as satisfaction. And yet it demands that a person only becomes involved to the extent he chooses, because this is the essence of a libertarian outlook. But this is a conflict that will resolve itself, as the person unwilling to involve himself at depth finds the depth-relationships of the ideas as to what sort of being liberated man, and therefore rehumanized man, is likely to be. This, as has been said, is because our ideas of what freedom means and will produce are expressions of our largely conditioned personalities.

Nevertheless, on the basis of anthropology, it is possible to put out various ideas. Are we going to have far greater communalization, or are we going to see Stirnerite self-sufficiency? Is the Marxist picture of sexual communism or the alternative of the family going to occur? Will factories be operated on a system of workers' management? The anarchist has never been very specific about his utopia, and when he has differences of opinion have been obvious. Because in expressing his utopia he is expressing his largely culturally conditioned being. It is interesting, even helpful, to have some idea of which way we will go; but the fact remains it is very largely guesswork.

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Education in 1980: open or closed?

DAVID DOWNES

THE MOST PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF EDUCATION IN 1980 is that it will be much the same as now, only more so, and more of it; there is a danger that pessimism is automatically granted a keener realism than optimism, and therefore that the prophecy becomes self-fulfilling. This is a view to be rejected at the outset.

The best clue to the possibilities of the next twelve years is what has happened over the last twelve. To quote Alec Clegg,¹ they have been the "most remarkable so far in the history of our education". In terms of school building, teacher training, university expansion, there has been a fantastic acceleration. There has been the "primary revolution", the "new maths", a spurt in technological education from the abyss it was in in 1956. But most remarkable of all there has been an unprecedented awakening to educational possibilities: "ustreaming" is a concept to be taken seriously, rather than dismissed as the preserve of cranks; the economic potential of education is a fact to which we are all alerted; the "comprehensive" case has been carried intellectually if not administratively; the idea that higher education can take place only in Oxbridge, Redbrick or White Tile has been savagely eroded by the "binary" system.

Precedents for all these trends were there before 1956: in a few progressive private schools; in academic journals; in a handful of LEA's; in the polytechnics and Keele, etc. But over the last 12 years the documentation and dissemination of these concepts has established them irreversibly on the educational scene. More and more schools are adopting them or being influenced by them. And they have raised a whole new crop of expectations and problems that have to be solved.

How can we "integrate" what remains of the privileged sector of education to make a truly "comprehensive" system? In such a system, how can we avoid "consensus education",² which distrusts men like Duane and McKenzie who break with convention and experiment with their pupils? How can we gain the advantages of size, and scale, but avoid the dehumanisation and anonymity of over-organisation and administration? And—the biggest educational dilemma—how can we ensure, or approach, "equality" of opportunity and provision, without imposing utter uniformity and absence of choice?

DAVID DOWNES was asked to address the planners of the proposed new city of Milton Keynes in Berkshire on the educational choices before them. This is the text of his address. He is the author of *The Delinquent Solution* and a forthcoming Penguin on further education, and contributed to ANARCHY 15, 21, 27, 53 and 64.

In one part of the school system these problems are either solved, soluble, or at any rate much more clearly perceived than throughout the rest of the system. In the primary schools, what remains of the privileged sector is already visible behind the best third of the state sector: and where parents still resort to fee-paying schools, one suspects that in most cases they would desist if the rest of the state primaries could be brought up to the standard of the top third. (Other reasons enter the picture after the age of 11.) Moreover, in the primary schools more than elsewhere, "unstreaming" is gaining ground. Secondly, experimentation is more notable in the primary field than elsewhere: the new maths is by now a by-word, but experimental schools like the ILEA's Evelyn Lowe and Vittoria Road primaries have successfully tried out new architectural forms at no increase in cost, timetabling has lost its rigidity, and already there have been momentous improvements in the responsiveness of the children to the discovery of learning. Thirdly, as far as size is concerned, while the norm is still around 300 pupils, greater ranges are now acceptable. Fourthly, in the concept of the Educational Priority Area (and the Community Development Area), we have a rationale for achieving greater equality of opportunity, an equality which would be enhanced by the adoption of the age-range 3 to 11 as the range appropriate for primary education. The evidence from the American project "Operation Headstart" is conclusive on this point. It is often forgotten that not only lower working class children need the stimulus and close attention to play that nursery education would provide. Harassed and "inadequate" parents also exist among the middle class.

Why have these gains been made in the primary schools and not elsewhere? The reason is plain. With the abolition of the 11+, the pressure to sift and label children from the age of 5 or 6 was taken off the primaries. The newfound freedom to experiment without the fear that one should really be training the child to pass exams has already proved itself beyond dispute. In the primaries, we have moved closest towards what Professor Basil Bernstein, of the Institute of Education at London University, has termed the "open" school.³ Can we not achieve something of the same revolution in the years after 11?

Despite "going comprehensive", the secondary schools are much the same as they were 10 or even 20 years ago, for the simple reason that the selection and sifting that used to begin at 5 is now concentrated and intensified in the years 11-15: again because the secondary system is still dominated by the function of sorting out the gifted minority who will enter the universities (which, despite expansion, have failed to keep pace with rising numbers of qualified applicants, and rising expectations of higher education. Last year only 59% of those with two "A" levels gained university entrance).⁴

In his concept of the "open" school Professor Bernstein has provided a realistic framework within which to formulate answers to this question. For what we have now at secondary level and beyond is still a "closed" school system. Despite all the flurry of experiment and innovation in a few schools and LEA's, and in the primaries, the

secondary school is still a world of hierarchy, selection, labelling, academicism in depth, rote-learning, deference, the "pupil".

But the world outside is changing: full employment, enough affluence to buy adolescent independence, the emergence of the "teen-ager" as a contra role to that of "pupil",⁵ youth culture, the increasing tendency of the young to question the relevance of "the syllabus" to their personal and social development. Jollied along by the Schools Council, faced by more articulate children, conscious of report after report from specialist committees, government bodies, etc., the most orthodox teachers in secondary schools are at least aware that there is no going back to the "closed" system proper, that the impetus is towards the "open" system.

What constitutes the "open" school? The two systems can be set out (see below) as "polar" systems, admittedly vastly over-simplified:

	"Open" (organic)	"Closed" (mechanical)
(a)	education in breadth	education in depth
(b)	self-regulation	punishment
(c)	unstreaming	streaming
(d)	social "mix"	social division
(e)	equal allocation of resources	disproportionate allocation of resources to elites
(f)	complex value system	simple value system (caricature of the "Protestant" ethic — austere work, orthodox dress, etc.)
(g)	"idea-centred" teaching	subjects
(h)	team teaching, etc.	forms

A few points should be clarified: firstly, the "open" system does not involve abandoning concepts of excellence in academic work, nor of all rules in organisation. Secondly, the "open" system does not necessarily imply late specialisation, but leaves that choice to the pupil. "Breadth" implies not an absence of specialisation, but that specialisation is much more prone than hitherto to cross and transcend "sacred" subject boundaries.

The "open" school therefore stresses diversity, rather than uniformity, a built-in potential for change rather than the illusion that one can arrive at a once-and-for-all-time perfect system. This has already occurred in some schools in the organisation of teaching groups. "The teaching group can consist of one, five, twenty, forty or even 100 pupils, and this number can vary from subject to subject. The form or class tends to be weakened as a basis for relation and organisation." It follows from this that "space and time in the new schools, relative to the old, have (within limits) ceased to have fixed references. Social spaces can be used for a variety of purposes and filled in a number of different ways. This potential is built into the very architecture".⁶ This means much more in terms of multi-use building than getting education "on the cheap", an assembly hall having to double up as a gymnasium because of lack of facilities. It implies a library which can take tapes, video equipment and films, newspapers, journals, etc., as

well as books, etc. It implies a lively nucleus for concourse around which a set of more specialised units revolve. But the best of the new comprehensives have already adopted these developments: any new town must base its architecture on the example of what has already been achieved in schools such as Mayfield, Crownwoods, Woodberry Down, and Southgate comprehensive in Epsom.

What does this new-found "openness" imply about size and location of schools? Two broad principles of child development underlie most educational assumptions, and must broadly be the basis for size and location. Firstly, child development implies a "fanning out" of relationships from the intimacy of immediate family to—ultimately—humanity as a whole. A child's sense of "identity" and "community" is variable and elastic, but it progresses—in building-block fashion—via family, school, peer-group, etc., to the larger community, the larger society, etc. It is crucial that education builds on the child's capacity to cope with increasingly complex and varied relationships. Secondly, the child is increasingly—with age—capable of self-regulation and increasingly can cope with making his own choices and decisions, given that the alternatives are clearly presented to him, and that advice is readily available. This helps to clarify the meaning of choice in education. At present, choice is interpreted purely in terms of the parent's choice to decide between schools which they conceive to be in their child's interests. This choice is, in practice, a reality only for the rich or for those lucky enough to live in areas where schools actually differ and who possess the skills to impress their will on the LEA. But often, as Mr. Morrell has stressed, parental freedom of choice is frequently a denial of choice for the child. It can work against the child as well as for him. But increasingly, choice is being enlarged for the child in the area which most matters, i.e. within, rather than between, schools. For the child, choice inheres in the range and flexibility of options open to him within the school, both in terms of syllabus and in terms of the quality of the teaching available to him. The principle of parental choice is obviously irremovable, and desirable. In the last resort, it is the only defence against intolerable standards. But more and more the enlargement of choice must take place within the school, rather than on the basis of mobility between them. If one school in three in an area is good, and the other two mediocre, it is more democratic and just to improve the latter (cf. the Plowden argument on educational priority areas) rather than "allow" movement from the latter to the former—when movement between the two groups is impossible for the majority anyway. This is more likely to be achieved with an increase in the scale of schools. A secondary comprehensive school of 2,000 pupils can offer much greater choice of subject and timetable than a school of 500. It can offer, say, four languages instead of two; a much wider range of technical aides and equipment, etc. But it is also a much more challenging and complex environment for the child to handle. There is some evidence for thinking that the size of the school is irrelevant to "pupil satisfaction": the crucial factor is the quality of the teaching. But, given imaginative administration (a

very large assumption, admittedly), "teacher satisfaction" can be much more readily achieved the larger the school, and the larger the potential for development of special skills and facilities, scope for promotion, etc.

The second principle implies that the older the pupil, the greater his need for dense and complex structures, and the greater his capacity to act responsibly within them. Once this is realised, school organisation can assume forms which might otherwise appear unmanageably complicated. This is already clear in schools where—from Summerhill onwards—ingenuity is exercised in ways of devolving responsibility to pupils as soon as possible (and in genuine, not merely token, ways). In Mexborough, for example, though the scale is small, a sixth form college has been established which is attached to, but partially autonomous within, the local grammar school, and which takes in pupils from the secondary moderns who wish to stay on after 15. This, of course, is far from being comprehensive, but it significantly moves towards a more "open" system than exists throughout the rest of the country. "At the start . . . some fears were expressed that without rules and a disciplinary system, there would be chaos. This has not proved to be the case. As a body, the students have shown a most commendable sense of responsibility. . . . It could be boasted that there has been no single act of vandalism within the college in three and a half years."⁷ The same argument applies even more strongly within the universities. And the principle could be implemented earlier than the age of 16.⁸

The "open" school also serves more realistically as a focal point for community needs. The old-style "closed" grammar school is totally unsatisfactory for this purpose, since working class parents and adolescents tend to feel alienated from the overwhelmingly middle class ethos.⁹ The "open" comprehensive would serve all sections of the community, not just one. For that reason, it could serve as the context within which school- and child-centred social services could be best organised: child welfare, vocational guidance, etc. But equally important, it must be adaptable for use in the evening as a focus for leisure and recreation: holding dances, sports, coffee bar facilities, scope for giving films and exhibitions, etc. It is therefore crucial that its "very architecture" must, as Bernstein stresses, "point up their openness compared with the old schools". As he says, "the inside of the institution has become visible". This does not necessarily mean acres of glass on stilts. But it implies the conveying of an ease of penetration into the schools of the outside community, with no boundaries of age, sex, or class.

We can now consider what educational system would best suit the needs of Milton Keynes in 1980. If we look at Bernstein's comparison between the "open" and "closed" system, their characteristics crystallise as alternative criteria and, in effect, as options, the choice of which will determine the whole educational character and social purpose of the new town. If, for example, the decision is made to give paramount importance to the attraction to Milton Keynes of upper middle and upper income groups, it may appear logical to press for a university

on the mini-Oxbridge model, with 2,000-3,000 students, etc. (once the 10-year embargo on new universities is over in 1976). From that it follows that one or two good grammar schools, or homogeneously middle class neighbourhood comprehensives which are in effect grammar schools, are adopted to service the university, and "cream" the much wider area of high IQ children. And already we are repeating the divisive and labelling character that brings in its wake the "closed" school, early streaming, the creation of a recalcitrant and under-educated minority, etc.

If, however, the alternative of universal "comprehensive" education till 18 is adopted, this would not necessarily deter the more favoured income groups, or hold their children back, but would cater much more fully for the vast majority of lower middle class and skilled manual workers' children. The apex of the system might ideally then be seen as a large polytechnic, or city college, with some 20,000 students,* some full-time, some part-time, some day, some evening, etc., some residential (and here there is scope for flexible building early in development), and a research orientation appropriate to the area, perhaps agricultural technology. This kind of "comprehensive university"¹⁰ would feed back a completely different, and much more "open" character to the rest of the educational system as well as catering for a great deal of adult education. A junior, or sixth form college, system could combine full-time and part-time students, operating a system of day-release "in reverse" (2-3 days in school, 2-3 days in a job) for the 16-18's. A largely unstreamed secondary comprehensive system would have emerged.

The scope for experimentation in the size and design of the junior colleges is enormous—they could range in size from a few hundred (as at Mexborough) to 5,000—and the 16-year-old as of now is frequently already at work in factories and firms employing more than that number under conditions far more authoritarian and gruelling than any junior college would ever be! The 11-15 comprehensives would in size be much as now. But in organisation and architecture they would be freed to repeat the revolution of the primaries, since they would no longer be hamstrung by the need to select and sift for a "closed" form of higher education.

The above pattern is presented as the most appropriate in terms of current thinking. But it must be stressed that constant re-evaluation is needed. A research and Intelligence Unit should ideally be built into the New Town plan, not just to carry out complicated experiments into the psychological aspects of a new teaching technique, but to "keep tabs" on what is happening elsewhere, and what new needs are emerging among the pupils and teachers themselves. Quite apart from this,

*For those who think this figure unrealistic, it has been estimated that by 1986 some 28% of the age-group will have attained at least two "A" levels (Richard Layard, *Financial Times*, 11.3.68). And we have yet to appreciate the scope for an explosion of long-frustrated educational aspirations of those who will be in their 40's and 50's in the 1970's and 1980's—but who missed the Robbins boat.

a sociologist should be appointed to document the development of education in Milton Keynes. It is astonishing that we have no body of research on which to draw from existing new towns; and this must be remedied.

It should be clear, in conclusion, that the criteria adopted at the outset clearly determine the character of education for decades to come. The alternatives are very real and if Bernstein's analysis is correct, by 1980 the "open" system will be as essential for our economic needs, as for more obvious social reasons. Education will be much more varied; it will play a much bigger part in the lives of people in mid-career in adult life than now; it will be the vehicle for "inter-employment", for those redundant in one skill and seeking others; and it will have to cope with rising expectations in all sections of the community, and a growing expectation of a good education for all children as of right. The "working class scholarship boy" of 1944 vintage, who regarded himself as exceptionally fortunate to be received into the educational preserves of the few, will be a part of social history. All—or the vast majority—will have become "achievement-oriented"—not always academically, but vocationally, artistically, athletically, technically. If they haven't, we shall have failed to learn from the last 12 years. "Can there be any doubt that the resistance to change that affects all our social and industrial life is due to the fact that most British adults have never been taught to think? We may have enough scientists and technologists, but we are cruelly short of technicians. We desperately need to broaden the base from which we train skilled people of all kinds. There is no major industrial country in the world where this has not been recognised. . . . Harold Wilson's white-hot technological revolution is going to look pretty silly founded on a secondary education of three and a half years."¹¹ Or on one of four and a half years, with no further or higher education for the majority.

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Paul Goodman on Freedom and Learning

PAUL GOODMAN, in an article "Freedom and Learning: The Need for Choice" (*Saturday Review*, 18.5.68), starts out

"The belief that a highly industrialized society requires twelve to twenty years of prior processing is an illusion or a hoax. The evidence is strong that there is no correlation between school performance and life achievement in any of the professions, whether medicine, law, engineering, journalism, or business. Moreover, recent research shows that for more modest clerical, technological, or semi-skilled factory jobs there is no advantage in years of schooling or the possession of diplomas. We were not exactly savages in 1900 when only 6 per cent of adolescents graduated from high school.

"Whatever the deliberate intention, schooling today serves mainly for policing and for taking up the slack in youth unemployment. It is not surprising that the young are finally rebelling against it, especially since they cannot identify with the goals of so much social engineering—for instance, that 86 per cent of the federal budget for research and development is for military purposes."

Well, what are these undeniable truths presented by Mr. Goodman bucking?

They are bucking, first of all, against the inherited pride of nearly every American in the public school system of the United States—a plainly patriotic emotion. It is an emotion which also lets us approve the spending of 86 per cent of the national research budget for military purposes—since we believe that we must preserve from alien wickedness the institutions which Mr. Goodman—rather persuasively—now tells us aren't worth saving.

Goodman is indeed a very confusing man. Next he focuses on a fact that conservatives and other unprogressive people have been whispering to each other for generations, in order to justify their indifference toward the educational potentialities of common folk. But Goodman has another reason for repeating this fact—he wants to refute the idea that the only kind of intelligence that should be honoured and fostered in our society is intellectual, academic intelligence. He writes:

"In the adolescent and college years, the present mania is to keep students at their lessons for another four to ten years as the

only way of their growing up in the world. The correct policy would be to open as many diverse paths as possible, with plenty of opportunity to backtrack and change. It is said by James Conant that about 15 per cent learn well by books and study in an academic setting, and these can opt for high school. Most, including most of the bright students, do better either on their own or as apprentices in activities that are for keeps, rather than through lessons. If their previous eight years had been spent in exploring their own bent and interests, rather than being continually interrupted to do others' assignments on others' schedules, most adolescents would have a clearer notion of what they are after, and many would have found their vocations."

Goodman proposes what he calls mini-schools—"an elementary group of twenty-eight children with four grown-ups: a licensed teacher, a housewife who can cook, a college senior, and a teen-age dropout". These people would find out what the children want to do and learn, and help them to do it. At their age, the children don't *need* what we try to teach them. No facts, but only cultural myths and parental expectations stand in the way of accepting and then doing what Goodman says:

"School methods are simply not competent to teach all the arts, sciences, professions, and skills the school establishment pretends to teach. For some professions—e.g., social work, architecture, pedagogy—trying to earn academic credits is probably harmful because it is an irrelevant and discouraging obstacle course. Most technological know-how has to be learned in actual practice in offices and factories, and this often involves unlearning what has been laboriously crammed for exams. The technical competence required by skilled and semi-skilled workmen can be acquired in three weeks to a year on the job, with no previous schooling. The importance of even 'functional literacy' is much exaggerated; it is the attitude, and not the reading ability, that counts. Those who are creative in the arts and sciences almost invariably go their own course and are usually hampered by schools. It is pointless to teach social sciences, literary criticism, and philosophy to youngsters who have no responsible experience in life and society."

One sees why Mr. Goodman is popular only with the young. How many parents are ready for these revolutionary revelations, and for the responsibilities which they entail? You might as well tell them to keep their children out of school! However, Mr. Goodman has excellent plans for reform at every level of learning. Of higher education he has this to say:

"By and large, it is not in the adolescent years but in later years that, in all walks of life, there is need for academic withdrawal, periods of study and reflection, synoptic review of the texts. The Greeks understood this and regarded most of our present college curricula as appropriate only for those over the age of thirty and thirty-five."

Obviously, the youth who are making trouble in the schools are not just "ungrateful". They are desperate human beings who have been mistreated and are intended to be misused. We have had no confidence in them; we have not listened to their inclinations; and now they have no confidence in us. Goodman concludes:

"Every part of education can be open to need, desire, choice, and trying out. Nothing needs to be compelled or extrinsically motivated by prizes and threats. I do not know if the procedure here outlined would cost more than our present system—though it is hard to conceive of a need for more money than the school establishment now spends. What would be saved is the pitiful waste of youthful years—caged, daydreaming, sabotaging, and cheating—and the degrading and insulting misuse of teachers. . . . Since the growing-up of the young into society to be useful to themselves and to others, and to do God's work, is one of the three or four most important functions of any society, no doubt we ought to spend even more on the education of the young than we do; but I would not give a penny to the present administrators, and I would largely dismantle the present school machinery."

MANAS (U.S.A.) 12 June, 1968.

New York school crisis

BEYOND THE FAMILY STRUCTURE imposed on us, the school is generally the first instrument of social repression a child meets in life. To the school is assigned the task of breaking the will to individuation, of "channelling the mind", of incapacitating the child with the rules that hold this society together: "This is the way things will be because this is the way they are"; the classroom serves to impress through the medium of daily routine that life is essentially following orders, that the choices are always among the given, that control of your life is, and always will be, somewhere else. Passivity is the rule, and all "activity" is planned (except for the frills: the extra-curricular; and then some). It is not accidental that the newest school buildings are indistinguishable from the newest prisons or the newest industrial complexes.

All the talk around the New York City "school crisis" misses this altogether. And this too is not accidental.

It is significant that the one voice that has not been heard in the great debate is that of the students. But after all, they cannot be expected to understand, because they are only children, partially educated beings: partially *moulded* to the system. And workers are dumb. And prisoners are unreformed criminals. Or so say the

fiction that surround life. In the minds of the Mayor, of the Teachers' Union, of the State Commissioner, of those who would use the issue of "community control" for their own ends—in the minds of all those who seek to maintain *this* education as an entrance into *this* system, there is the fear that if and when the student voice is heard it will say dangerous things. Dangerous, that is, to those people and the system they maintain.

Throughout much of the city, there has been the picture of locked schools with principals on the inside, police on the outside. There is a realization on the part of the Mayor, the Board of Education and the Union that there are far too many people whose "debt to education" might tempt them to convert open, empty schools into most unusual playgrounds. And there is *definitely* no place in the curriculum for social creativity, that is, the spontaneous activity of free individuals.

In the interaction of the various protagonists and the students, some are likely to come forward who may sense the meaning of real decentralization, who would then be impelled to want to change the system of education, to throw out this one, establish another. But who, attempting really to throw out this one, will not have to pass through throwing out the city, the state, the federal structures? Danger to the way things are lurks everywhere.

The system—as it is so often called in reference to the overall prevailing organization of life—is caught in an irreversible decay. But a system that decays does not necessarily pass. All of its solutions are attempts to arrest decay, freeze relations, make the system *permanent*: "decentralizing" schools is one such solution, building suburbs is another. The fascination with the synthetic—from transistorized hearts to glass-bubble cities—is no accident. The synthetic is so much more easily manipulated, controlled, and always, for a better living, as we all know, through chemistry.

As long as the struggle to maintain variations on what is, the solution to *changing* life is obscured, and obstructed.

"Well," someone will inevitably say, "from your analysis, we might conclude that people should do nothing about what they see as wrong or feel oppressing them, until they are prepared to attack and change 'the whole system'."

This is not our meaning.

Those who feel it is meaningful (not those desiring to use an "issue"—the politicians, manipulators, those out to build constituencies), those who feel it is *meaningful* to fight over this or that *must* do so. What we say is the *assault required to change one part is an assault from all sides, on the whole*. People activate themselves, engage in protest, because of how it makes them feel. And we will all feel best when the control over all facets, all aspects of our lives resides in us alone.

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Daniel Guérin's anarchism

NICOLAS WALTER

NI DIEU NI MAÎTRE. Anthologie historique du mouvement anarchiste. (Paris: Editions de Delphes. 44 francs.)

Daniel Guérin. L'ANARCHISME. De la doctrine à l'action. Collection "Idées", No. 89. (Paris: NRF-Gallimard. 3 francs.)

AFTER THE TWO DISAPPOINTING ANTHOLOGIES of anarchist writings from the United States which were reviewed two years ago (ANARCHY 70), it is pleasant to come to *Ni dieu ni maître*, a "historical anthology of the anarchist movement" which was published in France in 1965. We are told that it was produced "by the staff of Editions de Delphes with the help of Daniel Guérin"; the staff of the Nataf brothers who are connected with the excellent anarchist monthly, *Noir et Rouge*, and Guérin is a veteran socialist who became an anarchist.¹ Quite simply, they show how the job should be done: the book is very large (nearly 700 pages), very well produced,² very expensive (about 3½ guineas), and very valuable.

Ni dieu ni maître was published to commemorate the centenary of Proudhon's death in 1865, and it covers the century from the appearance of *What is Property?* (in which Proudhon became the first person to call himself an anarchist) in 1840 to the defeat of militant anarchism in Spain in 1939. After a short preface and a note on the Proudhon centenary by Guérin, there are more than 150 passages divided into ten sections: Proudhon and the 1848 Revolution; Bakunin and the First International; Max Stirner; the Jura Federation and the anarchist congresses; Kropotkin; Malatesta; the French movement from the 1871 Commune to the rise of syndicalism; Makhno and the Ukrainian movement during the Russian Revolution and Civil War; the Kronstadt rising; and the Spanish movement from the end of the First World War to the end of the Civil War. The passages included, says Guérin, are "either unpublished, or unobtainable, or kept in the dark by a conspiracy of silence". They are also unmistakably anarchist—there is no confusion with liberalism on one side or with nihilism on the other. The result is a faithful picture from the inside of what the anarchist movement has meant to most anarchists for most of its existence and, for anyone who can read French, by far the best single book on anarchism ever published.

It is, however, possible to quarrel with the selection of passages and with the general approach to the movement. Proudhon may have been the first writer who accepted the name of anarchist, but he

was hardly the first who was one. If Godwin is to be excluded because he was only a philosophical anarchist and was not involved in any kind of movement, there should still surely be room for some of those contemporaries and predecessors of Proudhon who were concerned with the practical as well as theoretical applications of anarchism—Bellegarrigue and Coeurderoy (there is one short passage from Déjacque) or Varlet and Roux in France, for example, and Hodgskin and Winstanley or even John Ball in England. It is good to be reminded of Proudhon's importance, but it would be a pity to get the impression that he invented anarchism; he and Bakunin—also important but surely not all *that* important—together take up nearly half the book, which really does seem too much.

Similarly, the only individualist anarchist quoted is Max Stirner, but he was hardly the only one, and he too was very much a philosophical anarchist—if indeed he was strictly speaking an anarchist at all. He is described as a "solitary rebel", but there have been plenty of other individualists who wrote things still worth reading—Godwin, Shelley and Wilde in Britain, Ballou, Warren, Andrews, Spooner and Tucker in the United States, Libertad and Armand in France, Chorny in Russia, Martucci in Italy—and it would have been interesting to have something from some of them. Even "Saint Max" gets only 15 pages, which at less than 3 per cent seems a rather meagre ration for a small but still vigorous variety of anarchist thought.³

There is plenty of Kropotkin, as one would expect, but it is rather oddly chosen. There are two essays and three extracts from his first collection, *Paroles d'un Révolté*, and two letters and two descriptions of him during his last years; but there are only three short extracts from the lecture, *Anarchy: Its Philosophy and Ideal* (which incidentally did not appear in *Paroles d'un Révolté* as is stated, but was given in 1896, eleven years after the collection was published), to represent the whole period between his imprisonment in France in 1883 and his return to Russia in 1917. It was after all during this time (while he was living in this country) that he produced the bulk of his most characteristic and original work: the later collections—*The Conquest of Bread*; *Fields, Factories and Workshops*; *Mutual Aid*—many important pamphlets—*The Philosophy of Anarchism*; *Anarchism in Socialist Evolution*; *The State: Its Historic Role*; *Organised Vengeance Called Justice*—and a constant stream of articles in English, French and Russian. It is true that these are often better known and more easily available than some of the items included, but the result is that his message is distorted; while the passages included are certainly worth reading, they give little indication why Kropotkin should be by far the most widely read of all anarchist writers. It really is time that there was a proper edition of Kropotkin's political works so that we didn't have to rely on old pamphlets, expensive second-hand books, and occasional anthologies to find out what he said.

No one could object to the representation of Malatesta, but it is a pity to have no other Italian passages, unless one counts Cafiero's Swiss

lecture, *Anarchy and Communism* (which is incidentally dated 1889 instead of 1880). In the same way, no one could object to the emphasis on the Russian and Spanish revolutions and civil wars, and the passages chosen give excellent pictures in both cases, but it would have been valuable to have something on the similar episodes in Germany and Italy just after the First World War, or on some of the more significant events in, say, the United States, Latin America, China, Japan, or even Britain.

It could be objected that there is an overwhelming preponderance of passages originally written in French, but it must be accepted that this is reasonable for a book published in France, and it must be added that most important anarchist writings have probably been in French and that anarchism was largely a French movement at least up to the first World War. Even so, it seems rather extreme to include no passages from any native-born British or American anarchists at all.

A more general objection is that the selection of passages shows a consistent bias towards activism, and the more intellectual, theoretical and philosophical approach to anarchism is almost completely ignored. This is the result partly of excluding English-speaking anarchists, who have been especially prone to argue at some distance from real life, but mainly of deciding at an early stage in the planning of the anthology to concentrate on anarchist writings which deal with practical problems; and the bias does seem reasonable when one remembers that most histories and anthologies of anarchism have one in the opposite direction, and sometimes lose sight of the actual anarchist movement altogether. There is a similar bias towards revolution, and the more moderate, pragmatic and reformist approach to anarchism is almost completely omitted as well. This is the result of similar factors, but in this case the bias seems less reasonable when it is so often forgotten that there is a wide middle ground between the extremes of philosophical inactivism and revolutionary activism.

But all these objections are overridden by the general authority of this book—"the voluminous record of a rehabilitation hearing", as Guérin puts it, "bound in black cloth like a bible". It is a unique collection in which "individual texts from the hands of the pioneers of anarchy alternate with collective documents", and in which one finds at last a genuinely serious and knowledgeable record of what the anarchist movement is about.

Every reader who is an anarchist must be impressed by the work which Guérin and the Nataf brothers have done for the cause of anarchism, and must also be fascinated by the material they have rescued from oblivion—masses of documents relating to Proudhon's part in the 1848 Revolution and to Bakunin's part in the First International and the 1870 Lyon rising, extracts from Max Stirner's writings on education (1842), the Manifesto of the Sixteen Workers of the Seine and Proudhon's letter about it (1864), some of the remarkable studies produced in the anarchist international during the 1870s and 1880s by Guillaume, de Paepe, Schwitzguébel, and Kropotkin (under

the pseudonym of Levashov), the letter from the terrorist Henry to the governor of the Conciergerie prison (1894), Pelloutier's call to the anarchists to join the trade unions (1895), some of Pouget's inimitable articles, extracts from the proceedings of the 1907 International Anarchist Congress, the International Anarchist Manifesto against the First World War (1915),⁴ Kropotkin's letter from Russia to the workers of Western Europe (1920), Emma Goldman's description of Kropotkin's last days and his funeral (1921), and then more masses of documents relating to the anarchists' parts in the Russian and Spanish revolutions.

And every reader who is not an anarchist must surely be astonished at the richness of anarchist thought at its best over a century, and must surely be convinced by Guérin's conclusion "that the constructive ideas of anarchist are still alive, that, provided they are re-examined and passed through a screen, they can help contemporary socialist thought to take a new step forwards". By any standards, *Ni dieu ni maître* is an extraordinary achievement, and it is particularly encouraging to see it coming from within the anarchist movement; it would be interesting to know what kind of circulation it got in France, despite its high price, and what kind of effect it has had on its readers.

* * *

L'Anarchisme is very different in scale, being a small (less than 200 pages) and rather badly produced paperback which was also published in France in 1965. But it is very cheap (only 5s.) and is in fact very valuable. It is a quick look at the anarchist movement "from doctrine to action", and once more it shows how the job should be done.

L'Anarchisme is divided into three parts—"The Basic Ideas of Anarchism", "In Search of the Future Society", and "Anarchism in Revolutionary Practice"—with a brief preface and conclusion. In the preface, Guérin notes the recent revival of interest in anarchism, and mentions the current books and articles about it, but he thinks "it is not certain that this literary effort will really be effective". He points out that anarchists have always been bad at publicity, and that the characteristic rejection of leaders and dogmas has led not only to wide variation among the ideas of anarchist writers but also to a vague impression of what anarchist ideas are about at all. But he insists that, "despite its contradictions, despite its doctrinal disputes which are all too often about false problems, we are dealing with a collection of sufficiently homogenous conceptions". He sees Max Stirner on one side and Proudhon and Bakunin on the other as being not all that far apart, Kropotkin and Malatesta as deviating slightly from the true mainstream of anarchist thought, and the terrorists as differing from most anarchists only in their means and not in their main assumptions.

He disclaims any intention of writing a full history or bibliography of anarchism, suggesting that most books on the subject have in fact sacrificed coherence to completeness. Nor has he paid much attention to the

biographies of anarchist leaders, remarking that most of the best known were anyway anarchists only for certain parts of their careers—Proudhon not at the beginning or end of his life, Bakunin not until the last ten years of his, Kropotkin not at the beginning or end of his either and often not in his scientific work even when he was an anarchist in politics. The plan of the first two parts of the book is therefore not the usual chronological narrative of individuals or organisations, but an analytical survey of the things which Guérin thinks essential to anarchist doctrine. The third part, which takes up about half the space, is a historical survey of the anarchist movement from the end of the First International to the end of the Spanish Civil War. The whole book is perhaps the best short introduction to anarchism in existence.

Guérin begins with “questions of vocabulary”—an introduction to the Greek word *anarchy*, its traditional use (or misuse), its defiant appropriation by Proudhon, the various qualifications made by those who followed Proudhon in calling themselves anarchists (federalism, mutualism, collectivism, communism), and its relationship with such words as libertarianism and socialism. He then runs through the characteristic features of anarchism—the emotional rebellion, the horror of the state, the hostility to bourgeois democracy, the criticism of authoritarian socialism, the contrasting sources of political energy (the individual and the masses), the rejection of utopianism, the insistence on organisation, self-management (the French word, *autogestion*, is really better), free exchange, free competition, planning, complete socialisation of property, workers’ control, the commune, free administration, public services, federalism, internationalism, anti-colonialism—giving in each section a clear and concise account of what the idea has meant to anarchists, with useful quotations from appropriate writers and references to appropriate events. The writers and events mentioned repeat the bias of *Ni dieu ni maître*—most of the quotations come from Proudhon and Bakunin, and most of the events concern the European labour movement—but they are always apt and illuminating. It would be easy to think of other anarchist preoccupations, but it would be difficult to get a better choice into a smaller space.

The third part of the book is in effect a historical appendix not only to *L’Anarchisme* but also to *Ni dieu ni maître*. Guérin is interested not so much in the drama of the anarchist movement itself as in the part it has played on the wider stage of the revolutionary labour movement. This gives his narrative a unity and urgency which are absent from most histories of anarchism. Thus he condemns the deviations towards adventurism and terrorism on one side and towards utopianism and scientism on the other not because they violated the pure truth of anarchist theory but because they alienated the masses from the practical importance of libertarian action, and gave the Social Democrats and the Communists a walk-over. And he praises the anarchists who went into the syndicalist movement, despite the dangers they risked for the anarchist movement, because they were trying to put libertarian ideas into practice in the harsh

environment of the day-to-day struggle of ordinary people.

There is a predictable emphasis on the Russian and Spanish revolutions and civil wars, and the pictures in both cases are as excellent as in *Ni dieu ni maître*. In between there is a brief chapter on the Italian workers’ councils just after the First World War, with an emphasis on Gramsci which might be expected in a Marxist account but is refreshing in an anarchist one.

In his conclusion, Guérin goes beyond the time limit of the end of the Spanish Civil War, and gives the examples of recent Yugoslav and Algerian experiments in workers’ control of industry to support his argument for the continuing—or rather, increasing—relevance of anarchism. They make sense in terms of the detailed organisation of factory work which is his main concern, but hardly in terms of the wider life of the community; it is surely a Marxist fallacy that the mode of production determines the nature of society as a whole. Although Guérin is well aware of the authoritarian features of the Communist regime in Yugoslavia and the “Socialist” regime in Algeria (and of the regimes in Russia and Cuba, which he also mentions), his concentration on such examples at the expense of all the others he could have chosen tends to blunten his important point that anarchism is directly related to the problems of modern society, and to strengthen the feeling that in many ways his position is still a form of libertarian Marxism rather than of syndicalist anarchism.

Guérin rightly attacks such recent historians of anarchism as Jean Maitron, George Woodcock and James Joll for saying that the anarchist movement, however excellent it may have been in the past, is now dead and belongs only to the past. He will have none of this, and repeats the message of *Ni dieu ni maître*. “Constructive anarchism, which found its most accomplished expression in the writings of Bakunin, relies on organisation, self-discipline, integration, a centralisation which is not coercive but federal. It depends on large-scale modern industry, on modern technology, on the modern proletariat, on internationalism on a world scale.” On this challenging note, this challenging book ends. It is a remarkable message to find in a cheap paperback produced for a mass market; again, it would be interesting to know what kind of circulation it got in France, with its low price, and what kind of effect it has had on its readers.

To sum up, these two books are the expression of an original and exciting view of anarchism,⁵ and they are also exactly the sort of book we should have in English. It is difficult to imagine the British (or American) anarchist movement producing or a British (or American) commercial publisher translating such a formidable and unprofitable undertaking as *Ni dieu ni maître*, but there is really no reason why a paperback publisher, either here or in the United States, shouldn’t find it worth bringing out a translation of something as short and simple as *L’Anarchisme*. There is much interest in the Marxist or neo-Marxist background of the current phase of revolutionary activity in the West, and this is reflected in the current lists of enterprising publishers. But the anarchist background should be

brought into focus as well, and it would be good to see books about anarchism on sale in this country which were produced by anarchists. We certainly have some lessons to learn from the French about propaganda as well as about insurrection.

* * *

¹Guérin was born in 1904, and during the 1930s was a leader of the "Revolutionary Left" in the Socialist Party and, when it was expelled, of the "Workers and Peasants Socialist Party", a Trotskyist group which collapsed after the fall of France. He was an important Marxist writer of a more or less Trotskyist variety—on the French Revolution, Fascism, colonialism and racialism—but for a time he attempted a synthesis between Marxism and anarchism, and he finally turned to a syndicalist form of anarchism. He is also a well-known poet and dramatist, and was one of the "121" who signed the famous manifesto against the Algerian war in 1960.

²Special mention should be made of the beautiful design of the book by G. Nataf (based on the ingenious use of sans-serif Helvetica type in a variety of sizes and measures) and of the fine printing by Ganguin and Laubscher of Montreaux, Switzerland. There are incidentally fifteen pages of well chosen illustrations, mostly portraits of anarchist leaders.

³A translation of *The False Principles of Our Education* (1842) has recently been published in the United States—see the review by S. E. Parker in ANARCHY 92—and it is included in the paperback edition of Max Stirner's works which has just appeared in Germany—*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum, und andere Schriften*, edited by Hans G. Helms, and published by Carl Hanser, Munich, at 7.80 Dm.

⁴The only survivor of the 35 signatories is Lilian Wolfe, who at the age of 93 is still active at the Freedom Press.

⁵A useful summary of Guérin's views in English is given in G. N. Charlton's translation of a 1966 interview, which was published in FREEDOM on September 30, 1967.

The instant new society

PARAIG MARREN

THE STUDENT REVOLT by Herve Bourges (Panther, 6s.).

FRENCH REVOLUTION 1968 by Patrick Seale & Maureen McConville (Penguin, 6s.).

THE BEGINNING OF THE END by Angelo Quattrocchi & Tom Nairn (Panther, 6s.).

WHEN READING THE ABOVE THREE BOOKS, one can't but feel that the material has already been presented with a lot more clarity and a lot less verbiage in ANARCHY 89 and 90 and the excellent *Solidarity* pamphlet number 30. Also, this "history-before-you-really-know-it's-happened" kind of book has the effect of consigning to the past a movement that is incomplete and the course of which is still undecided.

The Student Revolt is a collection of interviews with various activists including Cohn-Bendit. And, as such, they are conducted by a not particularly constructive interviewer who bounces from one point to the next without attempting to probe the depths of anything.

The superficiality is boring. Often the argument is about words, seldom about ideas. In most of his questions, and consequently, in

most of the answers, Bourges fails to distinguish the political situation from the educational situation. Cohn-Bendit's interview with Jean-Paul Sartre is the best section but it is almost the only readable part of a book that is both confused and confusing. Next:

French Revolution 1968. Done in the style of the journalist writing up the latest phenomenon. It is the sort of book usually described as lucid, vivid, trenchant, brilliant. It is all of these, and as a detailed, impartial account of the events it succeeds.

Seale and McConville are among the best journalists around, and their account is sharp, critical and pointed when dealing with the squirming of the authorities and the somersaults of the communist party. However, they flounder irritatingly when dealing with the extreme left. They exaggerate the Trotskyist and deprecate the anarchist influence. Daniel Cohn-Bendit appears as a sort of rebellious clown who played little more than an amusingly disruptive role and the book holds such gems of unexpurgated blah as "There could be no greater contrast between the disciplined, purposeful J.C.R. (Trotskyist) cadres and the free-booting Cohn-Bendit" and a quoted description of Cohn-Bendit as "*inorganise et inorganisable*" (disorganised and beyond organisation). Yet, it is a fair and readable effort. The dictionary has a word for it: Competent.

By far the best book of the three is *The Beginning of the End*.

Poetry and Revolution; they are twins. The fever running through the prose-poetry of Quattrocchi in part one (What Happened) brings the future society and its idea closer than all the Marxist jargon and pseudo-dialectic dogma distilled by every CP and authoritarian socialist hack on earth. Through the pages of near-verse one does not so much read of the events as live them.

Although, like the others, it fails to supplement our knowledge of the events, it is yet invaluable as a rendering (Quattrocchi) and as an analysis (Nairn).

Tom Nairn is the author of the second part (Why It Happened).

He writes of "the resurrection of anarchist thought and feeling in May, the host of black flags which sprang up from nowhere alongside the red ones. The anarchist 'groupuscules', feeble organisationally and small in numbers, were nevertheless far closer than the Marxist sects to the spirit of what was happening".

These two writers understand that there is only one kind of freedom: total freedom. And that it cannot exist within the framework of somebody's state, not though his name be Dubcek nor Johnson nor Castro nor de Gaulle. Again Nairn writes "All the evidence of May suggests strongly that without a powerful dose of anarchic sentiments and ideas, a revolution of this sort and in these conditions is very unlikely to get far".

The authors conclude: "The anarchism of 1871 looked backwards to a pre-capitalist past, doomed to defeat; the anarchism of 1968 looks forward to the future society almost within our grasp, certain of success". This is an amazing book: Buy it.

About Risinghill	289	The line I walk	158
The anarchism of Camille Pissarro	269	The machinery of conformity	353
Artists and anarchism	276	<i>P. MARREN</i>	382
<i>P.B.</i>	221	Meliorism	76, 83, 191
<i>H. BARCLAY</i>	90	The mirror of illusion	258
<i>R. BARLTROP</i>	341	<i>G. MOLNAR</i>	76
The Barnsbury environment	32	<i>H. MOORE</i>	283
<i>M. BARTHOLOMEW</i>	310	<i>A. MOYSE</i>	258
<i>G. BENELLO</i>	163	The need for choice	373
<i>P. R. BLACK</i>	56	<i>B. NICOLSON</i>	269
<i>M. BOOKCHIN</i>	191	Notes on poverty	33
<i>R. BOSTON</i>	65	<i>R. O'LUCIAN</i>	60
The case for listener-supported radio	321	On the job	126
The castaways	33	The other fisherman	113
A change is gonna come	53	Overtaken by events:	
Child poverty	42	a Paris journal	200
City planners, professionals and protesters	25	<i>S. E. PARKER</i>	318
<i>E. P. CLARK</i>	56, 147	The penal system considered	
<i>D. COHN-BENDIT</i>	214	as a game	129
Conversations about anarchism	65	Pirate political radio	339
The demand for workers' control	154	<i>R. POOLE</i>	83
<i>D. DOWNES</i>	365	Prisons: a case for their abolition	136
Education in 1980	365	<i>R. PRIOR</i>	200
Experiment at Kingsway	306	<i>V.R.</i>	283
An eye-opening job	189	Radio freedom: an anarchist view	330
Fake revolt	60	<i>A. RATTRAY</i>	42
<i>G. FEATHERSTONE</i>	330	Reflections on the revolution	
<i>A. FLEMING</i>	353	in France	193
A footnote on co-operation	116	Remembering Herbert Read	283
French lessons	348	Rise and fall of pirate radio	341
<i>N. FULFORD</i>	339	<i>J. ROBINSON</i>	189
Further observations on students	56	<i>T. ROSZAK</i>	321
The gamesmanship of Jean Genet	147	<i>A. SIMPSON</i>	42
<i>C. GILLETT</i>	53, 158, 306	<i>M. SMALL</i>	289
<i>P. GOLDACRE</i>	20	Spanish fishermen	118
<i>P. GOODMAN</i>	87, 373	Max Stirner on education	318
<i>M. GRAHAM</i>	113	<i>I. STUART</i>	129
<i>N. GUNN</i>	116, 122	Student anarchy	225
<i>D. GURIN</i>	25	<i>S. SUDDABY</i>	121
<i>R. & H. HERBERT</i>	376	Tenants take over	1
Homeless in Wandsworth	20	Unemployment in Hull	121
<i>P. HOWDEN</i>	97	Utopia means they don't want to do it	87
How long will the fisheries last?	128	<i>J. VANE</i>	193
Hull fishermen and workers' control	97	<i>J.M.W.</i>	348
I am a megaphone	214	<i>N. WALTER</i>	154, 375, 383
The instant new society	282	<i>C. WARD</i>	1, 118
<i>B. JAMIESON</i>	32	Josiah Warren: incomplete anarchist	90
Kilquhanity House School	310	Wasteland culture	163
Kropotkin House, Duluth	48	Whitsun in the streets	221
		<i>N. WILDE</i>	126

Anarchy 91

Artists and anarchism

Anarchy 92

A tale of two schools

Anarchy 93

Radio Freedom

Anarchy 95

Yugoslavia: is it workers control?
