

4. THE CRISIS OF THE SCHOOL IN THE 20TH CENTURY (ctd.):
LEFT LIBERAL CRITICISM OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter it was revealed that a strong demand arose in America for a more scientifically-oriented curriculum in the school as a result of the Sputnik debacle. During this time schools became the nation's scapegoat and the ideal of academic or intellectual excellence reigned supreme in the field of education and schooling.

However, the reaction soon followed (cf. paragraph 3.7.1.3). While some segments of society felt that the intellectual development or academic achievement of the child should take priority, other segments of society, due partly to social turmoil and partly in reaction to the dehumanizing effects of schooling for academic excellence, felt that human freedom and individuality, and thus the psychological atmosphere of the school and of the classroom, should be the primary focus in the process of education and schooling.

In this chapter, special attention will be given to the school ideas of those who criticize the school on the basis of human freedom and individuality but at the same time want to reform the school environment within the school setting, that is without questioning the right of the school to exist.

It is, however, not the purpose of this chapter to discuss all their points of criticism and their ideas for school reform. The general line of the school crisis to which these critics have "contributed" will be traced and the weaknesses of their ideas regarding the school will be pinpointed and evaluated.

4.2 DEFINING THE TERMS

4.2.1 The meaning of the term "left"

The term "left" has been derived from parliamentary language. It was originally used to refer to the liberal political party in contrast to the conservative party, or the party "on the right". During the later years of the 19th century, it assumed a meaning which today renders it a term strictly not used for Liberalism or liberal positions, but mainly to indicate socialist parties and groups. As time passed the term "left" was used also as a blanket term to indicate all parties and people who tend to accentuate the aspect of change and reform more strongly than they would the issues of maintenance and conservation of that which is currently in existence (Van der Walt, 1983(d):105).

In Christian circles, the term "left" is used in a somewhat different way. Vollenhoven (1956:30 - 33), Taljaard (1976:25 - 26), and Van der Walt (1980(b):13), for instance, use the term to denote a scheme of ideas which basically rejects God and His Word and is inclined to absolute humanism. The direction of thought which does not accept Scripture as the norm in one's life, especially in one's scientific endeavour is usually called leftist-orientated thought.

The history of Western philosophy may be divided into three great periods, namely the pre-synthetic, synthetic, and anti-synthetic period (cf. Van der Walt, B.J. 1978:8 - 12). Before the coming of Christ the Word of God was confined more or less to Israel, the elected. The Greeks and Romans who made such a very important contribution to philosophy lived outside the Word of God. They knew nothing about the God of Scripture and lived a completely pagan life. Thus, they were pagans in their philosophy also. However, after the coming of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), the Word of God was no longer restricted to the Jews only, but was preached to the different nations. Then the paths of Christianity and heathendom met and the synthesis between paganism and Christianity occurred on a considerable scale. But the synthesis between Christian and

pagan thought could not, in the long run, endure. The paths of Christian and pagan thought separated again when it became clear that they could not co-exist. Thus, on the "left" the Word of God was totally banned from every scientific effort. On the "right" men tried to give Scripture its legitimate place in science.

The term "left" is used also in this study to refer to a scheme of ideas which does not accept Scripture as the norm in science, in this case in educational and especially school theory. People on the left are those who do not accept a Christian life concept. They are non-Scriptural and anti-Christian. The members of this leftist circle include, not necessarily only unbelievers, but also Christians who do not believe that the Bible has relevance for science.

4.2.2 The meaning of the term "liberal"

The term "liberalism" is derived from the Latin word libertas which means "freedom". From the Latin was derived the French liberté and the English "liberty". Before 1800 A.D. "Liberalism" was used primarily as a legal term denoting the opposite to "slavery", but since the French revolution it has begun to acquire a new political content (Scholtz, 1965:7). The first group to do this was a political party in Spain who called themselves "los liberales", a group who advocated constitutional government for Spain (Scholtz, 1965:8; Schapiro, 1958:9). Later "liberal" was a term taken over in other countries, notably Great Britain, where it was used to designate a government, a party, a policy or an opinion that favoured freedom as opposed to authoritarianism (Schapiro, 1958:9).

As a philosophy, liberalism is not a system of immutable dogmas but rather an attitude toward life and the problems of life in which the freedom of individuals, minority groups and peoples is central. What has characterized liberalism at all times is its unshaken belief in the freedom of the individual. Liberals are deeply convinced that without liberty or freedom life is not worth living. Hence, they have always sought to free the individual from unjust and hampering restraints imposed upon him by

governments, institutions, and traditions.¹⁾ Human equality is another fundamental liberal principle. What equality here means is that all have equal rights before the law, and that all are entitled to civil liberty. Thus, liberalism has also waged an unceasing war against privilege, whether it be that of birth, wealth, race, creed, or sex, as an artificial hindrance to individual development.²⁾ Liberals also have a strong belief in progress (cf. Schapiro, 1958:9 - 13). By progress they mean that man has moved, is moving, and will move in a beneficial direction. According to the liberal view this progress results in transforming one system of society which is bad but not too bad, to another which is good but not too good. Liberals are convinced that mankind has always been advancing, steadily, continually, and inevitably to an ever better civilization. This belief in progress has inspired liberals to become the ardent advocates of reform of all kinds in order to create the good society of the future. Thus, reform has been the passion of liberalism.

The liberals see modern society as being in deep trouble. They do not, however, want to totally reject the society and the establishment. Since they have a strong belief in progress they accept the assumption that the present system is able to change and solve its problems creatively. The liberals accept the assumptions and needs of the establishment to be legitimate and thus choose to work (reform) within the system to bring about the changes they see as necessary for the expansion of freedom and the equality of the individual. The liberal's norm for action is the system itself (Gish, 1970:30; cf. Spring, 1977:10). Consequently, where the crisis of the modern school is concerned, the liberals wish to effect reforms within the school system, and setting it going along the well-known liberalist lines of individuality and freedom.³⁾

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1. Since the ideal of human freedom is valued to such a degree by the liberals, they insist that the modern school which they think stifles or hinders the free expansion of the child's freedom should be thoroughly reformed (see paragraphs 4.3.3 & 4.4).
 2. On this principle of human equality, the liberals have applied themselves to the process of equalization in the school (see paragraph 4.3).
 3. One can notice the fundamental difference between the liberals and the radicals regarding their respective views on the existing system and the establishment. The radicals see little hope for the future of the system or the so-called establishment (see paragraph 5.2.1).

The term "liberal" in this study is used to refer to those critics who put a high premium on the individual and on his freedom in societal life and especially in the school setting. In other words, it refers to those people who place the interests of the individual and the essential dignity of human personality at the centre of their life-concept. They are basically humanistic and apostatic instead of being theo-centric and anastatic. They are all on the "left" in the sense of the word defined in a previous paragraph (4.2.1).

4.3 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF LEFT LIBERAL EFFORTS TO REFORM THE SCHOOL

4.3.1 Orientation

In this study, especially two groups, namely, left liberals and left radicals, are differentiated according to their ways of approach to the crisis of the modern and contemporary school.⁴⁾ Those critics who work or want to reform within the school system or setting are regarded as left liberals and those who want to remove the school as an institution in its entirety are denoted as left radicals.

Analysis of the works concerning the criticism of the modern school has revealed that the following critics are fairly prominent figures in the field of school criticism as well as school reforming movement: Postman and Weingartner, Kohl, Silberman, Friedenberg, Dennison, Neill, Leonard, Kozol, Hentoff, Henry, Steiner, Herndon, Goodman, Reimer, Holt, Freire, and Illich.

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4. Modern school critics have been variously described as "the compassionate critics", as Van Till calls them (Shields, 1973:17), "romantics" (Schrag, 1967:80), "anarchists" (Havighurst, 1968:21) "new educational reformers" (Rich, 1974:163), "new critics" (Bosak, 1977:169), and "radicals" (Gross, 1971:23). They are usually divided into two major groups; the anarchists and the activists (or "institutional meliorists") (Havighurst, 1968); the humanistic critics and the Neo-Rousseauians (Husén, 1979); the Neo-progressives and the radical reformers (Rich, 1974:164 - 165); the radicals and the new ultra-radicals (Gross, 1971); the emancipatory pedagogics and the socialist pedagogics (Schoeman, 1980); the liberals and the radicals (Ravitch, 1978); and the left liberals and the left radicals (Van der Walt, 1980(b)).

Among these critics, Goodman, Reimer, Holt, Freire, and Illich can be classified into the left radical group and all the other critics into the left liberal group. This classification according to approach to school reform is supported by an analysis of their major works.⁵⁾ The point of distinction will become clearer in the course of discussing the school ideas of some left liberals and the left radicals in the following paragraphs and in chapter 5.

To review all the school ideas of the above-mentioned critics is, however, not the purpose of this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is, as already mentioned, to trace the general line of the school crisis with respect to the left liberal idea of the school. For this reason, in the following paragraphs, the school ideas of only six left liberals who were selected on an arbitrary basis are surveyed⁶⁾ and much more attention is given to one selected liberalist's, namely, to A.S. Neill's school idea.⁷⁾

4.3.2 Criticism of the school by left liberals

4.3.2.1 Neill Postman and Charles Weingartner

In Teaching as a subversive activity (1975), Postman and Weingartner make abundant observations about what is wrong with the schools. As with many writers advocating reform of the school, an analysis of what is actually happening in the schools is important to Postman and Weingartner.

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5. For the purpose of grouping, the following books which this writer regards as the major works of the above-mentioned school critics were initially analysed: Postman and Weingartner, 1975, Teaching as a subversive activity. Kohl, 1970, The open classroom. Silberman, 1970, Crisis in the classroom: the remaking of American education. Friedenberg, 1965, Coming of age in America. Dennison, 1969, The lives of children: The story of the First Street School. Neill, 1982, Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing. Leonard, 1979, Education and ecstasy. Kozol, 1972, Free schools. Hentoff, 1966, Our children are dying. Henry, 1972, Culture against man. Steiner, 1924, The essentials of education, and 1969, Education as a social problem. Herndon, 1968, The way it spozed to be. Goodman, 1971, Compulsory mis-education. Reimer, 1971, School is dead. Holt, 1964, How children fail and 1972, Freedom and Beyond. Freire, 1973, Pedagogy of the oppressed. Illich, 1972, Deschooling society.
 6. The left radical criticism of the school will discussed in chapter 5.
 7. On the motivation for the selection of Neill, see paragraph 4.4.1.

The points of criticism of the school by Postman and Weingartner are mainly the following, namely, the passive role of the student in the classroom, the detrimental effect of schooling on the growth of the child, and the irrelevant knowledge which is given in the school. They perceive all of these problems simply as situations going on in the school system at the present time.

In Teaching as a subversive activity, Postman and Weingartner mention many times the passivity of the student in the school (cf. Postman and Weingartner, 1975:27, 30 - 35, 54 - 56). The following is one instance of what they think is actually happening in the school concerning the passivity of the student:

Now, what is it that students do in the classroom? Well, mostly, they sit and listen to the teacher. Mostly, they are required to believe in authorities, or at least pretend to such belief when they take tests. Mostly, they are required to remember. They are almost never required to make observations, formulate definitions, or perform any intellectual operations that go beyond repeating what someone else says is true.

In most classrooms, Postman and Weingartner (1975:31 - 32) insist, teachers ask so-called convergent questions, which might simply be called "Guess what I am thinking" sort of questions. Students learn to guess how the teacher wants them to respond. In this way, they get to know that passive acceptance is a more desirable response to ideas than active criticism; discovering knowledge is beyond their power and is, in any case, none of their business; recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement, and the collection of unrelated "facts" is the goal of education; the voice of authority is to be trusted and valued more than independent judgment; there is always a single, unambiguous Right Answer to a question.

While teachers do not tell their students not to think or question, the message is communicated quietly, insidiously, relentlessly and effectively through the entire structure of the classroom: through the role of the teacher, the role of the student, the rules of their verbal game, the rights that are assigned, the arrangements made for communication, the things that are rewarded or not (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:33).

This passive role of the student in the school, according to Postman and Weingartner (1975:40), bears a remarkable similarity to the behaviour of others in the contemporary world, for instance, of those in industry. "In fact, the similarities between mass-production industries and most existing school environments are striking: five-day week, seven-hour day, one hour for lunch, careful division of labour for both teachers and students, a high premium on conformity and a corresponding suspicion of originality (or any deviant behaviour), and, most significantly, the administration's concern for product rather than process."⁸⁾ In this passage, Postman and Weingartner imply that the present form of schooling produces manipulated people fitting perfectly into contemporary society.

Postman and Weingartner also criticize the modern school because of its detrimental effect on the growth of the child. The school system is, they say, detrimental particularly to the disadvantaged child. "At present, the conventional school is a hostile place, especially to urban disadvantaged children. They do not learn what the school says it teaches, and they drop out - or are thrown out - of it as soon as they reach an age where this is legally possible" (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:150). They state this simply as a fact, as something which is actually happening in the schools. What is implied is the assumption by society that the fault lies with the disadvantaged.

Postman and Weingratner (1975:54) also argue that much of what goes on in schools today is irrelevant and useless to the lives of the learners and that the curriculum today is still largely designed to keep students from knowing themselves and their environment in any realistic sense. According to the view of Postman and Weingartner (1975:26), most teachers are still trying to teach "subjects" that mostly don't exist any more, and they are acting almost entirely as shills for corporate interests, moulding their students into passive functionaries for existing bureaucracies.⁹⁾

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8. This comparison is somewhat similar to Illich's. "Our analysis of schooling," says Illich (1973:xxiii), "has led us to recognize the mass production of education as a paradigm for other industrial enterprises, each producing a service commodity, each organized as a public utility, and each defining its output as a basic necessity."
 9. This is also a theme that runs throughout Illich's comments on schools. Illich continually asks the reader to consider more fully what is really being learned in the present structure of schooling (Illich, 1974(a):1 - 24).

This claim is illustrated by reference to examples of examination papers set on the civilizations of Egypt and Greece which are referred to as "pretentious trivia" (cf. Postman and Weingartner, 1975:55 - 56). The only relevance of the curriculum for the child is that, if he does what he is told, there will be a tangible payoff. The real game which is played in the modern school, say Postman and Weingartner (1975:56), is the so-called "Let's Pretend" game: both teachers and students pretend that students are not what they are, that the work assigned makes a difference to their lives, that what is boring is important, and that there are things everyone should know and these are timeless and fixed.

4.3.2.2 Herbert Kohl

Kohl's criticism of the school is mainly based on his teaching experiences in the rigid, hostile environment of a black ghetto school in New York City. Kohl first thought that his experiences in this Harlem school were somewhat unique and special, but later on he concluded that educational conditions in schools are more similar than different everywhere. He, thus, thought that the discoveries he made about himself and his students through his experiences as a teacher might also be applied to most schools whether they be urban, suburban, black, white, integrated, segregated, elementary, or secondary schools (Kohl, 1970:11 - 12).

Based on his teaching experiences, Kohl revealed lots of wrongs and constraints present in institutional schooling, and criticized the school situation in various ways. It is not easy to generalize about his points of criticism of the school, but they seem to be centred on five main issues, namely, the problems of labelling the students, the controlling function of the school, the so-called segregating function of the school, the authoritarian environment of the school, and the goals of the school as opposed to an individual's needs.

In The open classroom (1970), Kohl describes some forms of grouping and labelling students in the classroom:

There are top, middle, and bottom classes; A, B, C, and D 'streams.' No matter how schools try to conceal this grouping, the pupils know where they are placed. Bottom classes, the C and D streams, often tell their teachers at the beginning of the school year. 'You can't expect much from us. We're dumb.' Teachers know the type of class they are expected to be teaching. Before the teacher has even met his students his expectations of bright, mediocre, or dull individuals are set (Kohl, 1970:17 - 18).

Here, Kohl blames the grading or labelling system in use in the school as serving a sorting function, which is also accepted by society for its own purpose.¹⁰⁾ Moreover, Kohl implies in the above quoted passage that this sorting function of the school actually produces a self-concept in the student alien to true growth and education.

Another problem which Kohl noticed was that children in the school were rather controlled by teachers and by the whole process of schooling than being helped to develop their individuality and creativity. In assessing the role of a teacher in the school, Kohl (1970:12 - 13) especially remarks that the most important function of a teacher is to control and manipulate the children. Kohl (1970:23) is even afraid of the fact that students in the contemporary schools are already so used to controlling or being controlled by their teachers that they will often be harder on each other than are the most oppressive adults.

Kohl also comments on the segregation problems of the school. Since schooling in modern school is, for Kohl (1970:12), essentially equated with the process of controlling and manipulating, he insists that the process of schooling itself does separate or alienate the child from the real society and life of the child. The classroom, says Kohl (1970: 63), not only segregates young people from society but also segregates them from each other.¹¹⁾

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10. Illich also comments on school's labelling people and discovers a blind faith on the part of people in this labelling (cf. Illich, 1970:57).
 11. The modern school, according to Illich (1971(c):414), separates the children from all the facts and tools which they really need to shape their lives.

He (Kohl, 1970:12, 37) also criticizes the school because of its authoritarian and oppressive atmosphere in which students are deprived of the rights to make choices concerning their own destinies. For Kohl (1970: 11), the whole structure of school was authority itself. "The principal was at the top and the students were at the bottom. Somewhere in the middle was the teacher, whose role it was to impose orders from textbooks or supervisors upon the students. The teacher's only protection was that if students failed to obey instructions they could legitimately be punished or, if they were defiant, suspended or kicked out of school. There was no way for students to question the teachers' decisions or for teachers to question the decisions of their supervisors or authors of textbooks and teachers' manuals."

Finally, he criticizes the school because of its goals which are opposed or detrimental to the individual's real interests. In modern authoritarian schools, says Kohl (1970:93), the survival of the institutional school is considered as being more important than the survival of the students. It is of secondary importance if the rule of the school leads to the destruction of the students. Kohl (1970:116), thus, severely criticizes the school as follows: "Our schools are crazy. They do not serve the interests of adults, and they do not serve the interests of young people."¹²⁾

4.3.2.3 Charles Silberman

In an evaluation of school education following his three-and-a-half years' study supported by the Carnegie Corporation, which included visits to more than a hundred schools, Silberman revealed a great many problems inherent in the modern school.

12. On this point, Illich again agrees with Kohl. Illich also sees the goals of the school as being opposed to an individual's needs (cf. Illich, 1975:23 - 59).

First of all, Silberman (1970:109 - 111) found out that what is mostly wrong with the public school education has less to do with venality or indifference or incompetence than with mindlessness. Because of this mindlessness, Silberman (cf. 1970:53 - 54) insists, schools are failing to achieve their main tasks, which Silberman sees as being both equalizing and educating. Thus, he (Silberman, 1970:11) describes the crisis of the school in the following way:

This mindlessness - the failure to think seriously about educational purpose, the reluctance to question established practice - is not the monopoly of the public school; it is diffused remarkably evenly throughout the entire educational system, and indeed the entire society.

Most schools, for Silberman, are inhumane and do not treat children as persons, and thus they are not fit places for human beings. The schools are so obsessed with order and control such as a rigid timetable, maintaining silence and the absence of noise and movement, routine qua routine that they became grim and joyless places (Silberman, 1970:10, 113 - 157, 207). "It is not possible," says Silberman (1970:10), "to spend any prolonged period visiting public school classrooms without being appalled by the mutilation visible everywhere - mutilation of spontaneity, of joy in learning, of sense of self ... Because adults take the schools so much for granted, they fail to appreciate what grim, joyless places most American schools are, how oppressive and petty are the rules by which they are governed, how intellectually sterile and esthetically barren the atmosphere. What contempt they unconsciously display for children as children." It is clear to Silberman that schools have come to confuse means and ends.

Even worse, the schools deprive the students of their feelings of worth and ability to be responsible, according to Silberman (1970:134 - 136). In other words, the schools are failing to meet the needs of people, that is, to develop sensitive, autonomous, thinking, human individuals. Far from helping students to develop into mature, self-reliant, self-motivated individuals, schools, Silberman (1970:134) insists, do everything they can to keep children in a state of chronic, almost infantile, dependency. The pervasive atmosphere of distrust, together with rules

covering the most minute aspects of existence, teach students every day that they are not people of worth, and certainly not individuals capable of regulating their own behaviour. In this atmosphere, schools discourage students from developing the capacity to learn by and for themselves and thus lead students to destroy their curiosity along with their ability to think or act for themselves.

The unnatural and hostile relationship between teachers and students is, for Silberman, also another piece of evidence of the crisis of the school. A major source of the underlying hostility, contends Silberman (1970:138), is the preoccupation with grades. The purpose of grading should be diagnostic: to indicate where teachers and students have gone wrong and how they might improve their performance. And since students will have to judge their own performance, they need experience in self-evaluation. However, says Silberman, schools rarely evaluate in this way. The purpose of grading in the schools is just rating and sorting: to produce grades that enable administrators to rate and sort children, to categorize them into rigid and inescapable categories.

With regard to the curriculum, Silberman (1970:173) contends that much of what is taught is not worth knowing as a child, let alone as an adult, and little will be remembered. The curriculum in most schools is banal and trivial. Students are simply taught to memorize a vast quantity of unrelated data. The curriculum reforms of the 1950's and 1960's, according to Silberman, did not deal with the problem of relevance. They essentially did no more than repackage contents, by imposing a new logic on old subject matter. The reforms came in response to the criticism of the essentialists that the schools were academically weak and "soft", and were developed by University scholars, who had little if any concern for the student except as an empty vessel into which knowledge was to be poured. They knew what they wanted children to learn; they did not think to ask what children wanted to learn. But the most fatal error of all was the failure to ask: what is education for? (Silberman, 1970:180). Thus, for Silberman, the crisis of the school, especially regarding the school curriculum, is partly due to the fact that it is rare to find anyone - teacher, principal, supervisor or superintendent - who has asked why he is teaching what he is teaching.

4.3.2.4 Edgar Z. Friedenberg

Friedenberg's criticism of the school is predominantly concerned with the conformist nature of schooling. Based on his ideological élitism, Friedenberg is first severely critical of the conformist nature of American egalitarianism in general. He holds that nearly all American social institutions exert strong pressure against the individual and individualism in order to produce an other-directed, conformist, safe citizen; the autonomous inner-directed person is viewed as a threat to the stability of the social order and as being troublesome to the status quo. This mandate for conformity has, according to Friedenberg, produced fear of autonomy and individuality on a total scale. Every institution, Friedenberg contends, places a premium on "adjustment", as opposed to individuality.

In this egalitarian society, the school is no exception. Schools teach students to become "mass" persons to fit a mass society. The school, according to Friedenberg (1965:235), avoids challenging the values and assumptions underlying the common-man pattern, leaving its students to pick up the fashions of higher status as they need them, and to treat these as "decorative adjustments" to life at a higher level. For the present, while in school, the shabby-genteel life is exactly what the students are required to enjoy. He (Friedenberg, 1964:xii) holds that the school is the instrument through which society acculturates people into consenses before they become old enough to resist it as effectively as they could later. Furthermore, the emphasis of the schools is increasingly directed towards internal conformity. Thus, the young find neither themselves nor other persons and become increasingly alienated.

Friedenberg (1964:75) objects to such a kind of schooling and sees this as alien to true educational purposes. He believes that the primary function of the school ought to be the development of individual identity in youth and sees the development of competence as being essential to the formation of individual identity. "In a world as empirical as ours, a youngster who does not know what he is good at will not be sure what he is good for; he must know what he can do in order to know who he is"

(Friedenberg, 1964:40). Since he believes that competence is essential to the development of a strong individual identity, Friedenberg insists that schools ought to increase greatly their emphasis on the development of competence in the child. Yet the schools, according to Friedenberg, are not doing this; rather, they are increasingly emphasizing adjustment to group norms and cooperative standards of behaviour. Thus, the modern schools, says Friedenberg(1965:13, 218), do succeed in creating a common cultural vision, but fail totally in the problem of clarifying experience; that is, the school succeeds in its social function while failing the individual.

The schools, accordingly, have no respect for the young as individual human beings, says Friedenberg. In Vanishing Adolescent he is concerned with the system's violation of the human dignity of the young; while this violation is performed in a strategically well-meaning and friendly way, it really implies a contempt for students as human beings (Friedenberg, 1964:86).

In short, Friedenberg perceives the school as failing to recognize competence, establish identity, and to respect the individual. As an institution, the school fails to do these things in many ways. In other words, the rights of students are violated in a number of ways according to Friedenberg. Compulsory school attendance, among others, may be considered as a main cause for these violations. Therefore, on the issue of compulsory education, Friedenberg (1965:42) states as follows:¹³⁾

Compulsory school attendance functions as a bill of attainder against a particular age group, so the first thing the young learn in a school is that there are certain sanctions and restrictions that apply only to them, that they do not participate fully in the freedoms guaranteed by the state, and that, therefore, these freedoms do not really partake of the character of inalienable rights.

13. Friedenberg's criticism of compulsory education mirrors that of Goodman but deserves separate consideration because the conclusions he draws from his analysis and the recommendations that he makes for the reorganization of education are radically different from those of left radicals like Reimer, Holt, Goodman and Illich (cf. chapter 5).

Friedenberg disapproves of compulsory school attendance in itself. He sees no valid moral reason for the rule. The economic reasons are compelling enough, but are likewise contemptible. The social reasons for compulsory school attendance are fairly obvious since the family has lost many of its functions through adaptation to social change and now has no more place for its young than any other social institution has and no real basis for dealing with them. Nevertheless, he finds it odd that children should, as a rule, be confined.

4.3.2.5 George Dennison

Dennison, who shares the libertarian views of A.S. Neill, sees the main function of school not as teaching or instruction but as providing intimate personal relationships. He (Dennison, 1969:7) insists that we should cease thinking of school as a place, and come to believe that school is basically a matter of relationships. The whole essence of education, for Dennison, is the provision of a relationship which allows the child's natural learning to occur. "The educational function does not rest upon our ability to control, or our will to instruct, but upon our human nature and the nature of experience... The task of educator is to provide experience. In order to do this, he must first interact with his students, not as a teacher, but as a person" (Dennison, 1969:246, 256).

The central aim of education, says Dennison (1969:260), is the growth of the individual self, in other words, the richness of experience of the child. The growth of the self, according to Dennison, takes place only in the face-to-face quality of relationships and in a high degree of personalism in all of the activities in the school. In this way, for Dennison, the relationships between children and adults, adults and adults, and children and their peers have a vital importance in the educational situation.

However, these intimate human relationships can never be established under such conditions as compulsion, formal discipline and a bureaucratic system of schooling. These conditions create anonymity and anxiety, and

an impersonal quality of show and look. For the children, says Dennison (1969:22), it is like walking through a department store, looking at a thousand things but touching nothing.

Desirable human relationships, says Dennison (1969:21), are the result of freedom. Here, freedom means not only an absence of the usual pedagogical restraints found in most schools. It means basically two things: the trusting of some true organic bond existing between the wishes of the children and their actual needs, and encouraging their childish desiring to take on the qualities of decision-making. It thus helps children to restore their pride and confidence, and ultimately enables the growth of the self. "Our concern for freedom is our concern for fulfillment - of activities we deem important and of persons we know are unique. To give freedom means to stand out of the way of the formative powers possessed by others" (Dennison, 1969:4).

The concepts of relationship and freedom are Dennison's main pre-occupations, and to a large extent they should constitute the curriculum of the school. Dennison's criticism of the modern school, although his work is not mainly an angry indictment of the present school system, is based on these two concepts which he thinks can make true education possible.

Since relationships are so important for Dennison he is vehemently critical of the centralization and the bureaucratic characteristics of the modern school. The present quagmire of public education, says Dennison (1969:9), is entirely the result of unworkable centralization and the lust for control that permeates every bureaucratic institution. He (Dennison, 1969:259) contends that education is not presently lived but administered, and Americans as a nation, have became a wretched hogwallow of administrative functions. In this mire the children have become victims of one of the largest bureaucracies of all, the school.

He is also strongly against all the conventional school routines which he thinks constitute a merely external order: the military discipline, the schedules, the competitive kind of tests, grades, seating arrangements according to the teacher's convenience, the punishments and rewards, report cards, home-work, standardization, guarded corridors and closed rooms,

and the category of truant. For Dennison (1969:97), all these things belong to an environment of coercion and control that destroys children's potential for the growth of the self. Creators of such an environment have not consulted the needs of normal growth, or the special needs of those whose growth has already been impaired.

Because the present school system, according to Dennison (1969:74), does not rest upon children's freedom or liberation, and thus is a horrendous, life-destroying mess, the powers of mind of the child are nipped in the bud, or are held inoperative. And because of precisely this reason also, the schools treat children like little robots, and it is obvious, for Dennison, that this kind of education cannot produce free, democratic adults. Dennison (1969:88) declares:

We cannot raise children to be free men by treating them like little robots; we cannot produce adult democrats by putting children in lock step and placing all decisions in the hands of authorities. Nor can we enhance the moral prestige of school by basing the entire institution on the act of force which compels attendance.

4.3.3 School reforms suggested by left liberals

4.3.3.1 Postman and Weingartner: The inquiry method

In suggesting ideas for school reform, Postman and Weingartner place great emphasis upon the curriculum and upon teaching methods. They have a strong conviction that the medium itself is the message. This implies that the invention of a dichotomy between content and method is both naive and dangerous. It also implies that the critical content of any learning experience is the method or process through which learning occurs (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:30). Hence, the method advocated by Postman and Weingartner is basically an inquiry method.

The inquiry method is based on learning how to ask questions, which leads to learning how to discover answers. According to Postman and Weingartner

(1975:34), knowledge is produced in response to questions, and new knowledge results from the asking of new questions. In this sense, Postman and Weingartner (1975:34) say that "... once you have learned how to ask questions - relevant and appropriate and substantial questions - you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know".

The inquiry method, insist Postman and Weingartner, is a new medium and its messages are different from those usually communicated to students. The inquiry method itself, they say, is a message and a process. Furthermore it is an attempt at redesigning the structure of the school. "It is not a refinement or extension or modification of older school environment. It is a different message altogether, and ... its impact will be unique and revolutionary" (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:37).

This method, they (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:38) contend, eventually can change the whole structure of the school. It activates different senses, attitudes and perceptions; it generates a different, bolder and more potent kind of intelligence. It will, consequently, cause all of education's present concepts about teachers, tests, grading systems, curriculums and college admissions to change.

In advocating the inquiry method as a most effective means of meeting the problems or the so-called crisis of the modern school, Postman and Weingartner have suggested many and varied ideas for school reform. They (Postman and Weingartner, 1975:134 - 137) have, for instance, a specific list of proposals that attempt to change the nature of the existing school environment:

1. Declare a five-year moratorium on the use of all textbooks.
2. Have English teachers teach maths, maths teachers English, social studies teachers science, science teachers art, and so on.
3. Transfer all the elementary-school teachers to high school and vice versa.
4. Require every teacher who thinks he knows his subject well to write a book on it.
5. Dissolve all subjects, courses, and especially course requirements.

6. Limit each teacher to three declarative sentences per class, and fifteen interrogatives.
7. Prohibit teachers from asking any questions they already know the answer to.
8. Declare a moratorium on all tests and grades.
9. Require all teachers to undergo some form of psychotherapy as part of their in-service training.
10. Classify teachers according to their ability and make the lists public.
11. Require all teachers to take a test prepared by students on what the students know.
12. Make every class an elective and withhold a teacher's monthly cheque if his students do not show any interest in going to next month's classes.
13. Require every teacher to take a one-year leave of absence every fourth year to work in some field other than education.
14. Require each teacher to provide some sort of evidence that he or she has had a loving relationship with at least one other human being.
15. Require that all the graffiti accumulated in the school toilets be reproduced on large paper and be hung in the school halls.
16. There should be a general prohibition against the use of the following words and phrases: teach, syllabus, covering ground, IQ, make-up, test, disadvantaged, gifted, accelerated, enhancement, course, grade, score, human nature, dumb, college material and administrative necessity.

These suggestions make it clear that Postman and Weingartner are proposing a rather drastic departure from current school practice. However, their ideas for school reform imply the retention of the school (system or setting) (cf. Postman and Wingartner, 1975:16, 199). Their hope is that, as Barrow (1978:8) says, by eliminating school preoccupation with subjects and by means of a curriculum based on the inquiry method, one can develop in each individual the ability to see and condemn the evil and absurdity inherent in the accepted manners and beliefs of contemporary society.

4.3.3.2 Kohl: The open classroom

The answer for the problems or the so-called crisis of the school, for Kohl, is the implementation within the schools of a truly-functioning open classroom.

The open classroom which is suggested by Kohl resembles a community in which students and their teacher work together. It is a means of making the classroom less authoritarian by freeing children from regimentation and punishment in the public schools. It is also a way of seeing students as individuals of worth and respect, not as reckless, unpredictable, immoral, and dangerous enemies. Central to Kohl's idea of the open classroom is a belief in the potential of the child to know what he wants to learn and how to learn it, a willingness to give up the notion of fixed truths or values, and a belief in the desirability and ultimate validity of freedom for the individual learner in the process of education and schooling.

The open classroom is totally different from the authoritarian classroom. In the authoritarian classroom, says Kohl (1970:31), there is no place for argument or conflict, nor is there time for teachers and pupils to learn how to live with and listen to each other. There is no give-and-take. The teachers direct their talk to the teacher, and obey the teacher's rules. Conflict, defiance, and disagreement are regarded as disciplinary problems and offenders must be punished. In an open classroom, however, there is considerable give-and-take, argument, disagreement, sometimes chaos. The open classroom concept of teaching attempts to put students more in touch with themselves, others, and the world instead of segregating them from society and from each other. This suggests that the teacher in an open classroom should act as a moderator rather than as a judge and an executioner.

However, the open classroom, contends Kohl (1970:15), is not to be equated with a permissive environment in which anything and everything is permitted. In an authoritarian classroom annoying behaviour is legislated out of existence. In a permissive classroom the teacher pretends it isn't

annoying. He also permits students to behave only in certain ways, thereby retaining the authority over their behaviour he pretends to be giving up. In an open situation the teacher tries to express what he feels and to deal with each situation as a communal problem.

Noting that the open classroom might very well constitute a threat to the teachers in a traditional school where the maintenance of control is a central concern, Kohl (1970:82 - 83) recommends the subtle, even subversive ploy of pretending to play the traditional game while working quietly and unobtrusively toward the means and ends of open education.

In this way, Kohl suggests many possible changes in the modern school, but he does not question the right of existence of schooling. Kohl seems to imply that reforms should take place within the present school system. "A teacher," states Kohl (1970:82), "can develop a classroom as open as is consistent with his survival in a given school".

4.3.3.3 Silberman: The British infant school

Since Silberman has attributed the failure of schools, first of all, to mindlessness, namely, to the lack of direction and purpose in schools, he (Silberman, 1970:11) proposes a general solution to the problem:

If mindlessness is the central problem, the solution must lie in infusing the various educating institutions with purpose, more important, with thought about purpose, and about the ways in which techniques, content, and organization fulfill or alter purpose.

Thus, all educators, including school teachers, principals and even the mass-media, according to Silberman, must be stimulated to think about what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

Based upon this general direction for school reform, Silberman (cf. 1970: 207 - 522) suggests many specific recommendations for improving the school.

He proposes, especially, the British infant schools, which are also known as British primary or free day schools, as a model for school reform. Silberman (1970:114) sees the goal of education as producing creative, humane beings, and considers the main function of the school as providing a liberal, humanizing education. Therefore, he is convinced that the British primary school can be a model for school reform. These schools, for Silberman, seem to combine freedom, dignity, individual attention, and emotional growth without ignoring the intellectual development of the child.

Silberman (1970:273) contends that headmasters or principals in British primary schools have a great deal of autonomy over their schools' organization, time-table, and curriculum. And they in turn give teachers much more freedom and responsibility in determining instructional programmes and materials. As a result, teachers too give their children a great deal of freedom and autonomy. In addition, the school itself is characterized by flexible grouping, informality of classroom arrangements and procedures, pupil self-direction, and de-emphasis of ability grouping. There is also less control of pupil behaviour.

All these things mean, according to Silberman (1970:230 - 232), that childhood and children in these schools are respected, and that the school experience is recognized as being important in itself, not simply as preparation for adult life. Teachers and administrators in these schools take seriously the belief in the dignity of the child as a unique individual and believe that learning can take place constantly in a stimulating, responsive, and non-threatening situation. The ideals of these schools are to make education not only child-centred and individualized, but also open-structured and unoppressive.

From the above discussion it is obvious that Silberman would wish to see a greater degree of freedom of the child, more self-direction, and a basic change in the direction of the school. It should, however, be noted that he envisions this as taking place within the school system or school setting. "The question, of course, is whether this can happen in the public schools - whether existing institutions can reverse the reign of error that leads to failure, or whether success depends on the creation of new

institutions. The answer is that it can be done in the public schools" (Silberman, 1970:98). According to Silberman, schools can be humane, and genuinely concerned with gaiety and joy and individual growth and fulfillment without sacrificing a concern for intellectual discipline and development.¹⁴⁾

4.3.3.4 Friedenberg: The diversification of the school

Friedenberg does not suggest many specific recommendations for school reform. He does, however, offer some general directions that he thinks the school reformers should take. First of all, since Friedenberg believes, as has been indicated in the previous paragraph (cf. 4.3.2.4), that competence is essential to the development of strong individual identity, he suggests that the school should be a place where children can find out what they are good at, be it scholastic or vocational skills. In other words, the school should be a place where children can discover their personal talents and gain pride and a sense of being. Raising the school's standards of scholarship or discipline is not the answer to the present failure of the school; in fact, these further restrictions may cause great alienation, says Friedenberg (1964:143 - 144).

If the school is to be a place where children can develop their competence, Friedenberg (1965:240) insists that children must not be compelled to submit to year after year of an education that denatures them. He is of opinion that the school must not be compelled to accommodate the hordes of youngsters unqualified by earlier experience to participate in its specialized educational functions for which they are unqualified and in which they see no value. In short, Friedenberg wants to end compulsory education and permit those who have academic ambition to have the freedom to choose to go to school. However, he does not specify what alternatives should exist to satisfy compulsory attendance. He just believes in provi-

14. Since left radicals advocate the deschooling of society, they would not be in agreement with Silberman on this point (see chapter 5).

ding other opportunities for those who are not academically inclined.

Friedenberg also suggests giving a wider range of alternatives to public schools. He (Friedenberg, 1965:257) proposes three kinds of public support for schooling, namely, the existing locally supported public school system, private and parochial school system, and a totally federally supported boarding school system. This diversification of schools, says Friedenberg (1965:250), might serve the specialized, rather than mass, needs of youth as well as a wide variety of social demands. Moreover, this system, according to Friedenberg (1965:253), could provide desperately needed alternative life-styles and ethical models.

Although Friedenberg seeks to end compulsory school attendance he does not object to the public school system itself. He stressed this point very clearly. "It is, I would very strongly stress, the compulsory feature alone that I object to. Public education, in the sense of a system of publicly supported schools open without charge to any student who wishes to attend them, is not a debatable issue" (Friedenberg, 1965:249 - 250). Furthermore, though opposed to compulsory schooling, Friedenberg does not foresee any great change or mitigation of this requirement. Consequently, his recommendations are offered without any pretensions of change within the present school structure.

4.3.3.5 Dennison: The First Street School

Dennison's proposals for school reform are embodied in his involvement with the First Street School. The school consisted of twenty-three black, white and Puerto Rican children, ages five to thirteen, from low-income families in the lower East Side of New York City; their three full-time teachers; and a part-time teacher, George Dennison, who has described the school in his book The Lives of Children (1969). The school was founded in 1964 by Mabel Chrystie and was supported by a private grant. It was influenced by the writings of A.S. Neill on Summerhill.

The First Street School was from the first experimental and put great emphasis on the individual and on his freedom, namely, on the ideal of human

personality. The school was conceived of not simply as a place for instruction, but as an environment for growth, which takes place in relationships, relationships between children and adults, adults and adults, and children and other children. Therefore all conventional school routine was abolished in this school. There were no grades, no graded report cards, no competitive tests. No child was compelled to study or answer questions when he did not want to. The children enjoyed a great deal of freedom of choice and freedom of movement (cf. Dennison, 1969:98).

The First Street School tried to provide the children with what Dennison (1969:211) called a "healing" environment, one characterized by acceptance and forgiving, involvement in group activities according to individual attraction to and capacities for these, pressures balanced with flexibility, lack of all formal punishment, encouragement of friendship, praise, much physical activity and contact, access to skills and modes of behaviour that are pleasurable and lead to confidence and security, and immediate rewards for growth. In this way, while the present public school is huge, impersonal, and bureaucratic, the First Street School was, for Dennison, regarded as an antidote to the dehumanization of the contemporary public school system.

Dennison suggests the First Street School as a model for school reform. This means that he regards the ideal of human freedom and individuality as the key to the directions which all future reform must take. Any solution which perpetuates the existing authoritarian bureaucracy, says Dennison (1969:279 - 280), is doomed to failure. However, he does not suggest that the First Street School be the model for an entire system of education. He proposes that sort of healing environment as an indispensable first step and a continuing foundation for school reform. He (1969:260 - 261) states as follows:

I do propose the kinds of relationships we established at First, the kinds of freedom enjoyed by teachers and children and parents, the respect for experience, the absence of compulsion, the faith in the inherent sociability of children; I do propose all these as the environmental model for an entire system, for they belong intrinsically to the educational experience, and not just to the rationale of a school.

While Dennison sees that society must overcome the crisis of the school, he concludes that this must be accomplished in and through the schools. "No school at all," contends Dennison (1969:213), "amounts to neglect, for no other provisions have been made." He has hope that reform is possible: "It will not be an easy matter to bring our berserk technocracy under control, but we can control the environment of the schools" (Dennison, 1969:6). This shows that Dennison strongly expresses himself in favour of reform of the school.

4.4 THE SCHOOL IDEA OF ONE ^ESLECTED LEFT LIBERAL: A.S. Neill (1883 - 1973)

4.4.1 Orientation

A.S. Neill may be counted as the most representative figure among the left liberals who put a high premium on individuality and on the freedom of the child. He advocated an extreme child-centred approach in education and schooling. Moreover, he actually put his ideal of total freedom for the child into operation in a school setting.

His book Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing (1962), which discusses the philosophical and psychological basis of the Summerhill School, has exerted an enormous influence on the free school movement throughout the world. It has become the guiding light (Hopkins, 1976:188) or a bible (Broudy, 1972:259) for advocates of the free school movement and of informal education. In America, the book Summerhill, says Hart (1973:4), became required reading in 600 university courses. Broderick (1974:685), who did his research on Neill's impact on American education, said that no other book has had a greater impact on American education within the past decade, and perhaps within the last century.

Neill's school idea is certainly "radical" in the sense that he went to extremes in his idea of freedom for the child in the school. Therefore, it can be reasonably said that Neill's criticism of the school and his idea of school reform along the liberalist line include mostly the libe=

ral's ideas of the school. For these reasons, A.S. Neill has been selected. His school idea is discussed in some more detail in the following paragraphs.

4.4.2 Biographical sketch of A.S. Neill

Alexander Sutherland Neill was born on 17 October, 1883, in Forfar, Scotland. His father, George Neill, was a schoolmaster and a very firm disciplinarian. He seemed to Neill sternness itself. Neill feared his father and could not love him, although he admired him as a teacher. Thus, as Lawton (1977:70) says, it would not seem far-fetched to suggest that a good many of Neill's attitudes to authority are connected with his rebellion against the values and standards of his parent. Neill loved his mother, who was a busy homemaker, but she was a snob and was often ailing. Neill relates an instance of her repressive prudery which he says marked him for life. When he was six and his sister Clunie was five, their mother caught them at sex play and punished them severely. "This incident affected my life for many years," says Neill (1972:79 - 80) later on in his autobiography, "not only forcing me to associate sex with sin but also giving me a fixation on Clunie, who was connected with the forbidden fruit."

At the age of fourteen Neill began to work, but he failed both as a clerk and as a tailor's assistant. His disappointed father put him in his own school to be a student teacher. Here Neill served for four years during his later teens, again doing poorly in his qualifying exams. Later on he moved to Kettle School and served for three years as a young dominie. Here he discovered what real discipline was like: "All pupils moved in military style; and everyone, including myself, was insincere, inhuman, fearful" (Neill, 1972:98).

He finally received his acting-teacher's certificate and taught for another few years at Newport. In 1908, not wanting to teach again, Neill went to Saint Andrew's University to study agriculture. The following year, however, he changed to English, studying under George Saintsbury and taking his M.A. in 1912. His view of his university education is exceedingly

critical: he felt he was taught neither to exercise independence of thought in relation to literature nor to care about its content. Then at the age of twenty-nine he took his first trip to London in the hope of a career in journalism.

After he also could not achieve success with a career as a writer, Neill took a position as temporary headmaster at Gretna Green School, where for the first time he began thinking seriously about education. Out of this experience came his early book, A Dominie's Log (1915). At this school he tried to put his educational ideas into practice. Some progressive people welcomed his ideas of freedom, but most people were opposed to him. In 1917 he was drafted into the army, and it was around this time that he became acquainted with Homer Lane who ran the Little Commonwealth School. When Neill visited this school he found that this was the school of which Neill himself had dreamed. The school was run on the basis of the child's total freedom. Neill promised Lane that they would work together when he was discharged from the army.

Unfortunately, however, when Neill went to see Lane, the Little Commonwealth School had been closed. He had to look for work elsewhere and taught at John Rullell's King Alfred School. This school was fairly progressive at that time and acknowledged the freedom of the child to a great extent. Yet the ideal of total freedom which Neill had had in mind could not be accepted even in this school. Thus, Neill left in disappointment in 1920.

Neill, then, realized that education which was based on the real freedom of the child would not be actualized in the present school system. Thus, in 1921 he founded an international school in Hellerau, near Dresden, with Dr. Otto Neustätter. Neill dates this as the beginning of the Summerhill School, in which he applied his educational principles until a few years before his death on Sunday, 23 September 1973.

4.4.3 Neill's lifeview (cosmoscope)

It goes without saying that one's lifeview is determined by his views of God (or god). In other words, God (or gods) is (are) determinant for our lifeview, and religion¹⁵⁾ is the ground of it. Religion embraces the whole person. Man alone possesses religion, because he was created in the image of God. One's lifeview is therefore determined by his religion (Van der Walt & Dekker, 1983:180 - 181; De Klerk, 1975:13).

For Neill there exists no God of the Bible. He did not believe in an Almighty God who created heaven and earth. His own faith, if any, was Deistic and was directed toward the goodness of God, if not the godliness of good. For Neill, most of what passed for religion was the source of the indignity of man: original sin, taboo, fear, restriction, and worst of all, hypocrisy (Brumbaugh & Lawrence, 1973:164). For him, there was no sin at all. Thus, he did not accept Christ as the Redeemer of our sins. God was, for Neill (1982:322), the goodness in the child and Christ was merely a good man who encouraged people to act according to the goodness in them. What we call sin was regarded by Neill only as sickness, the result of ignorance and fear. The greatest crime for Neill was to force something on to a child or to introduce fear into a child's life.

Consequently, Neill declared that he could not accept the exposition of the Bible about the origin of the cosmos as summarized in Genesis. Genesis, says Neill (1915:67), is a story told to children, to a people who were children in understanding. He was a supporter of the theory of evolution, according to which everything came into existence by gradual, spontaneous and natural development.

The world was, for Neill (1917:19, 32), out of joint, sick, unhappy, neurotic, inclined to hate and war, full of sorrow and horror. To this insane world, says Neill (1982:101), the child was forced to fit himself. In this way, the grown-ups have failed to make the world better than the gigantic slum it is. The only way to improve the world is to unlock the goodness in the child. The world can be made a better place, says Neill

15. On the meaning of the term religion, see paragraph 1.7.3.

(1917:32), only if the child is allowed to develop his personality free from discipline, fear and lies. The fault does not lie with the child. There is no such thing as a problem child; there are only problem-parents. Possibly it is better to assert, he (Neill, 1982:102) said, that there exists only a problem-mankind.

All the crimes, hatred, and wars, according to Neill (1982:37), have their origin in unhappiness. No happy man has ever caused trouble in a meeting, or has incited war or has lynched a Negro. No happy wife has ever nagged her husband or her children for something. No happy man has ever committed murder or theft. No happy employer has ever instilled fear into his employees. Therefore, in Neill's lifeview, to maintain a happy life takes the first and most important place. "The aim of life," says Neill (1982:109), "is to find happiness. The evil of life is all that limits or destroys happiness."

Happiness, however, one must experience now, here on earth, says Neill. It should not be a dream about the future. The quality of life in the here and now takes precedence over efforts to prepare for the future (and the hereafter). One must, therefore, learn to live by living. In this connection, Neill took a hedonistic view of life: one must eat, drink, and be merry, because life is short (Neill, 1936:169).

The happiness of the child depends on the quality of love and approval which he receives from the adult. Happiness can not be gained by hate, punishment, and oppression, but only by love. Love is a vital necessity for a happy life. Love and happiness always go together. Therefore says Neill (1936:150): "The only criterion of life is love, and the only aim is happiness. But it must be creative love, not asking for but giving."

Other factors which can contribute as allies of love to man's happiness are, among others, the following: the absence of hate, fear and compulsion, obstruction and external authority. Also the correct approach of sex plays a prominent part. There must be more freedom and less repression. Control by others is a hindrance rather than a help. What is good for a person is what he desires, and adults, contends Neill (1982:114), have no right to impose their notions of good and evil on children, because a

child will learn what is right and wrong in due time.

Neill convinced himself that man is essentially good and that man does not need to be a sinner (Neill, 1982:20; 1968:36). He reads like a paraphrase of Rousseau:

We had a complete belief in the child as a good, not an evil, being. For almost forty years this belief in the goodness of the child has never wavered; it rather has become a final faith. My view is that the child is innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing (Neill, 1982:20).

The innate goodness of the child, according to Neill, will remain so if all opportunity for hate and fear is eliminated by a changed society and if the child is allowed to develop in freedom. Thus, for Neill, man's aim is not to glorify God but rather to eliminate hate and fear for man's happiness.

To summarize, Neill had a non-Christian and an anti-Christian lifeview. His lifeview is based on totally humanistic, hedonistic, and evolutionistic grounds. The three keywords in his lifeview are love, freedom, and happiness, which correspond to a great degree to the slogan of the French Revolution (although Neill himself never mentioned it).

4.4.4 Neill's views of the essence, aim, and content of education

4.4.4.1 The essence and aim of education

Neill's ideas on the essence and aim of education are partly the logical result of his lifeview and partly the result of his practical teaching experience of more than a half-century.

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph (cf. 4.4.3), Neill supported

the evolutionist theory about the origin of the cosmos and of man. Both the cosmos and man were, for Neill, not creatures of God but had evolved to the present state by the process of gradual, spontaneous, and natural development or becoming. Likewise, he viewed education from this evolutionist point of view. He (Neill, 1982:20) regarded education as a process of gradual, spontaneous, and natural growth or unlocking of the goodness in the child from within . This implies that all authoritative discipline, direction, suggestion, moral training, religious instruction, and any kind of external compulsion would have no place in the process of education. Neill (1982:101) claimed that it was rather a crime against the nature of the child and at the same time the root of all the evils of the world to impose any external restraints and regulations upon the child.

Neill (1982:36) holds that happiness in the here and now is the main goal of life and, therefore, of education. And by happiness, Neill means man's real inner contentment. "If the word happiness means anything," says Neill (1982:308), "it means an inner feeling of well-being, a sense of balance, a feeling of being contented with life." Therefore, the chief aim of education, for Neill, might be formulated to help a child to live its life fully. In other words, to cultivate the ability of the child to work joyfully and to live positively was the chief aim of education. Neill even wanted to go further and he insisted that the aim should be to help a child to live its cosmic life fully, to live for others. Every man, according to Neill (1920:128 - 129), is egocentric, selfish, but there are degrees of selfishness. One person enjoys the possession of a new car. Another one enjoys helping the poor. The latter's selfishness has become altruism; that is, in pleasing himself he has managed to please others. The aim in education is not to abolish selfishness, but is to adduce or elicit this selfishness which is altruistic.

But, how can the child find and acquire inner contentment? Neill's answer to this question is that happiness can be bestowed only by abolishing authority and letting the child be himself, surrounded by love.

Neill (1982:20, 36; cf. Hopkins, 1976:189) was strongly convinced that happiness was defined by each individual for himself and the child knows best what will make him happy. Indeed, the underlying doctrine in Neill's views of education was a belief in the innate goodness of the child and a total rejection of any kind of external authority in the handling and development of his character and capacities.

Now, if each child can best define happiness for himself by virtue of his innate ability, it is, consequently, through freedom that an individual can best find happiness. Happiness, says Neill (1982:308), "can exist only when one feels free".

Each individual therefore has the right to determine his own goals in life, and, also in education. Hence, the whole idea of education, for Neill, was release: allowing a child to live out his natural interests. Neill (1982:27) claims that the function of the child is to live his own life - not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best; all this interference and guidance on the part of adults only produce a generation of robots.

In this way, the ideal of personal freedom is taken into account in Neill's view of education to the extreme: so much so that it is sometimes difficult to see why he regarded it as necessary to have schools or teachers at all. It is even of little importance, according to Neill, to learn subjects of any kind, because he thinks that children cannot be made to learn anything without their being robbed of will and turned into obedient, mechanical, scared, conforming adults.

To summarize, Neill took a broad view of education as the means of learning how to live one's own free life abundantly. The chief aim of education must thus be to make the child happy, and it can mainly be accomplished by freedom, love, and approval. Education was, for Neill, a preparation for a life of happiness in the here and now. The quality of living in the here and now, for Neill, takes precedence over efforts to prepare for the future (including the hereafter). Here, one can clearly notice Neill's

thoroughgoing humanistic and liberalistic views of education which can never be accepted by the true Christian.

4.4.4.2 The content of education

Since Neill took a broad view of education as the means of learning how to live one's own free and happy life, he paid little attention to the issue of school subjects or curriculum in the school (cf. Neill, 1982: 40; 1948:30). In his teaching practice, he also did not express an opinion on specific curricula, except in his reference to the Hellerau school (Hemmings, 1973:45).

In his later experiments Neill was even less conscious of the need to be concerned about the content of education. Neill appeared to have no kind of theory about worthwhile knowledge and activities in education. The only criterion of worthwhileness which appeared to be relevant to him was whether it interested the child or not. Neill seemed to be of the opinion that the child himself would ask for instruction of his own free will and study in the direction in which he was interested and therefore the school should not compel him to study a subject.

Neill wanted to distinguish clearly between education and book-learning. According to him, the latter was one of the things without which man could manage and books are the least important apparatus in a school (Neill, 1982:38). The greatest part of the work which the teacher did was simply a waste of time, energy and patience; it deprived the youth of his right to play and made the child literally old before his time. Study was only important for those who wanted to learn to acquire knowledge which would suit their originality and giftedness.

According to the view expressed by Neill it is not the book-learning or the acquisition of ready-made knowledge which is important, but surely also character forming and personality development. For Neill, book-learning has value only with respect to the three R's. He sees no value in ordinary school subjects. School subjects, for Neill (1982:37), do not

matter a jot compared to the larger question of life's natural fulfilment and of man's inner happiness. One of Neill's objections to the traditional schools is that they incorporate a great deal of knowledge or learning that he sees as useless or irrelevant. "What," asks Neill (1982:325), "is the use of teaching quadratic equations to boys who are going to repair cars or sell stockings?"

Neill feels that the child who is customarily filled with knowledge from textbooks but is not taught how to feel can not live or enjoy his own free life. All the book-knowledge that a child is forced to accumulate, says Neill (1982:26), can not help to make him a more loving, freer person, because the textbooks do not deal with the human character, love, freedom or self-determination; they take into account only the intellect and not also the emotion. However, by devoting their whole efforts to the transmission of book-knowledge to the child, our modern schools, says Neill (1968:37), "educate the head and leave the emotions to the crowd-compellers - the press, the radio, the TV, the churches, the commercial exploiters with their lying advertisements".

It is obvious that affective learning, for Neill, is more important than cognitive acquisition. Thus, Neill's criticism against the traditional schooling runs as follows:

... the classroom walls and the prisonlike buildings narrow the teacher's outlook, and prevent him from seeing the true essentials of education. His work deals with the part of a child that is above the neck; and perforce, the emotional, vital part of the child is foreign territory to him (Neill, 1982:40).
Benedict - analysis

4.4.5 Freedom and discipline in the school

4.4.5.1 Freedom

In accordance with his views on the essence and aim of education, Neill has declared that the child should be free to develop in his own way without any external interference; he must be free to decide for himself;

he must have a right to what Neill calls self-regulation. Indeed, freedom is Neill's catchword and it appears on nearly every page Neill writes: Summerhill is a free school, perhaps the only free school, and he constantly describes its children as free children. In this sense, Keohane (1972:401) said, freedom was actually the shibboleth of the Summerhill cult.

What does then this freedom mean for Neill? To what extent does Neill want to give the child freedom? What is the theoretical ground for his strong advocacy of the freedom of the child?

For Neill (cf. 1982:109), freedom means avoiding religion, politics, or class-consciousness. In other words, to give freedom means to allow the child to live his own free life. As Hopkins (1976:190) explains, freedom for Neill means that each individual should have an equal right to do, be, believe, and feel as he chooses. In the field of education and schooling, this means that each child should have the right to learn, to attend the classes as well as to stay away, and to become what he chooses to. Restrictions on this right should be minimized and the opportunity to fulfil it should be maximized. Freedom, then, becomes both freedom from restrictions and freedom towards opportunities.

Neill does not think that there is such a thing as absolute or complete freedom for children in the sense that he does see two types of limits on freedom. The one type is the so-called common-sense element of safety - locked chemicals, supervised swimming, and so on (cf. Neill, 1982:79, 104). Neill does believe that very young children sometimes need to be controlled for their own physical safety.

At Summerhill, however, freedom does not mean the abrogation of common sense. We take every precaution for the safety of the pupils. The children may bathe only when there is a life-saver present for every six children; no child under eleven may cycle on the street alone. These rules come from the children themselves, voted in a General School Meeting. But there is no law about climbing trees. Climbing tree is a part of life's education; and to prohibit all dangerous undertaking would make a child a coward. We prohibit climbing

on roofs, and we prohibit air guns and other weapons that might wound (Neill, 1982:34).

It must be noted here that although Neill acknowledges a certain degree of control for safety of the child he continually insists that such control is to be kept at a minimum. Because even a young child, according to Neill (1982:142), should be given as much freedom and responsibility for his own life as he can handle.

The other limit on freedom of the child is the non-interference with the freedom of others. Freedom means, for Neill (1982:112), doing what you want, as long as it doesn't interfere with somebody else. Licence, the interference with another's right to do or be what he so chooses, is not allowed and is to be either avoided by the individual tempted to commit it or prevented to him by others. Neill makes this point clearly: "Freedom, over-extended, turns into license. I define licence as interfering with another's freedom. For example, in my school a child is free to go to lessons or stay away from lessons because that is his own affair, but he is not free to play a trumpet when others want to study or sleep" (Neill, 1966:7; cf. Neill, 1982:112, 143, 309; Barrett, 1981:157; Hopkins, 1976: 191; Montessori & Neill, 1969:209; Barrow, 1978:88; Brumbaugh & Lawrence, 1973:170).

Everything,¹⁶⁾ according to Neill, should be permitted that is safe and that infringes upon the rights of no one else. In this way, freedom, for Neill (1982:105), does not mean licence or spoiling the child. It means, rather, equality of treatment, acting toward the learner with honesty and respect for his or her rights. Neill cites the example of his own daughter, and always the theme of balance and common sense comes through: freedom means give-and-take, asking the child to respect your own feelings as you in turn respect his, being supportive without permissiveness.

To give a child true freedom is not such an easy task, says Neill. It de-

16. Theoretically or morally, Neill even approved of complete sexual freedom for all who wish it, whatever their age. At the same time, he recognized that steadfastly adhering to his principles would have resulted in closing his beloved school. This is the only reason why he did not permit complete sexual freedom in Summerhill (cf. Neill, 1982:64, 186, 191, 307).

mands, according to Neill (1982:102), a strong belief in the goodness of human nature; a belief that there is not, and never has been, original sin. To put it more correctly, it demands an unalterable trust in the goodness of an individual's natural interests and desires. In addition, the very nature of society is inimical to freedom. Society is conservative and hateful toward new thought, says Neill (1982:109).

The usual arguments against freedom for children, says Neill (1982:107), are that life is hard and that children must be trained to adapt themselves to life later on; they must be disciplined, for when they are allowed to do what they like they will not be able to work under a boss; how can they compete with others who have known discipline, and how will they ever be able to exercise self-discipline?

Neill, however, denies this premise based upon his experience of Summerhill. This kind of premise, according to Neill (1982:108), is merely an unproved common assumption we have been brought up on and which we unquestioningly accept merely because the idea has never been challenged. Yet his forty years of experience with children disproves this assumption, declares Neill (1982:107).

The final faith which Neill acquired after his more than forty years of work with children was that each child is born by nature wise and realistic. Neill convinced himself that each child who had been brought up in true freedom would ultimately be a good citizen. He never doubted that in the end, if not molested or damaged, a free child would succeed in life.

4.4.5.2 Authority

Neill regards authority, discipline, and punishment as an antithetical concept to freedom - and to the extent that he favoured freedom he rejected authority, discipline, and punishment (cf. paragraphs 4.4.5.3 & 4.4.5.4). In this sense, Rossman, one of the outstanding representatives of today's leftwing campus, said that Neill actually examined in Summerhill not freedom but authority. "He (Neill) described the coercive quality of what he calls imposed authority - authority exerted through punishment, reward, and shame, and involving the repression of natural energies and anger"

(Rossman, 1973:141).

As has been discussed in the previous paragraph(cf. 4.4.4.1), Neill wants the child to live his own free life, that is, to work joyfully and to live positively. This implies that the autonomous individual needs no external authority at all. Neill's basic tenet is that happiness can be achieved by abolishing authority. Authority, according to Neill, makes the child fall in the so-called father complex. The child becomes dependent, submissive, and irresponsible and afterwards the child will lack initiative, lack self-confidence, lack originality. Neill insists that if the world is free the school (as well as the church) must aim at breaking the power of the father. He (Neill, 1917:136 - 137) argues as follows:

The religion of the Old Testament is a father complex religion; God is the hated and feared father, the authority who punishes, the provider of food and clothing, the maker of laws. Authority always makes the governed inferior and dependent; the man with a father complex cannot stand alone; he must always flee to his father or father substitute when he meets a difficulty. Thus does the Christian act; he seeks the Father; he places his burden on the Lord; he avoids responsibility.

Neill totally rejects all imposed or external authority, whether emanating from God or the state or die parent or the teacher. All these kinds of external authority are exercised as functions of fixed and centralized roles in an hierarchical system, and for Neill this was fascism.

Neill (cf. 1917:153) only acknowledges social or internal authority. Thus, a certain degree of authority and laws which we can call protection, care, and responsibility of the adults should be present in the school and also in society.

Neill's view of authority accords with his humanistic and naturalistic lifeview, and accords with his view on man. For Neill, man's natural interests and desires are good. Therefore, he puts strong emphasis on man's needs, interests and abilities and not on that which man (child) ought to be. This implies that the final authority for Neill is and should be man himself, or, to put it more correctly, man's natural interests and

desires, but not the Word of God.

4.4.5.3 Discipline

For Neill (1915:139; 1982:144), there are two kinds of discipline. One was external or authoritative discipline which one can find in the army. The discipline of an army is aimed at making for efficiency in fighting. All such discipline subordinates the individual to the cause. The soldier who jumps to attention does not, as a rule, care about the efficiency of the army, but he fears punishment if he disobeys.

The other kind of discipline is inner or self-discipline which one can find in an orchestra. Every orchestra member obeys the conductor because he is as keen on a good performance as the conductor himself is.

School discipline, says Neill (1982:144), should be of the orchestra type, but too often it is of the army type. He criticizes the public school as a barracks that is ruled by hate, fear and discipline. "School discipline is an anachronism that will disappear only when our civilization requires the only discipline that has any value - the discipline of an orchestra or a football team" (Neill, 1936:179).

Since Neill believes that a child should have as much freedom as possible, he totally rejects external or authoritative discipline. Likewise, he strongly objects to the discipline of the teacher in the school. "I want to," says Neill (1915:139), "crush the militarism in our schools, and, as most teachers call their militarism discipline, I curse discipline." This was so because he perceived strong discipline as depending upon fear, fear which is inimical to the happiness of the child.

Neill, however, advocates the inner or self-discipline which he thinks is encouraged by love. This self-discipline, insists Neill (1915:18; 1917: 138; 1982:309), considers the rights and happiness of others. For Neill, ruling by love, not through fear, leads to genuine respect and if there is love, external discipline is not necessary.

Neill's view of discipline is the logical result of his view of the child. He believes that the child is so wise by nature that he reacts to love with love, and reacts to hate with hate. Neill avers that badness is not basic in human nature any more than it is basic in rabbit nature or lion nature. Therefore Neill (1982:99) says:

The nursery training is very like the kennel training; the whipped child, like the whipped puppy, grows into an obedient, inferior adult. And as we train our dogs to suit our own purpose, so we train our children.

4.4.5.4 Punishment

Neill (1929:146; 1982:152) states that it is truly difficult to decide what punishment is and what it is not. He sees that it is a conceptual truth that a lot of what might loosely be called punishment is not strictly speaking punishment at all. Punishment, by definition, according to Neill (1929:146; 1982:154), involves the idea of morality, of good and bad.

Hitting somebody in a temper is therefore not an instance of punishment. Neill (1982:152) gives the following example. Imagine that the child borrows your saw and ruins its teeth by leaving it around or using it on a brick. Refusal to let that child have the saw again would not constitute punishment; it is simply a self-interested and understandable reaction. Neill regards such retaliation as quite acceptable. However, when it is accompanied by a moral idea, with the idea of wrong, then it becomes punishment and gives the child fear. In most houses and schools, says Neill (1982:153), the child is punished because of disobedience and impudence.

Neill condemns punishment for several reasons (cf. Neill, 1929:143 - 155; 1920:148; 1982:151 - 156). Firstly, he feels that punishment treats only effect instead of cause. Secondly, punishment salves the conscience. Thirdly, punishment can never be meted out with justice, for no man can be just. Worst of all, punishment always causes psychic damage of the

child; it arouses fear and hate. "Punishment," says Neill (1982:151), "is always an act of hate. In the act of punishing, the teacher or parent is hating the child - and the child realizes it." The punished child grows into a punishing father and mother, and the cycle of hate goes on through the years.

Neill is dead set against corporal punishment and he has maintained that man will never whack a child if he knows himself. According to Neill (1920:25 - 26), the parent or the teacher whacks the child not to discipline him but because in his deep unconscious mind he is an infant and he wants to show his self-assertion just as a kid does; he flogs the child, because it is his childish way of showing his power. Neill has in fact (1920:241) declared that "the flogger is a sexual pervert, a Sadist".

Neill also insists that the punishment that takes the form of a lecture is even more dangerous than a whipping, because it makes the child a hypocrite. "As a training for humbugs and hypocrites," condemns Neill (1982: 156), "the lecture form of punishment has no rival." Worse still is praying for the erring soul of the child in his presence, because such an act is bound to arouse a deep feeling of guilt in the child.

Neill, however, acknowledges self-punishment or so-called social punishment. Neill does not think that spanking, refusing co-operation or preventing the child from having or doing something is unnecessary. What he is saying is that, when the occasion for such things arises, one should employ them unselfconsciously and without reference to moral or religious cant. The child must learn that others also have rights in a society. If he offends against the community, the community will reject him. Here Neill reveals his biological naturalistic view of discipline and punishment which claims that the child will exercise self-discipline by experiencing the unpleasant consequences of his action which is against nature.

4.4.6 The task of the teacher in the school

As has been discussed in the previous paragraph (cf. 4.4.4.1), the ultimate aim of life and therefore, of education, for Neill, was happiness, and it was through freedom that a child could best find happiness. Consequent-

ly, for Neill, school was not a place of learning for a child, but a place concerned with free life and happiness of the child. "Summerhill is not a seat of learning," says Neill (1968:36), "it is a seat of living."

Thus, at Summerhill, Neill minimized the overt intellectual function of schooling and played down the importance attached to subject matter and the learning of it. Improving the methodologies of teaching was not his concern (Neill, 1948:24; 1982:20; cf. Waks, 1975:196). Neill was much more concerned with emphasizing the psychological and emotional well-being and happiness of the child, than to talk about teaching methods and intellectual development. In this sense, Neill (1982:20) insisted that he would rather see a school produce a happy street cleaner than a neurotic scholar.

What is, then, the position and task of the teacher in a school like Summerhill, where academic learning is denigrated and where all the external authority, discipline, and punishment are totally rejected? According to Neill's view, it is largely negative - staying out of the way, refraining from making suggestions, avoiding any appearance of guidance, counsel, or leadership. As a result, one almost never hears of teachers at Summerhill except to learn that they are not particularly competent. In Neill's words, the teacher at Summerhill "knows what not to do ... which is less dangerous than knowing what to do" (Neill, 1948:59).

Thus, for Neill, the main task of the teacher is not to teach or to transmit knowledge regarded as necessary to the child, but to make the child happy by encouraging him in his natural bent. "A teacher's work is simple: find out where a child's interest lies and help him to live it out. It is always so" (Neill, 1982:157). A teacher, then, becomes a facilitator, a guider, a friend, and the man who trusts the child and stands on the side of the child, helping the child evolve and develop according to his desires and choices.

4.4.7 The Summerhill School: Neill's experimental school

Summerhill was founded in 1921 by the late A.S. Neill, who also wrote the book Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing (1962) which describes the school's programme and discusses its philosophical and psychological bases. The school is situated within the town of Leiston, in Suffolk, and is about one hundred miles from London. The school accepts boys and girls without any examinations or other formal requirements. The ages of children range from about four or five to eighteen. The total of about forty-five or fifty children live by age groups, each with a house mother.

Before setting up his own school Summerhill, Neill had a good deal of teaching experience at several schools (cf. paragraph 4.4.2). Although many of these schools were regarded as extremely progressive, none of them was progressive enough for Neill. In all of them he found that he wanted to give children much more freedom than even the most progressive school was prepared to tolerate. Neill's real meaning lies in taking the belief in children's goodness and children's freedom to the extreme (Lawton, 1977:70). Thus, Neill (1982:20) wanted, from the start, to make the school fit the child instead of making the child fit the school.

In line with this view, each student at Summerhill is free to do what he likes as long as he is not trespassing on the freedom of others (cf. Neill, 1948:24; 1982:19 - 27). There is no requirement for attendance at classes. Students are permitted to stay away from classes for months at a time if they wish. There are no examinations. There is no moral or religious instruction. The children are left to themselves, cut off from any traces of adult suggestion. The main purpose of Summerhill is not to compel the young child to learn, but to help him develop emotional health, happiness and self-reliance. No attempt is made to lead and steer him towards pre-conceived objectives.

A significant feature of the school is the opportunity for PLs (private lessons). These consisted of children coming to meet Neill individually or in small groups for talks on such topics as The Inferiority Complex, The Psychology of Stealing, The Psychology of the Gangster, Masturbation,

Why did man become a moralist?, and so on. The school is also democratically governed. With the exception of a few matters everything at Summerhill is decided in a democratic fashion with all teachers and students having one vote to cope with problems of group living and the health and safety of the students. In essence Neill's view is that the experience of conducting affairs for themselves in this way is invaluable training in the only way of conducting affairs that a free people should entertain (Barrow, 1978:70 - 71).

Summerhill began as an experimental school and has served as a model and inspiration for many contemporary free schools.¹⁷⁾ There are even public free schools that approximate Summerhill's ideals in many ways (Parelius, 1978:369). Thus, as Neill (1982:20) says, Summerhill seems to be no longer an experimental school but works as a demonstration school.

Neill's Summerhill School is often called a radical school. It is quite understandable why the School is called radical when we consider the fact that Neill took the belief in the goodness of the child and freedom of the child to the extreme. However, Neill's efforts for school reform should be evaluated within the framework of the left liberal tradition. Neill thought, indeed, that it is possible, and in some respect even advantageous, to operate within a school situation or school setting. Furthermore, it is difficult to find evidence in Neill's view of the school that he condemned the institutionalized setting in itself as the cause of all evils. Neill's left liberalistic view becomes clearer when we consider his view of social reform. He did not like the existing society, specifically the English society within which Summerhill forms a small, isolated island. However, he did not see it as his primary concern to reform the society.¹⁸⁾ His hope was that in time the nature of society

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17. There have long been a few private schools in the United States that were explicitly modelled upon Summerhill. In the period of student and civil unrest between 1966 and 1971, there was a dramatic proliferation of free schools (cf. Graubard, 1972:351 - 370).
 18. Left radicals, like Goodman, Reimer, Holt, and Illich, also envision a new society. However, they see this as emerging from a process of deschooling society rather than reforming the present system (cf. chapter 5).

would be changed by free children who have full of confidence and the joy of self-discipline.

4.5 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF LEFT LIBERAL THEORY OF THE SCHOOL (WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO A.S. NEILL'S SCHOOL IDEA)

- 4.5.1 In the first place, the Scriptures do not have any place, and play no role at all in the school ideas of the left liberals and also in Neill's school idea. Therefore, their philosophy of the school is stamped as anti-synthetic left, that is to say, they do not even seek a synthesis between humanistic and Scriptural principles, but they reject the Scriptures and the perspective offered in their school ideas. They are man-centred, and therefore humanistic in warp and woof.
- 4.5.2 In the second place, Neill underestimated the leading or qualifying function of the school, that is, the logical-analytical function of the school (Van der Walt & Dekker, 1983:96; cf. De Jong, 1977: 5; Ebel, 1972:3). Since Neill regarded the role or function of the school as making an environment in which the emotions can be enacted and expressed (Neill, 1967:133), he made Summerhill a little island, which rarely recognizes that there is a world out there which will eventually require functional skills on the part of the students who wish to survive. In an effort to emphasize freedom at any cost, Neill was somewhat anti-intellectual and unconcerned with the importance of teaching knowledge regarded as necessary. Bernstein (cf. Hemmings, 1973:137), who has interviewed fifty of Old Summerhillians revealed that twenty-six of this sample complained of the lack of academic opportunity and the dearth of inspired teachers.
- 4.5.3 In the third place, Neill's view of the ultimate aim of life and of education is radically humanistic, and therefore is in direct opposition to that of the Christian. Since God has no place in Neill's school idea, man's inner contentment or happiness is the

end of all learning (though Neill himself didn't like to use the term "learning"). This is the precise opposite of Christianity, which affirms that God's glory is the end of all learning. To begin with, the Christian believes in Christ and bases all his undertakings on the eternal truth that "man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, answer to question 1).

- 4.5.4 In the fourth place, Neill's anthropological starting point is naturalistic, optimistic, and humanistic. It is, therefore, totally rejectable for the Christian educationalist. Neill defines an individual's interests and desires as good. His strong belief is in the goodness of man's desires. Thus he exalts human interests and desires to the state of being norm or criterion for education and schooling. Happiness, which is, for Neill, the ultimate aim of life and of education, comes from the fulfilment of one's desires, and happiness always means goodness. Man, in fact, was at one time good (Gen. 1:31). But, as recorded in Gen. 3, mankind had disobeyed God, and their nature became a fallen one. The Word of God clearly teaches us the fact that all mankind has a sinful, totally depraved nature (cf. Jer. 17:9; Psalm 51:5, 53:2 - 3; Rom. 3:23, 5:12; 1 John 1:8). Therefore, the sinful human nature, interests, and desires can never be the norm or criterion for education and schooling, although they must be taken into consideration in the process of education and schooling.

- 4.5.5 In the fifth place, Neill's faith in the child's ultimate capacity for self-regulation is rejectable to the Christian educationalist. Because of his distorted conception of the child, Neill insisted that teaching a child how to behave was needless. His strong conviction was that a child would learn what is right and wrong in due time. From the Christian standpoint, however, the child is an instruction-recipient, intellectually, socially, emotionally as well as morally. Children need to be told what is right and wrong and then need to be required to do the right. Scriptures teach us that children do not know by nature what is right and wrong, and when they are told, they don't by nature do the right (Cummings,

1979:9). Therefore, in the school there should be an authoritative standard or norm of right and wrong based upon the Word of God. "Contrary to Mr. Neill's faith in the child's ultimate capacity for self-regulation," says Deutsch (1962:195), "children cannot acquire the ability to differentiate between right and wrong without help from adults in their environment."

- 4.5.6 In the sixth place, Neill's idea of freedom is totally distorted and in conflict with the Scriptural principle. He tried to understand freedom only on a horizontal, man-to-man, human level. For this reason, Neill could never avoid self-contradiction in his idea of freedom. One can understand the idea of freedom correctly only in the light of the Scriptures and from the viewpoint of the Christian faith. Freedom has to do with not only man but with both God and man, because the Scriptures teach us that one can talk about freedom only in the relationship between God and man (cf. Van der Walt, 1979:148). The crisis of the school in modern times is caused to a great extent by an incorrect conception of freedom (and also of authority). For this reason, the Scriptural view of freedom and authority will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 (in which a Christian answer to the crisis of the modern school is tentatively supplied).
- 4.5.7 In the seventh place, the question of the moral credentials can be raised with respect to Neill's idea of freedom (cf. Barrett, 1981: 161). It is somewhat cynical or even cruel to say to the child that he may do what he likes as long as it doesn't interfere with somebody else. This view of freedom fosters the isolation of the individual by giving him a limited sphere within which he is lord and master. This can also lead to an attitude which regards other people as obstacles, barriers, or as objects to be used for one's own advantage (cf. Barrett, 1981:161).
- 4.5.8 In the eighth place, the problem of demarcation may be raised regarding Neill's view of the distinction between freedom and licence (cf. Barrett, 1981:160). Neill himself claims that it is only

licence which is outlawed at Summerhill School and that licence begins when an action has detrimental effects on others. However, what are those actions which have no adverse effects on others? There are many difficulties inherent in separating freedom from licence. Approaching this from the other side of the matter and admitting that freedom can be curtailed for others' benefit of protection, it may turn out that all kinds of things one would never have expected are outlawed for that reason.

- 4.5.9 In the ninth place, authority, discipline, and punishment should not be viewed as an antithetical concept to freedom. They are not separate entities which can be exercised or acquired apart from each other. Since Christ came not to destroy or abolish the law, but rather to fulfil it, freedom comes not apart from law, but always within the framework of it. Real freedom comes only through submission to the law of God (cf. I Peter 2:16; Rom. 6:17 - 18). This seemingly paradoxical concept can never be correctly understood outside the Word of God.
- 4.5.10 In the tenth place, Neill overlooks the authority of the teacher in the classroom. Because he confuses the exercising of authority by the qualified person-in-authority with so-called deterministic manipulation, he rejects all kinds of external authority, and even the authority of the teacher in the school. From the Christian standpoint, the teacher is delegated the authority by God to exercise in the classroom. Thus, in the school, the teacher maintains the authority which is delegated to him by virtue of his being a professional teacher. In other words, the authority of the teacher is qualified by the qualifying function of the school, namely, the logical-analytical function, which is aimed at equipping the child with knowledge regarded as necessary for his comprehensive task and calling in the Kingdom of God. Where necessary, therefore, the teacher must maintain his authority together with chastisement in full responsibility to God.

- 4.5.11 In the eleventh place, Neill's so-called "success" at Summerhill School should be looked at from a variety of angles. First of all, the environment of the Summerhill School is relatively simple. A small boarding school, with the student number varying from forty-five to seventy, shows highly individualistic characteristics. And the School was administered by and even permeated by the personality of a man with unique qualities. Moreover, for children who must have some outlet for resentment, Neill had the great advantage of being able to place the blame on the outside world from which they came. On the basis of his acceptance of this Freudian notion, the enemy could always be externalized (cf. Brumbaugh & Lawrence, 1973:162).
- 4.5.12 In the twelfth place, Neill's insistence that children at Summerhill School, as a direct result of the freedom they are given, are happier than they would be elsewhere is nothing other than a subjective opinion. No reason at all has been given for supposing that children must necessarily be more contented in a Summerhill environment than they would be elsewhere, still less for supposing that this kind of upbringing would necessarily be most suitable for preparing individuals to lead happy adult lives in a real community (Barrow, 1978:89). Furthermore, from the revealed Word of God we know that mankind can find true happiness only in Christ. All happiness without or outside Christ is useless hedonism and liberalism.
- 4.5.13 In the thirteenth place, Neill fails to see the value of instincts checked through adversity or through the simple postponement of gratification. Everything for Neill was black or white. In Neill's either-or world, one was either satisfied or dissatisfied, happy or anxious, and anxiety was clearly unproductive. Thus, children in Summerhill School were never seen grappling with problems and learning through failure (Engler, 1973:110). Bernstein's research showed the fact that pupils in the Summerhill School fell into the habit of giving up too easily in the face of difficult work (Hemmings, 1973:144).

- 4.5.14 In the fourteenth place, Neill disregarded the fact that the Summerhill School what was needed for a child with a very special problem was often not desirable for those many quiet, academically inclined, conventional children who are most comfortable in a conventional school (Ames, 1973:79). Such children would be most disturbed by the lack of discipline, guidance, insufficient help in academic studies, and lack of protection against bullies.
- 4.5.15 In the fifteenth place, Neill generalizes from isolated and individual cases. By and large, for Neill, to see something once is enough to establish some inevitable "law". The alleged impossibility of children ever being interested in abstract matters, for instance, is triumphantly established by a few glances at the behaviour pattern of Summerhill children (Barrow, 1978:186).
- 4.5.16 In the sixteenth place, the left liberal critics criticized the school and developed their ideas of the school on the basis of irrationalistic philosophy (cf. paragraphs 3.3.7 & 3.3.8). The personality or freedom ideal of the humanistic religious ground motif was strongly over-emphasized or absolutized in all the left-liberals' school idea, and typically in Neill's view of the school. Neill saw a series of false dichotomies: either the individual or society; either freedom or authority; either child-centred or subject (teacher)-centred, and so on. Neill personifies the swing toward the extreme, that is, toward the extreme freedom-side of the pendulum. These pairs of values, however, do exist in a creative tension, or in a complementary situation, with each other. Thus, even Dewey (1972:22), who also got entangled in the tension between two poles of freedom and science, once stated that "an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as ever was the traditional education which is reacted against". This statement of Dewey, says Keohane (1972:402), might serve as an epitaph for the Summerhill School.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the problem or crisis of the school has been sketched in the left liberal context. For this purpose, the school ideas of six left liberals, namely, Postman, Weingartner, Kohl, Silberman, Friedenberg and Dennison were first surveyed and the school ideas of A.S. Neill were discussed in some more detail.

The points of criticism of the school by the above-mentioned left liberals take many forms. Postman and Weingartner, for instance, criticized the school mainly because of the passive role of the children in the classroom. Kohl criticized the problem of the labelling, controlling, and segregating function of the school. Silberman questioned the problem of mindlessness as a central problem of the school. Friedenberg rejected the conformist nature of schooling. Dennison and Neill emphasized intimate personal relationships in the school environment.

However, the left liberal critics of the school are all concerned about the development of the child as a person, his growth and natural development as a free individual child. They believe that the school should have more as its aim than merely to teach pupils to acquire knowledge and skills. They advocate education and schooling for personal freedom, dignity, and equality. They all thus charged the public schools of damaging, thwarting, stifling children's capacity to learn and grow as human beings: the schools are inhumane, repressive, and hostile to human freedom and dignity; the schools do not treat children as free autonomous persons, and so on. In short, the present schools, according to their criticism, are not fit places for free autonomous human beings. This clearly shows that the free human personality or freedom ideal of the modern humanistic religious ground motif is absolutized in education and school ideas of the left liberal school critics.

The left liberals, however, have a strong belief in progress and accept the assumption that the problems of the present school can be changed creatively. Therefore, they want to re-make or reform the school environment to become more humane by putting more emphasis on individuality and on the individual freedom of the child. They do not reject the very idea of

a school system. They do not question schools themselves, nor the monopoly that schools have on formal education.

The following chapter will treat those critics who have even moved away altogether from the concept of public schooling and toward the notion of deschooling.