

Violence and Power

One of the characteristics of many small children is the violence of their attacks of screaming (as infants) throwing objects and at times banging heads against the wall.

This is replaced in the toddler stage by hammering with spoons etc. on their table, smashing small toys, and when able to walk and run, by violent movement of their bodies, crashing of toy cars together and 'shunting'.

If children are to grow into individuals with ability to use physical energy to achieve definite, consciously controlled ends, the above are phenomena that need careful study. What is happening in these states? Where does the energy come from? What is the inner experience of the screaming, banging child and how is control learned?

The first point to realise is that man, coming as he does as the last example of living mammals with a long line of powerful animals behind him, shares a great many characteristics with them. The road to control for the human can best be learned by watching the steps towards control of physical drives taught by parent animals to their young.

The following is an outline schema of what occurs –

Take for example, birds: as soon as the nestlings are to move on their own, the parents set them a physical task – to hop from a to be. (I have year after year, watched a swallow family teaching their young). Refusal of failure meet with two penalties (1) the parents fly off. (2) The other nestlings succeed and one can almost see their scorn of the refuser.

There are three characteristics this first task must have, firstly an element of danger, secondly a need for strong and determined effort, thirdly a sense of achievement (shown by flapping of wings) when accomplished.

A bit later comes the next task. The parent leaves from a seat on one branch for a swoop from it to land on a more distant one. This involves simple use of wings and each of the three elements is 'achievement'. Now self-confidence begins to develop in the young and with it a definite means of independence and a sense of confidence in oneself.

With human beings and the type of experience suited to their development, the part of the parent is taken by impulses of curiosity and desire for accomplishment in the child and correspondingly, the material objects he sets out to master 'talk back to him' (as one of my boys put it) i.e. the badly built tower falls down because large components have been put on

small' the blocks may 'use your head and look' and so an intellectual component comes in.

Very soon too the whole has to be planned in thought by the child who undertakes it – so awareness of outside forces, wind, weather soon come in: previous experience has to be remembered, understood and made use of. The drive of impulse is checked by risk, fear, by remembrance of achievement and slowly warring shapeless energy is turned into power.

All this has been missing in Richard's upbringing so that at 14 his interior discipline of his interior drives has not developed beyond that normal to 11 or 12. That is the problem.

If you take him on an expensive cruise now, swaddled within the family, he is for that period wrapped again in a cocoon; the pampering process is reinstated and all that time is lost. Don't take him. He dislikes sight seeing, he has no interest whatever in history (hardly an understanding of what history is); no desire for travel and nothing within his head to link travel to.

The time is short: there is a great deal to be done: and little time or space to do it in. Richard is waking up – realization of how backward his development is, is beginning to dawn in him. Send him to –

- A. Camp
- B. The sea and ship branch of Outward Bound
- C. For three weeks to a north country working farm where there are boys of his own age normally sharing in the farm work.

I am prepared to help you find these.

I talked these possibilities over with Richard and found they were attractive to him. I propose to discuss them with Mr. Gould.

In such a holiday programme there would be no privilege, no stewards to wait on him, no younger relatives to order about, no services being paid for, no luxury, and out of it he could gain some respect for himself and some confidence in his *independent* powers of achievement. Also learn to laugh at it.