

SPEECHES - MAX AND GERTRUD BONDY

To Gertrud from the Student Body - 1965

Windsor Mountain School

Lenox, Massachusetts

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THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL AND THEIR ORIGINS

As you know, the school was started by Max and me after the first world war. At that time Max came home from all his war experiences. He found that there was a great deal of camaraderie; that people wanted to live in groups; make friends with each other and do things in common.

Contrariwise, he observed that the same boys were cruel to each other and to the war prisoners. Max felt that the reason for this was the strict discipline practiced in German homes and schools. He had the feeling that these people did what they did because many of them had not learned decency and love, but had learned only to obey. These men were marvelous soldiers, daring, courageous and obedient but they were bullies. They were cruel to everyone whose strength was inferior to theirs. Max felt that this concept had to be changed and it could only be changed by a new method of educating young people.

When Max was a young student he was terribly disturbed by the attitude of the typical German fraternities. The fraternities drank for amusement and forced their young members to drink also. The older fraternity boys were cruel to the newcomers, similar to the hazing today in American colleges. One of their uglier customs was fighting duels in which they hit and cut each other's faces. It was actually considered a great honor to look like beefsteak, and to have a face that was cut through and through.

He observed also family life of that time. It seemed to him to be hypocritical. On one hand the fathers were extremely strict and mean to their sons, on the other they allowed them privileges far beyond the standards they preached. Max felt that this could be altered, but only through education which leads to mutual understanding and respect among peoples.

His friends and he started a fraternity which was built around this principle: Instead of drinking they read. They discussed and became enthusiastic in their discussions. Many of their aggressions were spent in this manner. They participated in sports. As some of you know, Max loved sports, he was a very eager soccer player and an excellent tennis player. They enjoyed skiing and mountain climbing. Mountain climbing was daring and needed skill, but at the same time there was always the element of danger. In this way the group built high standards for themselves.

All this was prewar. This group of Max's friends decided to build a school similar to ours today. Unluckily, nearly all of them were killed. Max, by chance, escaped because he came to Vienna to see me and our first-born baby. During this time, his whole battery was killed.

We decided to build this long planned school alone. From the beginning it was evident to us that the school would need strong leadership. We wanted to build up in all the children the sense of responsibility, self-respect and the desire to be a new person.

Certainly ambition is one of our leading qualities, and we can be ambitious in two ways. Firstly, we can become ambitious for a big name and power, and secondly, because we want to do the best thing. To educate young people in this way was one of our ideals.

GROWTH OF THE SCHOOL

As the school grew, we started to build small groups of students. They consisted of perhaps eight or ten boys and girls who had one teacher as their leader and an elected leader among themselves. This group functioned as a unit, doing everything together. They had common ambitions and sometimes they had big disputes with each other. I remember how they used to build treehouses and then fight one another for them. All of this was done in the spirit of sportsmanship.

From the beginning we were very proud of the student government because it was different and more democratic than other schools of the time. It was practically the first school to have student government and rely on education and ideals of mutual trust, rather than the discipline of teachers.

German boarding schools were really like American military schools with strict disciplinary measures giving the students the feeling that there was power over them. We wanted the students to feel that they could be leaders and be responsible for themselves, building up a life in the school. This worked very well. Certainly there were breaches of discipline and there had to be fitting punishments, just as we have here when people forget their principles. For example if someone said "I just don't believe in lack of discipline, and since I have no boss then I will become boss"; or "If there is no one to bother me, I will bother the younger ones and annoy them", then this type of person either changed under our principles and guidance quickly or was dismissed.

THE ADVENT OF THE NAZIS

At this time the Nazis came to power in Germany and built up an educational system which was contrary to everything we believed. We felt

more strongly than ever that what was needed was education. The Nazis, as you know, attacked only minorities especially the Jews. So every non-Jew could be superior to a Jew. He could murder him if he wished to or take his possessions without being punished.

In the concentration camps the cruelest and most inhuman things were done. This filled us with terror for the future of humanity and for the future of Germany.

So we decided to take the children out of Germany due to the inhuman principles of the Nazis. The lying, cheating and low mass instincts were very shocking to our students. I took the best of them, all who wanted to go to Switzerland.

Max continued the school in Germany. He expected all this monstrous behavior to be over within a short time, since he felt such cruelty could not be endured by humanity. However it took a long time, so he came to join me, and we built up the new school on our old principles.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS

One thing we wanted to avoid was the forming of "mass instincts" in our school. Groups were necessary but they must have high ideals. The moment a group begins to build an underground with destructive results, it is dangerous. Nothing makes me angrier than aggressions being let out in teasing, or any other forms of meanness. I am always annoyed when someone says "But everybody does it"! This implies that the wrong thing is not only permissible, but that it gives great pleasure in letting out aggressions in a way they shouldn't be.

Our job is to lead these people in the right direction. In psychology we have a word for this - sublimation. Max's group of mountain climbers are an example of using this aggressive force constructively. We do this by encouraging lively discussions, giving people the opportunity of letting out their aggressions in words, proving their points and understanding the opposite opinions.

This is a much more positive life. We have many physical activities which help people in this way. If anyone is conscious of people wanting to undermine these principles, it is up to him to stop them, because I think that most of you are of the opinion that the school is good.

Now the question is: What do those who are not in student government do with their ambitions? What do they do with their desire to be

leaders? There's a very simple answer to it. Try to be what you want to be. Those who are not in student government will get into it when they show themselves to be leaders. To be a leader is to see that life goes along in an enjoyable way. As you have heard me say before "WAKE UP." Wake up - not only to criticize but to criticize constructively, and to put your good ideas across to people. As I look at the group of people here, I feel you are capable of doing wonderful and constructive things.

I know you feel as I do that the advantage of our school over a strict disciplinary one is that we give you an opportunity to grow into leaders and self-confident people who will take their responsible place in future life.

EDUCATION OF THE EMOTIONS

What I want to tell you today is probably known to many of you but might be new to many who perhaps can use the knowledge and will understand why education should be carried out by trained and knowledgeable educators especially in adolescence, the most difficult age of human growth.

If we think about the effect of education on our children and young people to date, we make a puzzling discovery. There are some areas in which education has achieved much, while in others only superficial work has been done. The positive things are education towards knowledge, and the education of manners, politeness and tidiness. Little or no serious work has been done in the education of emotions.

There is no need to say anything about the education of knowledge. Most people in civilized countries are taught some science, languages, history, philosophy, depending upon the need and plans of the individual. Although there could be some criticism of the choice of material, on the whole one can say that education for knowledge is well done in public schools as well as in most private schools.

Education of behavior, mostly done in the home, is well done too; that means behavior (manners) in society and in the group. There are standards and patterns which govern social life. They are the technique of living in a human community, and they are understood and taught as a necessity. This politeness is not a friendliness of heart, but a practical politeness to keep outside friction to a minimum. The third thing in which education is successful in a certain way is the training for acceptance of outside control, punctuality, and tidiness. About the success of this side of training there has been enough discussion.

I want to talk about those parts of education that have not only been not successful but to which most educators have not even devoted time to a discussion of methods. I am talking about the training of emotions. You will ask why I make the statement that nothing has been accomplished in this direction. The answer is simple. It is relatively easy to judge just by observing how people live in their everyday life, how they live together with their children, their friends, etc. Perhaps sometimes it is not quite as easy because in modern civilization people live their lives in privacy not really visible to the outside world. It is nearly unobserved.

We had the possibility of observing uneducated emotions when for example National Socialism sanctioned the open display of the sadistic drives. At that time I was in Germany and we saw at once that the drive to hurt, both physically and mentally, to indulge people in the wildest cruelty and meanness, all those "uneducated" drives, revealed themselves in the majority of German adults. It was not the neurotic or psychopathic; it was the average German whose drives were uneducated.

This cruelty was not something Hitler had planted in the German. Modern psychology has shown these drives are living in every human being. Until now psychology has only stated the presence of these drives, but educators did not take advantage of this knowledge. If they accepted their existence at all they pushed it aside as drives that would cause no damage. Too late for the world it was discovered that these drives cannot be controlled but can only be educated, and that if they are not educated they will break through in some way that may damage the world terribly.

Let us be quite clear about it. Hitler did not create those uneducated drives. He only gave them a terrible opportunity to show themselves. But even this lesson that Hitler's regime should have taught us, has had no serious effect on Europe and little on our own country. Educators have not seen the need to educate those drives. Perhaps people including teachers had the idea that the Germans are a special race, and that it was the quality of the Germans to have the compulsive drive of hatred and aggression. This would be a dangerous deception.

There are clear indications here in this country that the aggressive drive is not specifically German, but a common human quality. Up to now the average education has done nothing about these aggressions. We have only to look at the many "anti" feelings which we have in this country, anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, etc. We know that no rationality can account for the vehemence and passion of these feelings. Here we find again the uneducated drives of aggression. These should just be hints for we could make many more observations of this kind.

Less obvious but equally dangerous are the private effects of these uneducated aggressions. In our profession we not only have

occasion to observe the children, but the parents also. How often can we observe a father as a tyrant over his whole family, or, worse, rejecting one member of his family! His aggression might show itself against his wife, his children, or any one of them.

How many marriages could be saved, how much terrible unhappiness for children could be avoided if educators would understand and work on these aggressive drives!

Educators should recognize as aggressive drives the many habits and attitudes of children and adults which seem to be unchangeable rudeness to each other, secret attempts to hurt, and the pleasure which people get out of gossiping and slandering each other without attempting to prove their statements.

We have all observed that only a very small number of people are able to live a happy life. We feel very strongly that the underlying reason for this inability to adjust comes from the lack of education of the deep unconscious human emotions.

In special cases, where the young person has been diagnosed as a neurotic, modern education makes use of this psychological insight. But it must be emphasized that the so-called healthy normal person is in need of help in forming these emotions which he does not recognize and cannot handle.

The age of adolescence gives us a possibility of helping the child. I'm speaking mainly about the aggressive drives but at that age there are many other drives which need guidance. All the examples that may be used in this connection, Hitlerism, Chauvinism, anti-Semitism, freshman hazing, groping, etc., apply to normal or average people and not to sick people.

If we consider that the average teacher and educator knows nothing at all about this and that the training of our young educators does not include any advice or information in that direction, then we must conclude education is still far behind our age; much farther than is necessary because it has not understood or made use of modern psychology. It has not been understood that the most important work of the educator lies in education of the emotions. Nursery schools in many places have done excellent work in this direction. Some elementary schools have done the same, but almost no high school continues it through the adolescent age.

It is a fascinating thought that there is a new possibility in this kind of education, the possibility of making humanity richer and happier. We do not need to believe fatalistically and pessimistically in the hopelessness of human nature when we see these drives which are destructive and a handicap to happiness and joy. We know today all these

drives of hatred and aggression can be tamed through our knowledge of modern psychology. Psychological insight gives a new opportunity for the betterment of education.

THE UNEDUCATED DRIVE OF AGGRESSION

First, I have to explain what the uneducated drives are; then I have to try to explain what modern education can do about them and how it can change the uneducated drives into directed and useful ones.

When I talk about uneducated drives I want mainly to talk about uneducated aggression. I know that there are many other uneducated drives which have to be worked on, but the aggressive drives are those that are most manifest and most disturbing, so I am talking mainly about them.

I know that most of you know about these uneducated drives but most people have only a theoretical knowledge which is not applied to education, at least not to the education of the normal young person. They are not aware of the appalling results of these aggressions in adult life.

Almost no one connects these uneducated aggressions with the failure of so many human lives. I have not known any of the young teachers coming directly from college full of psychological knowledge who have seriously thought about how to manage this main task of education. Not very many of the parents whose children cannot cope with their problems, understand that some of these problems develop because of their own uneducated aggressions which have their influence on the children.

I hope that my listeners today are the exceptional people who understand that parents too have these untrained emotions. It may be said in defense of all parents that it is not their fault, that nobody directed them into the right channels and that it is nearly impossible to solve these problems alone. Going back to my subject, I have to explain what I mean when I say that we have to combat these drives with education.

We all know how the aggressive drives start to grow from the beginning of life. Birth itself is an ordeal for the child, and every day brings new adjustments, new restrictions of the natural wishes and drives of the child. Love is the thing a baby needs most to help in this hard world. But is the love always given in the right way, at the right times to help surmount the struggle of necessary adjustment? Even if the love is there, certain difficulties are there also and cannot be avoided.

This is not the time nor the place to talk about child development and to state all the crises through which a child has to go in order to grow up. It is enough to say that disappointments, lack of security, lack of guidance, make a child feel lonely, weak, and lost. He develops anxiety, insecurity, and inferiority feelings. He is on the defensive; he develops feelings of hatred and of jealousy; and he takes revenge. This way a lot of his aggressive feelings and defenses are developed.

All of this happens to some degree in the life of every normal child. These aggressive tendencies are in every human being. They express themselves in a wish to exact vengeance. Children will break things. They will torture animals and other human beings bodily and psychologically and begin to develop hatred. This gets more and more suppressed, hidden behind forms of politeness, but still active behind those defenses.

We have to take for granted the existence of those aggressions just as we take for granted the existence of hunger and thirst. We cannot forbid them or eliminate them, but we can change them and direct them into other channels where they will not only not do damage but can be more useful to increased happiness. That is the starting point of modern education - to teach the teacher how to channel the aggressions so that they don't spoil the lives of the offenders or the offended.

CHANNELING AGGRESSIVE FEELINGS THROUGH THE BOARDING SCHOOL

What possibilities are there of educating those uneducated aggressions? Before I can answer that question, I wish to emphasize that already the realization of that task would be a tremendous step forward because then one could start to work on a solution of this problem scientifically.

For thirty years we have been working on this problem in a practical way in leading boarding schools here and in Europe. The following thoughts were our considerations. If the aggressions of a young person express themselves in a wrong way, it is because he feels constantly attacked and his attacks in turn are his self-defense. If this is so, we have to create a community life in which his fears and anxieties are not confirmed by reality. Therefore we try to create an atmosphere which is more friendly than usual in the ordinary life period. We explain to our colleagues why they must really listen when a child talks to them, not only that they must show patience but that they must honestly take the child seriously.