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## MOTIVATION AND EDUCATION

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There is an experimental state school in Malta which very few people know about, but which deserves the attention of educational theorists and teachers alike. In many ways it is an unusual school and it will serve my purpose very well in that it comes to grips with the kinds of problems that I would like to discuss in connection with motivation for learning. It is a small school, as it caters for only twenty five students in all. It is aimed at a very specific group of young people who interact with their teachers in much the same way as they normally would with older friends; and these students spend much, indeed most of their time outside the classroom working away in workshops or in the fields and grounds surrounding the school. It is likely that if you visit the school, you will find only half of the official number of students: the others will have accompanied one or more of the five teachers on an educational visit or some project work in another 'normal' school.

This school is aimed at the 'unmotivated'. As one of the teachers put it, all other schools had given up on these students and declared them to be 'uneducable'. "Imagine," this teacher said, "that these youngsters were motor engines, and that teachers in other schools who had them as students were unable to find the key to start these motors. Well, our job here is to find such a key. We believe that this key exists, that these students do have abilities. It is a question of finding out the way through to them,

to talk to them on their own terms and to work on their interests, on what excites them, in order to engage them in learning experiences."

Three of the teachers I interviewed told me how they set about meeting the challenge which colleagues in other schools had renounced. The first task they set out to achieve was to identify each young person's interest. While in 'normal' schools students are expected to become interested in what the teachers or the curriculum have to say, the order in this context is reversed. Let me illustrate this point by a case-study of one of the students. Joseph, a fifteen year-old boy attending this school, was very interested in gardening. A teacher who got on well with him became aware of this, and invited him to assume responsibility for a patch of soil barely five square metres. The teacher used some of the meagre funds available to the school and bought seedlings and plantlets and got a few more through his network of friends. Joseph was given a free hand to experiment and try growing various plants and through questions that the youngster raised, such as "Why do plants grow better when not in the shade, or when they have fertilizer?" and "Why is it that strawberries cost so much?" etc., teachers could introduce knowledge about biochemistry, as well as rudimentary concepts in economics and mathematics into the field of interest that Joseph was engaged in. Although initially teaching pivoted round each student's interests - a basic strategy in any communicative endeavour - the student was later led to consider themes and concepts that he had as yet not even contemplated. Invariably the teachers did this by using the student's own type of language. They were not too worried about labelling knowledge as 'mathematics' or 'chemistry' or 'economics' but rather approached it as an activity related to the development of problem-solving skills, drawing upon the former in so far as it was useful in dealing with life generally.

There were many other experiments of this nature which teachers either told me about or which I had the opportunity to observe during my visits to the school. Sonny, for instance was engaged in learning mathematics and reading in order to solve problems related to his interests in cabinet-making. There was only so much wood available, and if he made his calculations correctly, he could finish the piece of furniture he had in mind and perhaps sell it. Through these and a variety of other ways, such

'unmotivated' and 'uneducable' students were, in fact, engaged in learning tasks under the guidance of friendly elders, who, by taking up the students' interest as a point of departure, were able to introduce new ideas, themes, and knowledge so that these same students could enlarge their understanding and gain greater control over the problem-solving activities with which they were confronted.

### THE WILL TO LEARN

Needless to say, the case of the students portrayed above is exceptional: while we will find 'unmotivated' students in our classrooms, few will have lost interest in education to such an extent. However, the strategies adopted by the teachers in the school described are, in many ways, admirable. Their belief in their students' abilities even when others had given up on them led them to devise a pedagogy which has been advocated by the best educators that we have known this century<sup>1</sup> - a pedagogy which should be prevalent in all our schools. These educators depart from a basic assumption: **that everybody wants to, and can learn.**

The question that needs to be asked is the following: How can teachers best facilitate the learning process? And this is, of course, where considerations of motivation must start. What is it that makes an individual want to learn something? It would seem that there is a 'natural' inclination on the part of human beings to learn. Indeed some psychologists like Jerome Bruner have argued that

the single most characteristic thing about human beings is that they learn ... Other species begin their learning afresh each generation, but man (sic) is born into a culture that has as one of its principal functions the conservation and transmission of past learning.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DEWEY, J., *Democracy and Education*, (Free Press, New York 1966) and FREIRE, P., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Seabury Press, New York 1974) are two key books that deal in depth with the ideas broached in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> BRUNER, J., *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, (Harvard University Press, Massachusetts 1966).

Bruner argues that in comparison with other species, human beings have developed very few reflex mechanisms which enable them to react instinctively to problems and dangers posed by their environment. Cumulative learning from one generation to the next is the substitute for instinctive reflexes and compensates the lack.

However, it would also seem that many teachers and schools as institutions work on the assumption that this will to learn does not exist. Rather than building on the natural curiosity in students, teachers and schools generally seem to be more interested in asking a second, rather strange question: "Can an individual learn something if he or she does not want to?". How else could one explain the prevalent practice of inflicting upon students' 'learning' situations which are (a) irrelevant to their frameworks of interest, (b) couched in a language and formal style of delivery with which many students are unfamiliar, (c) abstract, making appeal to conceptual processes rather than to the senses, and (d) predetermined and presented as statements by the teacher (or curriculum) rather than taking the form of problem-solving exercises where students learn by doing?

Obviously one can think of instances where students do learn despite themselves - and there are, of course, certain cases where it is important that this learning takes place, even if a child does not appear to be motivated to do so. One has to teach a child not to touch fire, or not to cross the road haphazardly. It would be very unwise and inhumane to let a child 'learn by experience' and suffer the consequence of inappropriate behaviour, even though such a teaching strategy would probably be the most effective one! But, as we shall see, there is more to teaching and learning than efficiency, and education is often a question of process rather than one of goals.

#### BEHAVIOURISM AND MOTIVATION

One influential school of thought which places itself in direct opposition to what I have just said is what is known as Stimulus-Response Theory, an approach which is often associated

with behavioural psychology as developed by B. F. Skinner.<sup>3</sup> Skinner argued - and used laboratory animals to prove his point - that complex organisms such as rats, pigeons and human beings can learn new behaviours and skills by being positively or negatively reinforced, i.e., by rewarding and/or punishing them when they acted or failed to act in the way desired by their 'trainer'. A pigeon could be trained (taught?) to play ping-pong, for instance, if it was sufficiently rewarded with chick-peas every time it touched a table tennis racket with its beak. Rewards such as these were increased as each step towards the targeted behaviour - hitting ping-pong balls with the racket - were reached. The pigeon could also be helped along the predetermined path and towards the pre-established goal by punishing inefficient behaviour or actions which did not contribute to the game-playing skills normally associated with ping-pong. Negative reinforcers, in this case, could include withholding chick-peas (hence not providing rewards expected) and giving the pigeon a small electric shock to deter it from, say, pecking the racket rubber or pushing the racket from the table to the floor.

Many circus animal trainers and some teachers have taken a cue from Skinner's learning theory and have applied his maxim outside the laboratory. This maxim says that if one gains what one likes by behaving in a certain manner, one is more likely to repeat that particular behaviour. Behaviourists and S-R theorists make a number of other points about the process of learning related to the above-mentioned proposition. As we shall see, these points, presented schematically below, can have a number of implications for classroom practice, namely:

(a) Continuous reinforcement is necessary if a task is to be learnt.

(b) Positive reinforcement of the desired behaviour is more effective in reaching the predetermined goal than the use of punishment to curtail undesired behaviour.

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<sup>3</sup> Skinner has written a number of books on behavioural psychology, but his best exposition on the application of this approach to learning and motivation can be found in his books: *Walden Two*, (Macmillan, New York 1948); *Cumulative Record*, (Century Crofts, Appleton 1959), and in an essay entitled 'The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching' in *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 24, (1954).

(c) Once a task has been learnt, that behaviour can best be maintained by intermittent reinforcement.

(d) Success in doing a given task increases the chance that there will be the motivation to succeed again the next time the task is attempted.

The next step is not to consider whether these propositions are true. It would be quite easy to find instances which can either prove or disprove them. But this is not the point of this essay, for even if the propositions put forward by S-R theorists were always true, there would still be a number of objections to be raised regarding the assumptions such theorists make about the human person, the process of learning and motivation. In the first instance, S-R teachers, so to speak, would consider students very much like machines, subject to internal mechanistic laws which predetermine them to act in certain ways. These laws are so predictable that another person external to that 'mechanism' can press all the right buttons and obtain the desired effects. Any teacher who has spent some time in a classroom would know, however, that children and human beings in general are infinitely more complex and unpredictable than the S-R model would imply. Moreover, human beings in many circumstances have the ability to choose to act in one way rather than another or to ignore either pain or pleasure in order to achieve goals they set for themselves. An S-R teacher would find it difficult to bring his/her tools of persuasion - i.e. positive and negative reinforcers - to bear in such a situation, without infringing rules of professional and ethical conduct.

This reference to ethical behaviour is of course crucial to our evaluation of behaviourist theory. While an S-R teacher might argue that S-R methods are effective in reaching the desired goal of learning task X or knowledge Y, other teachers would be justified in arguing that we need to raise more significant questions other than efficiency when considering the subject of learning. "Are S-R techniques ethical?" and "Are they educationally sound?" are two such important questions. Let us look at the first. It would seem to me that one view of humanity's history is the constant struggle for increasing freedom, autonomy, and dignity: freedom from the whims of external forces, be these viruses, dictators or the elements. The fact that such a history has been neither linear nor progressive has not deterred human beings

from striving to redeem whatever agency they could from situations where their ability, option and right to exercise choice was severely limited. And yet my impression of S-R theory with its sights set fast on efficiency, is that it is quite blind to such a history and would envisage teachers not only determining the goals which students should reach, but also re-introducing external forces of persuasion so that these goals are in fact attained. An S-R teacher might of course counter this criticism by saying that the predetermined goal will work in the students' favour. But that argument can easily be dismissed for if we accept that the end justifies the means, we would be up against a large number of social ills, such as the destruction of our concept of democracy, to mention but one of the most important consequences.

One would also have to raise questions regarding the educational soundness of S-R theories and their implications for classroom practice. I would like to distinguish between 'education' and 'training'. I do believe, as I noted earlier, that S-R theories have some use in the classroom in those few circumstances where the goal is the learning of specific mechanical skills such as holding a pencil or handling a saw correctly. In a 'training' situation, the task to be learnt is relatively unproblematic even though it could require the use of complex conceptual and/or practical skills. It is 'unproblematic' because there is little that can be debated about with regards to both the goals and the process to achieve these goals. There is a general consensus that writing and wood-working are useful and desirable goals, and the technical means to achieve these ends have a time-honoured tradition in that past experience has shown that this rather than that is the best way to hold a pencil and to handle a saw.<sup>4</sup> An 'educational' situation is much more complex, for both the process of learning and the 'goals' to be achieved are infinitely more open-ended and subject to the learner's choice and value judgements. At least it should be so if we want to distinguish

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<sup>4</sup> For a more thorough account of the problematic relationship between techniques and skills on the one hand, and their embeddedness in ideology, see Gorz, A., 'Technology, Technicians and the Class Struggle' in GORZ, A., (ed.) *The Division of Labour: The Process of Class Struggle in Modern Capitalism*, (Humanities Press, Atlantic Highland, New Jersey 1976).

between 'education' on the one hand and 'indoctrination' on the other. In the latter process, the stress is laid on the 'doctrine' or learning goals determined in advance and without consultation with the person who is supposed to be doing the learning. The aim is efficiency: how best to get Paul or Patricia to learn X, Y, or Z.

'Education' would, however, lay the stress on Paul and Patricia, discuss with them both process and goals, and open the process of learning for discussion so that it can be influenced by the persons doing the learning. It should have become clear by now that S-R teaching has much more to do with 'indoctrination', and that there are alternative and educationally more correct ways of enhancing children's motivation to learn than to resort to behavioural modeling techniques. It is to a consideration of these alternatives that we now turn.

#### CHILD-CENTRED EDUCATION AND MOTIVATION

Just as S-R theory is consistent with its own concept of the human being as a machine, so too any rival theory of motivation and learning has its own image of the person. Of the many such approaches<sup>5</sup> I will focus on humanistic child-centred education as a shorthand term for a vigorous and multi-faceted perspective which places persons and their experience at the very centre of the educational enterprise. If anything, this approach takes an extreme and opposite view to that adopted by behaviourism in that it optimistically accords individuals a high degree of freedom, and is often quite blind to the constraints imposed by social structures of power which allow some groups to have a much better chance to explore choices and to exercise autonomy.<sup>6</sup> Hence, while behaviourism stresses external environment and stimuli to the exclusion of all else in order to explain why human beings act the way they do, humanistic psychology emphasises people's inner

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<sup>5</sup> YOUNGMAN, F., for instance identifies five major approaches, including behavioural, humanistic, cognitive, eclectic and Marxist in his book *Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy*, (Croom Helm, London 1986).

<sup>6</sup> For a critical account of humanistic approaches to educational theory, see BELL, L., & SCHNIEDEWIND, N., 'Reflective Hearts/Intentional Minds: Joining Humanistic Education and Critical Theory for Liberating Education', in *Journal*



motivations to construct meaning in life and to make choices which are coherent with their value system and general life philosophy. Moreover, humanistic approaches as exemplified by Carl Rogers<sup>7</sup> for instance, consider the human person to be essentially 'good' rather than neutral as in the behaviourist model. Persons are seen to be self-directed organisms which through authentic intra- and inter-personal communication, can discover themselves and others, thus actualizing their potential and facilitating the development of others. Learning is therefore a question of personal and communal growth and there is the Socratic idea that education is really a question of the discovery of one's true nature and the unfolding of one's innate potential. By following one's own internal needs and interests, by listening carefully to one's organism, one can 'learn' - a process synonymous to personal growth. Hence, while S-R approaches stress 'extrinsic motivation' as a precondition for learning, humanistic approaches highlight 'intrinsic motivation'. Learning, in the latter model, is the result of a positive and spontaneous response by an organism to satisfy internal needs, the most important of which is self-actualization.

It follows logically that a humanist teacher would set out to facilitate this kind of growth in favour of all students by providing a safe learning environment where individuals exercise their freedom to discover and fulfil their inner potential. Not only is motivation not a problem, but rather it is traditional teaching - with its ready-made curricula, its dismissal of an individual's needs and particular concerns, and its didactic and teacher-centred strategies - that is responsible for de-motivating students, for the extinction of what, to the humanists, is an inherently natural trait: the will to learn.

Youngman provides a useful description of what a humanist teacher would do in a classroom (or outside it)<sup>8</sup> - a description

*of Education*, vol.169 no.2, (Boston 1987). For an account of the types of power structures which constrain choice in Malta see the three papers by Ronald.G. Sultana, Mary Darmanin and Frank Ventura in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> ROGERS, C. has written a number of very influential books, but the most relevant to the points being made here are his *On Becoming a Person*, (Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1961), and *Freedom to Learn*, (Columbus, Merrill 1969).

<sup>8</sup> YOUNGMAN, op. cit., pp. 126-7.

which reminds us of the experimental state school discussed in the introductory section of this paper. Summarizing Carl Rogers's experiments in this area, Youngman portrays a humanist teacher in the following terms. He or she

focuses on the importance of learning in the education process. Thus he (sic.) stresses student-centred learning based on personal involvement through goal-setting, self-initiated activities, and self-evaluation. Concomitantly, the role of the teacher is to be non-directive and to be a source of the resources the students need to carry out their own learning. The teacher's purpose is to 'facilitate' learning, to provide freedom for growth. Rogers' main injunction to the teacher is to 'trust the student' and he regards the personal relationship between teacher and student as of paramount importance. His concern is with the process of learning rather than with its content, as he believes the modern world to be characterized by change so that learning static knowledge is futile [...] He seeks to encourage processes of inquiry rather than fact acquisition, so that the individual can become an autonomous learner. At the centre of his approach is the use of small groups and learning based on intensive group experience.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, humanistic education not only sets out to be effective - by structuring learning experientially, by making content meaningful to learners, and by integrating intellectual and emotional development - but it also sets out to respect basic ethical and moral norms by creating supportive, co-operative and democratic learning environments.

#### INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND EDUCATION

There are a number of other very practical reasons why humanistic education perspectives - or what can be referred to as 'child-centred' teaching or 'experiential learning' - should hold sway over our thoughts on motivation. In the quote by Youngman above, Rogers argues that the world is changing so much that any view of knowledge as static becomes untenable. It is not knowledge consumption that is important, but knowledge production; not merely learning, but learning how to learn. Another characteristic of the modern world is that the key activity of work is itself changing, and people will experience increasingly

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<sup>9</sup> YOUNGMAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7.

more leisure time both as a result of personal choice (witness the increase of part-time work and the rise of the leisure industry which can be partly explained by the preference for quality holiday time rather than more money) and as a result of constraints, that is unemployment.<sup>10</sup> Habermas has argued that because of this, a number of social institutions such as schools are facing a 'legitimation crisis'<sup>11</sup> What this means in effect is that extrinsic motivators such as 'good jobs' or a 'good career' in return for investment in schooling are fast disappearing, and therefore it is difficult to legitimize or justify schools and the efforts they represent unless a new emphasis is placed on the intrinsic benefits of education. Humanistic education seems much more practically and philosophically equipped to deal with this challenge, a challenge which, I might add, speaks directly to a Maltese context. It is therefore highly relevant to point out that in a research project I carried out in Maltese Trade Schools in 1988<sup>12</sup>, 37.1 per cent of the students answered that they were not quite sure whether those who followed an academic schooling track ended with a better pay-package in their work lives than those who, like them, opted for a shorter school route. As many as 22.2 per cent of these students declared outright that investment in schooling was not related to material success in life. If these attitudes had empirical grounding - and indeed there is enough evidence to show that schooling in Malta, while related to status, is not necessarily correlated with high earnings - then it would be most unwise and counter-productive if our teaching had to appeal to extrinsic motivators in order to mobilize attention and effort.

That the emphasis in the general teaching practice in Maltese schools - both state and private - is placed on extrinsic motivation has been documented by a number of undergraduate and

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed account of these developments see MACAROV, D., 'Planning for a Probability: The Almost Workless World', *International Labour Review*, vol. 124, no. 6 (1985) and OFFE, C., *Disorganised Capitalism*, (Polity Press, Oxford 1985).

<sup>11</sup> HABERMAS, J., *Legitimation Crisis*, (Heinemann, London 1976).

<sup>12</sup> For more details of this study, see SULTANA, R.G., 'School Children in Malta's Twilight Economy', *Bank of Valletta Review*, (4), 1991.

post-graduate empirical research accounts.<sup>13</sup> These document in detail the teacher-centred pedagogy that generally prevails, the association of learning with boredom, and the reliance on punishment and rewards in order to cajole students to pay attention and to learn. Bruner's words are depressingly appropriate for this prevalent pedagogy which

derives from another time, another interpretation of culture [i.e. other than a forum and negotiation and creation of meaning], another conception of authority - one that looked at the process of education as transmission of knowledge and values by those who know more to those who know less and know it less expertly. [The implications of such a pedagogy are that] there should be something rooted out, replaced or compensated. The pedagogy that resulted was some view of teaching as surgery, suppression, replacement, deficit filling, or some mix of them all.<sup>14</sup>

#### MOTIVATION AND JUSTICE

There is also a very important link between motivation to learn and social justice. The point that has been made by a number of interdisciplinary educational theorists and researchers<sup>15</sup> over the past two decades has been that we should think of schooling as a form of language. Schools and teachers speak to students in a variety of ways: they not only use words, but also communicate through the structures of learning that they promote (e.g. the school as standing enclosed as a physical site, detached from the

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<sup>13</sup> AZZOPARDI, A. and BONDIN, A., *Resistance to Schooling*, Unpublished B.Ed.(Hons.) dissertation. (University of Malta 1991). CURMI, M., *Leisure Values in Primary Schools: A Sociological Analysis*. Unpublished B.Ed.(Hons.) dissertation. (University of Malta 1991). DARMANIN, M., *Sociological Perspectives on Schooling in Malta*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. (University of Wales Cardiff College 1989).

<sup>14</sup> BRUNER, J., *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, (Harvard University Press, Massachusetts 1986), p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> A key account is that provided by BOURDIEU, P., and PASSERON, J.C., in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, (Sage, Beverly Hills 1977). These authors' work is covered in more detail in Sultana's paper in this volume. See also WILLIS, P., *Learning to Labour*, (Saxon House, Farnborough 1976) and WALKER, J.C., *Louts and Legends*, (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1988).

wider village community), through the pedagogical relations they develop within and outside the classroom (e.g. inter-student competition and hierarchical relationships between teachers and pupils), and through the selection they make from the wealth of knowledge that there is to learn (hence the formal curricula for different subjects).

The major problem with this 'language' is that it speaks much more to certain groups of students than to others. Many educational theorists have argued that a number of features of school life represent the language patterns, cultural practices, values, attitudes and styles of knowledge of middle-class groups. These authors explain that the 'motivation' which such students have towards learning is due to the fact that the 'language' - in the wide sense being used in this context - they use at home is recognized, finds currency and is given a positive value at school. Middle-class students are therefore more easily attracted to schooling and learning because there is a continuation between the culture of the home and that of the school.

The problem arises for working-class students - often said to lack motivation<sup>16</sup> for education - because the language and cultural and conceptual practices of the school are dissonant with those of their home. Working-class students are said to have a much more organic link to the village community and appreciate communality. The school separates them and encourages a competitive individualism more akin to the cultural and material *habitus* of the middle class. While the latter are brought up in an environment where language (that is, speech as a symbolic activity) is the main tool for interaction at home and, for their parents, at work, the working class rely much less on this symbolic form of communication and are more engaged at the concrete level of problem-solving utilizing hands and manual skills. Schools and teachers, however, represent knowledge to students mainly in symbolic form: speech dominates much of the

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<sup>16</sup> This lack of motivation can be seen in the very high rates of student absenteeism. See SULTANA, R.G., 'School Children in Malta's Twilight Economy', op. cit.

interactive time at school, with students being required to listen - often up to eighty per cent of the six odd hours at school.<sup>17</sup>

The argument goes that such an overwhelming emphasis on language which requires students to work first at an abstract/symbolic level and then to apply that to concrete instances in order to solve problems places working-class pupils at a disadvantage. This is due to the fact that the latter's manner of solving problems takes a different path, starting as it does from a real problem, a concrete situation, which is solved, and in the process of which abstract theoretical conclusions are reached. Such students, therefore, lose their will to learn not, as is imputed, because they and their parents do not value learning, but because they do not value and find alien a system of representation of knowledge which stresses symbolic to iconic (pictorial) and practical (learning by doing and experiencing) languages.

In a very important sense, therefore, our schooling institutions could be acting as systems of exclusion, whereby groups of students are systematically de-motivated. Now, an S-R teacher would probably not give much importance to such an explanation, for he or she would argue that even if such a problem did exist, working-class kids could be brought round to investing further in education if each learning step was sufficiently well reinforced by rewards and, failing that, by punishments. But there is ample proof to show that such students are more likely to receive the latter than the former,<sup>18</sup> and that this is much more effective in alienating them from schooling and learning than motivating them to learn. A humanist teacher, on the other hand, would feel reassured that the child-centred pedagogy which takes the student's experiential world as its starting point is more likely to encourage motivation. Communication - what Walker calls 'touchstone discourse'<sup>19</sup> - is much more likely to occur if the

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<sup>17</sup> YOUNG, R., *A Critical Theory of Education: Habermas and our Children's Futures*, (Teachers' College Press, New York, 1990). See also C. MIFSUD's paper in this volume.

<sup>18</sup> AZZOPARDI and BONDIN, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> WALKER, *op. cit.*

teacher is engaging with the student on the latter's own terms.<sup>20</sup> It also ensures the avoidance of another cause for the extinction of motivation to learn: the exclusion from the curriculum of that knowledge which is valued by different groups of students. A number of studies<sup>21</sup> have shown, for instance, that textbooks used in primary schools, as well as posters and audio-visual aids, generally exclude and deny both the experiences and the interests of particular groups of students - specifically girls, and pupils of working-class origins. This fact could also explain why some groups are more likely to lose motivation and invest less and less in formal schooling, while investing more and more in learning outside school where life appears to be infinitely more real and interesting. What humanist educators attempt to do is to bring that real and interesting world into the school.

#### ENHANCING MOTIVATION

How, then, does a teacher enhance the students' innate will to learn? I have offered a number of ideas in response to that question throughout the essay, and many of these rest on the argument that motivating students is more a question of a shift from an S-R teaching mentality to a child-centred and humanistic one. While the latter approach is not to be thought of in unproblematic terms<sup>22</sup> - one needs to consider, for instance, the extent to which it excludes working-class pupils - it nevertheless does create an environment which satisfies a large number of pedagogically sound and ethically correct criteria. It is also politically viable in that it encourages the formation of pro-active,

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<sup>20</sup> This point is developed in greater detail in YOUNG op. cit. See also Sultana, R.G., 'The Challenge of Critical Education' *Education*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Malta 1990).

<sup>21</sup> *Studju fil-Qosor ta' Kotba Wzati fl-Iskejjel Primarji Maltin* (Kummissjoni Ghall-Avvanz tal-Mara, Valletta 1989). See also the papers by DARMANIN and SULTANA in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> See BERNSTEIN, B., *Class, Codes and Control*, vol. 3., *Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission*, 2e (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1977). Bernstein, among others, has argued, however, that progressive child-centred pedagogy reflects the interests and cultural dispositions of the new middle-class and ultimately can work against the interests of working-class students.

critical and participative citizens whom one desires to see in the classroom and wider community alike. Of course teachers will, to some limited extent, have recourse to S-R techniques, rewarding students and occasionally punishing them to reinforce certain behaviours, attitudes and skills. This will, however, become increasingly less necessary as both teacher and child discover mutual 'touchstone discourse' - the common ground on which they will meet to communicate.

While such a shift from S-R teaching to child-centred education might be relatively easy to achieve by parents as the primary educators in the home, it is by far more difficult to establish in a fully-fledged bureaucracy such as any schooling system is. The following ideas on how to encourage the motivation to learn that pupils come with to school take into account the fact that teachers who favour the approach adopted throughout this essay will often feel themselves constrained and limited by a curriculum-oriented, examination-oriented system and over-crowded classrooms. While in the previous sections, therefore, I made a case for what schooling ought to be like, the following list of pointers towards good practice is operable in schools as they currently are. A critical, humanist educator would probably try to work at both levels, that is, on the one hand striving to do his/her best for the students while at the same time working in favour of a systemic shift from one mode of schooling to another. A humanist teacher who would encourage students' motivation to learn would:

(a) establish a warm and friendly relationship with all the students. She would not only know each of them by name, but would also learn what interests them and what excites them. Such a relationship would lead to as open and non-judgemental an attitude as possible, where students feel safe to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes, to offer answers or solutions to problems without fear of a sarcastic or humiliating reply. Many of us who think back on our student days remember with pleasure those teachers who were warm and empathic, and whose sense of humour brought light and joy to the most dreary of days. Often we found ourselves attracted to the subject, and doing well in it, simply because we liked the teacher!

(b) draw on students' experiences and interests and structure learning situations in such a way that these experiences and interests become the starting point for problem-solving activities.



The teacher would take into account students' views and give the students a strong participatory and decision-making role both in the formulation of learning goals and in choosing the pedagogy and pacing for different educational situations.

(c) develop as wide a repertoire of teaching strategies and approaches as possible. Everybody, but children especially so, is attracted by variety. Colours, music, mime, dance, group-work, discussion, pictures, drama, quizzes, debates, experiments, educational visits, puppet shows, etc., all these and more appeal to the student's curiosity and help make that association between learning and fun which is vital to the maintenance of motivation. A learning situation would make use of a number of such patterned activities. Children learn so much through play and do not need to be pushed to play. The bifurcation between 'leisure' and 'work' is an artificial and historical creation<sup>23</sup> which excludes qualities of one from the other, and which leaves fun, creativity, spontaneity and intrinsic satisfaction as a domain of leisure, and joyless, boring, repetitive, forced and extrinsically derived satisfaction as a domain particular to work. A humanistic and motivating education sets out to bring into work the qualities of leisure, without losing the problem-solving goals that are normally and correctly associated with 'work'.

(d) ensure that students understand the worthwhileness of the activities they are involved in. This is not only a question of relevance, but also of mobilizing determination that outlasts the effect of time. Since learning activities typically spill-over from one day into the next, the motivation to sustain effort depends very much on the extent to which students understand the usefulness and relevance of the totality of the activity in question.

(e) be enthusiastic about teaching and what is being taught. Energy, dedication and enthusiasm are infectious, and a motivated teacher carries the class - or most of it at any rate - with him/her.

That there are teachers who display these qualities and that there are students who regain lost motivation for learning because of teachers such as these, has been made clear by the example of

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<sup>23</sup> One of the best accounts available is that provided by CLARKE, J. & CRITCHER, C., *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain*, (Macmillan, London 1985).

the school described at the start of this essay. In so far as this school approximates the humanistic and motivating education that I have made a case for above, then to the same extent do I recommend its practice as truly liberating and educational, deserving emulation by the officially better known, higher status 'academic' schools in the country.