

## Quotations

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 29 July, 2003 - 11:12

If you would like to send in quotations you think might be of interest to TCS parents, please do! If possible, please include the full reference details (Author, where said/written, date and other publishing details).



### Lord Avebury

“It is customary, but I think it is a mistake, to speak of happy childhood. Children are often overanxious and acutely sensitive. Man ought to be man and master of his fate; but children are at the mercy of those around them.” (1887)



### Eric Berne

“We are born princes, and the civilizing process makes us into frogs.”



### Robert Briffault

“The effects of infantile instruction are, like syphilis, never completely cured.” (1931)



### Winston Churchill

“How I hated this school, and what a life of anxiety I lived there for more than two years. I made very little progress at my lessons, and none at all at games. I counted the days and the hours to the end of every term, when I should return home from this hateful servitude and range my soldiers in line of battle on the nursery floor. The greatest pleasure I had in those days was reading. When I was nine and a half my father gave me *Treasure Island*, and I remember the delight with which I devoured it. My teachers saw me at once backward and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the Form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal, but I was stubborn. Where my reason, imagination or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn. In all the twelve years I was at school no one ever succeeded in making me write a Latin verse or learn any Greek except the alphabet.” – *My Early Life* (1930)

In a letter to his mother, arguing against even one hour of tutoring a day in his summer holidays: “I shall feel that I have got to be back at a certain time and it would hang like a dark shadow over my pleasure.” – quoted in *Churchill: A Life* by Martin Gilbert

“I hope that if evil days should come upon our own country, and the last army which a collapsing Empire could interpose between London and the invader were dissolving in rout and ruin, that there would be some -- even in these modern days -- who would not care to accustom themselves to a new order of things and tamely survive the disaster.”

 Taking Children  
Seriously

[Charles Darwin](#)

“[W]ithout the making of theories I am convinced there would be no observation.” – *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* Volume II, C. Darwin to C. Lyell, June 1st, 1860, p. 108

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[Benjamin Disraeli](#)

“It has been discovered that the best way to insure implicit obedience is to commence tyranny in the nursery.” (1874)

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[Albert Einstein](#)

“One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year ... It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of enquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail.”

“[N]o path leads from experiment to the birth of a theory.” – *The Sunday Times* 18th July, 1976

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[Richard Feynman](#)

“What I cannot create, I do not understand.”

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[Gauss, Karl Friedrich \(1777-1855\)](#)

“It is not knowledge, but the act of learning, not possession but the act of getting there, which grants the greatest enjoyment. When I have clarified and exhausted a subject, then I turn away from it, in order to go into darkness again; the never-satisfied man is so strange if he has completed a structure, then it is not in order to dwell in it peacefully, but in order to begin another. I imagine the world conqueror must feel thus, who, after one kingdom is scarcely conquered, stretches out his arms for others.” – Letter to Bolyai, 1808

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[William Godwin](#)

“In what manner would reason, independently of the received modes and practices of the world, teach us to communicate knowledge? Liberty is one of the most desirable of all sublunary advantages. I would willingly therefore communicate knowledge, without infringing, or with as little possible violence to, the volition and individual judgement of the person to be instructed.” – *The Enquirer* (1797)

“If a thing be really good, it can be shown to be such. If you cannot demonstrate its excellence, it may well be suspected that you are no proper judge of it. Why should not I be admitted to decide, upon that which is to be acquired by my labour?” – *The Enquirer* (1797)

“According to the received modes of education, the master goes first and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended, it is probable that the pupil should go first, and the master follow.” – *The Enquirer* (1797)

“This plan is calculated entirely to change the face of education. The whole formidable apparatus which has hitherto attended it, is swept away. Strictly speaking, no such characters are left on the scene as either preceptor or pupil. The boy, like the man, studies, because he desires it. He proceeds upon a plan of his own invention, or which, by adopting, he has made his own. Everything bespeaks independence and equality. The man, as well as the boy, would be glad in cases of difficulty to consult a person more informed than himself. That the boy is accustomed almost always to consult the

man, and not the man the boy, is to be regarded rather as an accident, than anything essential. Much even of this would be removed, if we remembered that the most inferior judge may often, by the varieties of his apprehension, give valuable information to the most enlightened. The boy however should be consulted by the man unaffectedly, not according to any preconcerted scheme, or for the purpose of persuading him that he is what he is not.” – *The Enquirer* (1797)

“There is reverence that we owe to everything in human shape. I do not say that a child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and with principles of morality; and that in this description is contained abundant cause for the exercise of reverence and forbearance. By the system of nature he is placed by himself; he has claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence. Violate not thy own image in the person of thy offspring. That image is sacred. He that does violence to it is the genuine blasphemer. The most fundamental of all principles of morality is the consideration and deference that man owes to man; nor is the helplessness of childhood by any means unentitled to the benefit of this principle.”

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[William Lloyd Garrison](#)

“On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – AND I WILL BE HEARD...” – *The Liberator* (1831)

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[John Holt](#)

“Next to the right to life itself, the most fundamental of all human rights is the right to control our own minds and thoughts. That means, the right to decide for ourselves how we will explore the world around us, think about our own and other persons' experiences, and find and make the meaning of our own lives. Whoever takes that right away from us, by trying to “educate” us, attacks the very center of our being and does us a most profound and lasting injury. He tells us, in effect, that we cannot be trusted even to think, that for all our lives we must depend on others to tell us the meaning of our world and our lives, and that any meaning we may make for ourselves, out of our own experience has no value.” – *Instead of Education* Chapter 1, “Doing, Not ‘Education’”, page 4

“The idea of painless, nonthreatening coercion is an illusion. Fear is the inseparable companion of coercion, and its inescapable consequence. If you think it your duty to make children do what you want, whether they will or not, then it follows inexorably that you must make them afraid of what will happen to them if they don't do what you want. You can do this in the old-fashioned way, openly and avowedly, with the threat of harsh words, infringement of liberty, or physical punishment. Or you can do it in the modern way, subtly, smoothly, quietly, by withholding the acceptance and approval which you and others have trained the children to depend on; or by making them feel that some retribution awaits them in the future, too vague to imagine but too implacable to escape.” – *How Children Fail*, Revised Edition, 1964, 1982, currently in print and published by Penguin, page 294-295

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[Ivan Illich](#)

“School is an institution built on the axiom that learning is the result of teaching. And institutional wisdom continues to accept this axiom, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.”

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[William Pitt The Younger](#)

“Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.” – in a speech in the House of Commons, London, England, on 18th November 1783

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[Karl Popper](#)

“...we are all equal in our infinite ignorance.” – *In Search of a Better World*, Page 40

“The proper answer to my question ‘How can we hope to detect and eliminate error?’ seems to me to be ‘By criticising the theories and conjectures of others and – if we can train ourselves to do so – by criticising our own theories and speculative attempts to solve problems.’” – *In Search of a Better World*, Page 48

“Thus life proceeds, like scientific discovery, from old problems to the discovery of new and undreamt-of problems.” – *Objective Knowledge*, Page 146

“We are fallible, and prone to error; but we can learn from our mistakes.” – *Objective Knowledge*

“The inductivist or Lamarckian approach operates with the idea of *instruction from without*, or from the environment. But the critical or Darwinian approach only allows *instruction from within* – from within the structure itself.

In fact, I contend that *there is no such thing as instruction from without the structure*, or the passive reception of a flow of information which impresses itself on our sense organs. All observations are theory-impregnated. There is no pure, disinterested, theory-free observation.

[...]

We do not discover new facts or new effects by copying them, or by inferring them inductively from observation, or by any other method of instruction by the environment. We use, rather, the method of trial and the elimination of error. As Ernst Gombrich says, ‘making comes before matching’: the active production of a new trial structure comes before its exposure to eliminating tests.” – *The Myth of the Framework*, Pages 8-9

“...it is of the utmost importance to give up coxsureness, and become open to criticism. Yet it is also of the greatest importance not to mistake this discovery, this step towards criticism, for a step towards relativism. If two parties disagree, this may mean that one is wrong, or the other, or both: this is the view of the criticist. It does not mean, as the relativist will have it, that both may be equally right. ...As two wrongs don't make a right, two wrong parties to a dispute do not make two right parties.” – *The Open Society and Its Enemies Volume 2*, p. 387

“[The three R's] are, I think, the only essentials a child has to be taught; and some children do not even need to be taught in order to learn these. Everything else is atmosphere, and learning through reading and thinking.” – *Unended Quest*

“If I thought of a future, I dreamt of one day founding a school in which young people could learn without boredom, and would be stimulated to pose problems and discuss them; a school in which no unwanted answers to unasked questions would have to be listened to; in which one did not study for the sake of passing examinations.” – *Unended Quest*

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[Ayn Rand](#)

“America's abundance was not created by public sacrifices to the common good, but by the productive genius of free men who pursued their personal interests and the making of their own private fortunes. The idea that ‘the public interest’ supersedes private interests and rights can have but one meaning: that the interests and rights of some individuals take precedence over the interests and rights of others.”

[Arthur Schopenhauer](#)

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“All Truth goes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Then it is violently opposed. Finally, it is accepted as self-evident.”

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**Thomas Szasz**

“Formerly, when parents couldn't cope with their children, they enlisted relatives to discipline them or hired governesses and tutors to do so. Now, they abuse them or hire child psychiatrists and mental hospitals to do so.”

“In the past, parents and psychiatrists tortured sexually active (masturbating) children with mechanical restraints. Today, they torture hyperactive children with chemical restraints (psychoactive drugs). The moral: Only adults and drugs are allowed to be active (children should be seen, not heard).”

“Juvenile court judges now routinely send children deemed to be ‘ungovernable’ or ‘in need of supervision’ to psychiatrists. The child, reasonably enough, views the psychiatrist so imposed on him as his adversary rather than his ally. The psychiatrist who ‘sees’ such a child insists on viewing himself as the protector of the child's best interests. The parents and juvenile court judges who initiate this process insist on viewing themselves as helping the child get the treatment he needs. If we wanted to hasten the destruction of children injured by parental neglect, it would be difficult to devise a more effective mechanism for doing so.”

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**Mark Twain**

“Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run.”

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**Virginia Woolf**

“And it struck her, this was tragedy – not palls, dust, and the shroud; but children coerced, their spirits subdued.” – *To the Lighthouse*

to post comments

## Comments

### **Everything bespeaks independence**

*Submitted by katherand on 30 July, 2004 - 18:47*

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*Everything bespeaks independence and equality. The man, as well as the boy, would be glad in cases of difficulty to consult a person more informed than himself. That the boy is accustomed almost always to consult the man, and not the man the boy, is to be regarded rather as an accident, than anything essential.*

This is I think at least part of what I meant when I said in another post that I have had a hard time convincing myself of the importance of authority figures.

***Katherand***

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