

Vulnerability in Education^{*}

This paper would never have been written were it not for Raymond Callahan's distinguished book *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*,^{**} in which he discusses the extreme vulnerability of school administrators. He argues that, up to the second decade of this century, they were vulnerable largely because of the power exercised over education by business. Reading the book, I said to myself: 'All are vulnerable. Mankind is a vulnerable animal and suffers from feelings of vulnerability day in, day out, awake and in his dreams.'

As a college teacher, I am aware of the excruciating vulnerability of students; and my own sensation of vulnerability as a student will never leave me. I am remotely like the old professor in the movie *Wild Strawberries* who, at the peak of his fame, when he was about to receive the highest scholastic honour in the country and a salute of cannons, had a dream the night before of failing an examination. It is not very long since I ceased to have such dreams; they are the primeval dreams of confronting life's test and failing.

Social scientists consider protection a requisite for society, but it is also essential that society make men vulnerable. If a man is invulnerable society cannot reach him, and if society produces men who cannot be reached it cannot endure. Thus society will protect us only if we consent to being relatively defenceless. To the end that man can be injured and thus brought to heel, an array of frightful devices has been created so that men will be meek and mild, even to being meek and mild in order to be violent and terrible, like the soldier who obeys orders to kill.

From all this it follows that in order for society to survive it must create a vulnerable character structure in its members. The combination of factors that make us thus vulnerable I call the *vulnerability system*.

Bringing men to heel

Where *is* man vulnerable and how is his vulnerability accomplished? To begin with we must have a clear idea of the areas of existence in which man is exposed to injury. First there is his reputation - his good name. Since a person protects it by learning the norms of his social class and never deviating, reputation depends on careful study of norms and obedience to them, however one may despise them. Of

^{*} From *Teachers College Record*, vol. 68, no. 2, November 1966.

^{**} Raymond Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, University of Chicago Press, 1964.

course it is always better if one believes in them, and this is the effortless way of maintaining a good reputation; of being socially invulnerable. But maintaining a good reputation must involve also a certain amount of concealment - of hiding one's deviations. Since deviation can be in thought as well as in action, invulnerability of reputation involves learning how to conceal deviant thoughts. Hence the person with an invulnerable reputation knows how to conceal his socially unacceptable thoughts - if he ever has any. Of course, the best way to handle deviant thoughts is NOT to have any. This requires either looking away quickly from the socially unpleasant; or better still, never looking at anything closely.

How does society make people excruciatingly sensitive to the possibilities of and dangers in losing reputation, and how does society make one sensitive to one's vulnerability? It is done through placing reputation - the social person - in the centre of consideration and making reputation destiny; 'by degrading the inner self to second, third, or merely adventitious place, and making the social facade supreme, so that at every step the self will be sacrificed to the facade.

How is this manoeuvre accomplished? Surely it can be accomplished best through acquiescence and through disregarding and even punishing the emerging self. It is not so much, however, that the child is punished for asserting his selfhood, but that the thrusting upward of the self is not even seen; what is seen by the parent is largely what is relevant to social requirements; what contributes to a good name; what makes one socially invulnerable. In this way the spirit is pruned, largely insensibly, of everything that is not socially acceptable and self becomes identical with reputation. This need not be so, for it is possible for a person to lose his good name and yet accomplish good things in the name of his self. Great reformers and creators have often done this.

Dependence and inflated images

An important function of the feeling of vulnerability is to make us dependent. As small children we are overwhelmed by our vulnerability and so lean on parents, who have in this way become exalted in our eyes. Thus another function of vulnerability is to enlarge the image of those who could harm us and those who protect us. Society is built on a foundation of inflated images derived from vulnerability and upheld by the feeling that what is important are the norms and not ourselves.

While in our culture dependence on parents is necessary and very real in

childhood, the function of the inflated parental image is to project the child's feeling of vulnerability far beyond the boundaries of realism - in order that society itself may be protected. Thus behind every inflated authority image lies society's fear that it is vulnerable. Behind every inflated image lies society's determination to cancel independence. The child's vulnerability is sustained and intensified by the elementary school, where he is at the teacher's mercy. The teacher, clearly through no fault of her own, is the agent of vulnerability; and she transmits the sense of vulnerability to the child through two weapons thrust into her hands, sometimes against her will - discipline and the power to fail the child. Before these absolute weapons the child is even more vulnerable than with his parents; for with his parents the agony of vulnerability is allayed in part by love, and he can, within limits, fight back. In school, however, this usually is not the case; for in the first place, in the contemporary overcrowded class room, fighting back is a negation of necessary order and routine, and fear of failure is the pulse of school life. Remove the fear of failure and education in America would stop as if its heart had been cut out. Yet we cannot blame the feeling of vulnerability on fear of failure, for after all, without fear of failure nobody would try for success, and without striving for success there could be no contemporary culture. Thus another characteristic of vulnerability - its roots in the idea of success.

The lifetime fears

Fear of failure does not begin in school, for in our culture even the basic biological functions of early childhood are amalgamated with the ideas of success and failure. Moving one's bowels at the right time and in the right place is a great success for a baby; while losing control and doing it on the living-room rug is a failure, a source of shame and disgrace for many children. Even taking the right amount of milk from the bottle, and eating all one's spinach before getting dessert are successes, while leaving food on one's plate, or eating sloppily so that milk dribbles on one's shirt may be considered failures. Thus a baby is already psychologically vulnerable at the mouth and bowel, and thus in our culture fear of failure is built right into the biological functions. In this way the soul is prepared for the intensified fear of failure instilled all through school, including college and graduate school.

Related to such fears is the college student's query of 'Will I make it?', and for many college is a four-year opium sleep in which the answer to the question is postponed) while the student commits himself to the pleasures of a coeducational school as a courting pavilion, while at the same time trying to make himself invulnerable to the dangers of the socio-economic system. And this is the paradox - that even as the undergraduate is presumably arming, he gives himself up to

pleasure in order to forget the enemy.

Thus fear of failure is the dark aspect of the hope and striving for success. For most of us, our abilities, our good looks and our social techniques - our pleasant, public relations 'hellos', our ability to laugh at anybody's jokes, our capacity to hold conventional opinions and never to value or fight for any position in an argument too much - never seem quite adequate to ward off all the chances of failure. If a young person is successful in competition for one grade, one scholarship, one boy or girl, or one position today, can he be sure of being successful next time? In our culture a person's armour of personal capabilities is never predictably adequate, so that like the stock market and the gross national product, one can never be sure that if his capabilities are high today they will not crash tomorrow.

From this long training in feeling vulnerable the graduate student enters the academic world with a greater concern with reputation than with self, and an overpowering fear of failure. Under these conditions he is bound to be a failure to his self and at this point the *coup de grace* is often administered to it.

Vulnerability in the schools

In the world outside the university many institutions ensure that the sense of vulnerability will never be lost. Every teacher in a public school system, for example, knows that if he asserts his self the probabilities of getting a rise or even keeping his job are reduced. But behind the principal who makes this clear to him is a superintendent who can punish the principal; and behind the superintendent is a board of education, while behind them is a state department of education ready to punish them all. Behind the state department are the people. Now the (aide is complete, for the people, after all, are interested largely in preserving their good names. Since so many among them have given up self-striving, why should they allow it to anybody else? Furthermore they are frightened about what might happen to their non-conforming children.

It is now time to ask: 'How shall a person who wishes to assert himself in the school system become invulnerable or at least reduce his vulnerability?' By self-assertion I do not necessarily mean yelling at the principal, although it is rarely that assertion of one's self does not entail standing up to a superior.

By assertion of the self, I mean doing and saying what is in harmony with a self that is striving for something significant, for something which would be a step in the direction of selfrealization - in the direction of something that would enable one to say to one's self, I have made myself more significant in my own eyes.' It is this 'ownmost self, as Martin Heidegger has called it, that studies and evaluates remorselessly, that I am talking about.

For a teacher, assertion of the self would involve saying what he thinks most enlightening to the students; refusing to use stupid books, or reinterpreting them to make sense; deviating from the embalmed curriculum, and so on. Alone, he obviously can do this only within limits - although, when we come to think of it, the country is so starved for teachers now that after a squabble a teacher can often go around the corner to the next school district and get another job, while principals who once never thought twice before letting a teacher go, now think a hundred times.

On the other hand, going it alone is foolish, not so much because of the teacher's vulnerability but because, if his ideas are good, other teachers should share and express them, and if the majority of teachers in the same school do, it is difficult to withstand them. If a teacher acts alone and is forced to lie down or quit, the sense of vulnerability is intensified throughout the school system. The sense of vulnerability functions in a school system to frighten the teachers into becoming stupid; and since when they become stupid, so do the pupils, we end up with the understanding that vulnerability in the teacher helps educate children to stupidity. In this way society gets what it wants.

The example of Paradise

The functioning of the vulnerability system is illustrated by the case of Virginia Franklin, a high-school teacher in Paradise, California, as reported in *Life*, 26 April 1963.

I quote from the article:

The rage in Paradise centres on a high-school teacher named Virginia Franklin. She believes America is served best by training children to make up their own

minds. Her social-studies classes, filled with debate, are encouraged to read material of widely divergent points of view, from the liberal to the extremes of the right wing.

Although Mrs. Franklin earned an award from the Freedoms Foundation, she gained the enmity of the local American Legion post and others, including the John Birch Society. She was, of course, accused of being a communist, and one of her students was discovered spying on her in class by means of a tape recorder hidden in a hole carved in a text book. Fortunately Mrs. Franklin is such a good teacher that she had the support of her principal, her superintendent and a small majority of the people who voted in the election for a new member of the school board. Mrs. Franklin's supporter won.

This case has many features of the vulnerability system as it operates in our country. It is seen to have its roots in irrational fear and hate, and it takes possession of a revered symbol, in this case love of country. But it appropriates the fear symbol also which, in this case, is communism, for the extreme right considers itself the sole defender of the country. Mrs. Franklin would have been vulnerable had she stood alone; but what is most striking is that, although the principal, the superintendent and the school board supported her during the outbreak of lunacy, the other teachers did not come forward.

The comment of Dr George Baron of the Institute of Education of the University of London is vital in connection with the case. Writing in the *Teachers College Record* (May 1964), he says:

The Hell in Paradise case . . . gives to an English reader at first the impression of a closed, insular little society in which all is distrust and suspicion . . .

There was, it would seem, no structure of accepted authority and custom to which the participants could appeal, no firmly held views on what was the nature of the trust that parent, teacher and pupil must have in each other and in each other's roles, in the school situation. Moreover . . . neither teacher nor principal was effectively supported by any professional associations; no *university appears to have lent its weight to the cause of the teacher's freedom, and no figures of significance in the intellectual and political life of the nation seized on the incident as one to be lifted out of its purely parochial context*. It was left then, for the . . . small community of Paradise to decide unaided issues that have occupied men for centuries.

Thus Dr Baron sees to the core: the distrust and suspicion which spread like cancer; the readiness of hate and fear-motivated organizations to usurp power where no clear authority exists; and the oceanic lack of involvement of the American people in their own vulnerable predicament. This is brought out by Dr. Baron's remarks that no professional association, no university - especially professors of education - came forward to be heard on the matter. Like the New Yorkers who watched from behind their blinds while a woman was stabbed to death, they remained uninvolved. As long as Americans are uninvolved in one another, each stands alone in his vulnerability. We conclude from this that a consequence of extreme vulnerability, wherein all men stand alone, is to make all men vulnerable; to bring all men to heel. Commenting further Dr Baron says: This is markedly different from the situation in England - or, indeed, in Europe generally - where the universities, the schools, and the professions together have a coherence that protects them and individual teachers and practitioners from local and other external pressures.

In conclusion he says:

Given the place accorded to the local community in school affairs [in the United States], the isolation of the teacher, the seriousness of the heed paid to the views of children and adolescents, the political function ascribed to the school [as a controller of political ideas], and the fear of uncontrolled unusual ideas, other Paradises are inevitable. Teachers and parents, who support mildly controversial ideas, even though they are commonplaces throughout the western world, must then live with the fear of being denounced and persecuted.

It *is* now necessary to ask the question, 'Where were the professors of education?' As a matter of fact, where are professors altogether in the social studies issue? We can examine some of the factors that might prevent them from taking strong positions on sharpening the social studies. In the first place the professors of education in those institutions which are in the most strategic position to make their opinions felt, are subject to the same pressures toward ineffectualness as Mrs. Franklin. Their situation is aggravated, however, by the fact that although their universities may be tolerant, the state departments, fearful of their own position, cannot afford to liberalize the social studies, and therefore the professors cannot afford to be different.

The roots of incompetence

Since a consequence of vulnerability is to prevent social change, and since in our

culture there is always a strong push for enlightened social change, we conclude that usually the function of the vulnerability system is to prevent enlightenment and the consequent change. Put another way, the function of the vulnerability system is often to guarantee darkness and incompetence.

As a matter of fact, the people who are in the positions most strategic for social change are usually the most vulnerable. In Government an outstanding example of this is the United States Department of Labour, which, although originally established to look after the interests of labour, was quickly deprived of power because of the danger of too great closeness of labour and government. Shorn of real power, the Department of Labor became a frozen bureaucracy dedicated largely to collecting statistics and keeping out of trouble with Congress, the Department of State and organized labour itself, who came to look upon the Department as largely a do-nothing outfit, uninterested in labour's welfare and under the thumb of Congress and business.

In education the group most strategic for social change is the teachers, and we know that the teachers are a vulnerable group. Fifty years ago labour was in a similar position, and it is only through organizing that it lost its vulnerability. As soon as this happened, however, labour lost interest in social change also.

This suggests that although a vulnerable group cannot institute social change, once it has become invulnerable it may lose its interest in social change.

As a group becomes invulnerable, either through organization or through freezing in self-protective attitudes, it also becomes incompetent, because within the cage of protection that freezes around it there are frozen also the skills the group is seeking to protect. Hence teachers don't change, superintendents don't change, and workers do not take the trouble to educate themselves beyond the skills guaranteed to them by their organization. Over the years invulnerability through hiding has become the very factor that has now made educators increasingly vulnerable to the criticism of incompetence.

Scapegoats and children

In all of this those who suffer most are children, for the defensiveness of everybody - the socially patterned exposure and vulnerability of everybody in the educational system - produces classrooms where off-beat questions are rarely asked. If they arise, they are ignored by the teacher; the readers, written largely by females who make a business of writing mindless stories) confront no issue but the

apathy of the children; and, for generations, little changes but the faces. Attacks on teachers nowadays therefore have some of the spuriousness of attacks on Jews, for whenever a society is under stress the most vulnerable group becomes the scapegoat. Anti-educationalism is a refined form of scapegoating. In the present crisis in education, we see that what really binds the system is the hysterical and stingy public, committed to the high-rising living standard and frightened out of its wits by fear of communism. Meanwhile, in the drive to improve the teaching of science and mathematics we observe a present paradox, for while fear impels us to revolutionize science teaching the danger arises - as witness Mrs. Franklin - that we go backwards in other areas. Even the fear of communism, however, is not the force behind the effort to improve the teaching of science and mathematics. Basically the force is all of business - textiles, oil, supermarkets, rockets and so on, who need the scientist and the mathematician to automate, to analyse, to invent and to compute along with the computers; for business is so vulnerable to competition, to obsolescence, to the stock market, to imports, to a labour movement and to depression that it needs our children's brains as protection. We must not, however, let everything else in our schools remain dead and embalmed while science and mathematics spring to a new and ambiguous life.

The case of Rene Descartes

Most of us have learned in introductory courses in philosophy that Descartes was so afraid of the church that he had to prove many times that God exists, that he withdrew several of his works on hearing of the condemnation of Galileo, and that he insisted on anonymity. It has not been pointed out that Descartes seems to have avoided discovering calculus because he was afraid that analysis of infinity would be considered blasphemy. Anyone who knows Descartes's capacities, that he started western philosophy on new pathways, that he is a fundamental source of modern phenomenology, and that he invented analytical geometry, could not doubt, after reading his *Principles*, that he could have discovered calculus had he not been afraid of inquiring into the nature of infinity. Consider the following from Principles XXVI and XXVII:

That we must not try to dispute about the infinite, but just consider that all that in which we find no limits is indefinite, such as the extension of the world, the divisibility of its parts, the number of the stars etc.

We will thus never hamper ourselves with disputes about the infinite, since it would be absurd that we who are finite should undertake to decide anything regarding it. ... That is why we do not care to reply to those who demand whether

the half of an infinite line is infinite, and whether an infinite number is even or odd and so on. ...And for our part, while we regard things in which, in a certain sense, we observe no limits, we shall not for all that state that they are infinite, but merely hold them to be indefinite. Thus because we cannot imagine an extension so great that we cannot at the same time conceive that there may be one yet greater, we shall say that the magnitude of possible things is indefinite.

Now come the lines that make clear that the calculus was definitely within Descartes's reach:

And because we cannot divide a body into parts which are so small that each part cannot be divided into others yet smaller, we shall consider that the quantity may be divided into parts whose number is indefinite.

Since infinity and the infinitesimal are at the core of the calculus and since Descartes discovered analytical geometry, necessary preliminary to calculus, it is highly probable he would have discovered calculus too if he had not been afraid. Principle XXVII makes the issue even clearer.

And we shall name these things indefinite rather than infinite in order to reserve to God alone the name of infinite, first of all because in Him alone we observe no limitation whatever, and because we are quite certain that He can have none. [I change now to the French translation, because the issues are clearer there.] * As regards other things we know that they are not thus absolutely perfect because although we observe in them certain properties which appear to have no limit, we yet know that this proceeds from our lack of understanding and not from their natures.

So, he says, man must leave the infinite and the infinitesimal unplumbed because they belong to God and are beyond understanding - even though it was perfectly clear that Descartes understood them.

See Philosophical *Works* of Descartes, translated into English by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Cambridge University Press, 1931. The translators indicate that Descartes was enthusiastic about the French translation (from Latin) and that he wrote the Preface.

Thus the sensation of vulnerability prevented Descartes from making a great discovery; and from this we conclude that behind many intellectual failures lies a failure of nerve.

Knowledge bureaucratized

A bureaucracy is a hierarchically organized institution whose purpose is to carry on certain limited functions. Thus a school system, the army, a university, the government, are all bureaucracies. It is common knowledge, however, that bureaucracies have three functions, rather than one. Although the first is ostensibly to carry out the tasks for which they are established, the definition of roles and the routinization of procedures in bureaucracies brings it about that an important function of the organization becomes that of preventing anything within it from changing. Even small change might make it necessary for the entire organization to change because each part is so interlocked with every other, that to alter any procedure in a bureaucracy without changing the rest is often like trying to increase the height of one wall of a house without modifying its entire configuration. A third function of a bureaucracy is to perpetuate itself, to prevent itself from disappearing. Given the functions of preventing internal change and struggling to survive, bureaucracies tend to devote much of their time to activities that will prevent change. Under these conditions it is difficult to introduce new knowledge into the system. Often only a general convulsion in the total society can compel a bureaucracy to change; and then it will do so only just enough to avoid going out of business. Obviously these are the conditions for incompetence: bureaucracies create the conditions for their own incompetence and hence for their own destruction. World convulsions have caused radical changes in the administration of the executive in our own government; the changes in the Department of Defense have been a response to world crisis; and the entrenched military brass have almost been swept away because they would not change.

And so it goes. The feeling of vulnerability always creates efforts at defence but these very efforts only increase vulnerability over the long run because they cause incompetence. The feeling of vulnerability, efforts at defence by freezing the system, increased vulnerability and ultimate destruction if there is no change - this is the universal law of western civilization.

Competence for what and whom?

Anybody in our culture who suggested that we did not love our children would be hated; and in harmony with our love of children we want them to have the best education available. Of course, it has to be the best education available for the money we are willing to spend, and we all know that in calculating the amount of money we are able - or rather, are willing - to spend on education, the family standard of living comes first. That is to say, after we have calculated expenditures

for food, drink, entertainment, the kind of clothes that will present us and our children to the world in conformity with our class position, expenditures for fishing tackle, guns, high-fi sets, radios (several in one house), TV (two or three in one house), outboard motor boats, two cars, \$30 to \$40 dresses for the kid's graduation prom, two or more bathing suits for everybody, a summer vacation, a barbecue pit, a nice house with suitable mortgage and upkeep, hairdos, mouthwashes, cosmetics, cigarettes, bowling, movies and repairs of the car - I say, after we have calculated all these expenses - not to mention taxes to state and federal governments - we are willing to give our children the best education -to be bought with the money that's left over. Obviously not much is, and the continued defeat of one school bond issue after the other is witness to the contradiction between educational goals and the living-standard. Thus education, the very phenomenon that made a rising living standard possible, is being undermined by it.

Another factor contributing heavily to incompetence in education is the war, for since taxes to support it draw heavily on all of us, we are unwilling to be taxed for other things; that is to say, we are unwilling to pay higher education taxes in the interests of our children. When we add the expenditures for the spendthrift commitment to a good time and a rising standard of living, our children get the dirty end of the stick. Let us put it even more clearly: as far as education is concerned, war, a good time and the living standard eat up so much that, in their education, the kids get the crumbs that fall from the table. Educational crumbs can only be educational incompetence. On the other hand, in a deeper sense, our children get the best education compatible with a society that requires a high level of stupidity in order to exist as it is. A moment's reflection will convince anyone that this is true. For example, if television had a truly well-educated audience and the newspapers and magazines well-educated readers, the economy would collapse because, since nobody would then be impressed by the advertising, they would not buy. Adults who had been trained by clear-headed, sharp-brained teachers would be imbued with such clarity of vision that they would not put up with many federal and local policies and they certainly would stop smoking. They might even begin to question the need for a standard of living that has spread wall-to-wall carpeting from here to California and given millions more space and more mobility than they can intelligently use. In the light of these terrifying

possibilities the thought of an education in depth and sharpness for everybody can only make a thoughtful person anxious, because an education for stupidity is the only one we can afford right now.

I hope it is understood that no criticism is intended of socially necessary education for stupidity. Having been an educator much of my life, I understand that every civilization needs to introduce a reasonable amount of respectable intellectual sabotage into its educational system lest the young get out of hand and challenge or scorn tradition and accepted canons of truth. Too much striving by intellectual Samsons will only bring the temple down; it surely can do no lasting harm to cut their hair a wee bit. It looks better too: a crowd of crew-cuts or flat-tops looks so much neater than a mob of long-hairs. For a college teacher there is a certain comfort and tranquility in dealing with students who have been trained in elementary and secondary school not to embarrass him by asking impertinent questions; and scarcely a day must pass when he does not give thanks to a system that has provided him with meek students who permit him to grow old without too much intellectual stir - without making him feel vulnerable.

Education and war

If we look at education and war from the standpoint of vulnerability, we see that in many ways education in this country today is hostage to our fear of communism; and revisions in the courses in maths and science are not going to help the child much, they are just going to make him better for the war machine and for the changing character of American industry which each day becomes more and more dependent on the sciences. Revision of the teaching of science and maths will not help the child much because we are not improving his skills in maths and science in the interest of his inner self but in the interest of war and business. Furthermore the overwhelming majority of girls will have use for it and college students seem to show a declining in interest in the sciences. The history of American education in the last hundred years, as set forth cogently by my colleague, Professor Callahan, shows that education has not considered the child's interest but that of industry; and I am not yet convinced that what is good for General Motors is good for our children. Even less am I convinced that what is good for Missile Dynamics is good for our children, or what is good for the Pentagon is good for them. Meanwhile the educational system, pressed by one world movement or local interest after the other, successively breeds one form of incompetence after the other. Each world hysteria generates a powerful group that sees itself as prophet of the system and the system yields to it. It is yield or die, because for the moment they hold overwhelming power.

It thus becomes clear that love of our children is, at best, qualified by our love of fun and the high-rising living standard, and that the Joneses, the McMullins, and the Schwartzes throughout the country do not love their children so much that they are willing to lower their living standard and give up some fun in the interest of raising the level of education to what is more in conformity with the possibilities of the richest and one of the most democratic countries in the world. It is also clear that, although we love our own children, it is not so clear that others - like business or the Pentagon - love them in the same way and for the same reasons.

Knowing our strength

zsI have spoken of the vulnerability - the susceptibility to destruction and defeat - of man in our culture. I pointed out that in order for society to continue it has to make us vulnerable - it has to create in us a vulnerable character structure, for did we not feel vulnerable society would have no way of making us toe the mark. I discussed Descartes because I wanted to show how what attacks all of us in the scholarly world - fear of punishment for making the very discoveries which are the goal and glory of our calling - prevented Descartes from discovering the calculus. Anyone who reads history and the social sciences critically learns that behind many intellectual failures is indeed a failure of nerve. The books we are compelled to give our students - largely be-cause there are no better ones - are often boring and irritating, not because their authors lack brains but because they lack courage.

Thus it turns out that incompetence in education is in large part a consequence of fear - fear of one another and fear of communism - and the case of Mrs. Franklin is merely an extreme and overt expression of the widespread but covert process of sabotage that plagues the educational system and helps to make our children stupid. But the incompetence of the educational system is merely one form of bureaucratic incompetence, and all bureaucracies become incompetent because of fear.

The moral of all this is that we must know our strength. Nobody is invulnerable but nobody is as weak as he thinks he is either. Let everyone, instead of saying to himself, 'I am afraid,' say instead, 'I may be stronger than I think.'

Extracted from the collection, Essays on Education, Jules Henry, Penguin Education Specials, 1971