

Freedom and the exceptional child

Celia Green



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What motivates opposition to individual liberty? One factor is certainly the resentment which is fuelled in some people by observing a person being able to do what he wants. It might be thought that this resentment represents merely an envy of pleasure, so that it is greater in proportion to the amount of pleasure enjoyed by the other person. However, I believe it is a person who knows his own mind, decides he wants to do something significant, and is able to act on this decision, that arouses particular resistance.

It is interesting that, in spite of a lot of media attention devoted to the exploits of rich businessmen, filmstars and sportsmen, the maximum opposition seems to be aroused when a rich person tries to affect the social landscape in some way which reflects his personal interests. Even something as modest in aspiration as a private collection of pictures by contemporary artists arouses resentment of a quality which mere hedonism seems not to do. 'He shouldn't be able to keep things like that to himself; they should belong to the public.' Or a rich person being able to decide, say, what research gets done because he is the one providing the funding.

Perhaps there is more to the hatred of freedom than just jealousy of material circumstances. Perhaps it also involves envy of another person's sense of autonomy, of his knowing his own mind relatively clearly – and there being something to know – and his feeling that it is right to pursue whatever goal he is called towards.

Certainly this would make sense of the reactions which are observed in relation to gifted children. One thing which is often seen in children who are particularly talented in some way is the singlemindedness with which they pursue their activity, and the strong sense of purpose they appear to have. Compare a gifted child with the average demoralised adult and you would have to conclude that, of the two, the gifted child knew far better what he wanted and how to achieve his objective. Yet curiously, in the specious and sterile discussions which the subject of gifted children generates, the idea that a gifted child might actually be the best judge of what is right for him is rarely even considered.

The function of schools

A 1992 case concerning a child prodigy provides a good illustration of the sort of irrational reactions aroused by the phenomenon of a person doing

something which is out of the reach of his peers and from which he is likely to derive pleasure of a relatively sophisticated kind.

In December 1992, *The Times* reported that Nicholas MacMahon, a four-year old boy, was taking university classes after finding that his school was not catering for his high intelligence. In reaction, his former headmistress alleged that he behaved in a socially maladaptive way during the brief time he was at the school, commenting that he may be ‘used to one-to-one relationships but society, and certainly schools, are composed of groups of people. I have to say that we found Nicholas a very sad little boy.’ As if to endorse these invidious and destructive remarks, the article was headed with the assertion that ‘schools must try to balance the intellectual needs of gifted youngsters with ensuring that they have a happy childhood.’

On the contrary, schools should not try to do anything as ambitious as engineering ‘happiness’, as it only allows them scope for damaging interference and manipulation. If I were choosing a school for a child, gifted or otherwise, I should avoid any which imagined itself competent to do more than teach efficiently and provide a polite and civilized environment in which children were not exposed to physical or psychological attack from either the pupils or the teachers. (How many schools actually achieve this?) The article takes for granted, of course, the validity of the prevailing assumption that a dichotomy exists between exceptional intellectual achievement on the one hand, and normality and happiness on the other.

Incidentally, I should certainly be influenced against a school by the fact that its headmistress had no scruples about expressing, in public, opinions on a former pupil which could be damaging. This seems as bad as a doctor writing to the Press to reveal information about a patient. One would hope that a principle of confidentiality prevailed among those who were responsible for children. It should be recognised that a child so obviously precocious is likely to arouse hostile and irrational reactions, and there will be a strong tendency to use concepts such as ‘social adjustment’ or ‘happiness’ as excuses for frustrating him, or simply for making him *unhappy*.

According to an educational psychologist (from whose book on gifted children the extracts quoted below are taken), children go to school to learn

... not only in a narrow academic sense, but in the widest possible interpretation of the world – about themselves, about being a person within a group of others, about the community in which they live, and about the world around them.¹

I believe that any school that had such an extraordinarily wide set of objectives would be extremely dangerous. If a school has clearly defined and restricted objectives there is some hope that it may fulfil them effectively, or at least that its failures in doing so will be clearly visible. However, a specification as loose as that quoted means, in effect, that anything goes and that the child is delivered over to his teachers body and soul. He cannot feel exempt from interference simply by carrying out his learning tasks and keeping a few simple rules. He is there to be exposed to any variety of psychological manipulation that may produce what his teachers regard as a desirable psychological end-product.

One of the chief advantages of private education is that the inclination of teachers to interfere and form judgments is, at least to some extent, restrained. The danger of the state educational system, as I myself experienced it, is that there is very little restraint on the expression of hostility – which may be represented as benevolently intended psychological engineering – and of course no inhibition against putting pressure on parents to override their offspring's wishes.

‘The child has no valid volition’

The statement which heads this section was made to me by a gentleman with long experience of teaching in state secondary schools. It is, of course, perfectly true so far as the educational system is concerned. Parents have, according to the 1944 Education Act, a duty to provide their children with ‘efficient full-time education suitable for their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have’. There is no reference to the child's wishes in education law, and hence no duty on state school teachers to pay any attention to them.

It is characteristic of all state provisions that the volition of the individual has little weighting, whereas in a commercial situation it is dominant, since the individual will only pay for what he chooses to pay for. He must

therefore want what he buys, even if only as the least unattractive of the available alternatives.

Even outside the state system there is little general recognition of the importance of a child's wishes or inclinations. In connection with gifted children (including those gifted in music or some sort of physical activity) the idea of respect for their volition is only invoked when found useful for criticizing their advantageous education. An 'ambitious' mother under attack on television, asked why she provided her daughter with dancing and other special lessons, said this was to help her become a balanced individual. 'But wouldn't she be *more* balanced if she decided what to do for herself?' is the response, and the girl is earnestly asked whether she *wants* to do dancing, does she *like* it.

Similarly, it may be said of a tennis prodigy, *en route* to millionairehood, that her *parents* decided for her that she should be educated in tennis when she was a toddler, with the implication that therefore her career represents a restriction, rather than an expression, of her autonomy. No such concern with a child's wishes is provoked by its enforced attendance at ordinary schools, where it may be learning little or nothing and may clearly wish it were elsewhere.

It is, I must admit, difficult to avoid making decisions on behalf of a child before it reaches a certain age.

However, if no specialised training is allowed to be undertaken until a child reaches an age at which it can be said to be making a fully-informed decision, it will be too late for it ever to reach the highest rank in many kinds of activity. While recognising that a young child is not in a good position to translate its inclinations into available opportunities, I myself would, if in charge of a child, attempt to consider what choices it would make for itself if it were as informed as I was.

One of the few ways in which an intellectually gifted child can, within the context of a school environment, receive teaching which is better suited to it is by being put up a year. This procedure is treated as controversial, ostensibly because it arouses resentment that a child already regarded as 'advantaged' should receive special treatment, but in reality probably

because of the considerable psychological advantages which can accrue from it.

Certainly consideration of using acceleration as a possible solution to meeting the educational needs of exceptional children will have to take account of a wide variety of factors, and the likely implications of these on the well-being and good progress of the child in question. Such discussions will need to involve, without question, both the child and the parents, and staff from both primary and secondary schools.²

Why does the writer describe her assertion here as being ‘without question’, when it comes close to the most questionable crux of the matter – which is whether (a) anyone should be exposed to having decisions made about them by other people, and whether (b) there is the slightest likelihood that decisions made by a large number of people, taking into account a large number of factors which should be regarded as none of their business, will be other than harmful. Speaking as someone who was once a gifted child, I do not believe either of these things. If I was responsible for any children I would try to keep them in situations where no one thought it was their business to think about their problems, as opposed to getting on with the business of teaching them.

Let us spell out the assumptions that go into the idea that it is unquestionably a good thing for decisions about a child’s education to be made after discussion by more people, rather than fewer. It is assumed that it is probable, or indeed possible, that a good decision for the person concerned (who is, in case we forget, the child being educated) can be made in this way. We do not need to consider the possibility that some of those concerned may have jealous or obstructive feelings towards the child, and that these may influence the outcome; in fact, that they are more likely to determine the outcome the more people are involved in contributing to the discussion, and the more factors they are encouraged to regard as relevant to the discussion. The more widely ranging the discussion, the easier it will be for anyone who dislikes the child, or who simply dislikes the idea of any child getting ahead, to find a reason against their being allowed to do so.

The possibility also exists, though it would appear to be a much rarer one and I have never encountered an example of it, that a child might be forced to move up a year if a majority of people realised that this would actually

be unfavourable for it. I do not know under what circumstances such a move could be damaging, but the factors which enter into such situations exceed in number and complexity those which are recognised in books such as this. For example, by moving into a higher form a child might be brought into contact with a hostile teacher who had plans to change its personality.

The denial of ability

It needs to be stressed that the range of individual difference in aptitude for the acquisition of information and intellectual skills is very large. This point tends to be blurred or avoided in discussions of gifted children. One way in which this is done is to make generalisations about the class of 'gifted children', although this actually covers a wide range of ability in itself, since it is usually taken to cover children with any IQ from about 130 upwards, so that generalisations can scarcely be expected to apply equally meaningfully at both the top and bottom of the range.

A person with an IQ of 180 is quite a different matter from a person with an IQ of 130. The latter are, of course, much more common, and the sort of ability they display is found fairly unsurprising and is much less likely to arouse extreme reactions in people. To give a concrete idea of the difference in the range of ability we are talking about, probably most children with an IQ of 130 will not be able to read when they start attending school at five, although they will clearly learn faster on average than children with IQs of 100. A few children with the highest IQs may be reading encyclopedias and anything else that comes their way, by the time they are four. People obviously find this more surprising level of ability more alarming. What is to be noticed about this kind of discrepancy is that it corresponds to a difference in capacity which does not go away.

There is a tendency to refer to precocious achievements as an accidental flash in the pan and to suppose that a child is not being treated unfairly if it is left to mark time while other children 'catch up'. If, after some ten years or so of this sort of treatment it should happen that the child appears only moderately successful, or indeed completely unsuccessful, at academic pursuits, this will be taken as yet another confirmation that early precocity is truly meaningless and that the child has grown up quite unremarkable. Which, of course, everyone with a commitment to egalitarianism – which

is probably most people currently working in the field of education – is likely to find very pleasing.

It might be argued that the normal educational process is a wasteful and inefficient way of using even the most mediocre abilities, so that a moderately gifted child is already required to have a considerable toleration of purposeless living and underutilisation of its abilities. However, the degree of toleration of these things required of those at the top end of the IQ spectrum is far greater. This is, of course, only likely to be conceded by those who accept that there is a fairly persistent factor of intellectual capacity or intrinsic ability for a given individual. But if we accept this, we will see that the intellectual capacity which went into, say, learning to read encyclopedias by the age of four, must be used very little, or in very unpurposeful ways, if the child with an IQ of 180 is not to be many years ahead of children with an IQ of 130 by the time it is fifteen. I do not myself believe that the mental functions which are exercised in learning to read exceptionally fast conveniently vanish.

There is a practice described as *hothousing*, which is seldom discussed without negative implications. It appears to mean no more than utilising the learning capacity which a child towards the top end of the IQ spectrum may have, so that it is being educated relative to its capacity and not relative to the norm which happens to prevail in its society, determined by the prevailing level of underutilisation of average ability. Now it is not surprising that if a person, most likely a parent, sets out to help their child to utilise the capacity which it actually has, and if it was in the first place a child with an IQ of 180 or thereabouts, the results are likely to seem fantastic. Then people may throw up their hands in horror at the ‘unnaturalness’ of what has happened. John Stuart Mill was taught to read Greek when he was three! Good Lord!

The expression ‘hothousing’ suggests that what is going on is necessarily heated and unnatural. However, the fact that ‘hothouse’ children may produce some results which seem surprising by comparison with other children of their age scarcely seems to justify this. If their education is related to their capacity even to the extent that they are allowed to make as much purposeful effort as the normal child is allowed to make, their achievements are sure to be surprising. If they are not, it can only be because they have been provided with a lifestyle in which they have even

less scope for purposeful efforts than the average child, and this might be regarded as unnatural refrigeration, or being in cold storage.

It may be true that some parents have sometimes allowed their exceptional child not only to exert itself in as purposeful a way as the average child, but actually more. It is true that John Stuart Mill's father appears to have disliked the underutilisation of ability that went on in normal schools (that is, in the normal schools of his time) and did not send his son to one for fear he would acquire habits of idleness. The idea that someone should be allowed a life with a greater amount of purposefully directed activity and application of attention than the average is no doubt thought to be unacceptable, especially if he or she has greater than average abilities with which to take advantage of it. However, it seems to me unlikely that this policy would be successful for long with a child who did not find it congenial.

I see that we may require as an ideal that a child should not be required to live more purposefully than it feels inclined, or to produce a level of achievement only possible for someone with an IQ twenty points higher than it may happen to have, but if so, perhaps we should also have an ideal of not requiring a child to live in a more demoralised or unpurposeful way than it finds agreeable, or to conduct its academic career on a time-scale only natural for someone with a much lower IQ. In fact there is little or no reluctance to expose children to the demoralising influences that may be exerted by a school environment; there is an almost universal assumption that communal environments are 'good', and whatever influences they exert must be beneficial.

'Pushing and stretching'

There is general agreement that it is a bad thing to 'push' an able child, whereas it is desirable to 'stretch' it. These terms are not defined, and at first sight a person might imagine that the concept of pushing had something to do with making the child work harder than the child itself wanted to, or forcing it to behave as if it was ambitious when in fact it was not. However, a little experience of the usage of this term in practice soon convinces one that the child's inclinations actually have nothing to do with it (except perhaps in an inverse sense).

The modern age does not believe in heredity, hence it does not believe in innate characteristics, and a child's inclinations are something that can be changed at will. There is no aversion, for example, to placing children in group situations (such as schools) where they do not wish to be. The idea of 'pushing' has in fact nothing to do with the child's inclination or disinclination; in my own experience it was applied whenever someone suggested that I might do something progressive, such as entering the school at a level where I would actually be learning something, even if in the company of older children. The dominant fear that I might be 'pushed' came to appear to me extraordinary, and to have scarcely any relation to reality (except in the inverse sense of a tendency to oppose what would have been natural to me).

The concept of stretching appears to refer to utilising someone's capacity to the full, at least for a short time, but in a way that will not be of any permanent advantage to him. Doing very difficult problems which have no relation to any actual syllabus or playing difficult but useless games would appear to qualify. Pushing is applied to doing things that may result in positive emotional results, such as taking exams young, which may lead to a sense of triumph; or being put into a higher class, which gives one the opportunity to realise that one is able to do better than other children older than oneself. Stretching is a process which does not lead to these positive benefits; just possibly one may become interested in a useless but difficult puzzle and feel some satisfaction in solving it, but there is also a negative possibility in that one may simply fail to solve the difficult puzzle, or not to solve it well enough, in which case the teacher may be able to make the pupil aware of his inadequacy, so that confidence is actually undermined. Factors which might contribute to failure are an inability to become interested in a problem that is being set only for the sake of its difficulty and has no real point, and one's awareness of the teacher's hostility and desire to see one fail.

There seems to me to be a very strong likelihood that teachers will derive pleasure from seeing an exceptional child failing; indeed, some of my own teachers told me they did not like me being too successful. This is apparently an attitude which a teacher can find supported by educational theory:

Children may be reassured by being helped to see that as human beings there are strengths and weaknesses in us all, that we are capable of success at some things and at some times, and will fail in others.³

The ‘unrealistic’ demands exceptional children make upon themselves?

Exceptional children often find it difficult to accept the variability in their talents and their responses, and may make quite unrealistic demands upon themselves.⁴

Here we are depending on the definition of the author, and possibly of others, concerning what is ‘unrealistic’. This at any rate implies a difference of opinion between the ‘authority’ and the ‘client’. We are given this as a generalisation, presumably based on a number of cases, and we do not know whether any of the children involved subsequently came to agree with the authority’s opinion. Even if they did, this would not actually prove that their first opinions were erroneous.

It is quite possible that exceptional children have a realistic idea of how much they can handle and how fast, but that these ideas are based on favourable circumstances. If they are deprived of these circumstances, for example by being made to do less than they want to or to do it more slowly, they may well find that they are not able to progress in the optimum way. They may or may not be prepared to accept this as a permanent indictment of their ability; they will certainly not (if my experience is anything to go by) be encouraged by other people to give any thought to the ways in which circumstances, opportunities and motivation may affect their ability to function.

The educational system in this country, at least up to university level, is geared to a very slow and inefficient acquisition of skills and information. Even persons of quite moderate IQ may surprise themselves by discovering, when they come to prepare themselves for actually taking an exam, that it is possible to pass and perhaps even obtain high marks, as a result of a short period of purposively directed study. This is, of course, even more true in the case of people with IQs towards the upper end of the range. A friend of mine with an IQ once given as 170 did relatively little work throughout the time at his grammar school, where he was bored and unhappy; but he was able to treat exams as a challenge, and did excellently by working hard to prepare for them in a short time.

It is possible to keep people in unawareness of this possibility by keeping them to a prescribed diet of lessons and homework over a long period, without allowing them to start thinking for themselves of what is really necessary to attain a given standard. Nevertheless, there has always been some recognition among teachers of the possibility, together with resentment of the kind of person who was able to exploit the situation. It was felt to be 'unfair' that some people could reach the required objective standard very quickly, and felt that passing an exam 'should' be a reward for a long period of hard work in a social context.

Legislation introduced some years ago made exams such as the O-level, or its current equivalent, the GCSE, more dependent on the appalling concept of 'continuous assessment'. It is difficult not to see in this an expression of hostility towards the exceptionally able. It is possible to argue that, at lower ability levels, those who are favoured and disfavoured by this process are in some sort of statistical balance: some do better and some worse under exam conditions. But at the higher ability levels it is probably more common than not that a person can radically improve on their classwork performance by preparing themselves for the exam at the last moment. This, of course, was acknowledged by certain journalists commenting on the new legislation, who said that it would put paid to those clever-clogs who crammed at the last moment.

However, in the process of tipping the odds a little further against ability, the legislation also changes what the exams are measuring. It is rather as if you said that it is unfair that some people can learn sufficient French to pass an O-level much more quickly than others, so now the exam will not

only be about being able to do French, candidates will also be required to transport several logs a distance of half a mile. There is much less variation in the length of time different people need to perform the latter operation, and there is a definite minimum below which it cannot be done. It is not actually necessary for attaining a given standard in French, but it makes it 'fairer' because now we will be rewarding people for nearly equal quantities of labour.

My friend who never worked until the exams were upon him was not conscious of hostility on the part of his teachers particularly directed towards him, but this was perhaps partly because he had adapted to his school environment by becoming apparently demoralised. (There is an interesting parallel here with the chess prodigy Nigel Short, who seems to have cultivated an appearance of disaffection at school, perhaps as a way of adapting socially to his precocity.) It may also be pointed out that my friend's ability to find the work interesting when he did prepare for his exams depended partly on the fact that it came to him fresh and could be regarded as a challenge. If he had been forced to work for continuous assessment he might well have been unable to find it so interesting.

In my own case, I certainly *was* conscious of the teacher's hostility and found it difficult to feel motivated to produce work for her inspection. The fact that hostility was more explicitly directed at me and not at my friend probably owed something to the fact that I had not given up trying to live in accordance with my own standards; if I could have managed to appear a disaffected joker as he did, my teachers might have felt that the necessary change in me had been brought about.

The 'problems' of gifted children

Jodie Foster's *Little Man Tate* is a film about the problems of a gifted child which seems to depend upon rather acceptable, and in my experience absolutely fictitious, ideas. There seems to be a conflict between a loving mother who wants to bring him up as an ordinary child, and someone described by a film reviewer in the *Sunday Express* as a 'frigid humourless specialist', who wants to 'exploit his intellect'. I think Jodie Foster ought to know better since she was precocious herself and her success in life is firmly built upon her success as a child star, which is unlikely to have been possible without the sort of mother classified as 'ambitious'.

The reviewer described the message of the film as ‘oversimplifying the problems of bringing up a gifted child’, though goodness knows how much experience of really gifted children he can have had. He seemed to think a much more serious problem was their bad behaviour. Speaking for myself, I was a perfectly well-behaved child and would not have had any problems if it had not been that people had far too simple and wildly unrealistic ideas about the problems that I ought to have. This did, in due course, give me problems to the point of ruining my education. But I find it hard to believe that many people understand the problems that can be given to a gifted child sufficiently well to recognise an oversimplification of them. In my own case, they turned out to be exceedingly complex, and not the least harrowing element in the complexity was the fact that they were rigorously ruled out of consideration.

One reason why the genuine problems of gifted children will go on being unrecognised is that it is not in the interests of any child prodigy, such as Jodie Foster, who has become a success in adult life, to start selling a socially unacceptable line. Why damage one’s social image? When Einstein had become successful, he refused to criticise the university whose rejection had once bitterly disappointed him. ‘What good would it do?’ he asked. None to him; perhaps some to others like him, still unrecognised. Those in the entertainment business like Foster, of course, have to consider their commercial market.

When I am discussing the difficulties gifted children face, as illustrated by my own experience, a reaction I often encounter is the claim that things have improved since the time when I was a child, that there is more recognition of the problem, that there now exist organisations which cater specifically for the needs of the gifted. I tend to suspect that a function of this reaction is that it diverts attention away from a case of individual difficulty which might be hard to alleviate, and focuses attention on the modern preference for solving problems (or at least imposing prescriptions) in groups.

I do not think there is any question of the educational system now being more favourable to, or tolerant of, people like me than it was forty or fifty years ago. Books on the psychology of gifted children, such as that from which I have quoted above, show that the ideology about precocity is no

more sympathetic to the child's autonomy than it was before. If anything, the ideas presented are even more dangerously blurred than formerly.

Even if there is some nominal respect for a child's wishes, it is a very difficult thing for him to argue his case against adults. Much of the time the latter will not make explicit the considerations which they are taking into account, and even if they do, these are likely to be rationalisations, covering for more crucial considerations. It will be quite difficult for any child to say that the things being taken into account are less important than others which he is himself taking into account. In addition to this, it is not very easy for a child to express in a social confrontation his real reasons for preferring a certain arrangement. The fact that certain considerations are taboo may well make it difficult for him to formulate all of his reasons to himself, let alone bring himself to express them openly. Nevertheless, it may be quite clear to him what he actually prefers even if he finds himself inhibited in arguing for it. In a situation in which the child does not have the final power of decision it would be necessary for those who do to give great weighting to his expressed preferences, after parents and teachers have made their case to him in favour of other courses of action. This would have to be independently of his being able to convince them that he had good reasons for his preferences. In short, he would need to be placed so far as possible in the position they actually are in, of being able to make the final decision without justifying their reasons.

I do not really propose this as a solution because such a principle, even if adopted, could be applied very stupidly. Even if more prominence were given to the idea of discovering what the child really wants and giving a high priority to permitting it, it would remain true that it is extremely easy to make a child agree that he wants something against his better judgement, or at least against his internal misgivings. There is no reason to think that children would never make mistakes, although there is no particular reason to think that they would make more mistakes on their own behalf than are made for them by social authorities who impose decisions on them against their will. But there would be much more sensitivity to any false step that a child made on its own judgement (or ostensibly on its own judgement) and there would soon be publicised examples of children who had done what they said they wanted to do with poor results, whereas cases of children who are made to do things against

their own preference, however detrimental the outcome, appear to attract no attention.

So I do not think that any recognition of the situation is, in itself, likely to provide a palliative. What I would suggest is that children be provided with the possibility of greater real autonomy. Academic exams should be something which can be worked for and taken without dependence on the permission of a school and wherever possible without dependence on attendance at an institution, although in subjects where there is a genuine need for practical work as part of the course, such as physics or chemistry, there would need to be some method of access to centres where this practical work could be done. Children should be able to enter themselves for exams without having to seek permission from parents, teachers, doctors or any other adult authority, at least after a certain minimum age which could be on a sliding scale related to performance in a standard IQ test. An average child should be free to enter himself for exams from the age of, say, ten; the equivalent qualifying age for a child with an IQ score of 180 would be five-and-a-half.

How would children know of their opportunities? This should present no insuperable obstacles to a society which is constantly informing citizens of their 'rights' to obtain benefits etc. We could not rely on teachers or parents spontaneously to inform children of the examination system, but we could have the address of an information centre prominently displayed in every junior public library and after children's programmes on the television.

A new association for gifted children could be set up which would pay the fees for sitting exams for children whose parents refused to do so, or whose schools refused to let the required exam be taken under its auspices. Any child able to score as having an IQ of more than 130 would be entitled to the fees for any six O-levels and any 3 A-levels at any time. Any exam it passed would entitle it to the fees for one further exam at the same level. Any child who didn't qualify for free entrance on grounds of IQ, or who failed too many to have any further entitlement, could go to earn the necessary money at a special work centre where children could earn money by addressing envelopes, making baskets, etc. The rate of pay would not need to be very high as the children would still be being supported at

home; they would only need a way to earn money for any exam fees that were not provided for them free.

The new association for gifted children could also make available computerised and correspondence courses of instruction which could be purchased with money earned in this way or obtained from parents or relatives. These would supply learning material for those who did not think the 'teaching' which they happened to be receiving at school provided them with all they needed to prepare for a given exam.

Arrangements of this kind would make it possible, even if not always easy, for a child not to be totally obstructed by the wishes of its parents or teachers that it should not take exams before a certain age, or that it should not take them in certain subjects, and so on.

References

1. Susan Leyden, *Helping The Child of Exceptional Ability*, Croom Helm, London 1985, p.38.
2. *Ibid*, p.57.
3. *Ibid*, p.42.
4. *Ibid*, p.42.

A version of this paper was published in 1993 by the Libertarian Alliance.