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I have spent sixty percent of my life involved in something called education, as a recipient. Its contribution to my personal growth and development, however, is infinitesimally small. True, at some points it has played a small part in shaping my persona, the social vehicle of identification, and yet other things, outside of me, have played a larger part in its formation.

So many things in the past have been a waste of time, a negation of life. Yet education stands out as the greatest waste. It might be comforting to say that I hated it, that I reacted against it and that it provided an impetus for something better. The truth is perhaps much more damning than this, for it made me feel nothing.

As a recent optimist, I thought that education might have changed for the better, but generally I see no evidence for this. It still seems to remain a process of marking time, of enforced childhood and dependency, which meets the needs of 'adults' and not 'children'.

On a very simple level, it seems to make life much tidier and easier for parents who care only enough to conform but who cannot be bothered to produce change and development themselves. Slightly more complex are the needs of the educational bureaucracy itself which are much greater than just pupils and teachers. Any bureaucracy tends to be self-perpetuating but attempts are usually made to conceal this general truth. Education does not seem to even bother with this masquerade. It is quite brazen in its process of self-perpetuation.

During my time at school it seemed that education was largely a means to an end, the latter being defined largely by the unfulfilled, and often warped expectations of parents and other adults involved with oneself. I held a secret, unpopular thought that mass unemployment might alter this. With no end in sight, education might become a thing in itself, for itself, something to be lived through, not afterwards.

Perhaps this will happen eventually, when teachers and those who manage education recognise that the goals of education are now mythical, not real. However, I do not believe that education will change itself, nor can I see a general attack upon it from elsewhere. The sniping attacks of others much better equipped and more motivated than I score very few hits on such a massive, but largely unseen opponent.

My own education entailing periods when I really did learn something took place outside of any formal provision. For periods of time I lived with Marx, then Jung. I learned about the outer and inner worlds and tried to bring together theory and practice, so that one informed the other. In essence they were periods when the self was engaged in the process of life and living, of learning and acting.

At those times, education did not take place in a vacuum, and furthermore it met my needs over and above those of anything or anyone else. In the land of welfare state fascism that is not an easily tolerated proposition. In fact it would seem that anyone who tried to inject life into education is either stamped upon or effectively neutralised by the army of moral police which is made up of teachers, and people like myself, and most adults in general, the weapons in the war to achieve uniformity and conformity.

Sometimes parents and children do attempt to free themselves from the educational straitjacket, and they do this most successfully by quietly opting out. Sometimes we can protect them and allow these shoots to grow. Policemen can successfully collude with criminals.

Sometimes as well, we can break in to education and allow children to look out through the entrance of the burglary or inwardly at themselves, but like any other organism, education has an effective immune system and foreign bodies are surrounded and neutralised and destroyed if they stay too long.

In a lengthy experiment with a local school, we were allowed to 'socially educate' groups of young people so that eventually learning about oneself and the world became part of the timetabled curriculum. That seemed to produce some relief, and at times, even excitement, but in general our biggest enemy was inertia, whether hereditary or conditioned.

Certainly some people, and I would include myself in this, are prone to, or have a tendency towards passivity. The way that education is organised, and its dominant ethics both produce and reinforce this tendency. Children seem to be viewed as dependant lumps of clay who need to acquire knowledge and skills to become, if not complete, at least functional. This places teachers in a very powerful position because most people accept this hypothesis. In that sense there are many parallels with the positions of doctors, and to a lesser extent priests.

This is, I can see now, an elaborate confidence trick. Knowledge, skill and enthusiasm for life cannot be implanted. They are there already. They need to be drawn out. However, because they are ignored or suppressed, we produce stunted travesties of human being who in general have little faith in themselves, but a great deal of faith in the 'experts' of the social order.

For children to avoid this at present, they need bravery, either personally, or from their parents, or if

they do not possess this, they can, with extreme luck, be labelled 'extremely disturbed' and enter some of the

more interesting and pro-life experiments in education at the fringe. Locally, the school at Kilworthy comes to mind as a place where young people can pursue learning themselves whilst avoiding the expectations of most adults. As it is, nothing much is expected of them anyway so they are freed of many of the burdens which bind other children to the collective mass.

In adult life, similar opportunities seem to be afforded to those who 'go mad' for they are freed of most 'normal' expectations and are forced upon an often long, and frequently painful journey of parental expectation. At least they are afforded the opportunity to feel something deeply. Perhaps it is this which our educational system can least tolerate - that is the discovery of real feeling. Education uses intellect as a barrier to feeling and not as a vehicle towards it.