

The English dictionary defines 'to educate' as 'to rear or bring up a child'. In a conventional sense education is taken to mean the process by which a person learns all the disciplines necessary to gain a fuller appreciation of life and, more narrowly, as a training and preparation for future employment. Education thus includes all activities undertaken at school and later university, college, institute and of course any learning at home, work or associated with religious activity. I see education on a much broader front. Firstly, it must be appreciated that the process is continuous, beginning at birth through childhood into adult life. Second, education is a fundamental activity, performed for its own sake, leading to a development of the mind and body. In the general case, therefore, the education method can be described: 1) the acquiring of basic skills and techniques; all disciplines have their own 'language' which must be learnt as a prerequisite for further development. For example, in order to gain a deeper understanding of science, the student must familiarise himself with all the historical laws and basic mathematical groundwork. In the same way, someone interested in French literature must initially learn the French language. Thus, to educate oneself in anything requires an application of the learning process. A child has to learn and practise basic arithmetical manipulation before any more advanced and stimulating mathematics can be followed. The initial stages of learning can be turned into an enriching process by an interest in and an understanding of the 'language' being learnt. Often this interest can be acquired through total immersion and continuous familiarity with the concepts taught. 2) The second stage in the education process is the application of acquired skills. The person becomes free to develop his creative potential. This involves reading, discussion and experiment. The historian researches by reading around the relevant period. He discusses his own ideas and those acquired from reading with his colleagues or associates and experiments by writing his own work on the subsequent synthesis. In the same way, once a child is able to manipulate a paint-brush he can experiment by painting shapes and figures as he sees them. Both these aspects represent the most stimulating part of the education process and reinforce the learning activity described earlier. In this way development proceeds by research, discussion, argument and creation. It is my contention that this stage in the education process is generally the most misunderstood and abused in our present society. In order to develop the mind and knowledge in any activity one needs freedom to stimulate one's creative potential. So often this is killed in our schools by boring routine teaching methods, the examination process, the setting of suppressive rules and artificial competition.

The process of education always involves human relationships. Learning and creation do not take place in a vacuum. As an example, the most important part of a child's schooling is his relationship with the teacher. Likewise, the scientist cannot progress in obtaining a deeper knowledge of nature without constant interaction with and criticism from his peers. Throughout our education these relationships proceed on both a personal and professional level. To be able to teach oneself is a misnomer. One only progresses through constant argument and discussion with fellow beings. What is the purpose of tutorials and seminars but to enhance constant discussion among students and colleagues? Thus the student can always see both sides of the story since it is only from polar discussion that knowledge and understanding is acquired.

Finally on to ability. This is a much misused word and is employed as justification for preference, prejudice and segregation. A good educationalist, teacher, mentor and the like recognises ability in everyone. The maxim of the teacher is the positive attitude. The potential for anyone to progress is his confidence in what he is doing. It is a part of the education relationship previously mentioned to foster that confidence. Thus anyone who learns to draw is able to draw if he is confident of putting pencil to paper. Anything drawn will be an expression and communication from that person and will be a successful attempt. From established methods of teaching we generally consider someone's intelligence or learning to be measured by the amount he knows. I suggest that this is not the case. A person's learning, knowledge and ability is not related to what he knows but on how he performs when he does not know. Of course by attempting anything we eventually become knowledgeable in the most efficient way. As a result, the prime education process is the person who willingly tackles new original concepts, takes risks, is curious, forms strong human relationships and thus can always stand alone.