



Learning to be Human

John Macmurray

To cite this article: John Macmurray (2012) Learning to be Human, Oxford Review of Education, 38:6, 661-674, DOI: [10.1080/03054985.2012.745958](https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745958)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745958>



Published online: 07 Dec 2012.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2644



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 31 View citing articles [↗](#)

Learning to be Human

John Macmurray

Introduction to the *Oxford Review of Education* text, by Michael Fielding

In my editorial introduction to this Special Issue of the *Oxford Review of Education*—*Learning to be human: the educational legacy of John Macmurray*—I gave a very brief account of Macmurray's contribution to the field of education and said a little about his influence on a number of writers and allied fields in the 80 years since his first publications on education in the early 1930s. One of the points I made concerned the fact that some of his best educational writing remained unpublished, though enthusiastically circulated in typescript form by ex-students and a range of colleagues and admirers. One of these unpublished papers that is still referenced and utilised by contemporary writers—e.g. Fielding (2007), Murphy (2010)—and is also drawn on by a number of the contributors to this Special Issue is 'Learning to be Human', delivered on 5 May 1958 as the annual public lecture at Moray House College of Education, now part of Edinburgh University. We are delighted to publish it here for the first time, more than half a century later.

Key themes, enduring preoccupations

The key themes of the paper are ones to which Macmurray returned again and again in both his educational and his philosophical writing for over 40 years and they remain important for us today. Foremost amongst them is the necessity of grounding one's view of education in a view of what it means to be and become a human being. Unless we ask fundamental questions of this kind then the education system we develop, the schools we encourage, the teachers whose work we put at the heart of our expectations, and the families whose children we insist on daily attendance will persistently and pervasively fail to grasp what is important and will therefore fail themselves and the society to which they belong.

For Macmurray the most important double fact about our human nature is, first, its mutuality: we can develop our humanity only within the context of our reciprocal care for each other. Secondly, what he calls 'the paradox of human nature' is that whilst we are born human we also have to learn to become human.

What flows from this? If the first principle of human nature is mutuality then ‘the first priority in education ... is learning to live in personal relation to other people [i.e.] learning to live in community.’ This is the first priority because ‘failure in this is fundamental failure which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity.’

This affirmation of community is neither sentimental nor ethereal. If we are to respond to challenges of possible financial collapse and the fear and anger that so often follow in its wake, if we are to make a better world in the sure knowledge that it too will always be in flux then, rather than trying to convey ever-increasing amounts of information to new generations of students, we must base our approach on ‘values and understandings which rest upon common humanity’ and that common humanity is realised quintessentially and daily in the school as a living community of persons whose fundamental task is to learn what it means to lead good lives together.

In part this means distinguishing between education and erudition, valuing the former over the latter, understanding that teaching pupils is more important than teaching subjects and that the relationship between pupil and teacher is at the core of the education process. How instructive to hear a legendary university teacher and adult educator saying that if his own reflections on his practice suggested he was not doing so well as he thought, ‘I ask myself almost automatically whether I have fallen into the trap of teaching my subject instead of my pupils.’

It also means acknowledging that fear is utterly corrosive of our emerging humanity and that it thus has no place in education: fear ‘may succeed in securing an immediate obedience, but education is not concerned with immediate results but rather with persisting effects.’ It means acknowledging the contemporary resonance of his insistence on the education of the emotions, on the importance of the arts, creativity and the centrality of the imagination in education and all human affairs.

It means acknowledging that whilst the imperatives of earning a living, then as now, must necessarily and properly feature in education they should not comprise the whole or even the most important part of it. The key point is that they should be approached through other aspects of education and as part of the whole task of learning to be human in its richest and most fulfilling sense.

It means acknowledging that ‘education is not and cannot ever be a technical activity’, that ‘the attempt to turn would-be teachers into technicians by teaching them classroom tricks is as stupid as it is ineffective’, and that ‘the greatest threat to education in our society [is] ... the illusion that all problems can be solved by proper organisation, that when we fail it is because we are doing the job in the wrong way, and that all that is needed is ‘know how’. To think thus in education is to pervert education. It is not an engineering job. It is personal and human.’

A word about language and the specificities of context

Lastly, a word about language and the specificities of context. Whilst there are some references to past contexts that have inevitably aged, there are others that

have retained their resonance and none mar the power or the validity of Macmurray's argument. The challenge of language is more difficult. Talk of someone as an 'inhuman monster' or as an 'imbecile incapable of learning further' and terminology such as 'backward peoples' will grate harshly on the ear of contemporary sensibility. However, in addition to the obvious consideration of historical context, three points are worth remembering.

First, Macmurray was one of the great liberating voices of the 20th century, arguing, for example, for deep equality between men and women many decades before its now still only partial realisation. His life's work is a testament to human possibility, not to its truncated and fearful contraction within the categories of circumscription in a society that still regards knowledge as more important than wisdom and human relations as the convenient unguent of ambition rather than the end and means of human flourishing.

Secondly, he was a forerunner of the now increasingly significant critical realist school of contemporary philosophy and one of the few British philosophers whose work sits comfortably within continental traditions of existentialism, thus combining a commitment both to objectivity and to authenticity as the twin arbiters of human being and becoming.

Finally, it is worth recalling Macmurray's own insistence that:

However significant an old philosophy may be, it can never be adequate to the demands of the present. Its spirit may still be alive, but the body of the ideas and the words in which it expressed itself grows old and weak and ineffective. Words and ideas must continually be recreated, or they soon cease to express the significance that lies behind them, and conceal and destroy it instead. (Macmurray, 1932, p. 73)

If his terminology mirrors some of the limitations of a time and place that is no longer relevant, we should not dismiss or betray the emancipatory intent that lies behind it.

The needs which Macmurray identifies and affirms in this paper are either denied or, more often, distorted and corrupted by the reductive discourse and self-regarding arrogance of contemporary neo-liberalism. Yet these needs—for our encounter as persons in community; for relationships of care; for the complete eradication of fear in the educational process; for education of the emotions and its attendant emphasis on spontaneity, imagination and creativity; for the priority of persisting effects over immediate results; and for the rejection of teaching as a predominantly technical activity and the companion valorisation of organisational efficiency as the hallmark of educational success—remain central to the nexus between formal schooling and our capacity to live good lives together.

Not only has Macmurray's time come again, those of us working within the traditions to which he belonged and contributed so much must reaffirm and extend the view of human flourishing which lay at the heart of his work: the future of education in its broadest and most profound sense depends on it.

References

- Fielding, M. (2007) The human cost and intellectual poverty of high performance schooling: radical philosophy, John Macmurray and the remaking of person-centred education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(4), 383–409.
- Macmurray, J. (1932) *Freedom in the modern world* (London, Faber).
- Murphy, D. (2010) Democratic schooling: past, present and future, International Seminar Series—*Citizenship and democracy in schools: connecting policy, practice and research*, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, 16 April.

Learning to be human Moray House Annual Public Lecture 5 May 1958

John Macmurray

I am both surprised and gratified that I have been chosen to deliver this annual lecture. For I have no notable qualifications to talk about education. That I have been a university teacher all my life I do not count a notable qualification. For though the percentage of educated people is, perhaps, higher among University teachers than in some other professions, there is no guarantee that any particular professor is an educated man. I have known some who were bursting with strange erudition, but were clearly but poorly educated. But even those who are have not always reflected very much upon what they are doing when they teach; and without this at the least even a well-educated person with a life-time's experience of teaching is not qualified to make pronouncements about education. The older I grow the more serious become my doubts about my own education; but I can claim that I have reflected a good deal upon the meaning and purpose of education and I have long cultivated a habit of criticising my own efforts as a teacher; so that when evidences appear that I am not doing so well as I should, I ask myself almost automatically whether I have fallen once more into the trap of teaching my subject instead of my pupils.

I find, also, that what I have to say is not essentially new. All the great educationalists, from Plato downwards, have been of one mind on the essential purposes of education, even if they have disagreed about the proper ways to achieve them. At most I can reiterate the old and obvious truths in slightly different language; and with an eye to the vastly different conditions in which, today, they have to be realised in practice. Yet there is a sound reason for reiterating and seeking to revivify those truisms. It is that they are always to some extent denied or forgotten when it comes to practice, under the stress of immediate demands; and in our own day these stresses have grown so powerful that there is a real danger that they may be thrown overboard altogether. Recently—to take an example of the danger—we have had certain politicians telling the universities that they should be producing far more scientists—three Scientists to one Arts man was mentioned in one case as the desirable figure. One of the main reasons given was, you will recall, that this is what Russia is doing. It seems a little odd that the imitation of Russia should be held up by British politicians as an exemplar for our own practice—but that is not the important point. It is not even that more government officials take it upon them to instruct a university on educational policy—which is an expression not of democratic but of totalitarian attitudes. The important point is that those who make and those who accept such statements about what universities should or should not do, are clearly not thinking in terms of education at all. They

are treating a university as an instrument which can be useful in helping them to success in an economic competition or a political struggle. Such ends, even when they are not foolish, are trivial and ephemeral compared with the purposes of education. Universities are educational institutions, as are schools. Their business is not primarily to produce scientists, or historians, or philosophers, but through the sciences and the humanities, through discussion in their societies or through games in their athletic clubs, to educate men and women. And education, from the standpoint of its victims, is learning to be human.

‘Learning to be human’ is one way of putting the essential aim: and I chose it as the title of my remarks from a number of possible subjects which were suggested to me, for two main reasons; because it stresses the paradox of education, a paradox which we must not forget if, as teachers, we are to do our task properly: and secondly, because it connects, in a specially appropriate fashion, with the special conditions of education in our own time. I should like, if you will allow me, to explain these two reasons before going further.

There is a paradox in human nature, and to grasp it and hold on to it is the beginning of wisdom. It has been stated in many ways in different contexts. ‘A man who is master of himself is thereby also slave of himself’—that is Plato. Rousseau begins his *Social Contract* with another statement of the paradox: ‘Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains. How has this come about? I cannot tell.’ It finds a poignant expression in Jairus’ cry when he was pleading with Jesus to come to his daughter’s aid, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.’ We express it in common speech when we say of a friend, ‘He is not himself this morning,’ though we only rarely notice how much of our lives is taken up with playing various roles and how seldom we get an opportunity just to be ourselves. Perhaps in our day it is the inhumanity of man that we feel most keenly, and that conditions our generation to cynicism and hopelessness. It is this same paradox from which both the necessity and the sense of education is derived. We are born human, and nothing can rob us of our human birthright. Nevertheless, we have to learn to be human, and we can only learn by being taught. So hard is the lesson that very few of us learn more than a smattering of it; our own reality lies always beyond us and we reach after it but never grasp it. This, thought Browning, is as it should be:

A man’s reach should be beyond his grasp
Or what’s a heaven for?

Perhaps you may think that I am being fanciful. One does not take the poets seriously; and both Plato and Rousseau were idealists. When it comes to the practical business of schooling boys and girls who have soon to earn their own living in a competitive world, we have to be realists. I entirely agree. And the paradox to which I am drawing attention is entirely realistic. So I shall try to state it in language which is literal and unemotive. A child is born human; but this humanity consists in being without instincts, totally dependent, in an environment which is not natural, but the product of human artifice. He can survive only by being cared for. He can do nothing—just nothing—to help himself. He has to learn everything—to see, to move

about, to walk, to speak: and while he is learning these basic elements of humanity, his human life consists in his relation to those who care for him—who feel for him, think and plan for him, act for him. This dependence on others is his life—yet to be human he must reach beyond it, not to independence, but to an interdependence in which he can give as well as receive.

Thus his humanity consists in learning to be human: and since it can take place only within his relation to others who care for him, the learning is also a 'being taught'. To this we must add that the process of his education, like all human activities, is not matter of fact but of intention, and not determinate but problematical. Both he and his teachers must intend each step in the process. It will not happen of itself. And because of this, each step falls within the inescapable antithesis of success or failure, of good or evil, right or wrong, truth or falsehood. There is no certainty in the learning. He may fail, or others may fail him, and he will grow up perverted, delinquent, an inhuman monster; or he may be injured by accident and become an imbecile, incapable of learning further, and so remain a travesty of the human being he might have been. Whenever in this education there is a failure, whenever it goes wrong in any way, the result is that he will remain less fully human than he might have been.

There is another reason, as I hinted, in the conditions of our time, for defining education as 'learning to be human'. Whitehead pointed out that with the 20th century the rapidity of social change has come so rapid that the society in which we spend our childhood is not merely likely, but certain to be transformed radically by the time we come of age. The importance of this, for the practice as well as the theory of education has not, I think, been widely grasped as yet. Until quite recently the teacher could take it for granted that the world in which his pupils would live their adult lives would not differ in essentials from his own. Consequently he could aim to fit his charges for life in a well-known world. Now we know that the world for which he must be fitted is unknown. We may guess—but all we can be sure of is that his world will be different from the present one. The fixed points, by which we can steer our course as teachers, have become those human qualities and aptitudes which remain unaffected by social transformations; qualities and aptitudes which belong to all men everywhere because they are involved in the structure of human nature itself.

For this reason there is a special advantage in thinking of education as 'learning to be human'. It corresponds to the peculiar demands made upon education by contemporary history. We are in the early stages of a world revolution. The old traditions, the old ways of life are dissolving. The old sanctions of religious and moral belief have lost their power. The old world is melting away and the new world which must come is not yet taking clear shape. We are still in the stage of dissolution and breaking up, without which the building of the new society cannot begin; and for those, like ourselves, who were leaders and masters in the old world it is inevitably a time of tribulation and fear. So we tend to lose our faith in progress. Yet surely, if we have at all learned to be human—and so to feel and think from the standpoint not of Britain or Europe but of mankind—the fact is

that progress is running like a river in spate, carrying everything before it, in Russia, in China, in India. Perhaps the nations who have been in the van of progress must now mark time until the backward peoples, the vast majority of our fellows, have made up on us, so that we can move forward together. Under such conditions it is the values and understandings which rest upon a common humanity that we have to learn and that education ought to teach. To be educated today means to have learned to be human—not Scottish, not British, not even West-European, but human.

So much by way of explanation and defence of my subject. But this occasion is concerned with education as it is carried on in schools and colleges and universities—with organised education. I am very much concerned with this too, and shall have something to say about it. But perhaps the most important point to begin with is that the educational institutions—schools and colleges of all sorts—cannot do the whole task of education, and should not be expected to. ‘The City,’ said Plato, ‘is the great educator.’ Yet when he came to consider how the good society could be established, he talked about taking children away from their parents at birth and bringing them up under controlled conditions, so that only the proper influences should mould their characters. And I have heard teachers in this country sigh and say, ‘If only we could remove the children from the influence of their homes!’ Now this is not merely impossible: it is a symptom of megalomania—or at least of temporary exasperation. The teacher’s dream of controlling all the influences that help to educate his pupils may be natural, where so many of the existing influences work against him. But this would-be educational totalitarianism is less dangerous than the political only because it is more impossible of achievement. The school is only one factor in a child’s education, however important; and part of any good education theory must be to determine what the teacher should attempt to do and within what limits he should confine his efforts.

Scottish education once led the world; it does no longer. It is, in my judgement, now lagging behind, while other countries which used to be the laggards have pushed ahead and are now leading the field. Yet Scotland has held to her educational tradition with great tenacity, and it is easy to argue that what was so effective in past generations cannot be fundamentally mistaken now. But this is to forget that in the great days of Scottish education there was a close and effective co-operation between home and church and school: and in this educational partnership there was a natural division of labour. For church and home together could take care of the formation of character and the training in morals and manners, leaving the school free to concentrate upon the more technical aspects of general education—the instruction in the various ‘subjects’, reading and writing, mathematics, foreign languages, literature, geography and so on. The success of the school, then, depended on the success of the church and the home in doing their part. But in our time this partnership has been broken. Neither home nor church is performing their educational task universally or effectively. This diminishing of the effective discipline of behaviour by church and home, working together to a common and conscious conception of their ideal, has left the school

to carry out its part in the general scheme alone. At the same time, the tendency to specialism and autonomy of specialist activities which is so marked a trend in recent social developments has tended more and more to make people think that the education of their children is the business of the schools and universities, and so to divest themselves more and more of the responsibilities which they feel increasingly unqualified to perform.

The school can never carry the whole weight of the process of education; not even of that aspect of education which is consciously designed. There are educational forces in the home-life which no school can ever fully provide; as there are elements in the training of the emotions which only a religious institution can canalise effectively. But if the Scottish school tradition were to undertake to do what a school can do to cover the whole field of education it would have to submit to a radical reformation. Something has been done; but on the whole the old tradition has remained, with its limitation to the intellectual and bookish aspects of the total task.

Compared with Scotland, England was until fairly recently extremely backward in the educational field. I can remember reading, when I was in my teens, a speech by an English peer in the House of Lords in which he maintained that education was a luxury which should be reserved for the upper classes. But what tradition there was centred in boarding schools: and in a boarding-school there is no escape for the teacher from an effort at complete education. The children are there all the time, so what can be provided of home life and its responsibilities must be provided; and religion must be built into the structure of the school. Consequently, when England began to take education for everyone seriously, the existing tradition tended to stress education of character as much an intellectual training and factual knowledge, perhaps even to overstress the first at the expense of the second. And this gives the English a decided advantage in an abnormal situation like our own, where church and home are (or at least feel) incapable of taking responsibility for the education of the personal life, for the training of the emotional motives, the valuations and the objectives of humanity, and the school is called upon to shoulder them instead. There can, I think, be no reasonable doubt that these aspects of education are the fundamental ones. In the economy of human existence the intellect is concerned only with the means of life, never with its ends.

This has become a long digression. It arose from the reminder that the agency of education is the society in which we live and nothing less; and that when we think of schools it should be to consider what part they should play in the scheme of education. To that question there may be, I have suggested, no single answer: the changes of social context may demand variations in the functions of the schools and other educational institutions. But to say what, in any social context, should be the function of schools we need to have a general understanding of the educational process as a whole. We must know what it means to learn to be human. It is to this question we must now turn our attention.

The first principle of human nature is mutuality. 'There can be no man,' said Confucius, 'until there are two men in relation.' In a more modern idiom we might

say that 'a person is always one term in a relation of persons.' This principle, that we live by entering into relation with one another, provides the basic structure within which all human experience and activity falls, whether individual or social. For this reason the first priority in education—if by education we mean learning to be human—is learning to live in personal relation to other people. Let us call it learning to live in community. I call this the first priority because failure in this is fundamental failure, which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity. For inhumanity is precisely the perversion of human relations. As infants, our relation to our parents is the basis of our survival, as well as of our satisfactions and miseries. But it is a relation of total dependence; and consequently it is, on one side, self-centred. To grow up is to escape from this egocentric attitude, step by step, to one which centres our interest and our feelings upon the world outside us, and centrally upon the others with whom we are interdependent. The psychologists have discovered for us how the breakdowns and neuroses of adult life can be traced back to failures in this process in early life: and that this is an educational failure is indicated by the fact that the cure for these breakdowns is a process of 're-education'. To this I should only add that those defects of character which fall short of breakdowns—like arrogance, obstinacy, avarice, aggressiveness and all the dismal list of human vices—have the same source.

It is illuminating for the practice of education to recognise that the underlying reason for these failures and limitations in personal relations is always fear. The process of human development itself is always bound up with fear, with fear directed towards people with whom one stands in personal relation; and the educational problem is, therefore, the overcoming of fear. From this we can draw the conclusion that the use of fear as a weapon in teaching is a perversion of education, and in the end is self-defeating. It may succeed in securing an immediate obedience, but education is not concerned with immediate results but rather with persisting effects. The appeal to fear sacrifices the future to the present; for what is learned for fear of consequences is improperly learned if not soon forgotten; for it remains associated with fear, and so distasteful and to be avoided if possible.

It might be said that this kind of training is something that belongs essentially to the home, and that a school cannot and should not be expected to be responsible for it. I have already agreed that in principle the home and the church are the proper agents—or the major instruments—in this field but there are two reasons why the school should be aware of it, and responsibly concerned, even when these other agencies are doing their work effectively. The first is that this aspect of education is not merely fundamental. It is also inescapable. For any kind of teaching involves establishing personal relations between teacher and pupil, and the success or failure of the teaching depends very largely upon the character and quality of this relation. The second is that going to school is itself a stage in the process by which we learn to live in community: we pass from the small, cosy and intimate community of the family to a wider, more demanding, more complicated community in which for the first time, our success and our acceptance depends on

our own qualities and our own efforts. For the school is a community; and we learn to live in community only by living in a community. It is a necessary part of the school's business to absorb new children every year and to integrate them into the community of the school.

One could discuss this fundamental aspect of education for a very long time—and with profit: but my purpose is only to select certain essential aspects of the process of learning to be human; and to indicate their place in the whole. In particular I am anxious to direct attention to such aspects as tend among us to be forgotten or undervalued. So I must pass to a second aspect which I believe to be both very important and also too little provided for. The natural designation for it would be, I suppose 'the education of sensibility' or even 'of sensuality'; though, unfortunately, the latter word has been degraded in meaning. What I have in mind includes the development of our capacity for sense experience, and through this, the education of the emotions. The instruments of this education are the arts—music, plastic arts, dancing, singing and so on—and its expression, when it is successful, is in grace and loveliness of behaviour.

There are two distinct ways of integrating our sense-experience into our humanity as persons. The one with which we are most familiar and which we are at pains to provide for in our educational practice is to use our senses for providing information. This information—we often refer to it as 'the facts'—forms the data for thinking and planning. We use our senses as instruments for practical purposes; as means for solving practical problems; or alternatively as means for developing scientific knowledge or technological procedures. But there is another way of employing our senses, and this is by living in them, treating them not as means to practical ends, but as ends in themselves. We can use our eyes for the sake of seeing; our ears for the joy of hearing; we can look and we can listen, not merely see and hear, and we can do so without any *arrière pensée*, without any notion of making something from it. This, I believe, is what the Greek philosophers meant by 'contemplation'; and it is a distinct and important part of 'being human'. Learning to be human, in this aspect, is the cultivation of sensibility, by which is meant, or should be meant, the development of the capacity for fine sensory discrimination. Most people's capacity for such discrimination is crude and undeveloped. Like all our capacities it can be made accurate, and subtle, and quick by practice.

The importance of this aspect of learning goes far beyond the mere sharpening of our sensory powers, important though that is. Contemplation it is, and not the intellectual manipulation of facts, which gives us our direct and personal knowledge of the world around us. But to learn to live in our senses is to learn to enjoy both our seeing and hearing and what we see and hear. There is a Puritan depreciation of such enjoyment of the life of the senses which demands its suppression, and associates it with vice. But it is the depreciation and the suppression, we may suggest, that are vicious. Crude sensuality is barbarous and horrid, no doubt. But that lies in its crudity; and it is crude only because it is untrained, unrefined, uneducated.

When we stop doing things and contemplate the world, the practical energy which is withdrawn works in reflection. Seeing is never merely seeing. It is the

starting-point of reflection. So long as our intention is practical our reflection will take an intellectual form, using the 'data' provided by our senses as the starting-point of processes of thinking. But if we stop to contemplate, the reflection is not intellectual, but emotional and imaginative. To contemplate is not merely to perceive, it is to evaluate; and valuation when it is direct and immediate, is a matter of feeling. Contemplation when it is genuine centres our attention and interest upon something outside us, and so is a powerful counteraction to the egocentricity which keeps us juvenile or adolescent. It centres our emotional capacities upon the object in a search for *its* uniqueness and reality; and so provides an emotional objectivity for the apprehension of *its* value. So contemplation is a powerful agent for the education of the emotions; the increase in sensory discrimination carries with it an increase in emotional discrimination and subtlety. If this aspect of our education is neglected our emotional nature remains in important respects crude and childish. In some respects, I say, because the discipline of the emotions is even more powerfully controlled by our experience of community with others.

There is one other consequence of learning to live in our senses. Besides the education of emotional capacities, and indeed through this, it provides a discipline of the imagination. For any form of reflection seeks to complete itself in an expression which embodies it; and the expression of any emotional valuation is the creation of an image or symbol. Here again what matters for our discussion is the contrast with intellectual reflection. The latter involves the suppression of imaginative freedom, the concentration on generality, the operation by rule. All intellectual activity is uncreative: the creative capacity we have lies in our imagination. Education which emphasises rationalisation and calculation—as ours does—and neglects contemplation, has the effect of suppressing imagination and with it the natural creativeness of its pupils. The only 'advantage' of this is that it tends to produce adults who are dull enough to enjoy routine, easy to organise for co-operation and ready to do as they are told. But from a properly educational point of view there is *nothing* to be said for this: it is again an educational perversity. To learn to be human is to learn to be creative. The imaginativeness of children is their birthright: it requires the discipline of the objective world for its training; but to suppress it is a crime. And the discipline of the imagination cannot be intellectual; it must be rooted in contemplation, in the life of the senses and the reflective activities which spring from it—contemplation, valuation and imaginative expression. This, I believe, is the truth in Sir Herbert Read's claim that Art is *the* agent of education.

The third major aspect of education is the one which might perhaps be called the technological. It comprises the accumulation of information and its organisation for use, together with the practical aspects of this, the acquirement of techniques, whether practical or reflective, for its applications. This will include, of course, the special training for the work by which an individual will earn his living in the social economy. This is what we mean, on the whole, by education. This is what, on the whole, we teach to the great majority of our citizens. My main aim has been to suggest that this is not the whole of education, that it is not even the more important part of it. It is rather the minimum that an industrial society must demand for

efficiency's sake. I do not mean that more than this does not get done in our schools. But it gets done, in the main, in spite of the conception of education which is built into the system; and in the interstices, as it were, of the organisation. Perhaps I am unfair; perhaps this is a caricature. Even so, I think it is a recognisable caricature, and caricatures have a function.

Of this aspect of learning to be human, then, I have little to say. It *is*, I insist, an important aspect, and it *is* the minimum of training that cannot be done without. And it should be done well. But I must add this: it can only be done well if it is done as a part of the whole task, in and through the other aspects. What matters most is that those who design it and those who teach it should be under no illusion that it constitutes the whole of education, or that it can be treated as if it were the paramount aspect. Any subject, however technical, can be used as an instrument of true education by a good teacher, provided he is allowed to do so, provided he is granted conditions which are free enough and flexible enough. On the other hand the teaching of 'subjects' tempts the organiser and the administrator to construct curricula and to elaborate methods. Organisation is no doubt necessary up to a point in the educational field, but it is also very dangerous. It can make real education impossible in the name of efficiency.

There are other issues which I should like to have talked about; but time fails, and in any case I would rather leave a clear, if limited impression in your minds than risk blurring it by saying too much. In particular I should like to have stressed the importance of healing the gap between theory and practice which is sanctified by the pious but imaginary notion that knowledge is an end in itself. It is impossible, for example, to understand poetry except through the effort to write poetry oneself. But I must leave this, and much beside, for another occasion: and conclude what I have said with a remark or two about its bearing upon the training of teachers. From the teacher's point of view, education is helping other people to learn to be human. The qualification for this is that he should be himself an educated person. He must have gone through the process of learning to be human with at least a fair measure of success. He must be able to enter into positive relations with each individual among his pupils. He must not be afraid of them, and he must be able to inspire their trust and admiration. No person who doesn't really care for children should ever teach. But also he must be qualified on the artistic side—I mean he must not be bookish or merely intellectual. He must be alive and creative; his imagination must be active and disciplined. Given all this—and it is a lot to demand—the rest will take care of itself. Without some measure of these human qualities and capacities, without an understanding of what he is undertaking in proposing to teach another person to be human, he cannot succeed. No technical training in educational methods can ever be substitute for this, however unexceptionable the methods may be in themselves. Education is not and cannot ever be a technical activity. The attempt to turn would-be teachers into technicians by teaching them classroom tricks is as stupid as it is ineffective. A man who doesn't like poetry, for example, cannot teach poetry to children. Even if he masters all the latest methods of poetry teaching, and carries them out faith-

fully and well, he will only waste the children's time and—what matters less, perhaps—his own. He will only succeed in teaching them that poetry is a bore. Here, I believe, is the greatest threat to education in our own society. We are becoming more and more technically minded: gradually we are falling victims to the illusion that all problems can be solved by proper organisation: that when we fail it is because we are doing the job in the wrong way, and that all that is needed is the 'know-how'. To think thus in education is to pervert education. It is not an engineering job. It is personal and human.

There is a great deal of bad education about; there always has been. Perhaps the worst teachers, like the worst artists, are those that work to a theory. But there is no need to be despondent, I tell myself when I feel pessimistic; the redeeming feature in the situation is the quite enormous capacity for resistance which children possess.