

STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
EXTENSION BULLETIN

The Educational Experience

BY ROBERT REDFIELD



DIGEST OF THE FUND FOR ADULT EDUCATION LECTURES—1954



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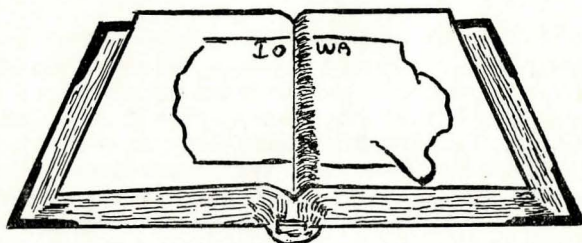
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His books are *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village* (1930), *Chan Kom: A Maya Village* (with Alfonso Villa Rojas, 1934), *The Folk Culture of Yucatán* (1941), *A Village That Chose Progress* (1950), *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (1953), and *The Little Community* (1955).

Robert Redfield delivered The Fund for Adult Education Lectures in 1954, on the campuses of the University of California at Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles. These lectures—now out of print—are here reprinted with the permission of The Fund for Adult Education. They have been reduced by two-thirds. Their argument is intact. But a treasury of illustrative instances has been sacrificed to the god Brevity.

R. J. BLAKELY



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STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Bulletin No. 779

R. J. BLAKELY, Editor

IOWA CITY, IOWA

June 1, 1961

Issued monthly throughout the year. Entered at the post office at Iowa City, Iowa, as second-class matter under the Act of October 3, 1917.

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FOREWORD

unb. Robert Redfield wrote:

Education is of course learning something. More importantly, it is becoming something. Although knowledge is needed for education, an educated person is not the same as a man who has knowledge. An educated person is one who is at work on his enlargement. If we learn things that become parts of us, if we make efforts to develop our own particular understanding of life and of the order of life's goods, it is education we are doing. A person is something that it takes time to make; there is on everyone an invisible sign, "Work in progress"; and the considered effort to get along with the work is education.

He was an educator, of himself and of others. After his death on October 16, 1958, the *Britannica Book of the Year* carried this obituary.

Robert Redfield was one of the world's leading authorities on primitive societies. His work was largely centred in primitive villages of Mexico and Central America, but from this research he developed a general theory of the transformation of primitive into civilized cultures, and wrote extensively on the subject. Redfield took a law degree at the University of Chicago in 1921 but then turned to anthropology, receiving his doctorate in 1928. He joined the University of Chicago's faculty in 1927, was dean of the university's division of social sciences from 1934 to 1946, and chairman of the department of anthropology from 1947 to 1948, when he resigned to spend full time in writing, research and teaching. In 1953 he was appointed Robert Maynard Hutchins distinguished service professor of anthropology at the university.

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1

Exploration

Education is a desirable experience of a particular kind, in this respect like falling in love, joy, and the state of grace. It is a good thing that happens inside people. As a teacher, I often think of education as something I am doing to somebody else, but I must admit that I am not often sure that I have done it. In my own self I feel now and then the educational experience, and in the lives of others I see its signs.

Its causes are obscure, but I should not be a teacher if I did not think that there is much that can be done to bring about this kind of desirable experience. Formal arrangements favorable to education are more effective, I suppose, than are formal arrangements for falling love. I would not close the schools or give up forums for adult discussion. But to judge the success of any particular such arrangement, one must be able to recognize the educational experience when it occurs.

The word "growth" suggests the upward change that is education. An inner something improves. The growth takes place in qualities of the intellect and

of appreciation, in qualities we dignify with large words: understanding, insight, wisdom. In our kind of society, where all are to take part in making decisions, these qualities are needed by everyone. So we make a beginning with their development in the home and in the schools, and try to remember—although we often forget—that it is only a beginning and that education has no end. After we leave school, the world continues to affect us. The factory disciplines or hurts us; the neighbors and our associates shape us in their own image; the voice of the radio and the image of television have their insistent way with us. If as grown men and women we do not trouble to continue our education, the world will make us in its own way, good or bad.

In thinking about education it is helpful to distinguish training, something also desirable and indeed indispensable, but of a lower order. Training is the formation of useful habits. In spite of claims to the contrary, there are no educated horses, only trained ones. Like animals, men form useful habits, and some are habits no animal can form, like speech and literacy. Training serves two ends: it prepares us to do useful work, and it frees the mind for education. A great deal of training is given in that which we call “technical education.” There is a conflict between technical education and liberal education only in so far as the technical education stops at training. Unfortunately it often does.

In adult life there is at least one circumstance favorable to carrying on an education: maturity. For making the discriminations and judgments implied by the word “wisdom,” some years of experience are helpful. If one arrives at maturity with some training achieved, one is at least prepared for education. Training comes easier in youth than it does later. But although there is some correspondence of youth with training and of maturity with education, either can happen at any time of life. An occasional grandmother learns Greek grammar. The education of children may begin when they are very young indeed. Often its beginnings are by accident, through some book or person that illumines and gives wider significance to the world around the child.

The very young experience also education by intention. When Edmund Gosse was not yet four, he watched his father draw a chart of markings on the carpet, then of the furniture in the room, then of the floor of the house; then of the garden. The child was too young to draw the plan himself. He just watched. Gosse tells us that as result “geography came to me of itself, as a perfectly natural arrangement of objects.” This was education; the child caught an insight of fundamental worth about the nature of geographic representation.

While we are distinguishing education from things like it but different, let us acknowledge that education is not the same as the pursuit of information or even of learning. One may acquire information only and so become a bore. One may acquire learning only and so become a pedant. For a striking example of a bore, see old Joseph Finsbury in *The Wrong Box*, of whom it is written that “a taste for information had sapped his manhood.” For an out-

standing pedant, see Dr. Middleton of Meredith's novel, *The Egoist*. To convert knowledge into education it must be leavened with imagination and carried forward into the life one lives with others. Knowledge cherished as a private possession, learning pursued in a cell of life separated from the other rooms of existence, does not educate.

Perhaps the commonest confusion identifies education with schooling. But anyone who has had schooling, even in a good school, knows that many hours are passed there, sometimes very pleasantly, that are not educational. When we have built a school building and hired teachers, the problems and uncertainties of education are just beginning. The abundance of schools conceals the rarity of education. One of the reasons why the education of adults is a field ripe for development lies in the fact that so many of us leave school with most of the job yet to be done. Necessary as it is to have schools and to improve what goes on in them, they are, for some people, dispensable. Education has taken place with little or no schooling, or in spite of it. The case of Abraham Lincoln will be always remembered. One of our able American writers, Richard Wright, became an educated man by extra-curricular self-teaching, and accomplished this although the influences of his childhood were chiefly those of ignorance, vice, violence, and fear. His education began with a schoolteacher, but out of school. She boarded with his family and one day read him the story of *Bluebeard and His Seven Wives*. Wright tells us "the tale made the world around me be, throb, live. As she spoke, reality changed, the look of things altered, and the world became peopled with magical presences. My sense of life deepened and the feel of things was deepened, somehow." His grandmother beat him for listening to this story; she called it "the Devil's work." But with it his education began. The paths to education are various and curious. The young Negro boy, his imagination aroused, then feasted it on sensational stories in the newspaper supplements, moved on to forge an order that got him a book from a library closed to colored people, and to read his first serious novel, *Main Street*.

Many a man who has produced major works of the mind has found his formal schooling of no importance in his development. Henry Adams reckoned his school days as time thrown away and remarked of his experience at Harvard that "the entire work of the four years could have been easily put into the work of any four months in after life." This evaluation should encourage those of us who set about educating ourselves after leaving school. In his memoirs Charles Darwin wrote of the Shrewsbury school—outside of which he now sits in stone, a benevolent, bearded figure—that "nothing could have been worse for the development of my mind than Dr. Butler's school . . . as a means of education to me it was simply a blank." He regarded the three years he had spent at Cambridge University as completely wasted; Edinburgh University "sickened" him and the only effect on him of the geology lecture was, he says, "a determination never again to read a book on geology." It may be added that Darwin overcame this particular school-

acquired repugnance, for it was a reading of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* that so stimulated his mind during the famous voyage of the "Beagle."

Of course very many have in school more fortunate experiences. Schools we must have, and better ones than we now have. But the dependence of education upon schooling is not absolute, and no school and university together do anything more, at the best, than get education started. The men who became educated in spite of what happened to them in classrooms remind us how great is the self-educability of a determined person.

Such a person, adult and resolute, may make his own education in his own way. No particular program is right for everyone. Distrust the claim that someone has found the ultimate curriculum, the right way to learn for all men. Some elements of education men must have in common with one another so that in their societies they share common purposes, common understandings as to the good life. But formal programs of education result not so much from the nature of man, which is various enough to find many different roads to education, as from the necessities of teaching twenty adults in a room or ten thousand children in a school system. Programs are needed, but each is suspect, because a program tends to say, "Conform," when the true end is, "Be yourself." To meet together, as adults, and discuss what we have read in some of the great works of the mind is as good a program of adult education as I know. It is good because the examples of thought and appreciation are among the greatest, and because the ideas offered for our consideration are among the most important. On the other hand, no list of books is sure to provide the best education for everyone, and there are times when minds go forward fastest through lesser books, even bad ones, or away from books entirely. What matters is that one find a way, orderly enough for that one, in which to promote, in pleasure and in pain, the inner growth of which I speak. . . .

These preliminary reflections evoke the difficulties of identifying that kind of experience which is truly educational. If education is not training or information or mere learning, if it is not always to be found in school and may take place out of it, if most of us live lives filled with work, recreation, visits with the neighbors, and just sinking back into the Sunday supplement, and if we see around us little to stimulate the effort toward reasonable understanding of the universe—if all this is true, by what shall we know that stranger, that shy one, the educational experience?

I think that something of its nature can be learned from those reflective persons who have told us how it happened to them. These evidences may be joined with what each of us knows of how it happened, at certain times, that his mind and spirit took a leap forward. As a teacher, occasionally, and as a learner, also occasionally, I have knowledge of my own such movements of the mind to contribute to the evidence as to the nature of that inner growth which is education.

In the best book about this subject that I have read, *The Aims of Education*,

A. N. Whitehead describes the education of children and young people as a movement of the mind from freedom through discipline to freedom again. The mind begins in a phase of imaginative discovery of experience. There is a free ranging of thought and appreciation. This is the first of the three periods which Whitehead sees. It corresponds with the first twelve years or so of life and with primary education. It is followed, he tells us, by a stage of precision, corresponding with secondary education, in which additional facts are put into systematic order. And this is followed by a mature stage, ordinarily begun in higher education, when again there is freedom to range but in which, now, general ideas are entertained under control of the discipline that has been acquired.

Here I look not at the sequence of stages in the mental growth and schooling of the young, but at the mind's movement in any educational experience, brief or long, in young or old. I am thinking of how you and I add to our education, now, in any effort of the kind that we may make, from striving to understand the meaning for us of a novel we are reading, to the pursuit, perhaps under guidance of a university, of some course of lectures or discussions. As Whitehead sees a cycle, I, too, see a cycle; indeed, it is probably he who caused me to see it. I see a movement of the mind that begins as a free reaching outward, impelled by curiosity, wonder, excitement. I see the mind next pass through a sort of contest, a conversation of alternatives or between this event and that idea, in difficult and fruitful interaction. And then, if education happens, there is a third phase of the cycle in which the new fact or idea or experience is made a part of me; I act, internally, with regard to it. In the rest of the present lecture I shall speak of the first phase; the second and third phases provide the topics for the other lectures of the series.

Education arises out of the universal impulse to explore the world around us. Aristotle wrote that philosophy begins in wonder. He might have added—perhaps he did—that so does education. One may receive training by merely adjusting to the expectation of the teacher, but one cannot become educated without a sense of wonder at what no teacher is quite prepared to explain. There are glimpses of significance that stir mind and soul together; these are what make education possible.

Of course one is not educated by just wondering. A zestful feeling about the universe, with nothing added, may yield, at best, a vague happiness. Education requires much more: a respect for reason and the hard and troublesome use of it. Nevertheless, in considering first the disposition to explore, I attend to a necessary precondition of the educational experience. . . .

Adults are not confined to an imposed curriculum. If habit quiets the sense of wonder, on the other hand the opportunities for education widen as does experience in later life. We may explore tools, fields and woods, people, events, difficulties, and possibilities. Everywhere there is something in which to discover beauty and truth, appreciation and understanding, poetry and

science. The hindrances to education are enormous; the helps no less surprising. Out of the radio and the phonograph disc came an unpredictable development in American musical taste. Now, we find a fresh field of educational exploration in, of all places, the drugstore. The shelves holding the cheap paper-bound books are a major project in adult education. Included are some of the very best books ever written and also not quite the worst. To order them in worthiness, with good reasons, would educate anybody.

I agree with the assertion (by Robert M. Hutchins) that "the prime object of education is to know . . . the goods in their order." The heart of the educational experience is to distinguish the better from the worse. This is true, whether the good is sought in books, music, politics, or men. Education is a struggle to build one's self by making clear one's own order among goods. That which is most appropriate to human beings is the sense of value. It is, as Whitehead says, "the ultimate motive power." It "imposes on life incredible labours, and apart from it, life sinks back into the passivity of its lower types." Education is improvement in judgment about values. We can take the world as we find it and accept that lower passivity. Or we can undertake the labors and pursue an education.

As we explore the order among goods, how do we know that it is a better good to which we come? There is no proof that will satisfy every seeker. There is no argument that will satisfy everyone that the pursuit of order among goods brings the seeker to the better, not the worse. There are many who have no zest for the search, because they say each order of goods is special to him who holds it, or to the tribe or nation from which he takes his directions of search. Yet simple things may be said that have weight with him who thinks, as I do, that it is at least true that some order of goods is discoverable by education.

There is the evidence of one's own private convictions: one makes judgments on one's own success in discovering better books or music. There is at least the feeling that in the course of education one has clarified the judgments which, for instance, condemn the demagogue and approve the democrat.

There is, too, the evidence provided by the sequence usual in the development of the human beings around me. The boy collects marbles or pictures of baseball players, then perhaps seeks understanding of machinery, and if he ever seeks understanding of morals and of art, he does so when more fully grown. To pursue the goods in the reverse order would not seem to us educational. It would be climbing down a ladder when you want to go up. If one remains throughout life with the marbles and the ball players, education is clearly arrested.

In every part of the world, among savages or civilized people, men and women postpone some immediate and material satisfactions for some remote moral or spiritual ends. In this, all cultures are alike. All peoples distinguish the desired from the desirable: everywhere there is an order of goods that

can be explored and be more fully understood. In the more civilized societies these orders of goods come to be examined, criticized, and refined. In both the West and the Orient they are in part expressed in the form of a series of progressive stages in a man's life: in both parts of the world one is urged to conduct one's self so as to grow in wisdom and so as to leave less worthy things for nobler. Adult education has justification in every system of thought.

The differences of judgment as to what is better and what is worse, as between one man and another, or one tribe or nation and another, are of course great. But they are not unlimited. Those who compare the customs of mankind are nowadays more and more inclined, I think, to recognize the wide and general similarities among the orderings of values that have been reached by peoples in all parts of the world. For instance, capricious violence against a person of one's intimate group is everywhere regarded as an evil; very generally loyalty, hospitality, and courage of some kinds receive positive evaluation. And certain broad trends of development have occurred in men's ideas of good and evil: the condemnation of slavery; the rising, widening recognition of human dignity and individual growth. The judgment that Hitler had the wrong order of goods is not likely to be reversed; and it is at least an open question if his victory by arms would have much delayed that verdict. Very few people who have given up cannibalism return to the practice, and when torture is re-introduced in modern times, the practice is, after the event, even by the torturers more often deplored than admired.

If one seeks education as an effort to seek excellence, in work and play, in art and in ethics, one thereby widens the circle of those whose judgments as to these matters may support or may test his own. Education multiplies the minds in communication with our own. Alone we are not; we may find him who shares our struggle to judge well our present ordering of values almost anywhere—next door, across the world, or speaking to us from the past out of a book.

None of these considerations may keep this man or that from throwing up the whole business as too uncertain. Why seek so indeterminate an order of goods? Nevertheless, the simple observations I have just made set forth the fact that on the whole the human race has kept at it. I am one of many today who neither seek nor hope to find a source of authority for ultimate judgments as to the good. I think each must struggle to find it for himself. I am sure that you and I shall never agree on the same detailed order of goods among many things. And if one says that there is an order of goods that is true for all men, there is another who says it is not so. For the pursuit of education I do not see that it is necessary that either view prevail. I think it will be generally admitted that all human beings recognize some hierarchy of values, and that those who recognize education as an organized activity see its desired course as a movement up the hierarchy. Education will serve either to discover value in the universe or to create it. Education is to make the soul grow. . . .

It appears . . . that if the surge of the mind to explore even the unpopular and the dangerous idea is subject to restraints, the effort to do so is not only a contribution to one's own education, but an effort on behalf of the freedom of us all. Freedom and education depend on a common principle: that as the mind grows it may dare any idea, try out every speculation, consider every issue, so that reason and fact sort the better from the worse and bring us a step nearer truth. We are as free as we allow ourselves to be. No, we are as free as we allow others to be. If I deny the right of my fellow citizen to debate such an issue of real importance to us all as the political recognition of Communist China, or to discuss with entire openness of mind the worth of what Marx wrote, I am in effect limiting my own liberty. For we are committed to the making of a society through intelligent and informed opinion. The policing of ideas is abhorrent to our principles. Education can go forward if we keep ourselves free to explore and to test ideas. Education is both the exercise and the defense of freedom.

2

Conversation

The experience that results in education is a successful adventure with difficulties on the way. Impelled by the wonder and puzzle of things, the mind and spirit start out toward destinations not clearly seen. But soon the way is temporarily blocked. Across it lie ideas, facts, possibilities, and implications that demand to be dealt with before the traveler may go on. There is a period of struggle, mixed of pain and joy. The struggle is a give-and-take; this confronts that, a position is corrected by another position. There seems to be two sides, or more, to the engagement. But the outcome, if it be education, is not so much destruction as creation. That which lay across the path has made the traveler grow, and he proceeds, now taller than he was.

This metaphor suggests the movement of the mind in the education of child or man. The three parts of the tale fit the three lectures of this series. In the first I spoke of the outward impulse to explore. In this one I consider the struggle on the road. The growth that results is my subject in the third.

The struggle on the road is the effort to make sense of an idea or a fact

that makes difficulties or opens possibilities for a view of things that has already entered the mind. So the struggle is a talking back and forth. It is not a contest in which A tries to destroy B; it is a conversation in which A and B each speaks for himself while attending to the other. The struggle arises in the traveler's mind: how is this B to be taken into account, to be arranged with reference to A? We are educated through conversational struggles in which nobody loses. . . .

There are . . . many kinds of educational dialogues. The dialectic of mental growth is organized or unorganized, led by a teacher or pursued among those equally prepared, carried on within one's self, or exhibited in a lecture, a book, or a dramatic representation.

It is important to recognize that the conversations of education are not only those in which abstract idea confronts abstract idea, or opinion challenges opinion. There are also the dialogues in which it is the facts that speak, talking, as it were, with one another, or with the theory or other general conception which guides them and which they in turn affect.

Experimental science has its own dialectic. The hypothesis proposes a question; the experiment or the observation confounds or confirms it; or, more commonly, leads to putting the question in a new way. When we are not able to take part in this kind of conversation by direct experimentation and observation in the laboratory or in the natural world, we can at least retrace, in our own minds, the courses of these scientific conversations as they are presented to us in the records of experiment and observation. . . .

A conversation in some form is an indispensable part of that education which makes mind and spirit grow. One may learn truth as somebody else has thought it without the trouble of argument. But to develop the power of educated men in a free society, one has to struggle with idea and fact. It is much easier not to. In certain isolated universities of North Africa the principal qualities required of students are attention and memory; no attempt is made to train their critical powers and their judgment; they are in school to learn the Truth and not to think for themselves. So these students learn texts by heart and never participate in lecture or discussion. Nor do they ever, we are told by Professor Le Tourneau, take any part in their country's political life.

To take useful part in public decisions is to seek understanding through a struggle of alternatives. In America, too, it is sometimes found easier not to struggle. In some of our schools and colleges rote learning is less formally taught than in Africa. In many courses the student reads a textbook in which things are asserted about something without any invitation to argument. The paragraphs are short, brightly written, and conveniently captioned. Perhaps the instructor wrote the textbook. Then we have a monologue repeated. The long, difficult, strange, and beautiful dialogues of idea and fact that led up to that book are quite hidden beneath its bland and easy surface. Let us rejoice that in leaving school we may escape from such books. They contain no

visions to stir the explorative spirit. They provide no line of disputation on which we may exercise our critical faculties. "What is the use," asked Alice, just before she fell down the rabbit-hole, "of a book without pictures or conversations?"

As adults we may choose from many recorded conversations in arranging, for our own education, the conditions for carrying on our own further conversations. We bring to the enterprise the experiences we have had in work or in play. We are freer than are children to choose the approach congenial to our special nature. One may relate his ideas closely to action, as that one knows action in factory or politics or profession. Another may consider the topic philosophically, for general ideas and aesthetic appreciation. A third is more interested in the methods for observing natural phenomena and for drawing general descriptions from the observations. Whitehead says (in the fourth chapter of *The Aims of Education*) with respect to technical, liberal, and cultural education that each should contain the others. I agree; and we may choose that beginning that suits us. But the technical and liberal are not equals in education; the great end is the growth of the self, the effort to know, with reason and knowledge, the goods in their order, and the technical is educational only as means to that end. . . .

The educational dialogue, Socratic or otherwise, differs from all . . . other kinds of utterance in its ends and its rules. The rules are those appropriate to mutual enlightenment, to growth for all participants. There is first of all the recognition by all participants that the end is insight and understanding. So what is said is taken seriously. Light as the touch may be—and in learning humor is very welcome—in conversing for education there is the sense of the significance of what is said. I speak, or I listen, because the speaker means what he says, and believes it a contribution, however small, to the effort up the ladder of important understanding. So the utterances that move toward education are vitiated by insincerity and diminished by triviality or mere show of personal skill.

In the next place we may recognize the educational dialogue by the fact that it is truly a dialogue. The duty to appear at least to listen in the social conversation is replaced by the duty in fact to listen. No serious conversation takes place unless first I speak to one who attends to what I say for the dominant purpose of understanding it, and unless then I listen, seeking understanding, while he speaks with the same purpose. One may be silent in a circle of friends, or in a discussion of a book, and yet learn from the discussion of others. But then I carry on within myself an unspoken conversation in the same spirit and with the same rules as prevail in the spoken discussion. When the new idea entering my mind meets a difficulty or a conflicting view or fact, I talk, internally, for one side and then for the other of the possibilities I may begin to see for dealing with the view or the fact. To make reading educational I give the writer every chance to tell me what he is saying. And it is not yet fully educational unless then I meet what he says with my own

idea, or the idea or experience of another, and make the effort of seeing what comes of trying to entertain both or first one and then the other.

There is a balance, which the scientist, the scholar, the judge, and the wise leader all know, between the personal and the impersonal in the educational conversation. To be wholly closed within one's self is, obviously, to make education impossible. But to attack the educational experience with the complete impersonality of a machine, even if this were possible, would be equally defeating. One gives of one's self in conversing for understanding. One commits one's self to positions. One says, "Yes, just now, so far as reason and experience tell me, this is what I stand for; I will risk myself on this until shown something better." And to this position one adds whatever support comes from one's own life, personal as it of course is. Yet, on the other hand, the end, understanding, is not mine alone; it is shared with others. These others and I are communicating about a something impersonal, a something which, though expressed in some small part by the experience and insight of each, is above us both. Its names are many: common sense, truth, wisdom, the right. In Michael Polanyi's fine phrase, the effort to understand is made "with universal intent." The speaking in an educational dialogue is personal but disinterested, self-committing and self-transcending.

So we see that the educational dialogue calls for a large measure of good will. It begins in an act of faith: the assumption that those who converse speak in honesty, for the purpose of reaching understanding, and with generosity toward each other. The liar and the malicious speaker at once disqualify themselves, but the conversation begins with the assumption that they are not present. Such a dialogue flows on mutual respect. In certain kinds of utterance, as in legislative bodies and in debates, formal rules keep the talk going even when, between particular individuals, the respect is lost. In talking with friends to reach understanding, we do not need the formal rules. In talking, silently, with a book, we need the habit of mind which attends to what is said to us with friendly receptivity and yet with suspended judgment.

The educational dialogue requires balance also between assent and denial, agreement and disagreement. Needed is a certain willingness of the mind to reach out to that which is not yet understood, even to that which at first repels one. Those who only show the other wrong do not learn. Alain, the teacher whom André Maurois so much admired, said that "refutation is a dull game." Simple refutation is rarely educational. On the other hand, if one's agreement with the idea comes too easily, it may come before it has met the tests of judgment. If the new idea is a good one, it will be strengthened by doubt and restatement. There are people whose first approach to a new idea is negative. There are others in whom affirmation prevails. But there are only two dispositions of the mind that allow it to grow: one may say neither, "Yes, Yes," nor, "No, No"; one must say either, "Yes, but—," or else, "No—and yet—."

. . . Lyman Bryson said that we are embarked in the United States on the attempt to build a civilization in which as many as possible of our problems will be solved by each of us using what he has of the power to think. Often it does not seem that we are actually doing this, but of course Mr. Bryson is right; this is our purpose; and this is why universal education and democracy go together. We want not only government by the people; we want government by a people who make the effort to think.

No one citizen can think about everything. No one of us can form considered judgments as to the thousand problems of our common life that one day's issue of the *New York Times* brings to our notice. But there is something that we can all do; we can come to recognize a reasonable discussion when we hear it. We can, through practice of the dialogue in our own unending education, come to distinguish that man in public life who takes up problems with disinterested consideration of the alternatives, guided by reason and fact, from that man who is just talking for effect. We can support the one and reject the other. The former is carrying on intelligent conversation with universal intent. We can trust him. The latter we cannot trust; he may be a knave, a blatherskite, or a fool.

A representative democracy, in a world grown so complex as this one, depends, at the least, on common understandings as to the rules of reaching decisions. It cannot depend on common understandings as to what ought to be done about every particular matter. It cannot depend, safely, on trusting only the objectives of its representatives. The ends of our common life are inseparable from the means we use to get there. We want freedom and government by the people. We can get it by supporting men who themselves think with universal intent, and who respect the power of the people to do so also. If we support men in public life who offer to reach ends we seek by means opposed to those ends, we will get what the supporters of Hitler and Stalin got.

The implied rules of the educational conversation are both intellectual and moral. They say, "Use reason," and they say, "Be fair and generous." They are a commitment of faith in man's rational nature and his power to develop it. This morality of the educational conversation is also the ideal of public life in a democracy. Its application in public life gives courage to those who strive to improve education. Its exercise in education strengthens its practice in public life. An autocratic teacher, an instruction which does not accord respect to the intelligence and to the person, even a thoroughly dull school or course of instruction—these are not merely bad education, they are in conflict with our democratic principles. But where the conversations of organized education are conducted under the rules just described, there is preparation for citizenship in the kind of society we want ours to be. . . .

3

Creation

Education is of course learning something. More importantly, it is becoming something. Although knowledge is needed for education, an educated person is not the same as a man who has knowledge. An educated person is one who is at work on his enlargement. If we learn things that become parts of us, if we make efforts to develop our own particular understanding of life and of the order of life's goods, it is education we are doing. A person is something that it takes time to make; there is on everyone an invisible sign, "Work in progress"; and the considered effort to get along with the work is education.

Thought of in this way, education is not as common as one might suppose. The institutions that we call "educational" are engaged only now and then in the development, in children and young people, of understanding of the order of life's goods. Schools and universities provide care of the young, offer recreation and pleasant associations, teach many useful skills from reading and writing to surgery and the preparation of legal briefs, and occasionally, desirably, indispensably educate. . . .

In the very general sense of becoming something, everybody gets educated; everybody becomes something in the course of his life. The questions are, How good or bad a something? And, who decides what I become?

To meet the necessity of becoming something or other as one grows up and grows old, there are at least four distinguishable possibilities. The first way is no longer open to us; it was the way in which, in primitive societies, education was brought about merely through living the expected life. Taught by the example and the simple instruction of those around him, the American Indian or the African tribesman arrived at such wisdom as he needed in his well-integrated and largely stable world.

The other three ways are open to us in these later and more difficult times. Each is called "education" by those who approve of that way of making people.

One can become what a dictatorial authority decides that one should become. This is education in a Nazi or Communist state; it has had its full demonstration in George Orwell's book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In such a making of people, the choice of what to make is taken away from each individual, and the sense of freedom, so far as it exists, comes from identification with the nation, or the race, or some principle of history. Just now we are struggling both against the Communist way of making people and also against the rise of the same tendency among ourselves to take this way of becoming. . . .

A second way of meeting the necessity to become something or other is to become whatever at that time the people living around one are, changing to something a little different as people around one change. This, on the whole, is what many of us in this country do. It is sometimes called "adjustment" or "adaptation" or "socialization." This method, like the preceding one, leaves most of the work to others with a result that one is moderately comfortable and fairly acceptable to those who made one what one is.

In this country we will not choose the first of these ways and will defend ourselves against both foreign and domestic antagonists from having it imposed upon us. The lesser danger and the harder to avoid is the second way of becoming something. It will take some little thought and effort to avoid becoming the chameleon of the world's peoples, the easy adjuster to the immediate expectations of the suburbs or the neighborhoods in which we live, creatures whose characters are in their skins, not in their selves.

The third available way of bringing about the making of one's self avoids both dangers. It is the path I imagine us to choose in so far as we turn our interests and energies to our own education, as grown men and women. It is to take charge of one's own education, to put work into it along lines of one's own choice, and so produce something of a self-built self. This is in fact occasionally accomplished. It is a way open to anyone who wishes to give himself a good deal of interesting trouble.

For one who takes this responsibility, the experience that is education comes to be recognized, as it occurs within one's self or as one sees it occur

in another. Education is to be distinguished from such other experiences as excitement, pleasure, and having an opinion. I have ventured to identify its characteristic, distinguishing cycle of development. It begins in a reaching out of the mind and spirit, an entertainment of possibilities of significance and value in things seen, heard about, imagined. If this exploration of a universe that thereby begins to expand for one is to become education, it requires, as Whitehead so well presents the matter in his book, *The Aims of Education*, the discipline of order and precision. Further, facts must be considered. Ideas must be doubted and tested. In describing this phase of the cycle, one emphasizes the interaction of mind and mind, idea and idea, fact and fact, as forms of that conversation by which the cycle of the mind proceeds. And finally, there is an act of appropriation, a taking to one's self, on one's own terms, the piece of knowledge that has been offered. Although teachers are needed, education is always in part one's own act. As the child grows older, there comes to be more awareness of one's own effort to learn and to become, the third phase of which is an experience of growth by an act of affirmation. Something—an idea, a fact—is offered by book, teacher, or the experience of life. If it flows over and past one, there is no education. If it sticks to one, and becomes training or habit, nevertheless there may be little or no education. If one deals with it, thoughtfully and reasonably, in terms of what one already is and with a result that thereafter one is by some degree more than one was before, there is surely education.

It is this third aspect of the educational experience that concerns me now. For it, the word "participation" might be used to suggest the sharing of the act of learning by both teacher and student, or the part that is taken by the reader of a book in the ideas of the book. The word "incorporation" might emphasize the way in which something learned is built into one's self. And "application" points to that involvement of learning in the life of action with our fellows of which I shall speak later. But I choose the word "creation," because man is a maker, and the making of his better self, through learning, is the end of that activity which I am now examining. It is by trying to make something which we feel to be part of us and yet something which we can give to another, that we make ourselves.

Creation, not always connected closely with education, is an experience that all may have. . . .

The great creations of art and science and scholarship no doubt contribute to the education of those who achieve them and also provide works and ideas which become materials for the education of others. The coming to understand something—to understand it in that degree and kind which makes the thing learned a part of one's mind and self—is a creation, too. In this case the thing made is more private and personal. It is never wholly so. Education is an exchange in which each learner helps build the other as he builds himself.

Learning that educates includes an element of invention. In anthropology we speak of a process called "stimulus diffusion." Peoples learn from other

peoples not only by imitating one another but also by observing one another and then doing something in a different way that reaches the same end. After Chinese porcelain had been coming to Europe for almost two centuries, European potters, stimulated by the beauty of the Chinese product, set themselves the task of finding a way to make it and succeeded. In the early nineteenth century a Cherokee Indian, who was entirely without schooling or knowledge of English, was impressed by the white man's writing and was stimulated to invent, single-handed, a syllabary. He had not grasped the alphabetic principle, but the example of writing that he saw and only partly understood was enough to cause him to invent. It seems to me that my own experience as a teacher might provide examples of learning by stimulus diffusion. More than once I have been a little startled to hear some old student of mine thank me for the wonderful insight I gave him years ago: he then tells me I said something to him which I am sure I never said. I said something, and he was stimulated to think something else. I do not recommend this method of instruction; I mention it only to emphasize the element of originality in educative learning.

In the self-educating learner, the imagination, working on the infinite suggestiveness of the world around one, moves the mind to arrangements of idea and value that are both new and old. An idea is not the same when it is learned by you as when it is learned by me, provided the learning be more than mechanical repetition. I am a different learner; the thing learned is thereby different; therefore there is creation. Montaigne made the point when he wrote to the Countess of Gurson advice as to how her son should be brought up. He wrote, "For if by his own discourses he embrace the opinions of Xenophon or Plato, they shall be no longer theirs, but his. He that merely followeth another, traceth nothing, and seeketh nothing." I accept Whitehead's assertion that "the appreciation of literature is really creation." He goes on to say that the words we read and the music we hear are not mere stimuli to evoke an equivalent response. Learning that is educational is more of an original production, a self-modifying act, than is suggested by the words "stimulus" and "response." "No one, no genius other than our own, can make our life we live." Whitehead therefore deplored the deadening weight of what he called "inert ideas" in so much schooling. In contrast, to take a thought, a judgment of appreciation, or the significance of a fact into one's own thoughts and feelings, is to give it the place there which one's self feels to be just, is to perform an act of creation in the self. I think of this distinction between inert ideas and the self-modifying creative act when I read a bad textbook and elsewhere listen to a good teacher. The textbook offers me inert ideas. The good teacher—man or book—offers me something of which to make something of my own. I am led along a course of fact and thought with which I am compelled to struggle, which I am compelled myself to order and reform.

When we try to learn in company, or with one companion, this struggle

with its creative result is thereby helped along. The efforts of one to understand and to appreciate are provoked and tested by the efforts of the other. This may happen among schoolmates, between husband and wife in an adult education class, and even between people of very different origins and natures. . . .

It follows that education is in opposition to imitation and conformity. These have their place in learning: one conforms in order to learn rules of grammar; one imitates the teacher when he shows how the lathe is to be used or pronounces the French word that one is to repeat. But in education the learner, by his own efforts, by so much makes himself over: there comes about in him a rearrangement of the understood, the important, and the desirable. The rearrangement is not permanent; mind and feeling, with developed discriminations, are now a base from which the cycle begins again. With widened powers to understand and to appreciate, the work in progress is resumed. . . .

. . . grown people, if they choose, can find times and places for creative learning. They are not so busy with mere training, and they do not have so closely to obey the teacher. Indeed, they can well be teachers of each other, as they are in many an organized discussion group today.

As adults we bring to the educational effort something that children cannot bring: the experiences of adult life. . . .

I am struck by Sir Richard Livingstone's statement that "the young, whether they know it or not, live on borrowed property." They borrow, with incomplete understanding, the experiences of older people. In a widened sense, the proposition is true of everybody, young and old. We all live on mental property borrowed from our predecessors. The accumulations of our forefathers' experience, as recorded in books, we only partly understand. We have not had their experiences. As we live our somewhat different lives, we learn again the truths they learned. But they are not quite the same truths. Or, you who find this form of words unacceptable may allow me to say that we come to know the same truths in the contexts of our different experiences. . . .

. . . I think that in its own minor form that learning by the individual which educates is also carried along in a current of feeling. Teach your pupil to think? Livingstone replies, "Teach your pupil to think and feel."

It seems to me that feeling is a part of thinking, that we learn easily when we care strongly about what it is that we are learning. The feeling is itself something to be enlarged and disciplined. The passion with which one approaches a topic is both a hindrance to learning and a great strength. It makes it difficult to think clearly but it provides an energy for thinking at all. . . .

In talking about the place of feeling in education, Livingstone's principal point is that the discipline and the cultivation of appreciation are essential objectives. The making of the better self is not only a training of the intellect. It includes also the improvement of those discriminations by which we see that a thing is beautiful and good and admit it not only to our understanding but to our delight. One attends to something in the world about us not always

to act upon it, not always to analyze it, but sometimes with an attitude of simple openness to its goodness. This attitude is itself subject to development, to refinement. In it feeling is a strong component. In this aspect of education passion is controlled, and feeling enhanced and made sensitive to disciplined judgments. Livingstone refers to this part of educated men as the "other eye . . . the eye which enables them to contemplate, enjoy, and adore." And Whitehead puts it roundly when he says that beauty is the "aim of the universe."

. . . The education of the individual and the transmission of the common heritage are aspects of the same thing. The learning of each one of us is a part of that learning whereby our age takes over, and yet remakes, the learning of the peoples who lived before us. While we seek our own education, we also work at the transmission of knowledge through the generations.

Therefore becoming educated is a social obligation as well as a personal privilege. If all the books were burned and no one told us legends of the past, education and civilization would collapse together. Our studies make our times as well as ourselves.

If, then, I send my child to school, I am concerned not only with what the school helps to make of him but also with what the schools—and all other efforts to educate—make of all of us. I am involved in decisions as to what to study, and what kind of person is to be made by the studying, both for myself or my child and for all of us, everywhere. . . .

The question I have failed to put until just now may be expressed in terms of the problem of choice of the more ultimate values, the conceptions of goodness which education helps us to form. I spoke of education as the re-arrangement of the important and desirable. Is each to decide for himself what is important and desirable, and is each resulting program of education as good as any other? I said that education is the making of a better self. What is "better"? If my neighbor chooses to educate his children for better delinquency, or to revive Nazism, is his view of education to carry as much weight as my own?

What shall we study? For what moral end, if any, shall we study it? For a long time education was conceived as the inculcation of common values through the reading of the great books of the Western tradition. It is so conceived by many today, although the books are not widely read, and although many people are troubled by a lack of common values in America. In Livingstone's essay on "Character and Its Training" there is an eloquent statement of the view that common culture and common values are indispensable and that the source for these is still to be found in the exhibition of intellectual and moral excellence in the great men and the great works of the West. Others have expressed similar views, and Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler have more than stated this position: they have done something about it in effecting uniform publication of certain of these books and in getting thousands of Americans to read them.

I think that my own position is the same, with variations. I share the view

that education requires reasonable discussion and that the best basis therefore is a good book that everybody in the discussion has read. I think, too, that many good books have been produced in the Western world. And I agree also with the men I have mentioned in supposing that it is part of the good life to share with one's wife or neighbor or fellow citizen strong convictions, born out of common experience or common learning, as to what is good and what is beautiful. I think that to live together without common values may be possible, but that it would be a life lonely and bare. That I think so I have been helped to see by David Riesman, who in some pages of his stimulating writings has suggested a different position. (I do not think he has advocated it.) He tells us that people may live together in peace, may cooperate, without sharing common preconceptions. He reminds us of those social inventions, such as the market and skills of negotiation, that allow each man to get along with all the others by putting forward only some part of himself. To get along, he goes on to say, requires procedural consensus, "some shared values of a very general sort like due process, and among sufficient people in strategic locations, some less-than-fanatical attitude toward compromise and even corruption." Reading this, I tried to think of myself sitting somewhere reasonably secure from war and crime because of the market and procedural rules, like traffic regulations, and because other people somewhere were compromising skillfully with corruption. I tried to think of a nation and a world held together by these things and nothing else. And, passing the question whether in such an America I should in fact be safe, I felt pretty sure I should not like it. I should feel more than a little cold. A nation run only by traffic rules and the convenient compromising expedencies of other people is not the kind of nation I want, hardly more than it is the kind of family I want.

So I am for continuing the quest for values. I even see no harm in using the word and in sometimes talking about the subject. But I think we can promise each other only a quest. The alternative to more cooperation through the market and procedural rules is not a return to a real or imagined condition of agreement as to values "based on choicelessness." Choice is the condition of man today and for the future, so long as man is free. The alternative to a life of expediency is not to turn back to some moral authority of the past but to press forward, each now seeking that part of the good which he finds he needs and which he finds he shares with others.

The books of the West will continue to help us. But we cannot expect them to do for us just what they did for those who read them in times when the meaning of life was found in an education and an experience more nearly the same for a few people in all Western Europe than it is today for many people in the whole world. We shall read those books against the questions and emphases of today: against the impact of our discovery of man's irrationality, against the involvement of all nations in a common fate, against the evil we have come to see that men can do, against the hydrogen bomb. The old books were written without knowledge of the profound alterations in man's condition. Yet the books of the West record a magnificent conversation.

And now the conversation continues; things said before need to be said now in different ways to meet the questions of the changed condition of mankind. And to the conversation of the West come now to be joined the conversations that other peoples—Chinese, Indians, Muslims—have had, each within that tradition. Already a set of Great Books of the Western World appears just a trifle parochial. Many an Oriental has read some of them as well as great books of his own tradition, and soon we of the West shall find it quite natural to read his books as well as our own. For all traditions are becoming common property. The conversation becomes world-wide.

It seems to me that the state of education in our times and for any future which I should like my children to enjoy is one in which many choices are open to him who seeks to make himself grow. We shall continue to talk with many kinds of people who have different heritages from the past, and who take different positions with regard to the content and the source of moral authority. There will be some who find an ultimate authority in some chosen expression of ethical and religious rule. There will be others who are seeking certainty. There will be still others who do not carry on the search, finding that they can decide to do this and not do that, with satisfaction to themselves, but without certainty.

In one of the stories written by the Swedish poet, Pär Lagerkvist, mankind, moving through eternity, fail to find God when they all set out to seek certainty, and find him only when they go "to demand of him his boundlessness, his anguish and his space without end." And when God, an old man sawing wood, replies to their question as to why he did all this to them, that his only intention was that men should never be content with nothing, the wood-sawyer seems to grow tall, immense, and mankind move on in eternity having found a kind of peace.

This is where I suppose that we are now. Some of us will continue to search for certainty. I think that those who hope to find it and those who do not are together in so far as they ask questions about the ends of life. That has always been the human quest. Education is part of the pursuit. When we talk to each other in the course of the pursuit, we help each other in the common effort.

The Indian or the Chinese who reads his own book asks these more ultimate questions, and when he does so, he is closer to me, more helpful to my own education, than is my American neighbor who never asks them. It is a curious fact of modern life that one can sometimes find immediate understanding with someone born and brought up in a part of the world remote from one's own, and yet find a gulf of misunderstanding with an American neighbor close at hand. I think this is because the more ultimate questions, of happiness, virtue, and the nature of the good, are the same questions in every tradition, while the seekers and the accepters are more different from each other than are the seekers from one another. . . . I do not think the misunderstanding or lack of confidence is so much between thinkers and doers, as it is between the people who ask only, "How shall we get this done?" and the people who ask, "Why should we do it?" It is a separation between the ques-



tioners and the takers-for-granted. In our country it is mostly material productivity and individual initiative that are taken for granted; in Russia it is a narrow doctrine policed by the state. But when, anywhere in the world, one asks, against some background of experience, some tradition of questioning and answering, the same questions as to the ends of man and the nature of the good, one has joined a conversation and a quest in which all humanity can ultimately share.

The end of man's existence is not cooperation. It is not even safety. It is to live up to the fullest possibilities of humanity. And man is human only as he knows the good and shares that knowing with those to whom he is, in humanity, bound. It is not necessary that we begin with the same assumptions. It is not necessary that we read the same books, though it is very helpful to do so, especially when we meet to carry on education. What, I think, is most necessary for pursuing the conversation is that we ask the same ultimate questions. The question, "Can we all, on this earth, get along together?" is, of course, an immensely important question because it has to be answered successfully if we are to ask any other. But even more important is the question, "Why should we try to do so? What should we work for, live for? What is the good life?"

Lagerkvist's story, about the talk of mankind in eternity in the course of the search for God, seems to me to describe the historic stages of this conversation. Once men talked only each of his own experience, his own local life. But, as civilization took place, discontent seized us and we began the thoughtful search for meaning, truth, certainty. In the West we associate the beginning of this search with Socrates. Thereafter, for a time, Western mankind seemed to find certainty in some unity of thought. But the movement of man cannot be stayed. We go forward, even toward uncertainty and doubt. Indeed, as our minds grow, so does "the soul's longing"; we must be free to question, to seek, though it is anguish to do so. So we come to a stage in our journey when we are aware that we gather together the experience each has had. In this later stage, when we speak, the words are not about ourselves, "but about the meaning of life, as each sees some part of it, on behalf of everyone." Now, some of us, even in the bad state of the world, begin to ask each question, not as its answer affects only me, or America, or the West, but as it affects all people.

If I should choose a few words to describe the endless act of creation that is education, I should choose these: Education is conversation about the meaning of life, as each sees some part of it, on behalf of everyone. The words are too large for your needs and mine when we prepare to discuss a reading or a topic in some class or discussion group. Though we have in fact joined the quest and entered the "dialogue of civilization," we do not have then to think of our small places in the great enterprise. It is enough if we find the effort a significant joy.