

Education can be seen as many things in many ways to many people. Education should not just be seen as the somewhat regimental learning process which we are all put through. It should be seen as an experience or experiences. If we remember these experiences, then they have truly been an education; if we forget, then they were mere occurrences.

One of the most important educational experiences that any of us can face is learning about oneself. To understand oneself is a gift that encompasses all other experiences.

One of the most unfortunate phrases of our time is "to be educated." It is a term that many of us have used, often flippantly. What do we base education on, what has that person done to be educated? On the whole, most of us fall into the trap of believing that to be educated we only have to have achieved certain standards at school and at college, together with a degree of general knowledge that is achieved through a certain level of perception, via reading, viewing or experience. This conception of education is gravely biased, as it bases its analogy purely on traditional educational merits, i.e. he that is able to recite literature, compute or speak Latin is often praised against he that may be able to deliver a lamb or appreciate the natural glory of history or nature; for the latter may have had experiences/feelings that education alone could never create.

Education can be seen as preconceived and often very limited. This can be seen in the division and the prejudice of the young, even in the early stages of our lives, where we are so ignorant we have our set beliefs, based more often than not on second- or third-hand information. We tend to believe what we see and what we hear, what is around us and what will happen. We all believe that as individuals we are free-thinkers; that our opinions do not just depend on the opinions of others, but how much is this so untrue! We are all led by the thoughts and actions of others; it is only the very few who are really independent.

The educational institution is a mere farce; a stage upon which to perform a tightly scripted role. We are directed to perform in set ways, ways which can be averred and compared. The institution often sadly drowns the individual amongst barrages of rules and regulations that accompany the process of education.

One of the most amazing facts about our somewhat contradictory society is that we will leave many possessions - health, etc. - in the hands of the very best, yet often quite happily allow ourselves and our children to be moulded and shaped for adult life by very poorly qualified individuals, individuals who quite often are unable to face the rigours of the real world themselves, let alone teach us to do so.

The great educational institution/process has become too far removed from society. From our protected, high-walled conclaves of primary school to the palace-like fairy tale kingdom of Oxford that typically inspired literature such as "Alice Through the Looking-Glass". With this in mind, education can be seen as doing the very opposite to that which it set out to do, removing us from reality rather than preparing us.