Chapter 7

Educational Forms of Teaching

In this chapter I address a theme that up to this point I have put aside, namely, the meaning of “education.” My procedure may seem backwards in that most writing on teaching shows up within what is taken to be the main question: education. It is assumed that if the nature and purpose of education are clear, the meaning of teaching easily follows. I do not think that there is anything necessarily wrong in proceeding from education to teaching; the two meanings are intertwined. Unfortunately, however, debates about education have not led to a richly textured meaning of teaching, but instead have implied one very narrow meaning of teaching.

It seemed worth a try, therefore, to begin with teaching separated from any institutional assumptions about education. At the least, attention to teaching would not be shortchanged. In addition, a richer meaning of teaching might provide a novel perspective on the ambiguities of “education.” If someone were to say that I have assumed a meaning of education from the beginning of this book, I would not dispute the claim. But that implied meaning of education can now be articulated better with the help of a comprehensive meaning of teaching.

Jacques Barzun, introducing a collection of his essays, writes, “Forget education. Education is a result, a slow growth, and hard to judge. Let us rather talk about teaching and learning.” I can almost agree with his first sentence, except that he does not follow his own advice in the second sentence. Instead of saying, “Forget [for a while] education. Let us talk about teaching and learning,” he cannot resist saying in the middle sentence what education is. And the two references he makes, “slow growth” and “result,” mirror the confusion of so much writing on education. The two images do not go together and each of them represents a misleading way to describe education.

In the first half of this chapter, I propose a comprehensive and con-
sistent meaning of "education." I wish to argue that education is an interaction of forms of life; this set of relations is the most adequate way to comprehend education in the past and to address the needs of today. In the second half of the chapter, I name the most important forms and describe the pattern of a lifelong and lifewide education.

**Meaning of "Education"**

There is no single "true meaning" of education. Like "teaching," and any other important word in the language, the meaning is found in use. One has to trace the usage both historically and geographically. Historically, the perspective has to include etymology and the shifts in meaning throughout the ages. Geographically, one has to examine the meaning of education assumed by various groups today. Those groups that most control the definition of the term may be excluding voices that should be heard. While definitions of "education" are all too plentiful, they tend to leave out what is most interesting, what makes "education" a fighting word and a word worth fighting about.

Throughout the world "education" remains a word of almost magical power. No politician makes speeches against education. There appears to be unanimity that education is supremely important. Yet this seeming agreement is accompanied by intense frustration and disappointment. At least since the nineteenth century, education has been the great hope that never seems to fulfill its promise.

During the last century and a half, education has been closely identified with schools for children. Writers on education often use the terms "education" and "school" interchangeably, although if they were challenged they would acknowledge a difference. It is assumed that while education can be acquired elsewhere, school is the place that is deliberately and intentionally set up for education. The "professional educator," therefore, tends to talk of education as what you get in school, or at least what is supposed to be available for the getting in school. It is said that school is a mere means; education is the result. Or, for other writers, education is the process of learning that the school should serve.

One common distinction in the twentieth century, which seems to acknowledge the difference between school and education, is "formal" and "informal" education. But "formal education" tends to be a fancy name for school; every other aspect of education is left formless or amorphous. The school retains all the power by reason of appropriating "formal"; nothing else is given an educational name, except otherness to the one form of school.

Religion provides an instructive comparison here. The religions of the world are not adequately described by naming one's own (form of) religion and then waving in the direction of otherness. There can only be dialogue between different forms of religion, not between form and informality. The world of religion is not adequately described by "Catholic and non-Catholic," "Jewish and Gentile," or "Christian faith and world religions." Caught up in our own language, we might not realize that "non-Catholic" is a Catholic word, or that "Gentiles" exist only for Jews, or that Christians have to join the world's religions before speaking with any particular one of them.

The world of education, like religion, does not consist of one form and amorphous otherness; instead, there is a multiplicity of forms. The language of formal and informal education cannot lead to a serious conversation between several forms of education. The distinction between formal and informal does little to illuminate how people have actually been educated. With only the language of formal/informal, it is simply impossible to explore what forms of education have existed and still exist.

When David Elkind wrote, "The idea that there are many different forms of education is one of the most important insights we can glean from the observation of young children," I could not agree more. But his very next sentence is bewildering: "The children described so dramatically by Maria Montessori were engaged in informal education, an education in which the materials are self didactic." Of all people to choose for illustrating "informal," Maria Montessori was almost obsessively attentive to form. Yes, children are taught by the (carefully arranged) things in the environment; the form is the most critical element. Elkind is puzzled that people do not see the importance of informal education, that they think "all education is formal education."

Perhaps people think that "all education is formal education" because the term "education" necessarily connotes formality: forms of time, place, materials, and the relation of organism and environment. I share Elkind's objection to the idea that education means a classroom with an adult at the front explaining things to children. We need other rooms, other languages, other age groupings, other material than that
image conveys. In brief, we need to name and explore other forms of education in addition to classrooms for children.

Before the rise of modern education and the assignment of children to school, education had no single form or clearly defined age range. Its meaning usually did have reference to an immature being in need of guidance toward maturity. The age of the learners was not limited to 6- to 16-year-olds. At the beginning of *Emile*, Rousseau cites the poet Varro for the two Latin words that give us “education”: “Educit obstetrix, educat nutrix.” The midwife begins the leading out (educere), the nurse continues by nurturing (educare). All of that happens before the child is of “school age.”

Schools have not always existed; at the times and in the places they have existed, they have been only one of the institutions involved in education. It is also of more interest than historical curiosity that in its early usage the word “education” was not restricted to human life; an animal or a plant could also be educated. Education had to do with forms of life and the relation between those forms.

Education in premodern times operated mainly through traditional family patterns, religious doctrines and rituals, and apprenticeship for one’s station in life. With the rise of the modern sciences and a concomitant criticism of religion, educational reform was needed. The teacher as trained expert came to the foreground. What the emerging world looked for was explanations based on laws discernible by reason. For the founders of Western Enlightenment, the school was the new temple; where religion had failed in the areas of personal knowledge, good behavior, and social order, success would come through “education” (that is, the school).

In the North American colonies, the ideal of universal schooling was already enunciated by the middle of the seventeenth century. Every town of fifty families was to establish a school to teach pupils to read. The ideal would take several centuries to fulfill; school as a full-time occupation for children could only be afforded by the rich. Both Rousseau and Locke, with their new educational theories in the eighteenth century, chose as the typical student a boy of the upper classes; they were not describing classrooms for the masses. Nevertheless, their meanings of teacher/teaching led to and were easily assimilated by the modern school.

In modern usage, the teacher is an adult who has studied books; the student is a child who, sent to school for the purpose of absorbing the knowledge available in books, sits before the schoolmaster. The actions of the (school)teacher constitute teaching: to teach is to explain, to teach is to give reasons, to teach is to convince little boys to master their letters.

Whether a certain form of education fixed the meaning of teaching or whether a single meaning of teaching led to a concentration of education into one form, the fit between this teaching and this education is obvious. Other forms of education with their own embodiment of teaching did not immediately disappear, indeed have never disappeared. In the seventeenth-century colonies, even as the school was being affirmed as a necessity, the main business of education was still being carried out by family, church, and apprenticeship. But in the twentieth century it became more difficult for other forms of education to be accepted as serious partners with the classroom.

When John Dewey began his educational writing at the end of the nineteenth century, he looked back nostalgically to a time when home, church, and apprenticeship were real partners with the school. But Dewey concluded—fatefully and prematurely—that these other institutions were now all but impotent. The school was faced with the task of picking up the slack and carrying the whole burden of education: socializing the child by community experience, challenging the child’s intellect with a curriculum based on modern science, and preparing the child for a job in the technological world. The overwhelming task required religious zeal and supreme confidence.

The narrowing of education into schools for children was already in process before Dewey. His writing, however, towered above other literature on educational reform. He was a man of great ideas that could be used to support the growth of the school business. Of course, there were protests from the beginning of the school system’s ascendancy in the nineteenth century. One potentially fruitful criticism came from the “adult education” movement, first in Denmark and England, later in the United States. I have noted that the adult-education movement grasped the inadequacy of equating education with the schooling of the child. The early leaders of the movement foresaw twentieth-century educational centers where people of any age would learn from a wide range of experiences.

Throughout the twentieth century we have sometimes seemed on the verge of this new educational world, but our language badly trails behind. The very existence of the adjective “adult” (or various replace-
ments, such as "continuing") before "education" is symptomatic of the continuing problem. There is still (real) education and adult education, instead of a use of "education," which if unqualified would include all ages. To this day in towns across the country, no one confuses the educational budget with the cost of adult education; on university campuses, the school of education sits next to the school of continuing education; no one ever suggests that adult education is part of "higher education."

The tragic flaw in the adult-education movement, I suggested in chapter I, was its willingness to relinquish "to teach" to the one form in which an adult explains things to a child. Instead of fighting to diversify the forms of teaching, the literature of adult education quixotically attacked teaching. The result is that "adult education" took on an image just as narrow as (children's) education. Adults do continue to get educated but most of them do not do so by participating in the industry called "adult education." I have no complaint about discussions lasting six or eight weeks on every conceivable topic so long as such programs do not lay claim to being in charge of the education of adults.

An educational pattern that would truly be lifelong would begin by naming those forms of life in which people are taught how to live. This first step is not inventing something new but retrieving what has clearly existed in the past and has continued to be present during this century, even if shunted to the periphery in the discussions of professional educators.

Educational reform movements often try to broaden the meaning of education. I said above that education in premodern times involved several forms of life and the relations between them. If "education" is contracted into a single institution, then we do not get a narrower meaning; rather, we end up with a different kind of reality. Education becomes an "it," mainly if not exclusively available in one institution. If someone tries to broaden this "it," either "education" stays put in its one clear setting, or else "education" becomes increasingly vague as it is assigned to numerous agencies. When "education" does not mean the "it" available in school, its meaning loses concreteness and practicality. Yes, there is "informal education" without limit, but most books on education address the one clear thing that everyone agrees upon, namely, the school.

One author who tried valiantly to break through this dilemma was Lawrence Cremin. In the early 1960s, Cremin wrote several fine histori-
tion, which he regularly used and which he had his students memorize: "The deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort." Despite all the qualifiers, the one word that controls the definition is effort. "Education is...effort...as well as any outcomes of that effort." The standpoint seems to be that of the individual human teacher: to teach is to intend, to teach is to make an effort and hope for outcomes from the effort. With education as effort, Cremin had set himself an impossible task to write the history of education.

I suggest that the key word for beginning a description of education is interaction. How is the organism transformed as it interacts with the environment? How do various forms of life interact with and transform each other? The human efforts in the midst of these interactions can sometimes alter the forms, but if human effort is to be worthwhile, one cannot lose sight of the overall context; one has to gauge precisely how human influence can be exercised.

Education connotes interactions that are not random or mindless. There is "end" in the sense of purpose, design, or meaning. This end is not always obvious nor is it always imposed by a living human individual. The form that shapes life (for example, the family) may include generations of design and redesign. And whatever the contribution of persons and groups today, the process continues. Thus, in the other sense of "end" — termination point — there is no end to education; it is both lifelong and history-long. The particular interaction can have a number of ends internal to the process but no external thing to be acquired that would bring the movement to a conclusion. Education, therefore, is always "with end and without end." The difficulty of education is in maintaining a tension between these two meanings of "end," that is, having direction and accomplishment but never reaching a final product.

The Forms of Education

If education is the interaction of forms of life with end (meaning) and without end (termination), then what remains to be done is to describe the major forms that are lifelong and life-wide. The curriculum of education consists of these social forms with which a person interacts in his or her journey from conception to death. The individual's life is transformed by these encounters; the forms themselves are also changed, although their transformation is usually a very gradual one over the course of centuries.

There are innumerable social forms that human life takes. I will concentrate on four of these forms that cut across the lifespan and also influence the individual's entire life. Every child starts out being cared for and taught in some family pattern. Children then receive some kind of instruction for living in their society; this form of education evolved into the classroom. Every society expects its healthy adults to perform tasks for maintaining and enhancing life. Every society allows its older members to step back from the most laborious jobs to take part in what we now call leisure activity. Thus, family, classroom, job, and leisure activity can be viewed as a lifelong sequence, the simplest basis for a theory of education.

A more fruitful educational theory will see these forms as interacting at every stage of personal life. At any age, any one of the four can be at the center or at the periphery; none should entirely disappear. For example, when a child goes to school, familial teaching is likely to recede but it remains a partner with classroom teaching. For people in their 20s and 30s, family may reemerge as central to education, at least until the last child leaves home. Finally, being a grandparent at 60 or 70 may bring familial teaching to the center once more. The point of so describing the family in education is not to fit each individual's life into a preset pattern but to recognize that a person's life is educationally shaped by familial relations, with variations depending on gender, marital status, parenthood, housing arrangements, and many other factors.

What I am saying here of the family can also be said of the other three forms, that is, they are likely to be at the center during one period of life but they continue to be of subsidiary importance at other times. Classroom teaching may be especially appropriate for children and youth, but it can be important at any age. Similarly, having a job is the mark of younger and middle-age adults, but each person is taught by the tasks he or she performs from infancy onward. Leisure activity is most prominent in retirement but it cannot fully blossom there without some cultivation throughout life.

Each of the four social forms that I have named is a partial embodiment of some ultimate value that can stand in for the purpose
of education. For example, the family partially embodies the value of community. The family educates to the degree that it is truly communal, that is, to the degree that the person and the group, the group and humanity, humanity and the biotic community are mutually enhanced. Even the best of families cannot be more than an imperfect teaching of community. The familial form of community always has to be complemented by nonfamilial but communal expressions of human life: friendship, neighborhood, religious congregation, athletic team, and so forth. As I note in the following chapter, a school ought to be a nonfamilial, communal form of life that teaches community by its procedures, personal interactions, and system of rewards.

Rather than pursue dozens or even hundreds of social forms that teach every person at every age, I will stick to the more manageable task of describing the four major forms of family, classroom, job, and leisure activity. The attempt to be exhaustive here can end in a shapeless profusion of details where education can mean almost anything and everything. Behind that flow of endless possibility there then emerges the one thing that nearly everyone seems to agree is education, namely, the school. However, approaching this question from the perspective of teaching, I have denied that school is (formal) education. As I describe in chapter 8, a modern school is likely to include many forms of education. Before examining the school, it will be helpful to examine the forms of education that exist both within schools and outside schools.

Family

I choose to use “family” here rather than “home.” Although “home” in the English language does have the advantage of rich connotations, it may be too weighted toward architecture and place. Those are elements of the context but “family” emphasizes the individual’s interaction with a human form of life, a social pattern that stamps the individual for the course of his or her lifetime. For at least several thousand years, family has clearly deserved to be called a form of education. And for all the bewailing about the collapse of the family and the deficiencies of the contemporary family, there is not even a serious competitor on the horizon.

At least since the time of Plato, there have been proposals for alternate social arrangements to rear children. The proposals and their execution have usually involved a high degree of violence. Unfortu-
Finally, the third point is to notice the family as unusually rich in its variety of teaching languages. All three families of languages discussed in chapters 4, 5, and 6 show up in ordinary family life. The first and the second have about equal weight; the third is a little less prominent, except when the family becomes very self-reflective.

Each of the languages that make up the first and second linguistic families eventually appears in family education. Storytelling, lecturing, and preaching are there, with the first of those being very prominent; the preaching and lecturing, one would hope, appear only intermittently. Similarly, with therapeutic languages, the family is the main place where people learn to show gratitude, to forgive failure, to comfort hurts. Each of these teaching languages is embodied in the rituals of daily family life.

The examples from the third linguistic family (teaching the conversation) should not be entirely absent from family life. For example, children early acquire an attitude to reading, reflective thought, and conversation. Parents (and grandparents) often succeed in conveying a good attitude even if they are not "academically trained." The adult's taste for learning and an excitement with ideas are usually more important than academic credentials. Many immigrants who never had the chance to get beyond primary school have taught their children to value ideas, knowledge, and the pursuit of academic skill.

**Classroom**

The classroom represents a form of learning that should go on throughout life but is especially prominent in a young person's life. Another way to refer to this kind of learning is "schooling," but I am particularly interested in clearly distinguishing between "school" (an agency, a building, an institution) and a more specifically delineated form of education that classrooms are established for. Under the aegis of the modern school, several other kinds of activity go on that involve other forms of learning. The school can be a place that houses preparation for a job and actual experience of paid or unpaid work. The school is also a place for artistic and athletic performances that are integral to one's education but have never fit comfortably within the walls of the classroom.

I will be brief about classroom learning here because the next chapter goes into detail on this issue. I simply wish to name this form of learning
and to place it within the constellation of the four forms of education. It achieves power by having its distinct time and place, but it effectively uses that power only in interaction with the other three forms. During one period of life it is likely to take center stage; at other times, it recedes to satellite status. However, for some individuals it can have either a more permanent or a recurring centrality. Many people in the modern world have jobs that involve constant study. Many other people at ages 50, 60, or 75 are discovering that they are finally ready to hit the books.

I will make three points here parallel to what was said of the family, namely, that the form of classroom teaches, that every individual in a classroom should experience teaching and learning, that the classroom gives prominence to one family of teaching languages while presupposing (or compensating for) the other two.

First, the existence of classrooms and the composition of any particular classroom teach. I will go into detail and offer many examples in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that the form sets stringent limits on what can effectively be carried out in the name of education. But if the appropriate things are happening in this setting, the classroom as teacher can be a powerful element in education. "In our schools," wrote Maria Montessori, "the environment itself teaches the children." 25

Second, most classrooms have only one person called "the teacher." In fortunate circumstances, there may be two such people. If the two work well together, the effect is not a doubling of teaching, but a change in the dynamics of teaching. Two people start a conversation and others ("the pupils") are drawn in. The person (or persons) called the teacher is obviously expected to teach, but one of the tests of good teaching is that sometimes the person called teacher becomes the learner. One need not imagine an obliteration of roles or complete equality of participation in the teacher and learner roles. 26

Third, the classroom is a deliberately invented setting for one kind of learning — reflection on information that is today available in books, television, newspapers, computers. Unlike the family with its balanced mix of teaching languages, the classroom concentrates on the third linguistic family: teaching the conversation. And within that group, academic criticism has a privileged place. The school as a whole has a range of educational languages as wide as the family, but the classroom has to be focused at one extreme. In practice, every classroom instructor has to deal with deficiencies in the backgrounds of particu-

lar groups of students. But if there is little academic criticism occurring in the classroom, the students are not getting the education the school promises.

Job

As in the previous two cases, the form of education called "job" is a partial embodiment of the educational value at stake; in this case the value is "work." Almost everyone has a job, if we extend the word beyond salaried employment to the tasks people must accomplish. Sometimes the jobs we are required to do have little or no educational value; they are not real work. If people have such jobs "to make a living," then they have to find meaningful work at other times. Every job can be reformed in the direction of its being meaningful work, although some aspects of maintaining human life involve drudgery. Machinery has reduced or could reduce some of the laborious aspects of work. However, the dream of completely eliminating such labor is probably a dangerous dream for bodily creatures.

In this context, Maria Montessori’s method places great emphasis on the child learning to work and learning by work. She realistically relates work to discipline and labor, although in doing so she may undervalue the connection of work and play. "I have to defend my method from those who say it is a method of play. Such people do not understand that work is natural to man.... Man’s true name should be homo laborans rather than homo sapiens." 27

Montessori was reacting here against followers of Friedrich Froebel, who believed that the child’s highest activity is play. Froebel had a kind of mystical sense of the divine presence in children’s play. 28 Montessori saw all the talk about children’s play as evidence of adult control and the trivializing of the child’s activity. The two theorists were perhaps not so far apart as their language suggests. If the child’s work is play, then one does not have to reject the one in affirming the other.

Of course, Maria Montessori would not have liked that formula. She believed that affirming homo laborans was the way to overcome the split between working-class laborers and the new professional class. I agree that many professionals could use some labor experience (for example, in the work of caring for the home or children), but unfortunately that will not do much for the laboring class. The laborers need, among other
things, the availability of better classroom instruction throughout life and, to whatever extent possible, more play in their work.

"Apprenticeship" is a common term in educational history. Its standard use was for the kind of teaching provided by a master workman to a young person learning the trade. It fits well the root meaning of "to show someone how to live." Occasionally, writers use the term not only for learning a job but for all kinds of learning that involve an expert showing by example how to do something. This meaning is a helpful one to have. But while apprenticeship for a job needs reappropriation, that meaning needs a wider context.

The assumption in former times was that a master instructed an apprentice; once having learned the job, usually in the teenage years, the apprentice was set for life. The more common pattern today is training for the job, training on the job, retraining for a new job. The job has become a more important teacher today, with each of the jobs teaching lessons to a student who is willing to learn.29

Many parents today struggle to combine work outside the home and work within the home. The former neat division of men doing public work and women doing "housework" (which often was not classified as work at all) has suffered what is probably a permanent downfall. We do not yet have a healthy, fair, and efficient system. Ideally, no one should be forced into somebody else's idea of the correct system of dividing work. Whatever the pattern of individual lives, nearly everyone is taught by the tasks they have to perform. And for most people that means how to include more than one job in a balanced life.

The job world is in educational interaction with the classroom, a relation that does get some attention these days. The job is also related to family life and leisure activity. For several decades of a person's life, his or her job may hold center stage. But even then, the striving for money, prestige, power, and status has to be balanced both with other kinds of work and other forms of education.

One way that young people can acquire that balance and insight is by experiencing work that provides a needed service to people. The work is done not for pay but because it is worth doing. Such work can include helping friends with schoolwork, minding younger brothers and sisters, helping out in a nursing home. This pro bono work can begin in childhood and continue throughout life.30

The school is a chief agency for organizing service work, especially when youngsters are in junior or senior high school. Business corporations working with schools have a place in education; realistic preparation for employment is part of the young person's education. However, the meaning of work is more likely to be found by the young person in donating time and energy to help the very young, the very old, the poor, the disabled, or the stranger in distress. A criterion of the educational value of work is that the work is experienced as worth doing.

As to the forms of language that are found in the job/work world, it is more difficult to draw generalizations here than it was in the previous two cases. Each line of work has its own mix and its own emphasis. If one is a law student or lawyer, then the dramatic performance and the dialectical discussion of the third family have a permanent place. If one is a counseling psychologist, the second family of therapeutic languages predominates. If one is a clergyman, the preaching in the first family may be central. There is no one formula for even these fairly well-defined jobs. Each job has an occupational hazard, that a language central to the job can take over one's life — the clergyman always sounding preachy, the psychotherapist always talking therapeutically, the lawyer ready to debate everyone. The only protection from this hazard is the interaction of several forms that provides a complementarity of languages.

Some jobs, I have acknowledged, are such laborious drudgery that we should try to replace them with machines; until then, those jobs ought to be distributed equitably.31 For example, the aspects of caring for the home that are bothersome should be divided equally among family members. The fairness of the split as much as the execution of the job becomes the teacher. An equal sharing of the laborious jobs makes it possible for everyone to have a share in the creative work of the home.

Professional work is of such a nature that it should not be laborious drudgery. If professional people are bored with their work and careless in its performance, we have a shocking situation. Obviously the work is not teaching, perhaps because the professional is not ready to learn. Donald Schön describes what he calls a researcher-in-practice who is continuously taught and therefore finds joy and relaxation in the work itself. "When practice is a repetitive administration of technique to the same kind of problems, the practitioner may look to leisure as a source of relief, or to early retirement; but when he functions as a researcher-in-practice, the practice itself is a source of renewal."32
Retirement/Leisure Activity

This fourth and last form of education shows up most strikingly in old age but has to be present throughout life. Schön's reference above to "early retirement" is to suggest that if someone thinks that early retirement is the solution to being bored with work, disappointment is likely to follow. Schön also uses "leisure" in the way it is commonly used today—time off the job or leisure as nonactivity. I have combined "leisure" with "activity" to resist this modern bias that classifies leisure as nonactivity. The modern era, reversing what earlier peoples assumed, takes business (busy-ness) as activity and leisure as emptiness. I am positing an activity called leisure that expresses a deep human experience of completeness. This attitude finds expression in a multitude of ways, ranging from utter stillness to exuberant play.

A drastic shift in the meaning of leisure occurred in the nineteenth century. In the classical and medieval periods, leisure was related to the high value placed on the contemplation of eternal truth. Leisure was the soul's best attitude and the culture's calm center. For Aristotle, leisure was a way to describe the purpose and end of education. The fact that the Greek word we translate as leisure (skhôle) is the word that gave us "school" indicates that a discussion of leisure belongs within the meaning of education.

It is unlikely that "leisure" can be restored to its pre-nineteenth-century meaning. Too much has happened in the interim, especially in the industrialization of our world. But as one era of machinery made a new meaning of leisure (time off the job) increasingly attractive, so a new era of postindustrial technology is now reshaping our idea of leisure. We could end up by just filling "spare time" with another job or with endless television viewing. But it is possible that an increasing number of people will have the chance to engage in pursuits that are enjoyable and educational, personally fulfilling and socially valuable.

The older part of the population is the chief place to look for how leisure is going. People, on the average, are living longer lives with better health. Those who are finding no great fulfillment in their jobs and can manage to retire at an early age often seize the opportunity. The question, then, is what to do with several more decades of healthy life. I am not suggesting older people have to create a busy schedule of daily events. Having many hours to be present with one's grandchildren is a worthy retirement activity. Getting one's hands dirty in the garden is an activity attractive to many people who have lived young adulthood separated from the soil. Both grandchildren and gardens can be great teachers.

All the talk about leisure in old age can sound obscene to those overwhelmed by poverty or sickness. No doubt there are signs of a dangerous selfishness among well-off older people. "I want my comfortable life; I deserve it. I don't care about anyone else's problems." That is one of the reasons why one must resist the trivialization of "leisure" by travel agencies and other commercial interests. Leisure has to be related to profoundly human activity that links the generations.

Older people do deserve much of the economic benefit that has come their way in recent decades. They have the right to step back from the production and management jobs that are burdensome. But for their own happiness as well as society's well-being, leisure activity has to have human depth.

Education among the elderly need not mean classroom discussion—although that should be available and many older people love it. Education in old age concerns the pattern of activity appropriate for the age, health, and talents of the individual.

As was true of the other three forms of education, leisure activity predominates in one part (the later part) of life but it should also be an educational satellite at each stage of life. If one has not been educated in leisure early in life its meaning is not likely to emerge full blown at age 65 or 70. Leisure has to be cultivated hourly, daily, weekly, annually. Religious rituals were once a help here and for some people still are. For other people, opera or baseball has taken that place; one steps out of ordinary time and place to be immersed in a rich pageant of human emotions. From the standpoint of rational productivity, such leisure activity is a terrible waste of time. For the individual participant, it can be a glorious and transformative experience. The whole culture would be the poorer without such leisure activity.

The child is taught leisure both by times when "nothing is happening" and by times of sheer enjoyment of any activity. The very young can probably best learn leisure from the very old; the two are co-conspirators in a world where everyone else is rushing to get things done. When the child has to settle into work at school and at a job, the relaxation, play, and joy may have to recede but they should not disappear.

Schools, as I shall describe in the next chapter, are places for the
teaching of leisure activity. Arts and sports do not fit the classroom curriculum, but they are part of the school curriculum. One way that the classroom can contribute to sport and art is by teaching intelligent spectatorship. Being a spectator may not be as satisfying as being a performer but, especially later in life, it can be a valuable part of leisure activity.

To whatever extent it can, the school should provide for artistic and athletic performances. The amount and variety of both should depend on individual choice, but the activities should be available. These things are not frills on a young person’s education; they add a necessary complement to the work of the classroom. The form of a basketball team on the court is a teacher. So are the keys on a piano. The young person will usually need some “coaching” along with the nonverbal teacher. A coach will use a rich mixture of teaching languages. Sometimes a little lecturing and preaching may be needed; sometimes forgiving and comforting are necessary. This metaphor of coaching for the purpose of reflecting on teaching will receive more comment in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Teaching in School

The question of school reform has generated a library full of books. Proposals for change have been constant in the United States since the founding of the public school system in the 1840s. The number of reform packages has probably reached a new high since the early 1980s. The most obvious cause for the intense recent interest is U.S. economic competitiveness with Japan, Germany, and other countries.

This chapter does not attempt to compete with proposals that offer a detailed blueprint of how public schools should operate. Much of the economic, political, social, and racial complexity is beyond my scope here. However, I do think that this chapter might contribute to the discussion by offering several clear distinctions. Clarity can sometimes simplify. Behind all the details of complex proposals to improve schools is someone’s assumptions about what constitutes a school and what are its proper activities.

I have approached the question of school by asking, “What is the meaning of ‘to teach?’” That journey led up to the previous chapter, which set teaching within four major forms of lifelong and lifewide education. Classroom teaching is one of those four forms. The form of classroom teaching exists in relation to forms of teaching outside the school. In addition, classroom teaching is related to other forms of teaching within the school. That is, the task of this chapter is not to describe “school teaching,” but to describe the configuration of teaching forms that a typical school can house.

Many of the books on school reform have thoughtful, exciting, and detailed proposals. But what usually does not get asked is the nature of teaching. In most of these books, the reader is not likely to find a page, let alone a chapter, asking the question, “What does it mean to teach someone something?” The question and an answer are, of course, implied. I can understand that documents largely political and