

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'education' as training a child mentally and morally, presumably in a way in which modern society defines what is meant by 'mental' and 'moral'.

Education is the building block of society. It is possible to say that without education life would not exist. Everything that is known to us has been taught to us. The Greeks, one of the earliest known civilisations, regarded education as of moral importance. Plato, anxiously determined to protect the children of his imagined elite from contact with false doctrine, and Socrates smoothly claimed to be the true philosopher and moralist. They both professed intention to provide examples for the encouragement of virtue and to deter the young from vice.

Rhetoric for the Greeks was an essential part of their lives. It must be remembered that the Greek age was far removed from the age of today. The age of today is one not only of miraculous scientific discovery, but also society today commits much that is said and done to paper. Although the telephone has eradicated much of that, more exists in words than in the Greek world. It is with this in mind that we can approach Greek education. A man when speaking in public, whether to a meeting or a law court, would not be surrounded by circulated documents, no backcloth of daily journalism to make his own or others' views familiar to his hearers. Like an actor, he had to know his lines, but more than that, he had to be versed in the art of persuasion. Up to a point that was teachable. The Sophists claimed to teach their pupils how to succeed in public life; rhetoric was a large part of what they meant, though not the whole. The contests of Attic tragedy show all the tricks of the trade as well as the art of the poets. A man had to depend on his rhetorical skill and his memory; nothing or very little was committed to writing and the demands and the requirements were much different from the same demands today.

The obvious drawback of such a system, and such a charge was indeed levied at the Sophists that they 'made the voice appear the better cause' (see Aristophanes' *Clouds*). A skilful speaker, whether his case be good or bad, will always win against he who cannot argue, however sound his case may be. Juries were familiar with style, but in an age without lawyers and barristers, it was worth the litigant getting his speech written for him by an expert.

Such was the emphasis in the Roman world. Public speaking was closely linked with the government of the republic. Cato was an arch-exponent of this, exploiting this medium to survive 50 political persecutions. This art was the mainspring of Roman public life and education, and as in his historical authorship, Cato was not entirely immune from Greek influence, the rhetorical 'art of persuasion' and the technicalities which it imparted. These influences, combined with the urgent practical exigencies of speaking in the Assembly, the Senate and lawcourts to create that most formidable of instruments, Latin oratory, of which Cato was a pioneer exponent.

Nowadays, however, emphasis is placed on the pupil writing down his thoughts in essays or in comprehensions. But the learning of poetry in English has been forgotten, and there is also very little oral work in French. Some teachers are absolutely convinced that their subjects are much more superior to others. A lot of teachers also believe themselves to be the greatest gift to teaching since writing.

Some teachers are sometimes absent for times of up to 2-3 days. When this happens, we usually get a project. This means that we learn nothing. Shouldn't we get a refund? However, most teachers are usually at school and able to teach.