Meditations on James Macdonald's Transcendental Developmental Ideology of Education

Aostre N. Johnson

E-mail: ajohnson@smcvt.edu

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Abstract

This is a slightly edited version of an article published in 1998 in the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing.* It is an contemplative autobiographical reflection on James Macdonald's 1974 publication, *A Transcendental Developmental Ideology of Education*, presented as meditations on the meaning of *meditation, development*, *transcendental, ideology* and *education*. It includes a "conversation" between Macdonald and 13th century Persian Sufi mystic Jelaluddin Rumi through quotations related to those topics. Macdonald was a prominent curriculum theorist whose overriding educational concern was always ethical. His transcendental ideology was inspired by Kohlberg and Mayer's 1972 "Development as an Aim of Education," in which they argued for *progressivism* as the best educational ideology for the times, after reviewing the prevailing *cultural transmission* and *romantic* ideologies. Macdonald understood the relative strength and weaknesses of these and suggested they were all limited by their views of consciousness. He proposed two additional ones, the *radical* and the *transcendental.* The radical emphasizes the influence of social and political forces on the developing mind and questions the hierarchical nature of cognitive stage theory, with the ultimate goal of economic and social equity. The transcendental posits that beneath our rational mode of knowing lies a vaster consciousness, a ground of being, the source of all knowing and the root of the deepest ethical understanding, with centering as its fundamental cognition. It proposes centering in both inner self and outer world as the dual aims of education—both personal enlightenment and social justice.

Key words: James Macdonald, transcendental, centering, curriculum, meditation

James Macdonald was fond of quoting Sufi Stories, and I begin with a Sufi story about Bullah Shah, a saint and mystic of Punjab, India. On the day he began formal schooling as a young boy, his teacher taught him *alif*, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. He became fully absorbed in this letter, so that when the other children in the class had mastered the whole alphabet, he was still concentrating on *alif*. When months had passed and the teacher saw that the boy had not progressed beyond that first letter, he sent him back to his parents, saying: "Your son is mentally deficient; I cannot teach him anything. Bullah Shah's parents hired one special tutor after another for their son, but he made no progress. Feeling ashamed for disappointing his parents, the boy ran away from home to a forest where he lived by himself for many years. As he sat in the forest, he contemplated each manifestation of nature and saw how *one* had taken form as grass, leaf, branch, fruit, flower, mountain, hill, stones, rocks, insects, birds and animals. He saw *alif* in himself and others. He thought of one, saw one, felt one, and realized one everywhere. Finally, when he felt he had fully experienced the unity behind the diversity of existence, he returned home to visit his parents, and while he was there, he went to pay his respects to his teacher. He bowed humbly and said "I have finally understood the lesson of *alif* that you taught me; will you teach me something else? The teacher laughed at him and thought what a simpleton the boy was. Then Bullah Shah asked permission to demonstrate his mastery of the letter and the teacher replied in jest: "Write it on the wall." When Bullah Shah traced *alif* on the wall, it split in two. And the teacher became the student of his former pupil. (Khan, 1980)

This story demonstrates the power of meditation and the lack of recognition and honoring of spiritual dimensions of

consciousness in educational systems. To meditate is to reflect on or contemplate-- either the perceptual and conceptual objects of consciousness—or pre-perceptual, pre-conceptual consciousness itself. A meditation is also a discourse intended to express its author's reflections or to guide others in contemplation. I use the word here in all of these senses.

Macdonald (1981) asks us to "accept meditative thinking on an equal footing with calculative thinking" (p. 174). In a general sense, he equates this with the hermeneutic quest for understanding, in contrast to the rational search for control, but in "A Transcendental Developmental Ideology of Education" he places it directly in a religious or spiritual context, suggesting that "the possibilities of accessibility to knowledge from 'hidden' inner sources operating on acausal, or integrative, or serial and synchronistic bases point directly toward the awareness of another ground of knowledge in human beings. (Macdonald, 1974, p 103). He proposes the process of "centering," as the fundamental human cognition arising directly from this ground. For Macdonald, as for many mystical thinkers throughout history, this ground is the "ground of being," the source not only of being but of all ethical understanding. Thus, he uses the word *center* in ways that overlap with the meanings of *meditation.* In one sense it means engagement in preconceptual knowing, the type of meditative thinking used within mystical traditions of many religions throughout history, and in another sense, he means it as a type of conceptual contemplative thinking, an "openness to the mystery of existence," that is continually asking "why?" and perpetually engaged in "examining the fundamental meaning of things. "We must encourage the young to say both yes and no to culture and probe the ground from which our culture arises, through meditative thinking" (Macdonald, 1974, p. 110).

This second type of meditative thinking involves a deconstruction of culturally constructed meanings in the context of intense awareness of the ethical dimension inherent in being. Macdonald understood centering as a non-dualistic mode of being, theoretically based in scientific and social as well as mystical views of the universe. He describes the process of centering as a "dual dialectic" which grounds the person in both "inner" and "outer" worlds, ultimately overcoming the distinction between them so that the aim of education is both personal and social transcendence—enlightenment and social justice. Thus, Macdonald as mystic and prophet foreshadowed constructivist postmodernism in ways that curriculum theory is just beginning to glimpse.

Like Bullah Shah, I meditated for many years on one lesson, that extraordinary article of Macdonald's, in the context of his other work. It became a personal ground of being for me as I searched for the spiritual basis of human development and education. Also, during these same years, I immersed myself in the poetry of the 13th century Sufi mystic Jelalludin Rumi. In particular, several poems seemed to insist that I pay attention to them, so that their words become a background chorus in my consciousness. As I listened to both Rumi and Macdonald, they began not only to speak to me but to each other.

Prologue

JM: The "back door" or "front door" of human being, whichever suits your purpose must be unlocked and left ajar if centering is to occur. The process draws its power and energy from sources that are not completely explicable.

JR The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds meet.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

I moved to Greensboro, North Carolina in August, 1983 to begin a doctoral program in curriculum with James Macdonald as my advisor and mentor. I had met him only once, a few months before, in a brief, intense meeting that would later be described to me as "archetypal Jim." He was both gruff and kind, a man who did not "suffer fools gladly." He focused on me with laser-like intensity, firing questions about the alternative schools and spiritual communities I had helped to create. We quickly settled on the organizing theme of the creative process for my doctoral studies, and I experienced the crystal clarity of his mind as he elucidated one aspect after another. Then the phone rang and the knocks at his door began; many people were asking for a share of his wisdom, perhaps anticipating the brevity of his remaining time on this planet. As we shook hands in parting and our eyes briefly met, I experienced one of those unexpected shifts of consciousness in which the mystery of presence provides a glimpse of the timelessness and space lessness of being. . . Then he was gone.

Shortly after my arrival at UNC-G, James Macdonald was taken to the hospital where he remained until he died a few months later. Of course, I felt shock and sorrow and deep regret and I mourned with those who had known him well. Yet, after his death I began to experience his presence as a mentor in my academic work and life. Some of this was powerfully embodied in the professors who guided me and kept his spirit alive, especially David Purpel, as moral prophet, Jo Leeds as theological artist, Fritz Mengert as existential philosopher and Sue Stinson as ethical dancer. But also, in a very different sense, Jim's spirit seemed to

pervade the inner-outer space in which I worked and lived. He appeared in dreams and meditations, offering me symbols relating to theories I struggled with, often resulting in creative breakthroughs.

During those graduate student years, I lived with my young daughter across the street from the campus. My kitchen became a gathering place for fellow graduate students and professors, the scene of many late- or all-night caffeine assisted curriculum theory discussions, with James Macdonald always inhabiting the seemingly empty chair. The deceptively simple questions he left for us to continue answering framed our discussions: "What does it mean to be human? How can we live together? How can we as curriculum theorists make a better world?" Several years later when I heard Madeline Grumet describe him as more wizard than prophet, not content to merely predict but destined to embody vision and spirit in daily life, in "kitchens and classrooms," I was struck by the realization that after his death he continued to play for me the role he had played for so many others during his life. He was, in Grumet's (1985) words,

always in the middle: between the Marxists and the existentialists, between social democracy and religion, between the rational and the intuited, between the technical and the aesthetic, between the word and the image, talk and action…Like Merlin, Tiresias, wizards carry messages between the possible and the actual (p.21).

He became for me the wizard who inexplicably carried messages between the two worlds, moving me closer and closer to the center.

Meditation on Development

JM The explicit knowledge of child development or of specific children may facilitate our understanding of them if it is internalized and integrated into our inner self. It is, however, only one avenue towards understanding. There is another path, much harder but more direct. This is the process of locating one's center in relation to another…to touch and be touched by another in terms of something fundamental to our shared existence.

JR The clear bead at the center changes everything.
There are no edges to my loving now.
I've heard it said there's a window that opens
from one mind to another,
But if there's no wall, there's no need
For fitting the window, or the latch.

My consuming intellectual passion, the desire to understand the nature of human mind and spirit, emerged at an early age, as evidenced by this poem written when I was eight years old:

Once an angel grew tired of flying in heaven all day.
She lay upon a fleecy cloud to sleep the night away.
She dreamed of people in a place where pain and joy both stay.
So life is but an angel's dream that fades with morning's ray.

In (Sleepy Eye, Minnesota) high school I collected and studied the dreams of hundreds of children and adolescents in my school system. I was struck by the contrast between daytime rationality and night-time emotionality alchemically changed into vivid imagery, offering a glimpse of mysterious dimensions of the mind. This research ("girl from Sleepy Eye studies dreams") earned me a scholarship to college where I continued to pursue theories of cognition and development, but I was disappointed to discover that in academic psychology, mind and emotion were accepted as two distinct entities, and the concept of spirit wasn't even entertained. Ironically, my studies took place in William James Hall, named after the man whose theories would become so critical for both Macdonald and myself in terms of developing a unified theory of mind, emotion and spirit.

Research on the development of children's thinking led me to spend many hours observing young children in early childhood settings. Much to my surprise, I began to feel a deep longing to become a preschool teacher rather than a psychologist. As an incipient feminist, I viewed this desire with suspicion, suspecting that it masked a fear of achievement—the stereotypically "female" job of "kindergarten teacher" had never been on my list of imagined futures. However, the urge was too strong to ignore, and I abandoned a doctoral program in psychology for a master's degree in education leading to what was to become a twelve-year teaching career. I founded, directed and/or taught in four schools for young children, two university laboratory schools and two private alternative schools. My dual obsessions during these years were understanding young children and "making a better world" through model schools. I was not surprised to learn that Macdonald had also been an early childhood educator and laboratory school director or to read that

Macdonald's proposed curriculum for young children differed markedly from traditional early childhood curriculum proposals of the time. While he was concerned with the whole child, and while his proposal is rooted in a concern for development, the strongest theme that recurs in every part of the program and gives it conceptual integrity is the deep concern for the ethical and moral in even the earliest forms of education for children (Spodek, 1985, p. 57).

This insistence on ethics as the foundation for all theorizing about development and education is perhaps the most defining characteristic of his legacy.

My relationships with young children inspired a profound respect for their ways of knowing. I felt that I was a learner as much as a teacher as I not only observed but experienced their enormous capacity to imagine, to wonder, to believe, to hope, to trust, and to enter wholly into the experience of living. I wrote in my journal during my first year of teaching: "It's a cliché, but it's true. Being with little children brings honesty, simplicity, joy and energy. That's the way they are—and they bring out the hidden part in me that is still that way." Later I would come to realize that what I was seeking—and finding—during those years was the experience of *being* embodied in the beings of children. As I came to understand young children more profoundly, as my center touched their centers, I became convinced that prevailing developmental theories were lacking a fundamental understanding of the nature of childhood, specifically its spiritual and ethical dimensions, and I felt "called" to assist in revisioning these theories. While I had encountered many relevant and insightful writings in this area, it was Macdonald's transcendental developmental article that galvanized my thinking.

Macdonald proposed his developmental vision in response to Kohlberg and Mayer's (1972) "Development as an Aim of Education" in which they define three main streams of thought in Western educational ideology, each based on a particular psychological theory of human development: *cultural transmission,* rooted in behaviorism; *romantic,* related to psychoanalytic approaches, and *progressivism,* based on cognitive developmentalism. They argue that cognitive development is the most appropriate aim for educational theory and practice. Development consists of progression through ordered, relatively invariant stages, and the goal of education is the attainment of "higher" stages of thinking and behaving that are more valuable than less developed ones.

Developmentalism, based on the assumption of progress and evolution through predictable, sequential, increasingly complex, and therefore "better" stages can be seen as the "cultural symbolic" of modernity. Macdonald breaks through the conceptual traps inherent in cognitive developmentalism and suggests a fourth ideology, the *radical,* before proposing the transcendental developmental ideology. While both the developmental and the radical models are dialectical, the radical dialectic is weighted on the side of social and political, rather than cognitive structures. Macdonald embraces the radical critique that developmental models are bound and blinded by the hierarchical dominance and submission patterns inherent in the culture itself. As he explains more fully in a later paper:
development involves the concept of an elite group (e.g., mature vs. immature or educated vs. ignorant) that knows the direction "development" must take and how to guide this process. These directions and processes are not always clear to developers and never known to the developee (since they are immature or ignorant by definition) (Macdonald, 1977, p. 143).
Here he calls into question the whole notion of stage theory and anticipates the more specific critiques of the racism, classism and sexism inherent in cognitive developmentalism that would follow.

While the historical and cultural analysis of the radical critique is of enormous value to him, Macdonald feels that it does not go far enough in comprehending or explaining contemporary culture. Using McLuhan's metaphor that "we are traveling down a superhighway at faster and faster speeds looking out the rearview mirror" (Macdonald, 1974, p.89). Macdonald concludes that while the radical view is not, like Kohlberg and Mayer's ideologies, "over the hill," still, it is in the rearview mirror. This is largely due to the fact that it is based on the same objectivist linear rationality and materialistic worldview as the liberal social sciences it attempts to critique. In other words, it is based on calculative, rather than meditative thinking. "What does a fish know about the water in which he swims all of his life?" Macdonald (1981) quotes Einstein as he warns curriculum theorists about the dangers of their overemphasis on rationality and their inability to imagine an alternative consciousness.

Thus, the transcendental developmental ideology is born of the recognition of a meditative mode of consciousness underlying rationality. Macdonald deems this ideology necessary because of his sense of the inadequacy of explanations of the source of human values in the other ideologies-- our biological nature, conditioning from the environment, or cognitive reflection on experience. These simply cannot account for his sense that values stem from our deepest tacit, intuitive experiences of being, from "sounding the depths of our inner selves" (Macdonald, 1974, p.96).

In a transcendental ideology, development--no longer narrowly construed along hierarchical stages or bound by the limits of the rational mind--proceeds from a metaphorical "dual dialectic." The first dialectic operates between the outer world and the rational mind, as in both the cognitive developmental and the radical perspectives, but without the bias of either, with inner cognitive structures and outer social constructions equally emphasized. A second dialectic results from the relationship between "inner self" and rational mind. Macdonald doesn't strictly define the inner self; rather, he understands it as a hypothetical construct which embraces other theories, including Marcuse's aesthetic rationality, Polyani's tacit knowing, Freud's pre-and unconscious emotional thinking, Jung's individuation process, and James' mystical understanding. Although he doesn't directly suggest it, he seems to be implying *layers* of consciousness

proceeding from explicit rationality to ground of being. Positing ground of being as ground of development is Macdonald's radical act of faith based on meditative, rather than calculative thinking. It catapults developmental psychology from a narrow, positivistic paradigm and allows us to reclaim spiritual dimensions of being muted by modernism but celebrated by most cultures throughout history.

Macdonald advises that future psychological developmental theory, if it is to be useful, must be grounded in being and utilize personal, phenomenological methods of investigation. He suggests both Jung and James as possible models for this approach. He tells us that Jung never developed a specific theory of child development -- and neither did James or Macdonald himself. Delineating the contours of a theory of child development which respects the socially conditioned, cognitively constructed, and ethical and spiritual dimensions of child development is a task which I feel that I inherited from Jim Macdonald. I have come to believe that development is best understood as an inherently paradoxical process, uniting the immanent and transcendent dimensions of being.

Meditation on Transcendental

JM Thus, knowledge is not simply things and relationships that are real in the outer world and waiting to be discovered, but it is a process of personalizing the outer world through the inner potential of the human being as it interacts with outer reality.

JR Daylight, full of small dancing particles
and the one great turning, our souls
are dancing with you, without feet, they dance
Can you see them as I whisper in your ear?

JM In a way one might say, at least in relation to the subatomic or supergalactic dimension, that physicists have literally gone out of their senses. . . when we get down to the atomic level, the objective world of space and time no longer exists. . . further, matter as entity behaves as waves or particles, but not on mutually exclusive terms. . .

To transcend is to rise above or go beyond the limits of ordinary experience or material existence. Although Macdonald doesn't directly discuss the meaning of transcendental, he does talk about "transcendental tachyons"—negative energy particles traveling backward in time—to illustrate the fantastic potential of the emerging physics: He quotes the physicist Sir James Jean: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine." The point he is making is a relatively familiar one now. But in the early 1970's, the idea that modern physics—including quantum theory and relativity theory—on some level shares a similar worldview to that of mystics across traditions and eras was being explored by only the most visionary thinkers. God as ground of being can be seen as the quantum wave-like patterns of probabilities or interconnectedness existing simultaneously in particular forms.

However, a transcendental world view is also associated with separations between matter, mind and spirit, leading to hierarchical valuing. The classical scholar repudiated the body for the world of the mind while the classical mystic headed for the mountaintop, leaving behind both body and mind. Patriarchal culture is based on an understanding of transcendence that results in valuing mind over body, heaven over earth, culture over nature, and rationality over emotions, imagination and intuition. Obviously, Macdonald didn't have this view of transcendence in mind when he named the ideology. Transcendence contrasts with *immanence*, implying presence in ordinary experience and material existence—a non-hierarchical consciousness which perceives spirit within all times and spaces of life. Earth, nature, the body, feelings, imagination, intuition are all seen as holy aspects of a holistic world. Macdonald's intention in positing a transcendental ideology was to overcome dualities, to center simultaneously in self and world. His choice of words stemmed from his insistence on going beyond the obvious, breaking through the limitations of linear rationality in order to intuit a future in which the mystical would unite with the seemingly mundane, and the ways we live together would become ever more true, good and beautiful.

Macdonald's discussion of transcendence in a later article made it clear that his definition embraced simultaneous movement in both "inner" implicit and "outer" explicit directions: "We are asking persons to transcend the limitations of their social conditioning and to venture beyond by seeing and choosing new possibilities…we by our very nature are drawn toward transcending our present state" (Macdonald, 1981, p. 159). This transcendence is embedded in our very being and doesn't have to be externally imposed. Freeing our rational minds from cultural embeddedness allows us to experience a natural transcendence from which new cognitive and social structures may emerge.

I lived for nearly a decade of my life in intentional communities, in the belief that I was forging a way of living that would bridge transcendence and immanence, bringing "heaven to earth." This period of my life could be seen as "stereotypical sixties" (although it spanned the late seventies and early eighties), based on that combination of youthful idealism, political innocence and hunger for inner experience that many nineties reassessments have denounced as naïve forms of individualistic egoism. Yet the two communities and the two associated alternative schools I helped to found still exist, although few of the original members remain. All

of these organizations have served as models for others, including public schools. And the lessons I learned about living in community--about mediating the tensions between individual fulfillment and smooth group functioning and about my psyche's particular kinds of resistance to moderating personal desires for the common good—have carried over into every aspect of my life.

Intense "inner experiences" during those years shaped the outer forms. The communities were intentionally *spiritual*, types of inter-religious, mystical schools attempting to integrate science with spirit, attracting people of all religious affiliations, as well as some who were stridently anti-religious. Picture a hybrid of Greek philosophical school, hippy commune, suburban neighborhood and medieval monastery complete with gardens and cottage industries, located in a historical Shaker community. Living and working arrangements varied, but ostensibly we were all there to uncover the roots of consciousness, to see God or Goddess face to face. And the point is that sometimes this seemed to happen, and afterwards, nothing would ever be the same. . . "transcendental" visions both solidified and destabilized community living. The ongoing rhythm of "permanence and flux" ascribed by Whitehead to all living structures accelerated as we unconsciously created and then attempted to demolish the hierarchical social structures embedded in our psyches.

My own inner adventures in the realms of angels and of dreams fulfilled my childhood intuition that we are so much more than what we seem to be. Indeed, both particle and wave, we simultaneously inhabit many worlds and the ways in which we limit the vastness of our being even as we dishonor its particularity is both comic and tragic. I carried this knowledge from community to doctoral program, hoping there would be a place for it in the wider educational world. And James Macdonald understood. However, he anticipated the controversies that would result from centering a developmental and educational theory in the realms of religion and theology:
It is important we do not turn away from examining the idea of centering simply because it is connected with spirituality. This term simply is the best one available in the attempt to refocus our fundamental educational concerns, even though is fraught with heavy cultural biases in our society" (Macdonald, 1974, p. 105).

Those cultural biases appear from all segments of the social/political perspective: conservatives who want to restrict the moral and religious to their definitions of it, traditional academics who object to "non-scientific" theories about human beings, liberal educators who fear a setback for progressive ideals muddied with mysticism, radical political theorists who continue to see religion as "the opiate of the masses" and bemoan the loss of rationality of "new age" romantic idealists, and social theorists who equate the positing of a ground of being with the violence associated with modernist hierarchies based on transcendental metaphysical world views. Yet, Macdonald urges me to hold my ground, hoping that curriculum theorizing will become "a prayerful act," an act of moral will based on religious faith (Macdonald,1981, p. 181). He wants me to believe in the transcendental possibilities embodied in the seemingly ordinary as I try to make a better world.

Meditation on Ideology

JM Centering takes place within the culture of the individual, and the process of centering utilizes the data of an individual's culture, what he explicitly knows through social praxis. The variety of religions, mystics, spiritualists and other manifestations found throughout history fundamentally tells us that inner resources and strengths can be made available and used but not what verbal form or perceptual reality this potential takes.

JR We are the mirror and the face in it.
We are tasting the taste this minute of eternity.
We are pain and what cures pain, both.
We are the sweet cold water and the jar that pours.

JM I do not believe that there is any fundamental contradiction in the long run between those theorists who advocate a personal change position and those who advocate a social change orientation in terms of changing consciousness towards a liberating praxis.

Ideology is "visionary theorizing" or "a systematic body of concepts of an individual, group, culture or political body." The postmodern mind sees all theories as historically situated and only relatively true. Human beings seem to be structured to search for meaning by finding or constructing patterns which they then tend to reify as fixed ideologies. However, individuals and cultures are also able to surrender meaning patterns that are no longer conducive to "living well," (whatever that may mean to the individual or group) and to restructure them in a more viable form. According to chaos theory, all of life fluctuates between periods of stable structure and periods of flux in which they either die or reconfigure themselves in more coherent, complex forms. In other words, it may be as necessary to surrender ideologies and form new ones as it is to have them. Macdonald emphasized that changes in culture, fresh readings of culture, and new scientific theories demand new ideologies, which must in turn give way to others. Obviously, this is a dialectical process: ideologies change as culture changes and cultures change as ideologies change. Thus, a liberating praxis begins in both places.

After finishing the course work for my doctoral degree, I moved to Vermont and began as a college professor working extensively with teachers. I was surprised to discover how open to change many teachers and institutions seemed to be. Schools were being "detracked;" short instruction periods were giving way to longer blocks; multi-age groupings and cooperative groups were forming; multiple intelligences were being honored; students were making choices and moving more freely; parents and communities were getting involved; teachers were becoming facilitators and were increasingly engaging in creating curriculum and governing schools. While all of these innovations could be seen as more technical than ideological, based on current fads rather than a deep underlying belief structure, I sensed real liberatory potential. Educators demonstrated genuine concern for individual students, especially those whose class, gender, race or disability was seen as a liability, and many believed in the possibility of impacting social structures through education.

Although my work took many forms, one particularly effective way of teaching utilized Macdonald's five ideologies. Most teachers had never studied curriculum theory and found this "big picture" enlightening. From their own experiences they could easily identify the cultural transmission as the dominant educational paradigm, with a dip into the romantic in the sixties and seventies, returning to the transmission but now seeming to evolve towards the cognitive developmental. Although some wanted to stop there, most were intrigued by the possibilities offered by the radical and transcendental perspectives. I observed much flux and reconfiguration of ideologies as they questioned, discussed, argued, read further, and questioned more. As ideologies changed, so did classroom and school practice, to the degree that existing systems allowed. When they didn't, the inevitable frustration and depression emerged, but for the most part, these were encouraging years.

During the last several years, school change efforts have increasingly utilized technology, a trend I view with mixed reactions. I turn to Macdonald who is at his most visionary when he says,
It is my personal myth that today's technology is yesterday's magic. Further, it is my intuitive feeling that technology is in effect an externalization of the hidden consciousness of human potential…humanity will eventually transcend technology by turning inward, the only viable alternative that allows a human being to continue to experience oneself in the world as a creative and vital element" (Macdonald, 1974, p. 91).
He is describing the shift from a premodern participatory consciousness in which symbols and myths were perceived as living magic, actively participating in the reality they represented, to a modern materialistic consciousness, based on objectivist rationality expressed in technological control of nature. The ever more fantastic and magical nature of technological advances seem to express the extraordinary power of spiritual self turned inside out.

And what next? The "turning inward" that Macdonald predicts for the postmodern world is occurring on several levels. Intellectual investigations of interior and qualitative dimensions occupy postmodern academics. Deconstructive postmodernism offers freedom through ideological disembedding, an aspect of transcendence that Macdonald appreciated: But the destruction of conceptual reality without the ground of being offered by a spiritual and moral perspective is also the destruction of values and spirit and this was a trend that concerned him:
There is one sense in which we might as well close up shop in curriculum…. This is if one fully believes that all values are relative and that all dominance of value is a result of the strong and elite (whomever they may be) having the political and social power in their hands to impose values…In its most general form, the pronouncement of value relativity is that 'God is dead" (Macdonald, 1977, p. 145).
As we have seen, Macdonald embodied the opposite: "In fact, 'God' is very much alive" (Macdonald, 1977, p, 145). This declaration anticipated what has become a very popular and public interest in moral and spiritual issues, another direction that the "turning inward" is taking.

Despite the example and encouragement of Macdonald and other mentors, I hesitated to "come out of the closet" about my own deep engagement with spiritual dimensions of development and education. I was certainly comfortable uncovering the moral issues implicit in rigid positivistic modes of curriculum and instruction and introducing teachers to other theorists' moral and spiritual perspectives. However, I feared that an explicit focus on spirituality might deflect attention from issues of justice and equity, as well as serve as a lightning rod for the anger of conservative community members. However, over time, I began to feel uncomfortable with my reticence, as if I were withholding my being from those I cared for deeply. This coincided with the growing public focus on spirituality, and it was really teachers themselves who urged me to talk personally. As we became more engaged, they began to share their own beliefs about the nature of being, and they asked me questions about mine. Eventually I began to be asked to speak in classes and at conferences on this topic. At a recent institute for middle school educators, the room filled quickly and the earnest and often poignant discussion about the often unmet moral and spiritual needs of early adolescents lasted for hours beyond the scheduled time, with James Macdonald as resident wizard.

The topic of spirituality is even beginning to interest more postmodern academics. . Macdonald understood that one of the key issues in this avenue of postmodern scholarship

would be rectifying the seemingly absolute nature of religious belief with the relativity of social theory, and Macdonald's God was very much a co-creating process God: *By God… I am referring to the source or ground of the religious impulse and spirit that pervades human history and activity.…humanity is not created in God's image, but is busily in the process of creating itself in the image of 'God"* (Macdonald, 1977, p.145).
(And, I would add, co-creating God in the image of itself.) In this he anticipates constructivist postmodernism, a union of process science and process theology, reuniting the secular and the sacred, science and values, fact and imagination, the objective and the subjective. By positing a ground of being as the source of not only spirit and values, but also the rational mind which continually constructs and deconstructs ideologies, Macdonald relativizes postmodern relativity.

Meditation on Education

JM As a teacher at the University, after many frustrating years, I have realized that if one wishes to influence others' ideas and perceptions, one must literally embody these ideas and perspectives. . .what we must ask ourselves then is to really profess, to reveal and justify from our own perspectives what we value and believe.

JR The minute I'm disappointed, I feel encouraged
When I'm ruined, I'm healed
When I'm quiet and solid as the ground, then I talk
The low tones of thunder for everyone.

JM The task of both student and teacher in such a process is the development of their own centering through contact with culture and society, bringing as much of their whole selves as they can to bear upon the process. There is no definable set of techniques or rules or of carefully defined teaching roles. It is primarily a willingness to "let go" and to immerse oneself in the process of living with others in a creative and spontaneous manner, having faith in ourselves, others, and the culture we exist in as a medium for developing our own centering.

JR There is a light seed grain inside.
You fill it with yourself or it dies.
I'm caught in this curling energy. Your hair!
Whoever's calm and sensible is insane.

Macdonald (1974) tells us that "the aim of education should be a centering of the person in the world" (p.104). By this he means that all "inner" centering takes place in the context of living in the world while creating community with others. Understanding educating as "leading out" and educator as "one who leads out" is clearly appropriate in terms of the concept of centering. Perhaps the most significant responsibility of the transcendental developmental educator is to honor the inherently transcendent (spiritual and ethical) nature of each of our students. However, Macdonald is so emphatic that this not be mistaken for a romantic belief about natural unfolding that he ends the article with a plea that teachers continually seek to understand the deepest longings of their students, consciously engaging with them in a profound lifetime process. Elsewhere he speaks of this engagement as not only understanding students but assisting in uprooting their embedded ideologies and offering new liberating knowledge and perspectives. He states in no uncertain terms that this way of educating is as relevant to the "disciplines" as anything else, and he demonstrates how even such a "mundane" discipline as mathematics can be taught from a centering perspective.

Macdonald suggests that the educational objectives of a transcendental ideology are processes individualized for each student, not ends in themselves, but rather means to centering. The processes that he recommends focus on religious experiences; meditative thinking; perceptual experiences; imagination; sensitivity to other people; ecological awareness; meaningful knowledge acquisition; meaning making based on all aspects of patterning, especially artistic forms; play and playful experiences; and a wide range of physical activities. All of these processes happen in the wider context of building community and creating a more ethical world. The objectives are continually reexamined in the context of the question: Are these necessary for the long-range development of the centering process?

Vermont has recently developed its own set of outcomes, or standards, intended for all students, and much of the state educational community is caught up in the fervor of "integrating the standards." These are largely process standards, sequenced by developmental stage and thoroughly rooted in the cognitive developmental ideology. They have been cleansed of any mention of spirituality, morals or ethics, although it is not difficult to ascribe a liberal ethical stance to them, as conservatives are inclined to do. We have been caught in our own version of "the backlash," with parent and community groups protesting the "dumbing down" of public schools.

While many of the educators I work with are committed to school change based on liberating ideologies, they often stifle their instincts and actions in anticipation of negative parent and community reaction. In the best situations, this is leading to lively and appropriate community engagement in local public schools. But in others, teachers are becoming increasingly discouraged as communication breaks down and battle lines are formed. In this political climate, the Vermont standards are increasingly seen as the best possible

compromise: standards without standardization, something for everyone.

Although I appreciate this argument, I am still left with a troubled sense that we are not moving in a transformational direction--that we are, once again, looking in the rearview mirror. Although process standards can be a useful tool, and I hope that the Vermont version will contribute to a more truly democratic system of education, I worry that they will derail deep restructuring by framing curriculum development as a technical activity by becoming unexamined ends in themselves, rather than possibilities for centering. Educational discussions often focus more on standards than on students, and curriculum development becomes more a technical than a reflective process. I am becoming increasingly silent in public education discussions, concerned that my critique would damage fragile alliances.

I turn once again to James Macdonald, who returns me again and again to *being*. It is time to dive deeper into my own being, to the source of my knowing and valuing. From this place I draw courage to be more authentic by confronting my fears and overcoming them, by "letting go" and allowing *being* to work through me. I can only reach the center of others through my own centering. Being-to-being communion is the most direct means of escape from the hierarchical implications of technical rationality underlying all modernist educational institutions. Macdonald (1981) reminds me of "a need for us as curriculum teachers and workers to be in the process of continuous liberating growth ourselves, and to facilitate personal growth in those we work with through our caring for them as actual persons" (p.163). This willingness to engage honestly in self-discovery and change in community with others, in a mutual process of centering, is sometimes called spiritual growth. I renew my faith in myself, in others, and in the transformational potential of culture so that I can once again become a real professor, one who professes faith.

Epilogue

Someone went to a Sufi with a question. He said: "I have been puzzling for many years and reading books, and I have not been able to find a definite answer. Tell me, what happens after death?" The Sufi said: "Please ask this question of someone who will die. I am going to live" (Khan, 1980, p. 14)

James Macdonald lives on in my life in many ways: in his writings, in the presence and work of those he influenced, and in the way his life impacted all of life. We are continually recreating ourselves and our worlds as we wrestle with the purpose and meaning of living. and as we do, we change the nature of existence. I have no doubt that the unique reconfiguration that was and is James Macdonald makes it a better place.

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Acknowledgement

Aostre Johnson, Ed.D. is Professor of Education Emeritus at Saint Michael's College, Vermont, where she directed the curriculum master's degree concentration, founded an integrating the arts into education master's degree concentration and taught courses on child and adolescent development, early childhood education, curriculum foundations and development, holistic education, spiritual education, and mindfulness education. She has published articles and co-edited several books relating to spiritual, contemplative, religious and creative development and education. Internationally, she has taught human development in Kenya, studied and lectured on contemplative education in Irish Schools on a Fulbright award, and taught holistic and contemplative education courses at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. She previously founded, directed and taught in holistic children's schools in Massachusetts, New York and North Carolina. She has been a student of and in various spiritual and religious traditions for many decades. She is currently working on a book, *Something More: Education for Spiritual Development in A Post-Secular Time.*