

David Letterman's Guide to Hope and Wholeness Present Past and Future in 10 Easy Flashcards

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Abstract

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The Present

1. The Baby Zoomers—Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai most prominently, but really many, many of our students who are mature, wise global citizens, FAR more, certainly, than I was at their age.

2. Relatedly, it has never been clearer in human history that, “We need to [learn to] love one another [and the Earth] or die” (W.H. Auden, “September 1, 1939”).

3. The ragers are raging because at some level they know that their way of thinking and being is dying. Authoritarians and fundamentalists are desperate for power precisely because they know their power over the human psyche and the Earth is finally coming to a historically decisive end. THAT is what they are REALLY raging at. They are, to twist a phrase of Dylan Thomas’s, all “raging into the dying of THEIR FALSE light,” and hence tragically and pathetically self-blinded both to clear present facts and from seeing any NEW lights arising in the world.

4. People are insisting on the RIGHT to wholeness. No one anymore is settling for psychic enslavement. Holism is thus being made deeply personal and deeply political through movements of mutual recognition and healing. Black Lives

Matter and #metoo are, above all else, movements for the holistic social empathy that is the emotive underpinning of deep, real democracy.

The Past

5. For 95% of human history, ALL education was holistic, as we can see in all remaining Indigenous cultures. So, though decolonizing education is hard, re-Indigenizing it is nothing more than tapping into intuitions we all still have.

6. Relatedly, Chilean evolutionary theorist Humberto Maturana, in his *The Origin of Humanness in the Biology of Love*, says that our rightful name as a species is *homo sapiens amans*, “the beings of languaging loving”—or, as futurist Rutger Bregman puts it, “homo puppy,” not “homo Big Bad Wolf” as both the small and large tyrants among us collectively assume.

7. Even more relatedly, holistic, playful loving is still fairly natural for most children. According to feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan, in *Why Patriarchy Persists* (with Naomi Snider) and elsewhere, it is modern culture’s teaching of boys at around age 6 to dissociate themselves from their feelings and girls around age 12 to dissociate themselves from their thoughts that MOST denatures us. What this means is that

we ALL have recollections of what a deeply feeling and deeply thoughtful democracy might mean for the HAPPINESS of all through recollections of our early childhoods, and many of us from much later on as well.

The Future

8. Liberal culture, even at the highest levels, is starting to become less materialistic and empirical and more holistic and transcendental. We are starting to understand that “we are in a battle for the soul of democracy” (Biden, 2000) and that a greening of human consciousness—a deepening of the American Dream, not just an expansion of it—must be made the heart of a Global Green New Deal.

9. We are starting to understand that we devolved from “homo puppy” to “homo Trumpy” not in 2016 but quite a long time ago, and that what we have called “civilization” for the past 6000 years is actually mostly a series of horrors and physical and psychic enslavements (Against the Grain, Scott, 2017). But, depressing as this is at one level, in another deeper level, it frees us to collectively evolve from our nature as LOCALLY beneficent homo sapiens amans into a species of GLOBALLY beneficent homo sapiens amans mundibus: lovers of the WORLD as a WHOLE with world-embracing compassion, homo BUDDHA, naïve and puppy-like, yet fully and soberly awake to the world’s need for active healing at many, many different levels.

10. This re-creation has recently been named (Albrecht, 2015) the conversion of humanity and the Earth together from the current Anthropocene Age of human domination to a future SYMBIOCENE_ AGE in which attunement with ourselves, others, and the Earth is the overriding goal of education and social and political life. Today, in other words, is like the years 1938-1941 were regarding the growing public perception of the need to eliminate political fascism from the world for the world to be even rudimentarily safe for democracy: of gradual mobilization against a both physical and psychic holocaust that most are slow to perceive the need for, but once it is clearly generally seen—as climate holocaust now is nightly on the news—can galvanize us to newly unified life. If, as the African saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child,” we can now see it takes a global holocaust to raise our species to act hopefully toward the formation of a global village of holism—and a new Symbiocene Age to encompass and dispel the many horrors and deformations of the Frankenstein-like Anthropocene Age that we are now FINALLY BEGINNING to fully face together!

Acknowledgement

Bruce Novak has devoted his life to making holistic education the democratic norm, and the heart of a deepened democratic life. He helped lead the Holistic Education SIG of the American Educational Research Association for nine years, co-edited the Routledge International Handbook of Holistic Education (2019) with Jack Miller and others, co-wrote (with Jeffrey D. Wilhelm) Teaching Literacy for Love and Wisdom: Being the Book and Being the Change (Teachers College, the National Writing Project, and the National Council of Teachers of English, 2011), and won a 2013 University-Wide Teaching Award at Indiana University of Pennsylvania for bringing the holistic pedagogies of that book to life. Currently he is working on getting "English" renamed as "Soulful Studies" and writing The Opening of the American Heart: The Great Educational Awakening on the Horizon of Democratic Life.