*On Dialogue, Identity, and Place: A Conversation on Meditative Inquiry**

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Abstract

In this conversation, Dr. William Pinar and Dr. Ashwani Kumar explore Kumar's thoughts on meditative inquiry and how it has informed his teaching, research, musical journey, and life in general. Guided by Pinar's questions, the authors reflect on a variety of broad themes. They discuss how meditative inquiry relates to holistic education, particularly as described by Jack Miller, and with Pinar's celebrated concept of *currere*. They delve into Kumar's ongoing meditative inquiry into Indian classical music through teaching, learning, and performing. Throughout the conversation, they highlight the significance of human subjectivity, identity, and the role of stillness in the human experience, and implicitly and expressly critique prevalent neoliberal models of education. Pinar prompts Kumar to share his thoughts on teaching and learning as an expression of who we are. Kumar notes the importance of asking students to explore their true purpose while acknowledging the value of Pinar's concept of autobiographical inquiry. They conclude that meditative inquiry is a sensibility that exists as more than a method or a practice – that it extends to the presence of *being*. In closing, Kumar affirms that he is continuing to deepen his understanding of meditative inquiry and shares his plan to write about it accessibly and for broader audiences.

**This paper presents a transcribed and slightly edited version of the conversation that took place between Ashwani Kumar and William Pinar at Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research: A Free International Online Conference. The full video of this conversation is available at:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGSs0KIA5Uk&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEomgiYYmBJKj1nvD1oGBwaf&index=4&t=2s

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Ashwani Kumar: I would like to welcome my dear mentor and teacher, William Pinar, to this conversation. Bill was my supervisor during my doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia from 2007–11 and he has been a very wonderful, caring, and supportive mentor since then. In fact, I started developing the idea of meditative inquiry more formally and conceptually during my doctoral program, which Bill supported in many ways, including asking difficult questions. So, Bill, thank you so much for taking the time to do this conversation with me, and also for writing such a wonderful and panoramic Foreword to the edited collection, *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research*: *Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts* (Kumar, 2022). It is so wonderful to have you here. Thank you.

William Pinar: Well, thank you so much, Ashwani. It is very nice to see you, too. It was my privilege to work with you as your supervisor and to watch your work since. To prompt our conversation, I composed several questions, and we can veer from them as you wish.

So, to start, Ashwani, what struck me about this invaluable meditative inquiry collection is the significance of dialogue with oneself as well as with others. You write that "in my life, dialogue has opened the door for learning and understanding" characterizing "creative and spiritual force that has transformed me deeply". Dialogue has taught you, you continue, to "listen and observe", helping you to "appreciate silence…become more patient, and caring". Dialogue has also taught you "to deepen [your] relationship with students and colleagues." You conclude that "dialogue is my way of life, my way of being" (Kumar, 2022, pp. 289-290). Allow me to ask, was that always the case? Were there certain relationships with people, with ideas, with events that alerted you to the transformational potential of authentic dialogue? Or was this insight an incremental, even imperceptible, process?

Kumar: That is such a wonderful question, Bill. Dialogue, definitely, I would say, is very much part of my being. One of the reasons why dialogue became so central to my life could be the oral culture of India. There is a lot of emphasis on conversation, and that could range from chitchat to very deep conversations, so, I think that could be one of the sources. There are many other sources that come to my mind when I reflect on your question.

I had a couple of friends in India, and we kind of began our journey into meditation together. I remember reading books on meditation and talking for hours and hours with my friends. I have mentioned this in my writings before (e.g., see Kumar, 2013; Kumar & Downey, 2018). When I was growing up, the power would go a lot, especially in the evenings. I remember having studied for so many of my exams under a lamp or gaslight. But that time, when the power was out, also allowed for me and my friends to just wander into the streets, constantly asking questions about life. What is life? What is our purpose? What is meditation? What does it do to our being? And there were many other mundane and so-called spiritual questions we explored. So, I would say that was one entry point into a dialogical way of being.

Another entry point was my teacher who I have mentioned to you before, K. K. Mojumdar, to whom I dedicated my second book, along with you, *Curriculum in International Contexts*: *Understanding Ideological, Colonial, and Neoliberal Influences* (Kumar, 2019). When I met

Dr. Mojumdar, it was a very amazing experience because he was a professor who would come to the class with a very open mind. No outcomes were written on the blackboard to be met, just an open conversation. I really enjoyed that interaction; I had one-on-one interactions with him for about 10 years. When I came upon Krishnamurti, I really loved his conversations with physicist David Bohm, and many other philosophers (e.g., see Krishnamurti & Andersen, 200; Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985). And of course, your idea of *complicated conversation* (Pinar, 2019) has also influenced my thinking about dialogue. When I met you as your doctoral student, I could see how authentic dialogue unfolds in the context of academia. I would say these are some of the entry points that have really influenced my thinking. So, it has been organically developed—it was present in the culture of India, and then it organically developed and deepened over a period of time.

Pinar: Well, thank you, Ashwani. I think you must have been a very remarkable young fellow, along with your friends. When the lights go out, I am not sure most young boys talk about spiritual questions – interesting and impressive to hear that. And you kindly cite a number of sources for your interest, and I certainly want to acknowledge mine, which is Paulo Freire, and his concept of *dialogical encounter* (Freire, 1973).

Well, I would like to ask you about holistic education. What role do you think meditative inquiry can play in the field of holistic education, so definitively defined by John P. Miller?

Kumar: Thank you so much, Bill, for your question. And yes, Paulo Freire has been one of the formative figures for me too. In fact, in my master's thesis, I wrote about how Paulo Freire can contribute to a more critical and global-minded citizenship education, and I connected his work to the work of Krishnamurti. So, thank you for reminding me of Freire.

As far as holistic education is concerned, you know, one of the keynote panellists in the morning session of this conference was Jack Miller. In his address, he reflected on his interest in Eastern philosophies and how that helped him develop or conceptualize the field of holistic education. So, I would like to note a few things before I can say what role meditative inquiry can play in the field of holistic education, since there are a lot of folks attending this conference who may not work in the field of education. Holistic education considers the whole human being; not just their cognitive development but the development of their whole being. Often, we see that education tends to be pretty instrumentalist, and that it only emphasizes cognitive efficiency, not even cognitive exploration but efficiency. Holistic education, as a movement, grew in the 1970s and 80s. Based on the human potential movement and the humanistic psychology movement, it questioned the mechanistic and data-driven nature of education (Kumar & Downey, 2018; Miller et al., 2018). People like Jack Miller (1988), Ron Miller (1997), and Paulo Freire (1973) are considered central figures for holistic educators developing this field of holistic education.

More broadly speaking, I would say holistic education itself precedes formal notions of holistic education. Indigenous education processes from all over the world are very holistic in nature; they are connected to nature, and they do not overemphasize cognitive learning at the expense of all other aspects of our being. Education is not just an instrumental process of getting a job. Similarly, I would say people like Krishnamurti

(1953), Rabindranath Tagore (see Bhattachrya, 2014), and many, many more educators have contributed to the development of holistic education.

Meditative inquiry, I would say, is something that draws upon holistic education principles and contributes to them in a reciprocal fashion. I feel that the key role that meditative inquiry can play is to emphasize the importance of very deep self-inquiry in the educational experience. It is not a simple self-inquiry, a form of reflection on practice to improve your teaching. It is a very deep exploration of yourself; the deeper you go, the deeper you see the complexity of the self and its relationship to social structures. I would say that that could be one of the roles that meditative inquiry can play in deepening this deeper exploration of the self.

Pinar: Well, speaking of self-inquiry, in my Foreword to the meditative inquiry edited collection, I call *currere* and meditative inquiry conceptual cousins. As you depicted in your groundbreaking 2013 book *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry*, meditative inquiry is traceable to Krishnamurti and James B. Macdonald. The method of *currere* derives from Freud and Sartre, rather different sources, although I would also list Macdonald's work as importantly informing my own. What makes them related, I think, is that each encourages a meditative way of working from within oneself. Do you think "cousin" was an apt metaphor? How would you describe the relationship between the *currere* and meditative inquiry?

Kumar: Thank you, Bill. That is a wonderful question. Yes, I also pondered upon this when I saw that remark in your Foreword, and I definitely think and feel privileged to know that you would consider meditative inquiry close to your *currere*. I definitely feel that they are conceptual cousins. For those of you in the audience who are new to the idea of *currere*, I would like to underscore that *currere* (2019) is one of Bill's major contributions to the field of curriculum studies, where the notion of curriculum, instead of being seen as a noun, is seen as a verb—something that is experiential and interactive, rather than something static that is imposed on teachers and students by external authorities. I would say that *currere* was/is a revolutionary contribution to the field of education because it brought in with great force the idea of subjectivity—the significance of the human subject, and the significance of studying it. Similarly, meditative inquiry is also an approach that looks at your subjectivity and self in a very deep way. So, because of their focus, because of their purpose and their roots in a desire to understand oneself at a deeper level in relation to social structures, I would definitely say that makes them conceptually quite connected and integrated.

Pinar: Well, I am heartened by your reply. Thank you very much, Ashwani. I think of identity as the interface between the subjective and the social, although, while the two domains are distinguishable, they are of course also intertwined. Identity can be an authentic expression of subjectivity—and the culture that informs it—but identity can also be imposed by others, as in racial and gendered prejudice. How do you imagine meditative inquiry into identity?

Kumar: That is such a wonderful question, Bill, because I think the questions of identity and subjectivity are very important to me and my work. The way I see it, I think, as you described very clearly, identity and subjectivity are interconnected and they are both manifestations

of the self. So, I see identity as a more crystallized, socially constructed form of self, while subjectivity is a more fluid and dynamic form of self. The self is a very dynamic and fluid entity that manifests itself sometimes as identity and other times as subjectivity. Given meditative inquiry's focus on understanding the self,its complexities and structures, and the way it is constructed through social conditioning and personal engagement with that conditioning, understanding identity and subjectivity is central to meditative inquiry. There are a number of ways in which meditative inquiry can help us understand identity and subjectivity. One of the ways is when we pay deeper attention to ourselves; we can see how the self changes its movement, its appearances, or its manifestations when it presents itself as identity and when it becomes subjectivity. I think it can help us see more deeply the interplay between the two.

The other point that it can help us see is that while identity gives us some kind of certainty or a more crystallized form in the personal and social context, it can also be divisive, as you just mentioned in your remark. It can be problematic, it can be imposed on you, it can be a particular identity that you might want to resist, and it can also be something that can produce groupism or divisiveness among people. It is very clear, if you look at the way human beings have organized themselves, that there is a lot of division based on identity. So, it can help us see where identity becomes divisive and therefore leads to conflict and problems.

And one final thing, I would like to say that meditative inquiry poses the possibility of silence or the possibility of having a space in yourself where there is stillness. It is my understanding—nobody needs to agree with me on this—there could be a real possibility that the movement of identity and subjectivity can be quiet. One can feel so centered that this constant movement of subjectivity and identity is in abeyance. So, perhaps meditative inquiry can go into the silences that are free of both. That is something for us to experiment with.

Pinar: That is lovely. Thank you, Ashwani. Relatedly, as well as meditative inquiry revealing when identity becomes socially divisive, it also seems to me it could become socially cohering. That is, people who share an identity, who are in some way victimized by that identity which has been imposed on them by others and that misrepresents who they are, can join together in solidarity to struggle politically against institutionalized and other social expressions of prejudice. I am wondering, in those moments of stillness, if it is possible to get a glimpse of how one's identity has been formed by others, and not only those who are politically problematic. I am thinking about even our parents who have been so influential, as well as our teachers that you acknowledged, and if you think that meditative inquiry can, in some way, dissolve unwelcome elements of our identity, while at the same time affirming elements of our identity that are in sync with our inner selves and in sync with our aspirations, ethical and spiritual, and so on.

Kumar: That is a wonderful question, Bill. First, I would like to acknowledge that I definitely think solidarity is important; like-minded people, coming together and making a point, critiquing social injustices, oppressions, and other social problems. I definitely think that there is that side of identity. That if people identify with certain goals—life affirmative and transformative goals—then it can really provide a source of cohesion. The only thing that I would like to just add as a cautionary tale, is that, even when people

come together to kill other people, like when riots happen between religions, they also think that they are coming together for a noble goal. And that is why I think self-critique and self-questioning are very important.

Pinar: Well, let me say how much I appreciate that cautionary note. It is so very easy to aim for solidarity and to slip into a kind of mob, a mob phenomenon.

Kumar: I definitely think that the ideas of identity, subjectivity, and self are not as clear cut as people would have it; the sources and forces that inform it can be so varied and subtle as well as explicit, that it is not always easy to pin down. I can give you an example. Recently, one of my cousins passed away. It had been a while since we had been in touch. Once I moved to Canada, we lost touch a little bit; I would often see him when I went to India. But his death reminded me of how formative he was for me in my childhood. He acted as my elder brother because my older brother was living with one of my aunts, and I grew up in a single-parent family. This person was so sensitive and compassionate, that he— unbeknownst to me— even took it upon himself to protect me, to care for me. And I realized that he was also one of my first teachers who would take the trouble to teach me something. Even my music is inspired by him because, in childhood, I would see him play the harmonium—an instrument that I play now. So much of the music that I ended up loving was because I used to hear it with him. And in a very strange and pleasant way, his father is one of my music teachers. So, I definitely think that there are many things, forces, and sources that inform and form our identity, and many of them are very positive. But again, as I said, that cautionary note is very important, that through my meditative inquiry, I am inquiring into those sources and forces and not just taking it for granted that they are right.

Pinar: What a powerful story— the power of remembrance. That is what has always struck me. How easily forgotten are the people, the person, and events, and ideas that have coalesced in becoming who we are! And it seems to me, one of the most striking potentials of meditative inquiry is to lay bare and allow us to acknowledge those who have been so important to us as you just did. We carry them with us still, and I confess I feel almost everyday gratitude for those who helped me to understand the little bit that I have been able to understand.

Kumar: Can I just make a brief comment on what you just said, Bill? I think that is why it is important for the audience to know the significance of the work that you have done—talking about autobiographical inquiry, which I feel is central to meditative inquiry as well. Remembering and being grateful to those who have contributed to your life is so connected to the ancient culture as well—if you see Hinduism, if you see Indigenous cultures, if you see African cultures, this respect for ancestors who we do not know, who existed thousands of years ago, they are part and parcel of our existence. When I make tunes—I was just telling Adam Garry Podolski, the illustrator of the meditative inquiry collection, yesterday, who was at our home – that when I make a tune, I say it is my composition. It is mine, but that is a partial truth. The whole truth is, it is also informed by thousands of musicians who poured their souls and intentions into creating the kind of music that is informing me now, and also creating the possibility of adding something to it. So, absolutely. Thank you, Bill.

Pinar: What an important insight, Ashwani. I am reminded of Carl Jung's concept of the *collective unconscious*. A part of what he meant by that is how we are encoded, perhaps even genetically, with the gifts of our ancestors and their curses—we get all of them. And so, working through politically, socially, and economically, the catastrophes our ancestors have bequeathed us, is certainly part and parcel of the process of understanding the gifts they have given us, and how they seem to disappear. As you pointed out, we had thousands of years of ancestors and we cannot remember them all.

Well, let me ask you this, does meditative inquiry bring a meditative sensibility—and I am not sure you use that concept— to all areas of inquiry? Does meditative inquiry function like a *mantra*? If so, does the mantra—the area of inquiry—matter? For me, a series of specific areas have been activated, and activate a still more meditative sensibility than do others by providing passages to understanding issues that weigh on me.

In progressive education parlance, the concept of "student interest" gestures toward this animated relationship between subject matter and the human subject. There are those, for example, who report being "called" to teach and to study. So, my question is: do you think of meditative inquiry as enabling the student and the teacher to identify what area that person is called to study and teach?

Kumar: That is wonderful, Bill. I see two questions in your one question. I will try to split them into two, and then try to respond to them.

I really love your phrase "meditative sensibility", I think that is amazing. Because as soon as people listen to the word meditative inquiry or meditation, they immediately reduce it to a practice or a method, rather than a sensibility. When we invoke the idea of mantra, that brings to our mind the practice of repetition; we repeat something to get some result. Meditative sensibility and meditative inquiry question this instrumentalist tendency in our minds that I do this to get that. And I repeat it *a number* of times. You know there are people who count their meditation hours—that is one of the strangest things I have heard in my life—and then, based on that, they create a hierarchy in which this person is up to this level, this person is up to that level. To me, that is a really obnoxious way of looking at meditation. So, I would prefer your phrase, and call it meditative sensibility, because it is a sensibility that pervades all areas of your interaction. It is not that you are meditative, you have meditative sensibility, or you are inquiring meditatively when you are reading a book or sitting silently, but then you are breaking dishes when you are doing the dishes. I would say that this is a sense of being aware, a sense of inquiring, a sense of being present that pervades no matter what you are doing, but not as a systematic, methodical structure that you take to all fields of inquiry.

Somebody made a comment, "Is meditative inquiry a theory of everything?" No, not at all. That would mean that there is a theory, and that we have to apply it to all areas of human endeavour. It is a sensibility that permeates your way of being, your way of thinking, your way of feeling. Through that subtle process, it permeates everything you do, but not as an externally stipulated step-by-step structure. So that is my response to the first part of your question.

In response to the second part of your question, I definitely think so. Let me give you an example. I

always wanted to learn music in my childhood, but never had the opportunity to do so and never got the encouragement to do so. During my doctoral studies at UBC, I remember that I would sing a lot and one of my roommates told me, "You should take up singing." I said, "First I need to finish my PhD, and then maybe I will start learning." When I moved to Halifax, I became quite absorbed with this idea of learning music because another of my friends said "You sing the whole day, it is better that you learn music now!" So, I found a teacher and began learning music.

The reason I gave you this story is that when one is in the process of inquiry, not suppressing one's feelings and not suppressing one's thoughts, but as you said, laying them bare, then slowly, slowly—and this is my theory—slowly, slowly, what happens is that there is a lot of force and energy and intelligence that is within ourselves. The more we become free of these social constructions and social impositions, energy begins to make its appearance, intelligence begins to make its appearance, and it comes in a very subtle way and then it becomes powerful. That is how it happened to me, that it became so important for me that I could not push away learning music any longer. The music really had to come out, I really needed to do something about it. And then I began learning.

To answer your question, if one is genuinely serious about understanding themselves and genuinely serious about observing oneself, and paying attention to how one lives in relationship with other people, this very process of observation brings out what one's true callings are, or what one's true orientations are. However, again borrowing your way of thinking, meditative inquiry is not an instrumental process in which I will do it for *n* number of years and then suddenly I will have my calling, nor will I pay a guru $5,000 every year and then three years later I will have enlightenment. I just want to make it clear that it is more amorphous than it may appear, and most people do not like that, they want clear structure and methods and predictable outcomes. Life is hardly predictable!

Pinar: I so appreciate your comments on these topics, and in particular, I so appreciate your critique of application. Tetsuo Aoki, of course, the legendary Canadian curriculum theorist, was also quite critical of application, pointing out that it bifurcated what was really a unity of experience in action. And that when we teach, we of course utilize techniques from time to time, but more profoundly teaching is an experience, an expression of who we are. I worry that some enthusiasts of mindfulness see it as a kind of magic solution. You know, the matter of student interest, that is student attention, has plagued teachers since time immemorial and mindfulness almost seems like a way of rationalizing student attention, even in areas in which they are not particularly interested. The narration of your interest in music originating first in childhood then circumstances not allowing you to develop your talent and interest and it was when you moved to Halifax that you were able to manifest this interest and this talent and this love of yours. I am wondering, if one could think of that narration, that story, as an instance of how certain interests remain latent, and it is only at a certain time of life that they might surface, and perhaps an interaction with a place – I am thinking about the place-based interest too. I mean, was there something about Halifax that you think engendered this rebirth of your interest; would it have happened if you had moved to Winnipeg?

Kumar: It is very hard to answer that question. However, before I answer , Bill, I want to acknowledge your reflection on the mindfulness movement, because I think that is very important. You know, as I have seen through my experience and through my studies, the source of inattention is either when somebody is not interested in something or when somebody who is trying to teach you something or introduce you to something is unable to create curiosity and interest in you. This often happens in the school context and in the university context, we do not ask students, "What are you interested in?" And if we really asked them, then I do not think attention would be a problem. Also, if the teachers reflect on how and why they are introducing something to the student—are they introducing because it is part of their job, are they introducing because the school board is coming on their throat to teach certain outcomes, or is there a real joy and pleasure in introducing them to something?

In my life, I have experienced that if I love something, attention is not a problem. And if I have a wonderful teacher who is willing to share something with me then I do not have a problem with attention. I have a problem with attention when something is imposed on me, or something is really not that exciting. So, I think what is happening is that the education system is not tackling these problems, but isolating them as a symptom of attention, and then trying to respond to that. And when you have false problems, there are false solutions. So, mindfulness, I would say is a false solution because what it is trying to do is to force you to focus on your breath or focus on your belly, and trying to bring your attention to it. But I am saying that the capacity to be attentive is natural and intrinsic to us. See a child when they are playing, you do not have to tell them to attend to play. They are so fully immersed in the play. That is why I have highlighted, in as many forums as possible, that meditation is not a way to suppress your feelings and thoughts, or control them, or bring them to a particular point so that you can get a particular result; meditation is paying attention to whatever is. And the very attention, the very observation, the very love of seeing, brings in attention naturally. I really want to acknowledge that as a very important critique.

I want to tell you, Bill, what happened to me in Vancouver. So, when I was in India, I had a pretty difficult life in many ways. The traffic is really heavy. I was a schoolteacher, and it took me hours to get to my school from my residence. My life, just before I came to UBC, was quite hectic. When I landed in Vancouver, so much vast space opened up. A lot of people get depressed in that space. Maybe I was depressed too because I was away from my family and all that, but I just absolutely loved the space and the beautiful trees and the water and the mountains. I found it extremely healing and rejuvenating. And I think that is where my interest in music started to deepen, and I started saying quite often, "I want to learn music, I want to learn music." Mindy Carter, who you know, who was one of your students, tried to give me a couple of lessons but then we could not continue. When I came to Halifax, the same intensity was continuing. Halifax is also an amazingly beautiful place. I used to walk in Point Pleasant Park – I used to live very close to it. So, if I can say what could have impacted me—it is the beauty of the place. The beauty of the place, perhaps, helped me bring out the beauty inside me.

Pinar: What a lovely thing to say. It almost leaves me speechless to hear such a story. Well, finally I wanted to ask, what is next for you? It seems to me you have done it all in a way. I mean you have

laid out an exposition of meditative inquiry, you have invited others and they have participated thoughtfully and joyfully, that is so obvious in the collection. What do you think about the next step on your path, what form it would take?

Kumar: Certainly, it has already started taking shape, Bill. Thanks to my interest in music. I have started studying Indian classical music more seriously as a subject of personal interest – learning more about it and also studying it historically, spiritually, and culturally. That is one thing. Over the years, I have composed a lot of music. What I am trying to do now is to record music compositions, so, believe it or not, I am learning recording technologies. I did not enjoy this in the beginning, but I think I will learn to enjoy it. In the keynote session this morning, there was a discussion on universities being all about publications, publish this and publish that, and how the universities have the ranks that they want to maintain so they push people to publish a lot. And I feel – I am not trying to be arrogant at all – that a lot of poor-quality work is produced because of that; because there is an expectation for you to write not because it is emerging from you.

So, what I hope to do going forward is to write things in as simple and accessible language as possible, and I want to share it with wider audiences, and organize events like this conference, so that there is a more openhearted exchange of ideas—which should be the focus of the university, not just doing things for instrumental reasons. You know, we academicians criticize instrumentality a lot, but the universities are part of the capitalist system, and we are actually part and parcel of capitalism and capitalist thinking, except that we also critique it. So, I hope if we can contribute to changing the culture from instrumentality to authenticity a little bit that would be really helpful.

Pinar: You know you are certainly right. Universities have become corporations, and scholarly production has become a form of production rather than an expression of authentic study and interest. I want to acknowledge that I had the privilege of listening to you and Nayha perform Indian classical music in Braga, Portugal at the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies Conference. It was an extremely powerful, beautiful, and moving experience. I am curious, you mentioned that you are composing. Is it in the classical genre, or is it more of a hybrid, or even contemporary music?

Kumar: That is a very good question, Bill. I would like to clarify something. The term Indian classical music is an equivalent of Western classical music, but, in actuality, the term Indian classical music does not do justice to the music of India! Indian classical music is *raga* music and raga is a melodious expression that pervades Indian soul and is rooted in the folk music of India. So, I would say most of my music is rooted in the melodious expression of the raga music. It is definitely connected to the very roots of India, and it is inspired by the musicians who have influenced me a lot, who I have grown up listening to, and I just love the sound of their voices. So, basically, it is an expression of my own feelings and thoughts that come through that music. But it is very much rooted in the raga music of India. That is how I feel; traditionally minded Indian musicians may say, "No, that is not true." But that is how I feel.

Pinar: Oh, it seems to me such a searing acknowledgement of your earlier reflection that the ancestors come through you. And that being called, in this sense, is hearing the voices of others

and expressing it through the medium of ourselves and in your case, your musical capability. But I would also say intellectually and in terms of scholarship, it in some ways is parallel to music composition in the sense that we are attempting to hear what is audible within ourselves, and what we read and think about and experience in everyday life, how that can be expressed in a way—as you are attempting in your next phase to write in a more accessible medium—that might be available to a wider audience as well as to students and scholars. I am thinking of that concept of *allegory,* that in a sense, the allegorical significance of your turn, your musical turn, is to acknowledge the power of the past. And how we are not just in the grip of it, as we often lament when we are thinking about our economic or political troubles. But we are also given birth by it. That is, we come from the body of the past, and owe our present experience to it.

Well, thank you so much, Ashwani, for all your commentary. So insightful and so interesting and I learned a lot from you.

Kumar: Thank you, that is very, very kind of you, Bill. I definitely say that, as you are saying, the past informs us, and it gives birth to something new. And I think that is the beauty of our beings and, I would say, even nature and existence: the past is there but the infinite future is there too. And there is always a space for the birth of something new and beautiful. So, thank you so much again, Bill, for taking the time to ask these questions. You know, in India, from an Indian context, it is such a great privilege if your teacher sits with you and helps you explore some of your ideas. It is a tremendous privilege that you were able to come to this session and we could have this conversation. Thank you so much.

Pinar: Thank you, it is my privilege and pleasure too, and if I may say that in my world, a student being willing to sit with his former professor is also a great honor and I thank you for that. Thank you.

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Author Bios

Ashwani Kumar is Professor of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University (Halifax, Canada). His teaching and research focus on meditative inquiry, which is a self-reflective and aesthetic approach to teaching, learning, researching, creating, and living. He has conceptualized several key curricular and pedagogical concepts, namely, curriculum as meditative inquiry, teaching as meditative inquiry, and music as meditative inquiry. He has also developed a contemplative research methodology called dialogical meditative inquiry to conduct subjective and intersubjective qualitative research. He is the author of two scholarly books: *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and *Curriculum in International Contexts: Understanding Colonial, Ideological, and Neoliberal Influences* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). He is also the editor of *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research: Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts* (Routledge, 2022). He has served as the President of the Arts Researchers and Teachers Society, Canada. His book *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry* was chosen as an Outstanding Academic Title by Choice Reviews in 2015. His co-authored paper, "Teaching as Meditative Inquiry: A Dialogical Exploration," which describes his pedagogical philosophy and practice, received the Outstanding Publication in Curriculum Studies Award from The Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies in 2019. He is also the recipient of the Mount Saint Vincent University President and Vice President's Advanced Career Teaching Award 2022 and the University of British Columbia Faculty of Education's Alumni Educator of the Year Award 2022.

William Pinar was named the Tetsuo Aoki Professor in curriculum studies in 2019 after two terms as the Canada Research Chair in curriculum studies in the Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy at University of British Columbia. Known for his work in the area of curriculum theory, Pinar has been strongly associated with the reconceptualist movement in curriculum theory since the early 1970s. At that time, Pinar, along with Madeleine Grumet, introduced the notion of *currere*, shifting the notion of *curriculum* as a noun to *curriculum* as a verb. Apart from his fundamental contributions to theory, Pinar is notable for establishing the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, founding the *Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice*, and founding the *International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies*. He has also spoken about and written on many other topics, including education, cultural studies, international studies, and queer studies.