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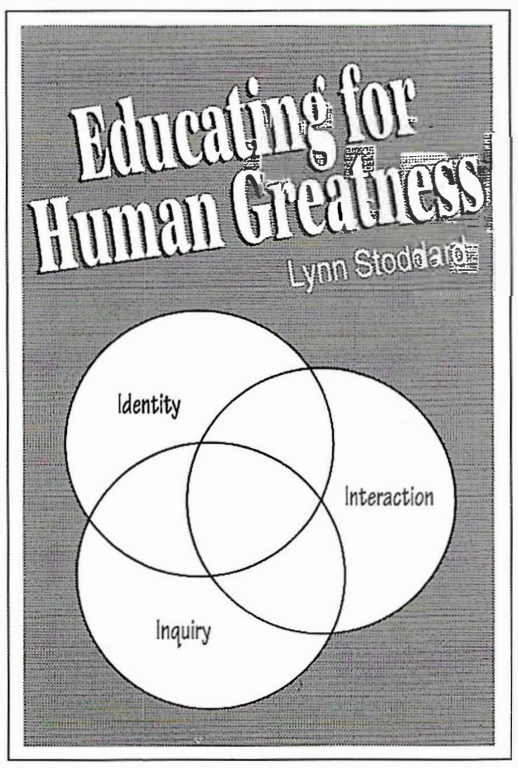

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Lynn Stoddard is a former classroom teacher and elementary principal (36 years in service!) who now writes and lectures on improving public education.

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ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Editorial

On Preparing Children for the Future

When people think about education, they almost always assume the goal is to prepare children for the future. Political and corporate leaders want schools to prepare students for the new global economy. Parents want schools to prepare their children for admission to prestigious colleges. Even dubious trends are often defended as preparation for the future. For example, schools are assigning increasing amounts of homework at younger and younger ages (Bennett and Kalish 2006; Kohn 2006). There is no evidence that homework benefits young children, and it certainly makes children unhappy, but homework advocates have a sure-fire defense. Young children need homework now so they will be ready for larger amounts in the years ahead.

For many years I have tried to call attention to the problems with focusing too exclusively on the child's future (e.g., Crain 1983, 1993). I have tried to show how our preoccupation with the future can blind us to how children grow and develop. It diverts our attention from the experiences the child needs to develop fully at her present stage. On occasion, though, I have wondered if my position was too one-sided. In this essay, I will elaborate on my position and then consider a possible qualification to it.

How a Future Orientation Leads Us Astray

Children are naturally motivated to develop different capacities at different stages. In early childhood, from about 2 to 8 years, children are particularly eager to develop the artistic sides of their personalities. They love to sing, dance, draw, and make up poems. And, as Howard Gardner (1980) has emphasized, their artistic development routinely blossoms in breathtaking ways. Between about 5 and 8 years of age, for example, children produce drawing after drawing that is fresh, lively, and beautifully balanced. Several modern masters, such as Klee, Kandinsky, and Picasso, have tried to recapture the young child's fresh and lively approach. It might seem that schools would want to give the young child's remarkable creativity opportunities to flourish.

However, today's schools are cutting back on children's time for the arts. Intent on preparing children for the high-tech, competitive workplace, schools are emphasizing academic instruction and rational problem-solving at younger and younger ages. Today even many kindergartens and preschools have done away with the arts. As a result, children have less opportunity to perfect their creative capacities.

Another special quality of early childhood is play. Young children spontaneously engage in considerable make-believe play, and it is often quite elaborate. Children are like little theater directors, weaving magical scenes and fantasies. Many also invent imaginary companions. Early childhood seems to be a special period for the development of imaginative powers (Crain 2003).

But children's fantasy play strikes many adults as lacking serious purpose. It has the look of idleness. Top-level educational policymakers never say, "Let's give children more time for free play." They demand higher academic standards, which they see as essential for the future workforce. In response many school districts have tried to make room for more academics by reducing or eliminating recess. They also have reduced time for free play after school by assigning more homework. And these reductions in free play, like the cutbacks in the arts, are occurring in the earliest grades.

Some parents, to be sure, recognize the child's need for free play. But they are reluctant to insist on it because they don't want to place their children at a competitive disadvantage. They see other parents pushing early academic skills, and they worry that their own children will be left behind. If other children are being placed on the fast track to Princeton, how can they let their children just play and fool around? To

compete, they, too, must provide extra tutoring and other structured activities. Parents want the best for their children, but anxious about their children's future success, they don't give their children as much time for free, imaginative play as they might.

A third area of great interest to the young child (as well as to the older child) is the natural world. Children take a keen interest in animals, plants, water, soil, and all the elements. Growing research suggests that natural settings foster children's powers of patient observation, reducing attention problems. Natural settings also stimulate creative play and give children a sense of being rooted in something larger than themselves — in the web of life (Crain 2006).

Today, however, children spend almost no free time in natural settings (Crain 2006). There are many reasons for this, but a major reason is that adults don't see how it is related to children's future success. How is playing beside a brook or exploring a weedy vacant lot preparing the child for the global economy? How is climbing trees or playing with mud going to get a child into Harvard? Focusing on the child's future, adults overlook the benefits of rich contact with the natural world.

The Child-Centered Alternative

Our preoccupation with the future, then, is robbing children of the chance to develop many of the strengths of the childhood years. To remedy this situation, I have advocated a child-centered approach to education and parenting. When we adopt this approach, we focus less on the future and more on the present. We try to provide children with tasks and activities that help them develop their naturally emerging capacities in their present lives.

But how do we know what activities children need? A child-centered approach takes its cues from the child, paying special attention to the child's interests and feelings. When children encounter tasks and activities that enable them to develop their emerging potentials, they take a strong interest in the activities and work on them with deep concentration. And when they complete the activities, they often seem happy and serene because they have been able to develop something vital within themselves (see Montessori 1967; Crain 2003). I believe that at some point in early childhood most, if not all children, exhibit these interests and feelings with respect to the arts, imaginative play, and the exploration of nature — provided, of course, the activities are available to them.

The child-centered approach gives no priority to the adult years. Each phase of life has, as Rousseau said, its own special strengths, "a perfection of its own" (1974, 122). When we give priority to the knowledge and skills we believe the child will need for adulthood, we can easily overlook the experiences the child needs to develop the perfection of her present stage. The only way to help the child develop all her potentials is to focus on the present. We must let the child develop fully right now, before moving on.

A Possible Qualification

But even though I enthusiastically subscribe to the child-centered position, I do have a reservation. There is a sense in which adulthood deserves priority. Adults, not children, are ultimately responsible for running societies and protecting coming generations. It is the task of adults, as Erik Erikson said, to *take care* of the world (1982, 66-67). This task has become especially urgent today, when war and ecological neglect threaten life on the planet. How can we help children develop the qualities they will need to care for our increasingly fractured world?

First, I suggest we look more closely at the qualities they will need. These qualities extend well beyond those promoted by our political and corporate leaders, who focus so intently on the ability to compete and succeed in the global economy. Indeed, adults who are consumed by competition and winning are likely to be too self-absorbed to be very caring. A preoccupation with winning may hinder the cooperative and nurturing attitudes needed to achieve peace and protect nature and other species.

The Adult Qualities Needed

I propose that the adults who will best protect the planet will possess at least three traits. First, nurturance will be a strong part of their personalities. Second, they will feel a strong emotional tie to nature. And, third, they will have the imagination to envision new solutions and ways of living.

To develop the first quality, nurturance as a personal trait, children need experience caring for others. Schools can contribute by switching to mixed age

groupings, where older children assist younger children with their schoolwork and personal needs. Parents, too, can encourage their older children to help care for the younger ones (and to assist others who need aid as well). My impression is that so long as the caretaking tasks correspond to children's abilities, children find the tasks rewarding. If we would give children more caretaking responsibilities, we would revitalize social patterns that have long been part of human history, before the modern value on individual achievement became so dominant (Weisner 1996).

To foster the other two qualities — a strong feeling for nature and a capacity to imagine new ways of living — we need only to follow a child-centered approach and help children pursue their own deepest interests. Children themselves love to explore nature, and in the process they develop bonds with her. Similarly, children themselves eagerly engage in the make-believe play that develops their powers of imagination.

Thus, children will develop qualities they will need to tackle global crises if we follow their own lead when they are children. While we can help children become caring adults by assigning them caretaking responsibilities, we also need to allow them to develop the special interests of the childhood years. We need to allow them to be children. As Maria Montessori (1967, 149) once said, "We serve the future by protecting the present."

—William Crain, Editor

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Charles Dickens and John Stuart Mill

Lessons from the Past

Kate McReynolds

Like the Gradgrind children in *Hard Times*, Mill received a strictly academic education that ignored his emotional life.

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1965) tells the story of Louisa and Thomas Gradgrind, whose father's utilitarian theories of education strip their lives of meaning and pleasure. Mr. Gradgrind, a well-intentioned but imperious man, abhors sentiment and flights of fancy. He is a "man of realities" (p. 4), literally matter-of-fact, and ruled by his hard-headed belief in the supremacy of logic and calculation. He has created a school that is a model of his educational theories. In the school, children — portrayed as empty vessels — learn only facts. Gradgrind instructs the teachers:

> Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them" (p. 3).

Gradgrind's own children are sullen and angry. They have no toys and have never heard a fairytale, a nursery rhyme, or a lullaby. Starved for something they scarcely understand, Louisa and Thomas live in a world where imaginative play and wonderment are forbidden. Their schoolmaster, aptly named Mr. McChoakumchild, enforces Gradgrind's philosophy, cultivating techniques to inhibit natural curiosity. "By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything, somehow, and never wonder" (pp. 47-48).

Far from able to "settle everything," the Gradgrind children are ill-equipped to handle adult life. Angry Thomas wishes that he could "collect all the Facts we hear so much about … and all the Figures, and all the people who found them out … and put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them and blow them all up together!" (p. 50) As a young man

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who cares only for money and gambling, he robs his brother-in-law's bank and blames it on an honest factory worker. In the end, when his loving sister helps him to leave the country, Thomas heartlessly blames her for his predicament.

His sister Louisa is forced into a loveless, but practical marriage, and is subsequently overcome by confusion and despair when she feels affection for a man bent on seducing her. She is so miserable and frightened by the void in her life that she flees her husband and confronts her father. Clutching her hands to her heart, she says:

> How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart? What have you done, oh, Father, what have you done with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here? (p. 205)

Louisa, in whom glowed "a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn" (p. 13), had maintained a tenuous but redemptive connection to her emotional world. Though she felt bereft of all that could make her happy, Louisa ultimately accepts the friendship of Sissy, the lively circus girl who represents imagination, heart, and human feeling. Through this lifelong friendship, which extends to Sissy's children, Louisa recovers what she had been denied by her fact-based, dispiriting education.

John Stuart Mill: A Philosopher's Journey

Hard Times is a cautionary tale, a scathing indictment of the mechanistic, dehumanizing effects of industrialization and utilitarianism, especially on the lives of children (Dickens 1965, xiii-xiv). Written in Dickens' most sardonic prose, it is tempting to read it merely as Victorian drama. But despite its fictional status, *Hard Times* is a fair representation of reality. Consider, for example, the life of the British philosopher and contemporary of Dickens, John Stuart Mill (Mill 1924).

Educated by his father, James, with the help of utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, Mill learned Greek when he was 3 years old, Latin at 8, and logic by 12. He read the first *Six Dialogues* of Plato when he was 7 and *The Iliad* (in Greek) when he was 8. Throughout his childhood, Mill studied history, philosophy, mathematics, and science, and at age 13 began his studies in political economy. In his autobiography, Mill extols the virtues of his education for the speed with which he mastered academic subjects, and he prizes his analytic intelligence. But Mill recognizes certain deficiencies in his education, among these his father's lack of tenderness and neglect of his emotional world (Mill 1924, 3-21, 36-37). In fact, had Charles Dickens written the story of Mill's life, it would have read like *Hard Times*.

Much like Mr. Gradgrind, his father James Mill was a practical man who valued reason and logic above all else.

Much like Mr. Gradgrind, his father James Mill was a practical man who valued reason and logic above all else. He had contempt for passionate emotions, considering them a kind of madness, and had "scarcely any belief in pleasure" (Mill 1924, 34). James, stern and unyielding, devoted a considerable portion of each day to tutoring his son, including the evening hours which were reserved for mathematics (p. 4). Mill recalls how disagreeable the evening math lessons were (p. 4), and in several passages suggests that his father demanded the impossible — a fair appraisal considering that by the age of 8 his nights were spent studying Euclidean geometry and algebra (p. 8). Holidays were not allowed "lest the habit of work should be broken, and a taste for idleness acquired" (p. 25). Even the long walks in nature that Mill took with his father were spent reciting summaries of the day's lessons. This is particularly poignant given that Mill, like so many children, was deeply moved by the natural world (p. 40).

Mill credits his intellectual achievements to being "perseveringly drilled" (p. 13) by his father but notes, "of children's books, anymore than playthings, I had scarcely any" (p. 6). Neither did he have friends or playmates, the result of his father's determination to protect him from the "corrupting influence" of boys and the "contagion of vulgar modes of thought and

feeling" (pp. 24-25). Mill spent whatever free time he had alone, reading and writing, but always felt that his education, particularly the lack of free play with other boys, had made him inept dealing with daily life, "the chief interest … to the majority of men" (p. 76).

Mill was the picture of intellectual success and poised for a brilliant career, but at 20 he faced an emotional crisis not unlike Louisa Gradgrind's. He became deeply depressed. He took no pleasure in his studies or his work and he questioned the meaning of his life. Mill longed to talk about his emotional despair with his father, but was convinced that his father would not understand. With no close friends or confidants, Mill felt completely alone (pp. 94-95). He realized (p. 76) that he was, in fact, a "mere reasoning machine" (a common charge leveled against the utilitarian philosophers) and concluded that the source of his depression was his underdeveloped emotional life. Mill's mind, now "irretrievably analytic" (p. 98), made it impossible for him to enjoy the simple pleasures of nonintellectual life. He came to believe that his imbalanced education had

> left [me] stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue, or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. (pp. 97-98)

Like the Gradgrind children, then, John Stuart Mill's exclusively academic education had not prepared him for adult life. He understood that feelings would make him happy, but he did not know how to have them. Whereas Louisa recovered her emotional and imaginative faculties through friendship, John Stuart Mill turned to poetry. Mill had read very little poetry as a child. The utilitarian philosophers considered it the enemy of reason; Bentham viewed all poetry as a misrepresentation of reality (p. 78). But seized by an emotional problem that no amount of analytic reasoning could solve, Mill realized that he needed a new kind of education. He found it in the Romantic poets. Mill favored Wordsworth for the feelings he expressed about the beauty of nature. From Wordsworth's poetry, Mill felt support for the feelings that nature's beauty had stirred in him, and Mill was then in a position to develop these feelings. Mill described Wordsworth's impact in no uncertain terms:

> What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a Source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings.... From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness.... And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence.... The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it. (pp. 104-105)

It would be going too far to say that children today suffer as much as they did in Dickens' time. Still, these are hard times for children. Schools have become like sterile factories, determined to produce children who meet future workforce needs. During the daily grind, schools impose months of tedious test prep, drilling children to generate the correct answers on standardized tests. To achieve this aim, the focus is almost exclusively on academic skills, even in kindergarten and before. Children's imaginative and emotional lives — the areas of life that are expressed in poetry, music, drama, and the arts — are pushed aside. And children are not free after school, either. They are forced into hours of homework, which consist of little besides tedious busy work or assignments far beyond the children's capacities. Children hate the homework, so parents are forced to play the role, in the words of one parent, of the "the teacher's enforcer" (Bennett and Kalish 2006, 55). It's in today's hard times that the insights of Dickens and Mill are particularly germane.

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Charles Dickens
Genius and Human Circumstances

Robert Lapides

Extraordinary creativity is a function of character; it originates in exceptional early experience; and it continues to grow with boldly courageous activity.

What is genius, and where does it originate? What made Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Mozart, Newton, Freud, and Einstein able to achieve what they did? The ancient Greeks and Romans believed extraordinary talent, like everything else they didn't understand, was god-given, and with slight modifications this idea has persisted more than two and a half millennia. Most people today take it on faith that genius is a gift from God or a matter of extremely fortuitous heredity. In either case, it's assumed to arise mysteriously and to conduct itself inexplicably.

My view is that extraordinary creativity is a function of character, that it originates in exceptional early experience, and that it continues to grow with boldly courageous activity. Just as authenticity is a richer kind of honesty than is sincerity, what we call genius involves a fuller, deeper and more resonant kind of work than that produced by less remarkable creativity. It involves extraordinary openness, concentration, and responsiveness — all of which are shaped by the child's family and social experiences. In this article, I will illustrate how Charles Dickens's early circumstances contributed to his extraordinary creative development. First, however, I want to note how much our culture resists the view that creativity develops along with an individual's personal history.

Mystification

A common assumption about genius, that there is "something fundamentally inexplicable about the nature of such prodigious powers" (Murray 1989, 1), is so unreasonable that the complacency with which so many people embrace it indicates its irrational appeal. Relatively little is yet known about the mind, but it cannot remain a dark continent forever. Even if

Note: The present article is part of a book the author is writing on the life and creativity of Charles Dickens.

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we have no present explanation for a given phenomenon, fundamental inexplicability is not something we usually consider likely, and few intellectuals would venture such an opinion in other realms of study. Why are so many people of culture willing and eager to do so here?

Part of the answer is that they are as likely as other people to idealize the icons they identify with. Such identifications enhance their feelings about themselves. But it is more than narcissism that moves them to sanctify creators, to safeguard unusual ability from rational analysis. As Jerome Kagan (1967) notes, "Since our shared premise about genius is that it is born, not made, we will do anything that will allow us to retain this belief, and we often wrap a Pollyannish and semireligious cloak around the word *creativity*" (p. vii). Belief in genius, in other words, is our culture's secular faith, replete with gods, priests and reverent congregants — a point Richard Poirier (1987, 68) acknowledges approvingly:

> "Genius" is a necessary idea because like the idea of God it is an abstraction a great many people want and need to believe in. And the belief depends on the fact that without it people would find it more difficult if not impossible to talk to one another about the extraordinary effects upon them of the created world. The term is useful in direct proportion to its vagueness; it conjures up something that cannot be specifically traced out; it describes things we suspect about an artist or work but cannot know for sure. To use the word "genius" is to express a desire that human attributes should exist that are beyond human understanding.

This is an odd position for an intellectual to hold. It may be true that without recourse to words like *God* and *genius* most people would find certain kinds of discourse impossible, but frustration of this sort might lead to braver, more complex thought.

The Biological Argument

The prestige of the physical sciences is also influential, for it's widely expected that it will be biologists, not biographers or psychologists, who solve this question, either all or most of it — that is, that a gene for exceptional talent or neurological conditions present at birth will be shown to produce different degrees of creativity and intelligence (see Gazzaniga 1992). There are empirical reasons for doubting this, however. DNA research has found nothing to support the heritability of differences in mental ability (Lewontin, Rose and Kamin 1984; Lewotin 1991), nor have vigorous efforts in other fields of biology shown that special talent or intelligence is innate. Some scientists, including the leading geneticist R.C. Lewontin, have argued strenuously that superior mental ability has no more a genetic than a divine origin.

Among the laboratory studies that have led to this same conclusion was the examination of Einstein's brain after his death in 1955. Not only was it of unexceptional size, but cut into sections and looked at microscopically over the next three decades, it disclosed nothing that supported the idea of innate genius. The biological determinists felt momentarily vindicated when it was found to have almost twice the average degree of neuronal branching, since Einstein's success, at least in part, had stemmed from the greater speed in thinking and the greater ability to make connections that this physical difference made possible. But it was soon pointed out that brains change and that Einstein had not been born with the brain he died with. As rats living in enriched environments had brains with more neuronal branching than the brains of control rats had, it was concluded, analogously, that Einstein's brain had changed because of his intense thinking. "Genius feeds itself," as one neuro-anatomist put it (Waterhouse 1988, 495). The life Einstein led made him become what he became.

Some logical arguments are also of interest. The anthropologist Loren Eiseley (1962, 47) observed:

> If genius is a purely biological phenomenon one must assume that the chances of its appearance should increase with the size of populations. Yet it is plain that, like toadstools which spring up in the night in fairy rings and then vanish, there is some delicate soil which nurtures genius — the cultural circumstance and the play of minds must meet. It is not a matter of population statistics alone, else there would not have been so surprising an efflorescence of genius in

> fourth- and fifth-century Greece — a thing we still marvel at in our vastly expanded world.

More recently, some biologists have questioned the simplistic effort to attribute any observed traits to specific genetic causes. They have challenged the Newtonianism of those other biologists who think the whole is a set of fixed parts acting in fixed ways, that is, that different human trajectories must result from different genetic parts. Recent work in genetics emphasizes the ways genes interact with one another and their environments (Campbell and Reece 2005, 400, 420; Holdrege and Wirz 2001). Citing the dialectical model provided by advances in molecular biology, Joseph Schwartz (1992, 144) insists that differences in biographical circumstances are what determine differences in mental abilities.

Biological research into genius may eventually prove productive, of course; what I am challenging is the idea that specific biological components can by themselves be responsible for extraordinary achievement. We should be aware that this belief is consistent with a conservative political position. If success depends on isolated genes, then social conditions cannot be implicated. After all, the argument goes, who is to blame if God or good genes select certain kinds of people and not others for greatness? This justification for the status quo has served the interests of privileged classes for a very long time. It has been used by racists and sexists, as well as by the wealthy.

Psychological Evidence

A 1926 study by Catherine Cox found persistence of effort, supreme self-confidence, and great force of character to be uniformly present in three hundred individuals identified as geniuses (cited in Murray 1989, 204). Noting that Freud was "convinced that he owed his many discoveries to what was essentially strength of character and mental honesty (aside from good luck at times)," the psychoanalyst K. R. Eissler (1971) associated genius with an ability to bear pain, a refusal to adjust to reality, the employment of the whole personality in the creative act, and "an unending, inexhaustible devotion and sacrifice in everything that has to do with achievement" (253, 252, 278). In a similar vein, Dickens had David Copperfield ascribe his success to "thoroughgoing, ardent, and sincere earnestness." David says, "Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self; and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was; I find, now, to have been my golden rules" (Dickens 1966, 672).

R. A. Ochse (1990, 130, 132), the author of another study, found "the most salient and most consistent characteristic of creative achievers is persistent enthusiastic devotion to work" and, therefore, that motivation may be creativity's most important determinant. The distinguishing factors, in other words, are psychological and, therefore, must originate in childhood. But just how these psychological factors arise and how they are related to unusual creative development has not been easy to discover. So little has been known about the early experiences of great thinkers and artists that scholars have had to proceed speculatively. However, a good deal is known about Dickens's life.

The Dickens Myth

Not that the well-known facts of Dickens's life have always been evaluated correctly. When he was twelve, his father spent time in debtors' prison, and he himself was sent to work in a blacking-house, a shoe-polish factory. This crisis was traumatic because it badly threatened his identity; his expectations of becoming an artist and a gentleman seemed to be forever ruined. It was not, however, the key to his life that many biographers made it, for it came after eleven relatively happy and formative years. As a way of garnering sympathy for him, his first great biographer, John Forster (1966), used the parental shortcomings that led to this crisis, as well as to other problems, to suggest that Dickens had had to overcome the limitations of his family background. And many later biographers, more interested in embellishing this compelling story than in researching the facts, followed suit, claiming he had grown up in poverty, obscurity and neglect — a myth that, as it grew, supported the notion that Dickens possessed innate genius that transcended the circumstances of his life. The exact opposite was true. The circumstances of his childhood were his great good fortune. He not only grew up with many more advantages than has been generally recognized, but his parents' shortcomings, as well as their real strengths, spurred his development.

Dickens's Social and Cultural Environment

Every artist must feel the world is safe enough to meddle with, and that he or she is powerful enough to do the meddling. This sense of safety, and of the kinds of achievement that are possible, is influenced by the social context a child's family operates in. During the first eight years of Dickens's life, his family's situation was at its most solid. There was a serious social crisis in 1812, the year of his birth, but the food shortages, mounting prices, bankruptcies, and deepening unemployment did little or nothing to inconvenience his family. His father, John Dickens, earned £225 that year as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office (Allen 1988, 14), an income that kept his family far above the distress most people contended with. The even more massive unemployment, the sharp drop in wages, and the five years of widespread misery that followed the end of war with France in 1815 enhanced the value of John's salary dramatically. His tendency to live beyond his means, borrowing money to do so, was fairly common; rather than being disreputable or a cause for alarm, it was a sign of how confident he was. In fact, his situation was good enough for him and his wife Elizabeth to identify their interests with those of his employer, the British government, and for them to share in the growing optimism then characterizing England's wealthiest classes, economically unrivaled anywhere and still more or less insulated from domestic woe. Unquestionably, this material well-being had a healthy effect on Charles's early development, for his parents' expansiveness gave ample support to his own sense of power.

Charles's consciousness was influenced, too, by how many relatives and friends his parents had whose skills had brought them some success and who, as a result, knew other people of culture, influence, and power. John was the son of servants, but his parents ran — and he grew up in — the household of John Crewe, a rather wealthy Cheshire landowner and a Member of Parliament, and his wife Francs Anne Crewe, a woman at the very center of London literary and political society. Impressed by the many famous writers, artists, and politicians who visited the Crewes, and by the hospitality they received, John Dickens spent a lifetime trying hard to measure up to a standard of success that was entirely beyond him — his theatricality and expansiveness were attempts to enlarge himself — and in ways conscious and unconscious he communicated to his son Charles that success (money, recognition, a comfortable home) meant truly great success, that nothing less would really do.

Elizabeth, Dickens's mother, came from an artistic family. Her maternal grandfather had been a well-known manufacturer of musical instruments. Her father was a musician who went into his father-in-law's business. One of her brothers was an accomplished musician. A second achieved success as a journalist, political commentator, scholar, editor, historical novelist, and poet. He worked for *The Times* and was later the founding editor of the short-lived but highly regarded *Mirror of Parliament*. A third brother was a painter.

Then there was the family's rich cultural life. Dickens's parents were not especially cultured, in the elite sense of the word, but both had had a healthy respect for popular culture since their own childhoods. Moderately well-educated and reasonably worldly, they loved language, wit, the literary imagination, and all types of performance. Charles grew up sharing these pleasures with them and with just about everyone else he was close to.

Both his parents were highly expressive and verbally adept. Certainly, Charles's early experience of them was where his talent began. As is normally the case when a child is appropriately encouraged, he imitated what he saw of his parents' abilities, gradually made their skills his, and then combined and used them in his own original ways. Among the strengths he learned from Elizabeth were a sharp eye, a strong sense of form, surprising wit, and a flair for hilarious mimicry. According to one acquaintance, she was remarkable in her ability to remember what she had seen, and she liked to talk about what she had observed.

> She ... had a fine vein of pathos, and could bring tears to the eyes of her listeners when narrating some sad event.... I am of the opinion that a great deal of Dickens's genius was inherited from his mother. He possessed from her a keen appreciation of the droll and of the pathetic, as also considerable dramatic talent. [She] has often sent my sisters and myself into uncontrollable fits of laughter by her funny sayings and inimitable mimicry. (Collins 1981, 130)

She saw the surfaces of life with remarkable clarity. According to the same woman,

> On entering a room she almost unconsciously took an inventory of its contents, and if anything happened to strike her as out of place or ridiculous, she would afterward describe it in the quaintest possible manner. In a like manner she noted the personal peculiarities of her friends and acquaintances. (Collins 1981, 130)

Elizabeth was more attentive to appearances than to deeper realities, more interested in her own cleverness than in responding lovingly to imperfection. But she was an excellent role model for a future writer and no doubt a first-rate coach for a young performer.

As for John, his flowery, dramatic way with words sometimes veered out of control, but he wrote a highly competent news story about a fire, when Charles was eight, that was published in the local paper and in *The Times*. His skill with language was such that at age forty-one he could learn shorthand well enough to become a parliamentary reporter. In conversation he was especially animated, which meant that his long walks with Charles — their talk moving through a succession of scenes and a series of thoughts — fostered the boy's narrative inclinations, his feeling for words, and his eye for detail.

Charles was fortunate in another influence, too, if his autobiographical "Nurse's Stories" is even half-accurate. According to that 1860 sketch, his nursemaid, a "female bard," told him disturbing, sometimes erotic bedtime stories, including tales of a Captain Murderer who ate his wives, a Black Cat that sucked away the breath of infants, a shipwright who was attacked by rats, a parlour-maid who saw a strange [phallic?] animal swell to enormous size in front of her, and a young woman's ghost that the nursemaid herself had confronted. If Dickens was not improving on memory, she made him listen to these stories hundreds of times against his will when he was not yet six; her power lay, no doubt, in her choice of material and her skill, for the sketch indicates how she used narrative voice, dramatic pacing, and colorful detail to great effect. That she roused him this way as he fell asleep every night, that she brought both reassuring intimacy and alarming excitement to his bedside, deepened the impact. Like the servant who stimulates her young master's sexuality with lifelong consequences, this nursemaid instructed Charles in narrative possibilities and inflamed his interest in imaginative performance.

His whole family took pleasure in performance. Theatre was everywhere — serious plays, melodrama and extravaganzas on the professional stage, traveling circuses, fairs and puppet shows, the annual street pageants of various occupational groups, and amateur theatricals in private homes or in rented or borrowed spaces — and everyone enjoyed it, the Dickenses especially so. But of even more consequence to his development was the performing Charles himself did.

Child Performances

Because genius is seen as an innate gift with a powerful life of its own, able to emerge unbidden, organizing itself and blossoming on its own schedule, it is commonly thought to require little help from the child who may possess it, other than a mostly unconscious, if passionate, responsiveness. Thus, the extraordinary creative activity Mozart engaged in during his youth has often been ascribed to his great ability, even though it makes more sense to view this the other way around. Only recently has it been suggested that his unusual development was a result of his unusual childhood activity, which itself arose from the specific social, cultural, and psychological circumstances of his childhood, namely, his family's ambiguous social status, his father's strong musical influence, and his own deep hunger for love (Elias 1993, *passim*). Dickens's childhood was similar to Mozart's in several ways, but most of all, perhaps, in how hard he worked as a boy. Charles very actively lived a life of the imagination, invested almost his whole personality in developing his abilities as a literary performer, and succeeded in firmly establishing an identity as a young artist.

"I was," Dickens recalled, "a great writer at eight years old or so. I was an actor and a speaker from a baby" (Dickens 1997, 119). John and Elizabeth encouraged their children to entertain at all kinds of get-togethers. According to the recollections of friends, "At birthday parties, Twelfth Night parties, and ordinary evening parties, at the Mitre [Hotel], at [their home], and elsewhere, and in juvenile picnics

in the hayfield ... the accomplishments of Charles and his sister were often utilised to amuse the company." Because the Dickenses were good friends of the Mitre's owner, little impromptu performances occurred in its public room fairly often and to varied audiences (Langton 1883, 36). Remembering how many "grown-up people ... were called upon to admire him," Dickens told Forster that he "used to be elevated on chairs and tables ... for more effective display of [his] talents" (Forster 1966, 8-9).

Nineteenth-century social life was such that these occasions presented themselves fairly often, though whether this was once a week or once a month we don't know. Twenty times a year would be a lot of performing for a child; ten would be a lot. Charles also spent a great deal of time rehearsing in private, as well as impersonating characters in his books, playing games of make-believe with his friends, staging little plays, and writing them. This almost constant activity was as important as his reading in his creative development, both generally and more specifically as a writer. His early efforts at verbal performance were safe, repetitive, unselfconscious, varied, imitative, and often surprisingly bold. He learned its key elements so well that performing became second nature to him.

As we now know, a child's nature, that is, his physical brain, is very much affected by his environment, beginning with structural, chemical, and hormonal influences in the womb and continuing through childhood and adulthood as experience develops (and repeated experience strengthens) the neural circuits that facilitate thinking (Healy 1994, 18-19). Important developments can occur in unusual adults, that is, in adults like Dickens whose engagement with their work is unusual (Obler and Fein 1988, 5). However, most of the brain's significant growth occurs in childhood. There, especially, "active interest and mental effort" are "major factors" in reinforcing synaptic connections; the more vigorous and various the mental activity, the greater the neural growth within the brain (Healy 1994, 18). The more one does, the more one can do. And yet a child's brain can feed itself only so much. It is the environment created by his parents or other adults that to a greater or lesser degree stimulates a child's interest and helps organize his activity. Dickens's mind, it is clear, was extremely well-nourished by his family's cultural life.

Still, his own performing focused his attention, honed his skills (with characterization, for example), and taught him discipline; it developed his stamina, self-possession, fluency, and a passion for doing. It was the basis for his later success as a performer, but more significantly it was key to his becoming a great artist. This need not have been the case, since talent, no matter how special, is not the same as creativity. Impressive skill can, of course, support the risks necessary for original work, but it can much more easily be used to avoid them. When precocious ability is not appropriately challenged, it fails to deepen and expand. What distinguished Charles from other child performers was, in part, the type of material he was given by his parents, the kind of situation — half-formal, half-intimate — they placed him in, and the sort of character he was developing, one that was unusually open to the life around him and within himself. Because he and his sister Fanny were repeatedly drawn into the shifting dynamics of performance, his performing not only organized but challenged and excited his imagination.

Evidently, their technical skill — the way they used their voices, for example — was impressive. The relationship they established with their material and with their audience was probably even more striking. Sixty years later friends recalled that their songs, "warmly applauded by all," were "admirably sung." His nursemaid could still remember Charles reciting "The Sluggard" by Isaac Watts, and how he "used to give it with great effect, and with *such* action and *such attitudes*" (Langton 1983, 39, 26). It's easy to imagine his gestures, expression, and poise as he moved from one image in this twenty-line poem to another:

> 'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain,
> "You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again."
> As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed,
> Turns his sides, and his shoulders, and his heavy head.

His boyish charm would have worked against the poem's heavy-handed morality — until the final lines allowed him to be unexpectedly sincere:

> Said I then to my heart, "Here's a lesson for me,
> This man's but a picture of what I might be;
> But thanks to my friends, for their care in my breeding,

> Who taught me betimes to love working and reading.

The earnestness of his performing must have delighted his audience, especially because the material his parents selected lent itself to interpretation and irony.

Another example is the love duet Charles and Fanny performed when he was eight or nine years old and she about ten. He sang the part of a worldly sailor, and she the young woman he was wooing. Part of the fun was their impersonation of sophistication; their innocence, the sauciness of the song, and the knowingness of their audience pulled at and affected each other. These performances were, of course, repeated frequently, and the repetition developed the boy's grasp of these dynamics. Each poem, song, or story, and each audience offered a different lesson, which we can assume he took in.

Concluding Observations

The ways his parents' personalities influenced his has remained the most undervalued piece of Dickens's good luck. It has not been understood that John's and Elizabeth's more immature qualities were actually of great value to their son's creative development, at least as much as their more upstanding virtues. Their grandiosity communicated itself to the boy, excited his ambition, and helped establish his special identity as a young artist. Their childish dispositions — their excessive narcissism, their irresponsible optimism, their selective attention, the value they placed on pleasure, illusion and play — encouraged his own privileged relation to reality. The high standards they set for themselves in some respects and their irresponsibility in others gave him exactly the kind of internal control structure an artist needs, one that is both permissive and demanding. And they also communicated to him the underside of their grandiosity — their personal and social anxieties — which made it feel imperative that he work very hard to achieve success.

Many years later his nursemaid remembered Charles as "a lively boy of a good, genial, open disposition." His schoolmaster's sister recalled him as a very handsome boy with "a very amiable, agreeable disposition"; she thought he was "capital company even then (at nine or ten years of age)" and "quite at home at all sorts of parties, junketings, and birthday celebrations (Langton 1883, 26, 57.) His pleasant demeanor and sweet self-possession were real, but so were the normal aggression and fierce ambition that his performing nourished and disguised. Other kinds of achievement, of course, would also have bolstered his sense of importance, but had he solved puzzles or painted pictures, or had he only written stories, the attention he received would have been focused on the skill within him or on a concrete piece of work. Charles's success was his relationship to his audience. What mattered in his story-telling and reciting, in his comic singing and acting was the impact he had, the way he charmed and held and conquered an audience, making it yield him its love and power. Such goals may seem too knowing, too bold for a small and very amiable boy, but they were probably unconscious in him as much as they were taken for granted in the culture around him. They were present in his parents' theatricality and his young nurse's spicy, spellbinding bedtime stories. And, as we've seen, some of the material in his own performing had an explicitly romantic aspect.

Dickens became a great artist because he developed, to a remarkable degree, the kind of character that creativity requires. His achievement depended on his extremely hard work, his driving need for ever-greater success, and his immense courage and stamina. His extraordinary abilities were supported by an unusual personality structure. His power of observation was based on an unusual openness to and interest in the world; his imagination arose from his unusual need to master and play with reality; his ambition moved him to develop the many skills he excelled at.

In this article I've touched on some of the social and psychological influences on Dickens's creative development and, because of space limitations, omitted others. But the evidence I have provided is, I hope, persuasive that his great abilities — what we call his genius — were rooted in the circumstances of his early life. There is no good reason to believe in miracles.

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Hard Times

Utilitarian Education in England

Robin Jackson

Since 1997, England has pursued educational policies that are designed to produce a skilled workforce rather than developing the potentials of all children and promote integrated living.

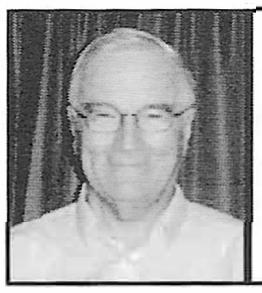
The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations. "In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!" (Dickens 1988, 1). The speaker was Thomas Gradgrind, dealer in hardware and proprietor of a utilitarian school located in a soulless northern English industrial town. In his novel *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens describes Gradgrind as "a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge. He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away" (1988, 3).

In *Hard Times*, Dickens was campaigning for the importance of imagination in life and for people's lives not to be reduced to an assortment of material facts and statistical analyses. In his school, imaginative or aesthetic subjects like fiction, music and poetry are eradicated from the curriculum, but analysis, deduction and mathematics are emphasized, as long as they have a practical value and purpose. Most of the characters in *Hard Times* act less like human beings and more like automata, conditioned to respond to life and to each other by standards of measurable expediency alone.

Gradgrind sees his utilitarian educational system as efficiently and speedily turning out knowledgeable children on a conveyor belt. He ignores the possibility that by nurturing the individuality of pupils, they might grow up a lot stronger, well-rounded, and better off.

Education in England Today

In 1997 nearly one hundred and fifty years after *Hard Times* was written, England's New Labour



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Government introduced a utilitarian educational regime in England that is as pernicious and insidious as the one described by Dickens. The government has relentlessly pursued a Gradgrindian agenda stressing the importance of pupils acquiring knowledge of basic subjects in order to serve a skilled workforce. Aesthetic and creative subjects — art, drama, dance, and music — have been sidelined. To insure that schools are focused on their instrumental goals, the government has introduced batteries of Standard Assessment Tests. The result is that the English pupil has become one of the most assessed pupils in Western Europe!

To raise educational standards, the Government has introduced targets and league tables, so the performance of schools can be monitored and compared one with another. Head teachers have to insure that teachers are single-mindedly focused on the task of maintaining or improving the schools' position in the league table, even though league tables are widely recognized as damaging staff morale. Schools also have become reluctant to admit children with special educational needs, for their presence can lower the schools' overall academic performance. Some head teachers have "cosmetically enhanced" their schools' results! In their desperation, they have ignored Lao-Tze's admonition, "The greater the number of laws and enactments, the more thieves and robbers there will be."

Notwithstanding various attempts by Government to raise standards, leaders of industry and commerce have continued to bemoan the fact that an increasing number of young people are leaving school without the literacy and numeracy skills needed in the workplace. The Government, for its part, has acknowledged that the country's future is dependent on developing young people capable of original, innovative and creative thinking. Nevertheless, it has generally ignored the fact that the utilitarian emphasis in education is stifling imagination, inventiveness, and enterprise.

Glimmers of Hope

In the last decade there have been some faint glimmers of hope. Negotiations have been taking place concerning the possible entry of Steiner schools into the state sector. Steiner schools, some educational leaders have suggested, could provide a new model, from which other schools might learn. A study of Steiner schools, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, concluded that they had much to offer to mainstream schools: in particular, the holistic approach to child development, the importance attached to spiritual values and the collegial style of management (Woods, Ashley, and Woods 2005).

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The Government is now in the process of setting up the first state-funded school to follow the educational principles of Rudolf Steiner. It also has given approval for a primary school in a deprived inner city area of Liverpool to become a Montessori school (Reynolds 2005; Garner 2007; Meikle 2007). This turning point in national educational policy — however nascent — is interesting for a number of reasons. The development of new models not only offers much-needed variation to the currently narrow system but also can provide other specific advantages. I will mention two, both of which the Government has started to recognize.

First, it is beginning to see that the world's most successful educational systems have occurred in countries where social competencies are developed *before* the academic ones. This is in marked contrast to the situation in England. Ministers now appreciate that the life-long learning agenda requires skills not dissimilar to those promoted and valued in "progressive" schools: self-direction, self-motivation and the capacity to work and learn on one's own. They

are aware that industry and commerce have constantly harangued both schools and the Government for not delivering people to them who can work collaboratively, and who have well-developed social and interpersonal skills, the very competencies espoused by progressive educators. The realization may have dawned that the relentless and depressing failure to reach targets may be related to social factors, which are imposing limits on what young people can do, and that action to improve social competencies is the way to deliver the academic ones.

Second, the Department for Education and Skills has expressed increasing interest in the social pedagogic model adopted in a number of Western European countries (Denmark, Germany, and Holland), which recognizes that learning, care, and upbringing are inseparable and interconnected parts of life (Department for Education and Skills 2005). In this model the child is seen as a social being, connected to others and at the same time with his or her own distinctive experiences and knowledge. This holistic model works closely with individuals and groups to enable them to develop their potential as social beings (Nava 2001). Such a model is thought attractive because it focuses on the care and development of the whole child within a family and community context (Petrie et al. 2006).

Countertrends

While welcoming these various developments, a serious note of caution is in order. The present Government may soon unleash harmful and powerful forces that will be difficult to restrain.

Replacing Educators with Business Managers

The Government is considering the appointment of businessmen to replace head teachers to administer schools (Whitty 2006). To the Government, managerial skills are just what are necessary. Anticipating a hostile reception to such an idea, the Government has indicated that matters of a purely educational nature would still continue to be the preserve of the teachers. But teachers are unlikely to be convinced. Teachers are likely to interpret this development as a lack of confidence in their professional competence, thus denting the already fragile morale in the teaching profession.

Teachers may have trouble winning this battle because it has been difficult to recruit teachers to fill vacant headship and deputy headship posts. The explanation is not hard to find. Teachers are reluctant to apply for posts that will involve them in the continual struggle to keep abreast of wave after wave of bureacratic policy initiatives and the attendant paperwork involved in the implementation of each one.

Privatization

Even more controversial is the Government's privatization proposal. It seeks to build 200 city academies in England and to have them in place or under construction by 2010. Academies are state-maintained independent schools set up with the help of outside, private sponsors to replace failing schools in struggling education districts. If private sponsors — businesses, charities, or wealthy individuals — can be found who are prepared to contribute up to £2 million ($3.6 million) for the construction of an academy, the Government (i.e., the taxpayer) will meet the remaining start-up costs which are in the region of £20 million ($36 million) per building. Under this scheme, failing schools are demolished and replaced by state-of-the-art buildings. The private sponsors select each school's board of governors and appoint the teachers, including the head teacher. The sponsors determine what gets taught, how it is taught, the admissions policy, which students can be suspended or expelled, and the style of discipline. The sponsors are also under no obligation to place contracts out to competitive bid, so, if they wish, they can award all of the school's business to their own companies. Few of the city academies established to date have received the full amount they were promised by sponsors; nevertheless the sponsors have retained control of their schools.

As some have observed, the academy scheme is an open invitation to entrepreneurs with religious agendas. Sir Peter Vardy — an evangelical Christian who believes in creationism and already controls two academies — has demanded that Darwinism should not be taught as a science but rather should be offered as one possible theory of the way the world came into being.

The National Union of Teachers has strongly opposed the introduction of academies on the grounds that they threaten fair admissions procedures; have a damaging effect on other local schools; threaten children's entitlements to a broad and balanced curriculum; and threaten teachers' pay and conditions of service (National Union of Teacher 2005). According to an EducationGuardian/ICM poll in 2005, only 6% of head teachers supported the Government's plans to build city academy schools (Smithers, White and Crace 2005).

In a report commissioned by the Government, the consultants PriceWaterhouseCooper stated that the establishment of academies could lead to a two-tier system based on social class and thwart the Government's policy of inter-school collaboration. Ministers chose not to publish this 264-page document (Stewart 2005)! The report only saw the light of day because *The Times Educational Supplement* made recourse to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This action obliged a reluctant Government to make the report's contents public. The authors of the report pointed to the experience of United States charter schools, the nearest equivalent to city academies. It was noted that students in charter schools were lagging six months behind pupils in state schools, a finding the Bush administration was also anxious not to publicize. Like the Labour Government, the White House sees charter schools as an effective replacement for ailing state schools. Despite their greater autonomy, it was found some charter schools soon returned to traditional values and implemented curricula with a strong basic skills emphasis.

Most professional teaching bodies in England have argued strongly against the creation of more religious and faith schools. They are concerned about indoctrination, and they also see faith schools as undermining the goal of helping children of diverse backgrounds learning to live together.

The Labour Government

After the Second World War, it was a Labour Government that brought in a series of radical reforms to redress some of the gross inequalities in society. It had a vision of the *public sector* developing the potentials of all children and promoting integrated living. Now a Labour Government is considering privatization and the introduction of religious schools. It also has narrowed curricula in the interest of academic standards and workforce needs. What, then, is the likelihood of a progressive and holistic education system emerging in England, in which not only the potential of all children is released but also the primacy of childhood is re-instated?

The dominant, utilitarian trends in England can be seen as part of the movement toward global capitalism (Baranov 2006). England's Labour Government, like governments elsewhere, want to produce a technically skilled workforce that can function in any part of the world. From this vantage point, standards and tests are simply quality-control measures. Competition among schools, privatization, and managerial control of education are all straight out of the capitalistic ethos. The development of the whole child, unless proven otherwise, is a waste of time. Many people on the political left had hoped for better from Labour, which, after all, should at least be suspicious of capitalistic models, but Labour has participated in the global capitalism enterprise.

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In many ways, we are witnessing a return to the kind of educational system that Dickens wrote about in *Hard Times*. But there is one major difference. Unlike the situation in Victorian England, we are witnessing the mounting radicalization of the young belonging to ethnic and racial groups and the growing disillusionment of young white working class males. In order to gain a sense of purpose and identity, some within both groups are seeking extremist solutions as a remedy. What will withstand these fanatic trends? Those committed to an open, progressive educational

system that nurtures the whole child and a socially integrated society must make their voices heard.

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Saying Good-Bye to the School

Chris Mercogliano

Editor's Note: After 35 years as a teacher and administrator, Chris Mercogliano has decided to leave the Albany Free School in order to devote all of his energy to writing and speaking out on children's issues. (Fortunately for us, he will continue to write his column for Encounter.) I thought you, our readers, might want to hear what Chris had to say to the school in his letter announcing his departure, and Chris agreed.

Dear Past and Present Students,
Parents and Staff, and Supporters
and Friends of the Free School,

As many of you know, I came to the Free School in 1973 at the ripe old age of nineteen. I was pretty sure I knew everything then, including being convinced that the surest way to save the world is by helping to educate children in a loving community in which they can grow up happy, self-directing and aware, and belonging to themselves.

Who's to say I was wrong — the world is still here after all — but what actually happened along the way is that I saved myself. Everything I wanted for the kids I have slowly and fitfully managed to garner for me. For instance, I am exponentially more in touch and content with who I am on the inside than I ever could have dreamed of being thirty-five years ago, even though I seem to know so much less now. I have also learned how — sometimes alternately, sometimes simultaneously — to think for myself and to collaborate with others on deep levels. And I have pretty well figured out why God put me in this body in the first place.

Most of all I have discovered a lot about love: how to give it, how to receive it, how to resolve the obstacles blocking its flow, and why it is so central to human experience. Now I understand that it is our ability to love — ourselves and each other — that saves the world each day and keeps the chaos of the shadow from taking over completely.

Thus, after three and a half decades of continuing education I have decided that I am finally ready to graduate from the Free School and take this precious wisdom out into the world to see how much good I can accomplish there with the time and energy remaining to me. I'm not certain, mind you, but at least I think I'm up to the challenge.

And how else will I find out unless I give it a whirl?

The reason I think this is the right time for me to go is that I have completed the mission I feel I was sent to accomplish: to help serve as a bridge between our founder Mary Leue, who retired circa 1985, and the new generation of committed young adults who are growing permanent roots here and are very eager to put their stamp on the school and lead it in new directions. Institutions that don't evolve soon grow stagnant and irrelevant, and it is their mission, as I see it, to figure out how to keep current with the changing times without sacrificing the essence Mary imbued the school with in the early years. I wish them well and will be available to help them with the upcoming transition whenever they feel they need it.

All that being said, my decision fills me with a vast sense of loss. I love children more than I can ever express in writing. To think of not being with them every day in our funky, chaotic, one-of-a-kind little school

CHRIS MERCOGLIANO, who significantly shaped the development of the Albany Free School, is the author of several books, including *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness*, which will be published by Beacon Press later this year.

where I can teach them in my way, and hug them and kiss them, and change their diapers and tie their shoes, and tell them stories, and trick and tease them, and above all let them be themselves and me be myself, brings up almost more sadness than I can bear.

But as I write these difficult words I find an equally huge feeling of gratitude tempering my grief. How many people can truly say that they thoroughly enjoyed going to work every day of their adult lives? How many have had the great good fortune of being taught by teachers like the ones who have taught me? Here I am especially thinking of the hundreds upon hundreds of amazing little people who have passed through the school's doors during my time. I want to thank each and every one of you for your precious, priceless gifts of wisdom.

I also want to thank the parents of those children for the remarkable trust they placed in us. I know it often wasn't easy, because the school's approach to education and to life is so far out on the edge. It was your faith in the process that made everything else possible.

Next I want to acknowledge all of the equally amazing adults I have had the pleasure of working with over the years. You have been my teachers too, and the best way I can think to thank you is to say that I will always remember and honor our association.

And then there are so many of you who have given freely of your time, energy, and money to help sustain the school and keep it on track. The school's success has always rested on the good will of the community of caring people around it, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your support to me personally and to the school as a whole. Again, words alone cannot express the feeling that is welling up in my heart right now.

What a time we've had together! Please be assured that I am leaving with no regrets and with enough incredible memories to fill three lifetimes.

With love and warmest regards,
Chris

Eva Mei and Me

A Personal Account of Intergenerational Exchange

Roger Shouse

Adults have an obligation to help their children grow a spirit of independence, courage, and even healthy disrespect for authority.

When my daughter Eva Mei was 11 years old, she and I got hooked on a collection of songs by a group of five pre- and early-teens called Dev2.0 (pronounced "Devo two point oh"). A polished Disney Corp. production, their music was nonetheless fresh and far different from most of the commercial pop/rock bands of recent years. More importantly, this "new old" music sparked conversation between the two of us about the original Devo band, its counter-commercial music, and its impact on my peers and me some 30 years ago. Eva Mei wanted to hear and see more, and the Devo CDs and DVDs I brought home a few days later simply blew her away. She played the songs for friends, took them to school, and reintroduced them to her teachers old enough to remember those thrilling days of yesteryear.

While some may view these simply as examples of corporately contrived daddy-daughter bonding, I see them as examples of inter-generational cultural exchange. The music gave Eva Mei an avenue for intellectual exercise and productive non-conformity: How many of her middle school peers were bopping down the halls singing and thinking about the sharp deceptive satire of Devo's *It's a Beautiful World*? The music also gave me a chance to talk to her about the fun and meaning in the art of an earlier generation. And the old music gave me new stories to tell Eva Mei about my life as a young man. This is vital to me, because most every night since learning to speak, she's asked, "Daddy, tell me a story of when you were little."

Young people really do want to know what the world was once like for their parents, and they want their parents — and teachers — to understand what their own world looks like as well. By sharing each

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other's experience and artifacts we start a potentially lifelong process by which authentic meaning and culture are created for youth and adults alike.

Exchange in Families

Educators tend to think of "parent involvement" in moral and academic terms. Parents should teach "right and wrong," "good study habits," and generally reinforce the school's mission. Children are expected to hear and follow parent directives, and perhaps this is necessary. After all, our children grow up so fast and there is much they need to learn. But beyond this one way interaction lies a much larger, often overlooked or undervalued realm of "home schooling" comprised of numerous less obvious ways parents exchange artistic, intellectual, and moral meaning with their children. Though the idea of filling a baby's room with sounds of Mozart or the Beatles may seem amusing, it becomes intriguing when viewed as the start of a lifelong pattern of parent-child exchange. Simple habits like fixing dinner, watching a movie, or talking out a problem together become parts of the pattern. One moment we teach them, the next moment they teach us — and surprise us — by preparing a delicious meal, writing a fascinating story, or by showing resilience in the face of a setback (such as, "I didn't make the soccer team").

My hunch is that for many young people, Harry Potter and other recent children's texts fill a vacuum resulting from schools and society becoming more narrow, protective, and custodial.

Exchange has also helped Eva Mei become, intellectually and artistically, a more literate, thoughtful, and creative person. More than that, our exchange has taught *me* a great deal. Trying to decode the meaning in my daughter's life has made me more literate and thoughtful as well. Another way to describe all this is to say that we have been examining each other's cultural texts and regularly sharing our results. The following sections briefly illustrate some of what we have learned.

Words and Music

A key cultural characteristic of any decade is the degree to which youth and adults share and value each other's music. When Eva Mei was just a toddler, for example, we played her a barrage of Beatles, especially on road trips, sneaking them in between her favorite children's songs (which can still be heard playing inside my brain today). *She Loves You* became a favorite of hers as did the songs from *A Hard Day's Night*, *Rubber Soul*, and *Abbey Road*. For me, this wasn't just for entertainment. I wanted to share with her an important part of myself.

Though her tastes have changed over the years, Eva Mei still listens to a lot of "dad's music" at bedtime or on a road trip. Even a 10-minute drive to soccer requires the playing of Half Man Half Biscuit's jab at yuppie paranoia, *Asparagus Next Left*, or Zappa's harsh, historical *Trouble Every Day*. Another song that moved her was Buffy Sainte-Marie's *Universal Soldier*. As a sixth grader, she memorized the lyrics and began singing it around the house. I told her it would be great if she could play it on the guitar. After a month of practice she played it at her middle school talent show. I worried at the time, in this age of "zero tolerance," how lines like "kill you for me my friend and me for you" might be heard or misheard by students and teachers. But she turned out to be one of the stars of the show.

Before being charged with gentle indoctrination, I ought to mention that politically I'm rather conservative. So, when Eva Mei sang the song at home I would ask her, "what do you think of the words?" We talked about violence and non-violence, about war, self-defense, and various historical figures and contexts. At some point she paused and said, "The words and ideas are really good, but I don't think they'll always work in the real world." Her meaning, that one can respect a song or an idea, yet still take a critical position on it represents a kind of thinking crucial to the development of intellect and democratic spirit. As schools become more custodial and increasingly place test performance at center stage, one wonders where (if not at home, in

books, or out on the street) students can gain such understanding.

Aesthetics, as well as ethics, are in play here. Engaging children with classic (in the sense of being relevant, thoughtful, pleasing, or valuable in any era) words and music helps them gain a more critical ear. Familiarity with popular music of the past is a form of literacy that offers inoculation against the banal commercialism of most FM radio. Eva Mei, for instance, loves a wide range of music (she recently started her own rock band) but seldom listens to the radio. It's not a rejection of all things new or commercial, but, rather, a form of aesthetic selectivity nourished by years of exchange.

TV, Film, and Literature

Reading with children is a form of exchange whose value goes far beyond helping them learn to read, "love to read," or do well in school. Done well, back and forth reading between parent and child offers a great opportunity for sharing and coordinating meaning and culture. Watching TV and video together also contributes to this process. In the context of inter-generational exchange, in fact, reading and viewing are complementary and catalytic, especially when parents allow children to read and view what they like, and find meaning in the things their children like to read and view.

When Eva Mei was three, for example, venturing out from her PBS kid show diet, she took a liking to Cartoon Network's *Sailor Moon*, an animated series about Japanese school girls who fight evil using magical powers and mystical links to the past and future. For three months, we watched together and talked about the plots, the action, and why we liked the show. We also talked about ideas like evil, good, courage, and the difference between fantasy and reality. When something happened that one of us didn't understand, the other could usually explain it. As interest waned in *Sailor Moon*, we started watching — multiple times — *Pocahontas* and *The Lion King*, movies where good, evil, and courage became more complex and where differences between fantasy and reality became more important.

Around that same time, I introduced Eva Mei to Betty Boop. For weeks we watched two volumes of the Fleischer video set over and over again. The cartoons were not only strange and funny, but also very old and black and white. "Old" and "black and white" are characteristics sadly disappearing from children's texts. Many of my grad students, mostly school teachers, tell me that regardless of content, their own students wouldn't sit still for an old black and white film. (What of old black and white books, I wondered!) Indeed, many grad students can barely tolerate the older films I use in my teaching. A student once saddened me by saying that despite its dead-on relevance to the idea of legal due process, he could never show the *The Ox-Bow Incident* to his middle school social studies class. But a few weeks later, I was happy to find Eva Mei trying to persuade her slumber party guests to enjoy a late night showing of Fritz Lang's *M*.

Lessons for Me

One might complain that all I've described here boils down to a parent teaching a child, watching a few of her favorite cartoons, and getting her hooked on old movies. Other than the daddy-daughter bonding, what did I gain? Where's the exchange? I can explain. Back in 2000, six-year old Eva Mei began begging me to read a Harry Potter book; not *to* her, but away from her, on my own. At first I resisted. I even teased her about it. She had read about a third of *Sorcerer's Stone* when I finally picked it up. Since then she and I have eagerly read and experienced every Harry Potter book and movie. But, one may further complain, so have many parents. What's the big deal?

Reading with children is a form of exchange whose value goes far beyond helping them learn to read, "love to read," or do well in school.

In fact there are at least three big deals. First, consider that Eva Mei literally insisted I read that book. She wanted me to understand it and the feelings of suspense, adventure, fear, fun, courage, and accomplishment it sparked inside her. She wanted me to learn something, just as I had hoped she would learn

from my favorite songs and movies. For me to accept her assignment, even if grudgingly at first, signified my respect for her and my willingness to put this piece of her inside me; the very thing we hope our kids will do for us as they grow old.

The second big deal was that reading Potter books revealed a genre of writing never previously appealing to me, the whole "sword and sorcery" thing. As a high school student in the 70s, I read nary a word of Tolkein and teased my friends who went around talking like Hobbits. But in 2002, Eva Mei asked to see the first *Lord of the Rings* film. It amazed us, gave us plenty of new things to talk about, and triggered a months-long binge of reading all three *Rings* books to each other. Like the American who couldn't stand soccer until he watched his child play it, following Eva Mei's interests opened new worlds and ideas to me and made me a much more literate person.

Beyond these benefits, exchanges with Eva Mei have prompted me to think and reflect more deeply about the popularity of children's texts, youth culture, and their connection to some recent troubling trends in the way we raise and teach our children. This may be the biggest deal of all, and it shifts the discussion from personal to public. My argument is not about integrating particular kinds of activities into school curriculum, but about the gradual disappearance in school and society of the free space young people once took for granted and relied upon to gather social experience, build imagination, and create authentic meaning. Wide, deep, and eventful, I enjoyed such space as a child in the 1960s as it ran counterpoint to the structured storyline of everyday school and family life.

Though my friends and I read books and went to the movies, this seldom generated much persistent enthusiasm in our lives. Our teachers tried to stir up interest in *Call of the Wild* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. We savored and blushed at *Goldfinger* and screamed from our seats at *A Hard Day's Night*. But their flavor and fury were fleeting and we certainly didn't insist that our parents read them or see them.

But film and literature are more central to the lives of today's young people. Some argue that this is due to capitalist consumerism and corporate pressure on children and parents to buy products. Yet despite massive marketing, so many current corporate ventures (e.g., many of Disney's recent offerings) simply fail to resonate with youth. One is thus drawn toward alternative explanations for the power and influence of Harry Potter and other recent children's texts. My hunch is that for many young people, they fill a vacuum resulting from schools and society becoming more narrow, protective, and custodial. Instead of free time during the summers and after school, children are regulated by play-dates, adult-supervised sports and activities, and parent-supervised homework. Even recess is being taken away. If youngsters dare misbehave in any way, they run up against "zero tolerance" policies. The upshot is that young people today have been largely robbed of opportunities to create, experience, and struggle with authentic adventure and moral drama both in and away from school (Mercogliano 2007; Shouse 2004, 2005). Absent such opportunities, is it any wonder that today's youth are captivated by books, films, and cartoons like *Harry Potter*, *Harriet the Spy*, *Holes*, *Spirited Away*, *Code Lyoko*, *Recess* in which young protagonists evade adult control, experience risk and adventure, act aggressively, break rules, solve their own problems, and learn their own lessons?

Perhaps modern life, or our fear of it, makes it difficult to venture back to the kind of youth life typical of the 50s and 60s. But just as I believed it was important to expose my daughter to an array of music, film, and ideas fundamentally different from what she might generally gather from school or popular media, I also believe we adults are obliged to offer our children a less custodial model of youth life than the one they generally experience today. *Harry Potter* reminds us of this obligation: To help our children grow a spirit of independence, courage, and even a healthy disrespect for authority.

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Seeking the Archetype of the Teacher

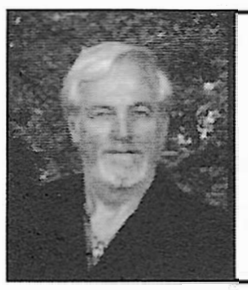
Robert Mitchell

The archetypal teacher engages her students as a total personality, rather than merely playing out the occupational role of "teacher."

It is common to think of archetypes as mythological and religious symbols. For example, one mythological image of the archetype of the teacher (or the educator archetype) might be that of *Ea*, the Babylonian god of the watery depths, who brought wisdom to humankind. Or the Egyptian messenger god, *Thoth*, of whom Ernst Cassirer (1955, 114) says, "[Thoth] has bestowed language and writing on mankind and who, through the arts of counting and reckoning, has given gods and men to know what is their due." In a similar way *Hermes*, too, is a teacher archetype, which derives from his function as messenger of the gods. That function can be interpreted psychologically as a communication between the godhead and the ego. This image of Hermes leads us to the psychological-religious realm and the teacher archetype in historical-religious figures of Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tse, and Jesus.

For example, as an archetype, Jesus, the Christ and the *Rabbi*, is a psycho-religious figure, of whom Jungian psychologist Edward Edinger (1992, 146) says, "The image of Christ gives us a vivid picture of the Self-oriented ego, i.e., the individuated ego which is conscious of being directed by the Self [the godhead]." Here, then, is a Christianized version of the Platonic philosophy that the idea of a thing is always directed by its ideal — its perfect image — that resides in the spiritual realm. The lesson taught by the teacher archetype is how to live a life that is of this world while also being directed by a transpersonal, spiritual power — that is, a life directed by what has been called the "godhead" or the "spirit-within" or, in the terms of Jungian psychology, the *Self*.

When we view the archetypes as mythological and religious cultural symbols, we can study them intellectually in order to learn about the culture and its system of sacred values. Often, it is important to begin with this kind of symbolic overview because what we are seeking to do, within ourselves, is to



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give substance to the symbolic life. That substance is best recognized through culturally familiar symbols. The process is mostly conscious.

A second way to view the archetypes is from the perspective of the clinical psychologist. In this view, we recognize that the archetypes lie within our own psyches, but they remain unconscious. They are manifest in projections. When the projections are withdrawn, we re-assimilate them into conscious understanding. This is what the therapist calls the psychic process of transference/counter-transference.

The third way to view archetypes is through initiation. A candidate for initiation understands that there is a spiritual guide within his or her own psyche and that he or she must find the path — the intrapsychic process — by which the archetype manifests itself to the ego. That is, one becomes consciously aware of one's own inner spiritual guide. Thus, there comes into existence an interactive relationship between the ego and the archetype — a process that Jung called *individuation.*

The question before us now is: How is the teacher archetype brought into play in a classroom full of children? How, indeed, does a classroom teacher find his or her own spirit guide and help children to know their own true natures and to have the strength and confidence to follow their own inner spirit? Thus, the teacher who is seeking the archetype is, first, the instigator of his or her own initiation/individuation and, second, the initiator of the children in the class.

To answer our questions about bringing the teacher archetype into the classroom, it is useful to turn to the works of two great minds of the twentieth century — that of Jung and the Austrian spiritualist Rudolph Steiner. Jung wrote very little on education, but he understood that the two most important factors affecting the education of the child are the curriculum and the personality of the teacher. The work of Rudolph Steiner, as an educator deeply concerned with the developmental processes in children, also asserts the powerful influence of the personality of the teacher. With its emphasis on the personality of the teacher, Steiner's developmental approach provides us with a structural framework that supports the Jungian psychological approach to education. Taken from this perspective, education becomes an interactive relationship between the teacher and the student that leads to wholeness.

I want to begin not with theory but with an anecdote that examines the contrasting personalities of two teachers: one who does *not* exhibit the characteristics of the teacher archetype, and therefore does not promote wholeness, and one who does. I would like to draw this picture from an experience that took place while I was completing my student teaching requirement for certification in the state of Illinois in 1983.

A Personal Anecdote: Linda and Kathy

I already had two full years of teaching experience prior to fulfilling my student teaching requirement: one year at a small, private American school in Mexico and one year at a Catholic high school in Chicago, where I taught while completing my coursework for certification. The following year, I was assigned to student teach math in a local junior high school under the supervision of a mentor teacher, whom I shall call Linda.

Linda was a very pretty young woman about 30 years old. She had a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's degree in education; she had been teaching at the school for six years. She maintained a notebook of neatly typed lesson plans, ordered according to the scope and sequence requirements of the district administration, and she had a well-stocked closet full of teaching aids and hands-on manipulatives to help her students visualize mathematical concepts. In respect to educational psychology, she was well-versed in Piaget's theories of cognitive development and confident in her ability to measure that development in her seventh and eighth grade students.

Furthermore, her classroom was well-managed and well-disciplined, reflecting the militaristic discipline that could be attributed to Mr. L., the principal. For example, L. had reduced the time between classes to two minutes, so that students, carrying all of their books, moved quickly and silently through the halls and did not waste time socializing. Linda took that initiative a step further and required her students to line up outside the classroom and enter in silence. She taught the lesson according to her own well-ordered routine, and then the students

worked silently and alone on the problem sets, until the bell rang.

I observed the routine for six weeks, as required, and then took over her classes. My first class went smoothly enough, though I felt that there was an invisible wall between me and the students that jeopardized every instinct I had about relating to young people. The class atmosphere was too sterile, and I had to do something to "break the ice."

When the second class lined up outside the door, I went out, introduced myself and told them just to come in and sit down. After all, that was Linda's routine and not school policy. The students quietly commented among themselves on this change in routine, and Linda ducked out of the room. A few minutes later she returned and said that L. would like to see me. He was not in a good mood. "I want you to get out of my school right now," he ordered, "and don't you ever come back." I was stunned but, by the time I arrived home, I concluded that I had upset the militaristic discipline of L.'s junior high school.

A week later, I was assigned to another student teaching position in a neighboring suburb. I arrived before school to meet with my new mentor teacher Kathy and Mr. M, the principal. Kathy was about the same age as Linda. At about five months pregnant, she literally glowed with that special kind of spiritual beauty evident in so many pregnant women.

When the students — an animated group of twenty-five twelve-year-olds — entered the classroom, some took their seats while the girls chatted with Kathy and felt her belly to see if the baby was moving yet. I started to take a seat in the back of the class, but Kathy stopped me. She introduced me to the students then handed me the seating chart. "You'd better start learning names," she said.

Her classes, too, were well-managed and well-disciplined. But it was evident that both stemmed from the mutual respect between Kathy and her students and not, as in Linda's case, from impersonal management methodologies and disciplinary techniques. The students were attentive during the lesson and then worked together on problem sets. Kathy asked me to participate and the two of us circulated in the classroom. But she had also paired students who grasped the material with the slower learners so that the classroom was not silent but hummed with a lively and animated interactive learning experience. As Kathy stood close, almost touching the student she was helping, one could sense that that child, too, was enfolded in the mystical nimbus that surrounded the pregnant mother-to-be and her unborn child.

The psychological importance of these examples should be clear. Linda was playing-out the role of the teacher by adapting her occupational-persona to the requirements of the job as defined by the district administration and by her boss, Mr. L. One might imagine that Linda would also adopt other personae to fit her home and social life. In a Freudian definition of the ego-centered personality, this young adult would still be undergoing the process of integrating her different personae into a singular, consistent pattern of a self-conscious ego-centered identity.

What this meant in the classroom was that, in playing-out a pre-determined role of the teacher, she was merely acting as a functionary of the system. Her occupational-persona was really only a one-sided aspect of her personality that reflected a mechanistic approach to education. But her junior high school students were more representative of multiple aspects of personality, because they were at an age of transition between the pre-rational, sentient, imaginative, and intuitive world of childhood and the more rational worldview of adults. At that age, the teacher's personality is an important influence on the developmental aspects of the educational process. Because, in general, Linda's personality was one-sided and rationalistic, her disciplined demands on her students had the effect of severing their more natural sentient, imaginative, and intuitive nature from their newly developing rational thought processes. Because this was a math class, that might seem normal, but it wasn't necessary. The effect on the child was that psychic development was redirected toward forming an abstract self-image, centered in the ego, and a rational vigilance of his or her performance and behaviors. This attitude seemed to permeate the school under L.'s leadership, making it a tense and sterile environment.

On the other hand, the school under Mr. M.'s guidance was a warm and human place; even a little chaotic, just as one might expect of a middle school with about 300 twelve- and thirteen-year-olds. Kathy's approach to teaching made the child the

most important subject of the educational experience. Her lessons were not scripted but stemmed from a solid knowledge of the mathematical principles and a vivid use of imaginative metaphors and creative examples that inspired the class. In other words, she engaged the whole personality of the child because she, herself, was engaged as a total personality, rather than playing-out the role of an occupational-persona. By engaging the whole personality, Kathy was able to *redirect* the child's imaginative and sentient energy toward 45 minutes of focused, intellectual development. Kathy masterfully and subtly redirected the energies of the child toward this objective, simultaneously educating the mind and nurturing the soul, because there was no distinct break between one and the other. In this sense, I found in Kathy an example of the spontaneous and unpretentious union of the good mother and the good teacher archetypes.

In other words, whether she was conscious of it or not, Kathy's relationship with her students stemmed from a part of her psyche that existed between the ego and the archetype: between the ego and the Self. Thus, it allowed some of the archetypal energy of the Self to become manifest in her ego. That Self is the central archetype of wholeness, and Jung equates that Self to the transpersonal, collective unconscious, a part of the individual psyche that is not just a product of personal experience but has both prepersonal and transpersonal dimensions that are found in the universal patterns and images of mythology and religion. That archetypal aspect of the psyche can operate independent of the ego; it has its own structuring and ordering principles that unify the archetypal content in symbolic forms.

Because Kathy's personality reflected that archetype in the subtle and nuanced aspect of everything that she did in the classroom, she was conveying to her students the simplicity, harmony, and beauty of an ego-archetype connection that worked together to create a holistic personality. In other words, the teacher and her students were engaged in a relationship that included an archetypal dimension. Psychologist Erich Neumann (1973, 85-86) says that this archetypal dimension can only manifest itself when there is a strong, mutual affinity, because the archetypal dimension does not arise spontaneously in the psyche of a singular individual but only in the psyche when two people are engaged in a relationship. He called this phenomenon the "two-footedness of the archetype." Equating this archetypal essence of the personality to the soul, we could say that Kathy was developing a soul-to-soul relationship with her students, while Linda's relationship was confined to an ego-to-ego basis.

The Psychology of Education

Jung's recognition that the archetypal psyche manifests itself in symbolic forms and that the symbolic Self can function separately from the ego, distinguishes Jungian psychology from all other psychological theories. This is in comparison, for example, to Freudian theory, which sees the unconscious as a repository of psychic energy that Freud called the *id*. The id is only a caricature of the soul because it identifies the unconscious only with instincts, without recognizing the symbolic forms that lie behind those instinctive drives.

The reason for making that distinction here is that Freudian psychological theory lies at the foundation of modern educational psychology, not only in the United States but in all modern nations, because modernism emphasizes individuality. That is, ego development in young people is the primary psychological factor of modernization. Jungian psychology, as well, has long professed that ego development is, indeed, the primary psychological activity of the first half of life. More recently, however, as I will discuss momentarily, Jungian psychologist Edward Edinger has proposed that there is some danger to accepting this theory as dogma. The problem lies, as even Jung acknowledged, in placing the ego at the *center* of the personality.

The developmental effect on the child of a psychological theory that places the ego at the center of the personality, as evidenced in Linda's classroom, is that it ultimately invalidates the instinctive, intuitive, and feeling-toned perceptions of reality through which the developing ego of the child maintains an integral relationship with the archetypal Self: the sentient, imaginative and intuitive nature of the child's soul. These perceptive modes are gradually eclipsed by mental-rational consciousness, and rationalism ultimately becomes the only acceptable

way of knowing. Thus, the child develops *toward* a positivistic worldview with a personality centered in the ego. Taken to an extreme by our current child-rearing and educational practices, this destroys the symbolic relationship between the ego and the soul — or Self — leading to development of a persona that is alienated from its relationship to the symbolic, suprapersonal, archetypal Self.

This is a widely accepted psychological theory of child development, and it is, in the words of Edinger (1992, 114), "destructive of the symbolic life." But if the symbolic life is destroyed, then what psychic structure serves to guide the development and expressions of the ego? According to Freudian theory, the psychic energy from the id manifests in the personality as basic instinctual and "wish-fulfilling" drives that are irrational, impulsive, asocial, and pleasure seeking. In order to keep these psychic forces from overwhelming the ego, modern culture has formulated a "social conscience" that directs the development and limits the expressions of the ego from below the threshold of consciousness. This psychic structure, which is introjected — or unconsciously incorporated — into the child's developing psyche is a culturally specific social conscience that Freud called the *superego*.

The inherent danger is that the introjection of the superego can dominate the unconscious and eclipse the creative/intuitive relationship between the ego and the archetypal Self. When this happens, the superego becomes the collective center of a *mass psyche:* a "herd-mentality" best described by a collection of "isms." For example, the mass psyche was the psychological component that supported both Nazism and Communism. But the egoism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, and consumerism that are the isms most associated with modern Americanism should make us wary of the development of a mass psyche in American culture, as well.

Jung (1969, 129, 132) says that

> If the subjective consciousness [the ego] prefers the ideas and opinions of collective consciousness and identifies with them, the contents of the collective unconscious [the archetypes] are repressed.... The mass psyche that results destroys the meaning of the individual and of culture generally.

And Erich Neumann (1970, 438-439) says,

> The building up of the persona, and adaptation to reality under the guidance of the superego as the court of consciousness ... constellates the mass man ... [who] is psychically a fragment, a part personality.... This unconscious mass component is opposed to consciousness and the world of culture. It resists conscious development, is irrational and emotional, anti-individual and destructive.

Lest we, in modern Western civilization and particularly in America, believe that we are insulated from the mass psyche, a singular example should prove to dissuade. That example is evident in the way the mass psyche in America was manipulated to justify the war in Iraq. In his book, *Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire,* author Morris Berman (2006, 212-213) writes:

> The campaign leading up to the war, was a "great conjuring trick" ... [through] the development and dissemination of interpretations that are accepted by the press and public, and so "become the lenses of which [the press and public] are aware but nonetheless shape how we think about political affairs."...They [the neocons] manipulated the institutional power of their own positions, to draw the American public into what can best be described as a synthetic neurosis that supported their template for regime change in the Middle East.... The case for war against Iraq was an argument of disconnected claims and images ... many of which turned out to be false or uncorroborated.... [T]hese techniques of mass persuasion ... are the same as those practiced by the former Soviet Union.

And, it might be added, those used by Hitler.

So, how does this concept of the mass psyche affect all of us who are concerned with reintegrating spirituality and education? Let me remind you again of Linda's classroom in 1983 and her managerial and disciplinary techniques. Developing these techniques has become a primary focus in many teacher training programs and, in the United States, they will become even more evident if the new requirements

of NCLB are adopted by Congress. But the approach to education that derives from the strict application of such techniques has the psychological effect of developing, in the child, a rigid, self-vigilant ego separated from the archetypal Self and subject to the mass psyche with the superego as its center of consciousness. So, we might look more closely at the ego-Self, or ego-archetype, relationship to find the teacher archetype that stands alone against the cultural trend toward a mass psyche.

Seeking the Archetype

The responsibility for seeking the archetype falls upon each individual teacher. Indeed, it is an individual journey of initiation, or rather the re-initiation of the ego-Self axis, the process that Jung called individuation. Fortunately, many good teachers have been raised and educated in ways that did not lead to the dissolution of the ego-Self axis. Thus, there are many good teachers who already find themselves constantly caught in the flux that Edinger calls ego-Self separation/ego-Self union — a prerequisite for finding the teacher archetype.

The relationship between the ego and the Self is a dynamic one. When a child is born, the ego is but a potential that is imbedded in the archetypal Self. Individual development occurs as the ego is gradually differentiated from the Self, and the ego takes on an identity in historical time and space that is differentiated from the timeless omnipresence of the spiritual realm. However, in children, while the growth and development of consciousness occurs each time the ego is separated from the archetypal Self, there are also periods when the ego lapses back into the comfortable status epitomized by union with the Self. While it is often accepted that the adult emerges from the child when the ego is completely separated from the Self, Edinger (1992, 5) has shed a different light on that picture. He says,

> The process of alternation between ego-Self union and ego-Self separation seems to occur repeatedly throughout the life of the individual both in childhood and in maturity. Indeed, this cyclic (or better, spiral) formula seems to express the basic process of psychological development from birth to death.

What Edinger is saying is that, while maturity arrives with the *differentiation* of the ego from the archetypal Self, we must also strive to retain an axis of connection that allows the ego-persona access to the directing powers of the archetypal content of the Self.

We live in a world dominated by the Freudian concept that the development of an ego-centered personality — the individual's socio-economic-political persona — is a fundamental principle of education. It is the psychological foundation for discovering one's economically productive "talents" and the modern basis for developing the rational attitudes and behaviors that are the hallmarks of civil propriety and, therefore, of citizenship. This observation has long been supported by Jung's general theory that the task of the first half of life is ego development. But Edinger's spiral formulation gives us a new sense of psychological balance. And it gives us a sense of the urgency with which maintenance of the integrity of the ego-Self axis should become a priority in child-rearing and education. The Self — one's archetypal essence, or soul — provides the foundation of the creativity that we define as talent and our fundamental grounding in moral and ethical values, attitudes, and behaviors. The ego-Self relationship is a more universally spiritual foundation of the personality than the ego-Superego relationship. Thus, a sense of civil propriety is determined not by obedience to authority but by the godhead. This concept was vividly expressed, for example, in Gandhi's "passive resistance" or the civil disobedience that was a hallmark of the civil rights movement. For the child, this individuation process needs both a model and a guide in the personality of the teacher: the parent, who is the first teacher, and the classroom teacher in the school.

The basic question for the adult is how the teacher expresses this archetypal Self in his or her personality without becoming an "inflated" personality — that is, an ego that is subsumed by the archetype? In other words, as Edinger (1992, 11-12) puts it, the task is to give the child a "realistic and responsible notion of his relation to the world, while at the same time maintaining that living link with the archetypal psyche which is needed in order to make his personality strong and resilient."

Outlining a New Approach

In a developmentally appropriate approach there is a strong emphasis on the teacher-child relationship in the classroom. We can take the Waldorf schools that follow Rudolf Steiner's philosophy as a baseline example, as long as we don't look at Steiner's work as dogma. For while there are certain constants in child development to be considered, there are also many variables that stem from differences in cultural time and place. In terms of the developmental constants, there are certain objective classroom activities that enhance the teacher-child relationship, such as storytelling, art projects and creative activity, dramatic presentations, and a more psychological and philosophical approach to the curriculum content, an example of which is Steiner's curricular emphasis on cultural evolution and the evolution of consciousness.

So, how do we find and train such teachers? How are they related to the teacher archetype? Seeking the archetype of the teacher within his or her own personality should become a personal priority for anyone choosing education as a profession. That is, good teachers derive from a stock that, through their own upbringing and education have been able to maintain something of the ego-Self axis and are actively engaged in the process of individuation — a lifelong process of becoming conscious of the archetypal essence at the foundation of the personality.

Let me remind you again of my student teaching experience with Kathy. I can't say that she was conscious of the archetypal essence in her personality and, certainly it did not occur to me to make that association until long after I had been deeply engaged in the study of archetypal psychology. Rather, I would say that she simply possessed solid instincts in relating to children. Kathy simply relied on and had faith in her a-rational instinctive, intuitive, and feeling-toned approach to her relationship with her students. In contrast, Linda had relied on rational methodologies and techniques that eclipsed her instincts, intuitions, and feelings.

Therefore, we might conclude that good teachers possess a parent's nurturing instincts and are able to bond with the pre-rational, sentient, imaginative, and intuitive nature of the child. Through that bonding, and therefore in subtle, nuanced ways, good teachers can introduce the child to a system of transcendental spiritual values. The bonding that the teacher achieves with his or her students while teaching the mysterious and symbolic component of transcendental concepts like truth, beauty, virtue, knowledge, respect, compassion, love, reverence, and wisdom is, in fact, an inflated bonding at the archetypal level. This inflation of the teacher's ego is felt not as an overwhelming power, but as a spiritual "high" that results from briefly attaining a unitary reality in the archetypal realm with a group of kids.

In this sense, good teachers stand at the threshold, providing continuity between the realms of childhood and adulthood, and there is no *technique* for the ability to bridge the gap between the generations. Thus, the good teacher's authority derives from being able to affect a soul-nurturing experience that integrates the child's way of knowing with the adult's rational way of knowing. Recall how smoothly Kathy was able to redirect the child's energies toward a 45-minute period of intellectual development that did not require an abrupt severing of the intellectual from the sentient and imaginative faculties of the child. Psychologically, it is that integrated experience that maintains the ego-Self axis throughout the child's maturation process.

Many good teachers, who possess those qualities in their relationships with children, come to the profession because they have a need to express their own creativity and intellectual curiosity and to pass on that creative urge and intellectual curiosity to future generations. Some good teachers come to the profession because they had a childhood experience with an adult teacher who helped them keep their own sentient, imaginative, and intuitive energies alive. And some good teachers come to the profession because they have a need to seek the truth of things for themselves, which certainly describes many university-level academics.

Defining the Teacher Archetype

Beginning with this good teacher, we can now rebuild a more scholarly definition of the teacher archetype. This can be found, for example, in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. In a book entitled, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul* (1990), Leslie Paul Thiele has a chapter entitled "The Educator and the Solitary," in which he explores Nietzsche's view of

the teacher archetype. For Nietzsche, Thiele observes, the teacher archetype can take the form of philosopher, artist, and saint.

The philosopher is the Knower: the one who searches not just for knowledge but for the wisdom of understanding — so that the knower might discover the "limitations of knowledge and the active, self-critical living of that understanding" (Thiele 1990, 165). This definition brings to mind, for example, the scientist who seeks to respect the boundaries between science and mystery.

The artist's task is "the creation of life-affirmative art" (Thiele 1990, 165). The greatest tribute is the transformation of the artist's life into an aesthetic phenomenon; that is, the artist's expression of the archetype in the personality. Thus, the process of individuation gives the fullest definition to the teacher archetype and, therefore, to the concept of the *art of teaching*.

The saint's love "is a rapture at the pregnancy of being and an active force in the realization of ideals" (Thiele 1990, 165). The saint is the bearer of the worldly creed that commands the perfection of human beings. In Nietzsche's words (in Thiele 1990, 171),

> Education ... has little to do with the accumulation of knowledge and much to do with the learning of self-control .... [E]ventually the student will ... learn to be the master, or perhaps better said, the coordinator, of his instinct.

The teacher, guided by this archetype, helps the child in the art of arranging the soul. He or she is not just a purveyor of knowledge, a talking book, but a purveyor of personality, a model of an ordered soul.

For Nietzsche, education is not meant to determine who the child should be but, rather, how children might become most fully themselves (Thiele 1990, 172). That is, the best teachers teach themselves. Using the curriculum as their medium, they are able to convey their own process of evolution; their own "unfolding."

In a more recent work that incorporates Jungian psychological theory, Clifford Mayes (2005) shows us a softer, more modern image of the teacher archetypes. He presents them as four different "prophets of the spirit."

Mayes says, the teacher as philosopher embodies *scholastic spirituality*. This is the same as the interpretation of Nietzsche's teacher as philosopher.

The teacher as federal-prophet embodies *civic spirituality*, which calls a people to "their noblest traditions and aspirations,"to deliver a message of great historical importance at the highest levels of culture (Lawrence Cremin as qouted in Mayes 2005, 163). This is also the teacher archetype that embodies the teaching of what I call the "culture of democracy."

The teacher as priest embodies *incarnational spirituality*. Here, Mayes quotes Parker Palmer (1983, 129-131):

> A knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will wrap the knower and known in compassion, in a body of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy.... We must recover from our spiritual tradition the models and methods of knowing as an act of love.

The teacher as Zen master embodies *ontological spirituality*, the spirituality of individual development. This, too, is an image of the teacher as the nurturer, the caregiver who is attuned to the psychospiritual needs of the student. Such an individual approach implies a subjective experience or relationship between teacher and student that is really embodied in the uniqueness of the human encounter between two people. This is the attribute that I would assign to my mentor teacher, Kathy. For the single image that persists in my memory of Kathy is of her leaning over a student and enfolding that child in the magical nimbus of her aura. That image says everything about the uniqueness of the spiritual encounter between two human beings.

It is helpful when the souls of new teacher candidates have been nurtured during their own development. It is then easier for the archetype of the teacher to emerge as a guide for the child's development. Although the teacher archetype arises from unconscious, spontaneous connections directed by the Self, teacher candidates facilitate the psychic development of those connections by recalling their own archetypal experiences with adults while they were growing up — for example, an experience with a parent or other adult relative or a classroom teacher.

These recalled experiences then provide the model for the archetypal relationship in the classroom between teachers and their students.

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Homeschooling

Kate McReynolds

Homeschooling represents a real alternative to traditional public education, as well as to the ideology of consumerism, conformity, and competition that permeates our increasingly standardized educational institutions.

Across the nation, public schools are cutting back or eliminating recess, art, music, physical education, and drama. Excessive homework and test-prep are encroaching on children's free time and family time, making it difficult for them to engage in activities that are important for their full development. Competitive college entrance requirements push young people to take Advanced Placement courses and SAT-prep courses, adding to their already heavy homework loads. The school work itself, driven by high-stakes tests, is typically dull and lifeless, consisting of little besides the memorization of disembodied facts and concepts. Children seem to dislike school more than ever.

We are told that all this is necessary to prepare our children for the future. But is it? Is there an alternative way to educate our children that will respect their happiness and individuality, and will foster their natural love of learning? Growing numbers of parents are turning to homeschooling.

Variations

By its very nature, homeschooling cannot be easily described. There is no unified homeschool "movement," no standardized curriculum or centralized source of information on academic achievement. Parents have many different reasons for homeschooling their children. For some the motivation is not the repressive and dreary nature of the public school curriculum, but the need to teach a religious-based education. Other parents fear violence in the schools (Bauman 2001, Masland and Ross 2003). Still others want to spend more time with their children (Blanchard 2006).

Some homeschooled children follow a traditional curriculum and a set schedule, some are "deschooled," a style of homeschooling that permits children to follow their own interests at their own pace. Some homeschoolers engage in "distance

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learning," i.e., Internet-based instruction, and purchase books and ready-made curricula. Many make or find their own materials, join learning cooperatives, and make use of community-based learning opportunities, such as public lectures, community theater, and continuing education classes (Russo 1999). Increasingly, homeschoolers are joining together to share resources and even to form partnerships with traditional schools (Bauman 2001; Blanchard 2006). But regardless of the form it takes, homeschooling is a growing trend, increasing annually by 15 to 20 percent (Bauman 2001; Masland and Ross 2003).

Evaluating the Outcomes

Academic achievement among U.S. homeschoolers is difficult to assess. There is no uniform curriculum; standardized tests are voluntary in many states; and federal systems of "accountability" are absent. Nevertheless, a variety of studies suggest that by traditional standards, homeschoolers do pretty well. They tend to score higher than public school children on standardized achievement tests (Rudner 1999), advanced placement exams (Richman 2005), the SAT (King 2004) and the ACT (Golden 2001). Homeschoolers attend college at higher rates than public school students (Richman 1999).

About three-quarters of the nation's colleges have policies regarding homeschool applicants and many, including Harvard, actively recruit homeschoolers (Cloud and Morse 2001). In 2001 Stanford University admitted 27% of its homeschooled applicants, nearly twice the acceptance rate of traditionally schooled applicants (Golden 2001). Once in college homeschoolers tend to have higher grade point averages than their traditionally schooled peers (Golden 2001).

Despite its apparent academic success, a prevalent mainstream concern is that homeschooling deprives children of the social and emotional development necessary to make it in the "real" world. The socialization question, as it is often called, represents a number of concerns. If children don't attend traditional schools will they be able to cope with college? Will they be able to get and keep a job? Will homeschooled children know how to get along with others? Will they tolerate people's differences? Will they know how to behave as society expects? I decided to talk with homeschoolers to get a better idea of their day-to-day life.

Ellen

Ellen, who lives in Brooklyn, New York, homeschools her five children. She was originally somewhat opposed to homeschooling, put off by her impression that homeschoolers were trying to shield themselves from the world, but all that changed when she sent Aidan, her first child, to kindergarten. "I knew something was wrong on the first day of school. I asked the teacher if I could meet with her and she seemed shocked. She agreed, but during our meeting her attitude seemed to be, 'What are you doing here?'" Although the school, which Ellen had researched and carefully selected, had an open door policy, Aidan's teacher didn't value parent cooperation. There were 37 children in Aidan's class and they were expected to sit in desks and do academic worksheets; there was very little playtime. Aidan, who already knew how to read, was bored and restless. Ellen was surprised to get reports that her well-behaved son was acting up in school. She discovered that the punishment was losing recess, which struck her as counterproductive. At home, her young son talked about teachers yelling at students, about students yelling, and about his feeling that his teacher was always watching him. Ellen suspected he had been pegged as a troublemaker. Six weeks into the school year a family emergency required Ellen's attention. She left town for two weeks, taking Aidan with her. When they returned, Aidan did not go back to school.

Ellen is a proponent of Waldorf education, developed by Rudolph Steiner, a holistic developmental approach that discourages introducing academics too early. Aidan spent his first year of homeschool primarily playing with friends, going to the library, doing art, and going on outings with his mother. Now, with five homeschoolers ranging in age from 3 to 13, some of the work is more academic, some of the time more structured. The children learn with books and workbooks, with friends, from programs at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, the Museum of Natural History, and other community resources. But each one has a unique developmental path that homeschooling is fostering. Ten-year-old Caleb, for example, is a peacemaker who is unusually sensitive to

people's well-being. He is more of a homebody than Aidan, and not as interested in academics. His education, therefore, is not as book-based, rather he spends time building and sculpting.

Ellen has been "methodical" about math but, in keeping with her philosophy, does not introduce it too soon.

> I observe my children very carefully to see how things are affecting them, not to cater to their every whim, but to make sure of healthy growth in every aspect of their lives, not just academics. It takes a lot of attention.

It seems to be working. When Ellen's daughter, Justine, who is sunny, artistic, and loving, was six, she spent the entire year drawing pictures. It was all she wanted to do and she was very focused and content. Now 8 years old, her interest is turning to academic subjects and she recently asked for a math workbook. When her mother gave her one shortly before bedtime, Justine took it to bed with her and began working out problems. She enthusiastically told her mother, "Don't be surprised if you see me here in the morning still working." Ellen believes that by allowing children the freedom to develop their own interests and learn material when they are ready we are protecting their natural enthusiasm and preparing them in the best possible way for the future.

> Their enthusiasm for the things they are interested in is so untainted by competition and external expectations that it's retained. Their enthusiasm for what's coming in the future is preserved. If we expose them to academics too early we're stunting their ability to use their knowledge creatively and in their own way. If it's too early they won't know what to do with what they know, but if we pay attention to the unique way that each child learns and grows, they will be free to accomplish what they want in life.

Ellen is very familiar with the socialization question. She's puzzled that people think of public school as the "real" world. "It's silly," says Ellen. "This is the world; we all live in it." Ellen believes there are many aspects of traditional schooling that work against healthy socialization, such as age segregation, competition, and the near exclusive focus on academic subjects.

> My children, and other homeschoolers I know, interact with people of all ages. In my family we have to adjust to each individual on a daily basis. There is an awareness of differences, a give and take. The older children help the younger ones and this develops compassion and understanding. Multi-age socializing is a very natural, real world practice that children in traditional schools don't experience. Homeschoolers have more time to socialize too. We are out in the world everyday interacting with people. And the children have time to play with their friends because they're not burdened with afterschool programs and homework.

Ellen goes on to say that cooperation, which she defines as working together for the common good, is not fostered in traditional schools. "How does putting children in a very competitive environment, where the emphasis is on individual achievement, promote social harmony? What are we teaching children when we socialize them in this way?" But Ellen believes that one of the biggest advantages of homeschooling for socializing children is the cultural opportunities it can provide. "The things that we share in our culture, like art and music, are the things that socialize us. This is where we come together as a society. And this is what's being eliminated from public schools."

Ellen's son, Aidan, has decided to start public high school next fall. She's not worried about how he will cope. "This is what *he* wants. He's motivated to be a part of this experience and he's a creative problem solver. He has the skills to overcome whatever challenges he meets."

Elisa

Elisa is a lively, articulate 15-year-old girl who has been homeschooled for the past year. She is a veteran of the Popcorn School, a parent cooperative pre-K and kindergarten, a public school, and a private school. When the homework started piling up in middle school, Elisa's mother suggested homeschooling. Elisa resisted, fearing she'd become a social outcast. By 8th grade, then in private school,

Elisa was doing six hours of homework a night. She was overwhelmed, sleep-deprived, and wanted a break. Desperate, her worries about being a social outcast faded. "I didn't care if I ever saw my friends again. " But it took meeting a group of homeschooled children for Elisa to get excited about what she was about to begin. Describing her reaction to a dramatic production that she attended staged by homeschooled children, Elisa said, "These are homeschooled kids and they are happy and they are doing this incredible production. I never looked back." I asked Elisa how she knew the children were happy. She said:

> You can tell. When you're in a place like school everyone seems very empty. They have very structured days and they are forced into a corner. But when I met these homeschool kids, they knew who they were and where they were going. You could see it in their smiles, in their eyes. I had never met anyone like that. They had an intelligence and a knack for life. There's a tangible difference.

Elisa told me that she has wanted to write a novel ever since she could say the word "novel." She's writing one now, and studying herbs and medicine. "I'm doing things that really interest me, and that's the cardinal difference. I'm getting to do things that I wouldn't have been able to do in school, things that will help me in my career path and in my life." Elisa also studies French, geography, mathematics, and English. She has two voice teachers and a dance teacher. Elisa and her mother have written a play, a parody of regular school that is currently in production. "It's the most surreal thing about homeschooling. You don't expect to be able to write a play and see actors voicing the words you wrote. It's unbelievably heart-warming and jaw-dropping at the same time."

Did her fears about her social status prove true? Elisa laughs.

> There are so many misconceptions about homeschoolers, that they're nerds, they're isolated. If you take any class, you'll meet people. But when you choose the classes you take you meet people who are mutually interested, and you come together in a way that you can't in school because in school it's forced down your throat. The people I've met in these classes are friendships I've kept."

Elisa expresses her belief that holistic education is the natural way to learn and that experiential learning is its essence. "Actually getting to touch and feel what you are learning is what's missing in the public schools." She is so wonderfully alive and enthusiastic that I asked Elisa to say more about happiness. She replied:

> This might sound odd, but once when I was little I was at the grocery store with my Dad, I saw this organic milk and on the carton it said, "From happy cows, on happy farms." I begged my Dad to buy that milk, and I could taste the difference. In schools kids are not naturally grown; they don't develop naturally. They can't tell happy from sad; they are fed emotions. It was a nightmare that I couldn't wake up from. Now I feel real. I feel this is what life should be like. I have never been more fulfilled and genuinely happy.

Henry and Adam

Henry and Adam have taken charge of making popcorn for the Pied Piper Children's Theater production of *Anything Goes*. Ten-year-old Henry measures oil, then popcorn into the movie-theater style popper. Seven-year-old Adam closes the popper door and begins to assemble popcorn boxes. He shows me a hot mitt that he brought so he wouldn't burn his hand when he opens the door. Their friend Emma joins them and they play as the kernels heat up. When the popcorn is ready, all three children scoop it into boxes with a paper cup. They repeat the process until the concession stand is full of popcorn boxes. I watch them closely, trying to detect deficits in their socialization. I can't see any.

Homeschoolers, including Henry, Adam and Emma, frequently participate in theatrical productions at the Pied Piper Children's Theater in New York City, where I live. The founder and Artistic Director of the theater, Reinaldo Martinez-Cubero, has worked extensively with homeschoolers and public school children, in children's theater and in his private music studio. I asked him if, in his experience, there was a difference in the social skills of

homeschooled and traditionally schooled children. He replied,

> Not anymore. When I started working in children's theater, fifteen years ago, there was a difference. The homeschooled children were not as skilled at negotiating and compromising with their peers. That was really the only difference. But that has changed. Homeschooling has evolved; parents are more committed to getting their children out and involved with other children. The Pied Piper Theater is a magnet for homeschooled kids because the families create a whole curriculum around the show so they have a great learning experience and a great social experience. I always have ten or fifteen homeschoolers and they are no different from the other kids. Of course, so much depends on the parents. We have some great parents who are doing great things. We have one homeschooler who has serious learning disabilities. If she were in public school she'd be in a class for disabled kids and she'd be doomed. But as a homeschooler she's been able to do everything that the other kids do; she's no different.

As a frequent volunteer at the Pied Piper Children's Theater, I was surprised to discover that there are so many homeschooled children involved. It turns out that I'm acquainted with many homeschoolers. I didn't know it because they're just like everyone else.

The World as a Class Room

The stereotype of the isolated, misfit homeschooler is giving way as, in growing numbers, homeschoolers make the world their classroom. It appears that homeschoolers spend more time in their communities and have meaningful interactions with a wider variety of people than traditionally schooled children typically do. Perhaps this accounts, at least in part, for the empirical findings that suggest that parents who educate their children at home are doing a good job socializing them (Russo 1999). In one study, Brian Ray (2003) of the National Home Education Research Institute surveyed over 7,300 adults who had been homeschooled, most for at least seven years. Ray found that homeschool graduates were significantly more involved in community and civic affairs, such as volunteering and working for political candidates, than were traditionally schooled adults. They also voted and attended public meetings at higher rates. Over 74% of the young adults surveyed had taken college classes compared to 46% of the traditionally schooled population. The overwhelming majority was gainfully employed or attending college. 98% of the homechool graduates had read at least one book in the six months prior to the study, compared to 69% of the comparison group. Ray's study demonstrated that adult homeschoolers are happier and find life more exciting than their traditionally schooled peers. Other studies have concluded that homeschooled children are not socially isolated (Meighan 1984), that their self-concept, a barometer of socialization, tends to be better than traditionally schooled children (Taylor 1987), and that home-schooling fosters leadership skills at least as well as traditional schooling (Montgomery 1989).

Conclusion

The British pediatrician and psychoanalyst, D. W. Winnicott (1986, 178-179) cautioned that there is a price to pay for education that neglects children's emotional and imaginative capacities. We can measure it, he said, "in terms of the loss of the opportunity for creative learning, as opposed to being taught." Creative learning is connected to Winnicott's concept of creative living, which he considers the foundation of health and happiness. He says, "In creative living you or I find that everything we do strengthens the feeling that we are alive, that we are ourselves" (1986, 43). When children learn creatively, they retain a personal, self-directed sense of purpose that is unmistakably their own. And this can be measured in enthusiasm and vitality. The homeschoolers that I met are learning and living creatively. They seem to be the very picture of homeschool advocate, John Holt's (1983, 288) description of the learning child, "It is their desire and determination to do real things, not in the future but right now, that gives children the curiosity, energy, determination, and patience to learn all they learn." Homeschooling represents a real alternative to traditional public education, as well as to the ideology of consumerism, con-

formity, and competition that permeates our increasingly standardized educational institutions.

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Unschooling

Homeschools Can Provide the Freedom to Learn

Kristan A. Morrison

To truly respect the individual, we must allow her to find her own life's meaning.

Imagine a school in which there is no common curriculum, where all students study what they want, when they want, and how they want. At this school, there are no classrooms, no set-in-stone schedules, no grades, and no age-segregation. Students are free to mix with children of other ages, and they are often out in the community. Most people would have a hard time imagining such a place and might even balk at calling it a school. When people think about school, they typically envision the conventional model, one with distinct classrooms, regimented schedules, and lessons that are mandated by state or federal authorities. In this conventional model, students have little to no choice in the subjects they take. What choice they do have comes in the area of electives, but there, too, choices are limited by the courses offered. Students have limited freedom of movement; they must ask permission from the teacher to leave their assigned classroom, and even within the classroom, students are expected to act and move as the teacher requires.

For people who attended traditional schools, it can be difficult to envision alternatives. But alternatives do exist, and they need to be examined and brought to public awareness. This is particularly important in light of current political policies, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, that call for choices and options in education. Unfortunately, these choices are often defined narrowly in education, such as new ways of preparing for workforce readiness and global competition. As a result, the idea of choice is actually much narrower than the rhetoric implies. Careful consideration of alternative models of education is needed in order to broaden the gen-

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eral public's understanding of what education can be. The unschooling model is one alternative.

Unschooling: Historical Background

Unschooling, sometimes referred to as deschooling, is the homeschool version of freedom-based education, in which children are free to decide what they study, and how and when they study it. Freedom-based schooling has a number of historical antecedents. Dana M. Bennis (2006) argues that one antecedent is found in most pre-industrial societies. In these societies, children are actively engaged in society and learn skills and knowledge by means of imitation, apprenticeship, modeling, and conversation rather than through formal schooling. According to Bennis, freedom-based education is also rooted in the Western philosophical traditions of the ancient Greeks, and Romantic thinkers like Rousseau and Froebel; in the Libertarian-Anarchist Tradition; in the Transcendentalist movement of 19th century America; and in the 20th century free school movement (such as A. S. Neill's Summerhill School and the many U.S. free schools that cropped up during the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s). John Holt is widely credited with being a catalyst for freedom-based homeschooling known as unschooling (See Ron Miller [2002] for an in-depth examination of Holt's legacy).

Unschooling is grounded in the same premise as all free schooling — that children are naturally curious and have an innate desire to learn and grow. If left unfettered, uncoerced, and unmanipulated, children will vigorously and with gusto pursue their interests, and thus learn and make meaning on their own and in concert with others (Dennison 1969; Hern 1996; Holt 1972, 1989; Illich 1971; Llewellyn 1997; Mercogliano 1998; Neill 1992). Proponents of freedom-based education argue that children who are given freedom to pursue their own interests will become better democratic citizens because they will know themselves, and will have learned how to negotiate with others and to overcome obstacles. (For an in-depth examination of the connections between freedom-based education and democratic citizenship, see Morrison 2007).

A Case Study

The following is a case study of a family that homeschools three children, using the unschooling model of education. I spent approximately 20 hours, over four visits, observing the mother, Sally Smith, and her three children: William, age 12; Christina, age 9; and Rebecca, age 7. The observations took place at a park, a Home School Science Fair, the local library, and the family's home. Sally and her children were engaged in various activities. In one setting, the library, William was involved in a computer search class. I also conducted a separate interview with the mother, Sally. In both my observations and verbal communications, I was seeking to discover the ways in which unschooling differs from the conventional model of schooling.

Scheduling

I asked Sally to describe a typical day in the life of her home school. She responded,

> Typical day? There is none.... In the morning, we all get up when we're rested (every now and then, we have to go somewhere early in the morning, but that is rare), and have breakfast when we're hungry. Mostly, William and Christina fix their own breakfasts. Sometimes, William goes back upstairs to read or play a video game with breakfast, or he may stay downstairs to watch something on TV or get on the computer during his breakfast, and sometimes we sit at the table and all eat breakfast together. We have a "morning clean-up," where the children are supposed to bring their dirty clothes to the laundry room, and their dirty dishes to the sink, and I remind them if someone may be coming over that day, in case they want their rooms picked up before our guest(s) arrive, or not. Lots of time, the children want to draw in the morning, and sometimes play a game or have me read a story, although it's getting rarer and rarer for William to want his mother to read to him. He'd rather just read it himself now. If, in checking my emails, I find a news article that may be of interest to one or more of the children, I'll call them over, and we'll read it, and perhaps talk about it.

We plan most of our outside activities in the afternoons, and there is generally only one, maybe two days a week when we don't go somewhere that day. We seem to all like and need a certain amount of "downtime."

Most of what William does all day is play around on the computer, read, draw, play video games, skate in the backyard on the ramps, and play with the dogs, and talk to friends (online and on the phone). Although that doesn't seem like much, I think he's learning quite a bit on the computer. He's put together his own web site. He found some Japanese on-line language lessons that he's been learning from, he's writing (in email, in instant messages, and in chat rooms with his friends), he finds games that stretch your mind and help you to think things through logically, and his decision to learn how to "do division better" came about because of some computer game that he wanted to be able to play better, and he knows that he needs division skills in order to do that. We also found a brand-new 4-H project booklet about computers that he was excited about, because it told how to build your own computer, and things like that, so he thinks that may be his 4-H project for the year. He wants some specific books about Manga art, and how to draw in that style.

Right now, as a family, we've begun a 4-H project about hiking, which will include us learning how to make beef jerky, fruit leathers and such, and then planning several small hikes, and at least one big, overnight hike (preferably in the mountains).

I'm (almost) always available for answering questions. I only ask that when I'm on the toilet or the phone, that people refrain from asking me questions. Sometimes on afternoons when we're going nowhere, or in the evenings, we'll watch a movie together, which is great for discussions, whether it be an historic movie, or a Discovery or Animal Planet show, or a show that deals with modern issues.

We've had days where we unashamedly watched TV or movies all day, and had a great time with it (like when we watched almost all of "Roots" in one sitting!). We've had days where we've been gone all day, going from one activity to another. Some days we planned on doing nothing but errands, and end up in Wal-Mart with the guy who takes care of the fish, and he talks and answers the kid's questions for 30 minutes (at least) about the fish, then get a can of paint, and the children ask the guy mixing it all kinds of questions about the paint mixer: how does it work, etc. Days when friends come over and the children just play, occasionally building and then mapping elaborate forts with every piece of furniture in the house. Days when we spend our time going to the doctor or dentist (and end up looking at the anatomy charts on the walls, and discussing where everything is, and what it's called). Days when we've spent a good portion of the day doing nothing that looks remotely educational, then about 9 p.m. you end up reading for several hours to the children, who keep asking for "just one more" chapter. And, yes, even days where the children decide they want to work on some workbooks, and do a timed math drill. Days to explore outside, with lots of jars for caught critters, with Mom waiting inside, having pulled out all the insect guides, just in case they may be needed. And days when it just must be a full moon or something, because everybody is fighting, from mom and dad, brother and sisters, even the cat and dogs, and everyone just needs to go to their own space to have quiet time to think and mull things over. (The turtle, though, never fights. Only an occasional hiss.)

Not only is there not a set, prearranged schedule that is duplicated from day-to-day, as in most conventional schools, there is also no clear delineation between weekdays and weekends, or between the school year and vacation. This is especially beneficial in this family where the father, John Smith, has a job that requires him to work some weekends and evenings. Sally noted that

> If these children were in school, they would only see their Dad three days a month. He works late, and they would be in bed before he got home most nights, in order to get up early for school. In the mornings, Dad would be

> sleeping while the children were getting ready and leaving for school. He only has one weekend and one extra Sunday off per month. Instead, we all stay up later, and get up later than most people, but it works out much better for us, and makes for a much healthier family life.

Curriculum

Unschooling is rooted in the basic premise that education should honor the dignity and autonomy of each individual by allowing her to freely discover her own life's meaning through the exploration of her interests, rather than being made to study some pre-arranged sets of knowledge at a standard pace. Thus, unschooling embraces no set curriculum, nor does it compel students to study particular subjects at a fixed time or age. What the children study is up to them; the curriculum is largely student-directed. I asked Sally about her role in the children's curriculum. She responded that

> I think that it's pretty even between what is child-initiated, and mom-suggested. Of course, if I suggest something, and nobody wants to do it, then we scrap it, and go on to something else. I do tell the children about different activities in the home educators' association that they might be interested in, as well as looking through various publications that offer classes, programs, etc., to homeschoolers or the public in general, and ask the children if they are interested. At the library, the children are free to pick out anything they want, and I also bring home books, DVD's, books on cassette, etc., that look interesting to me, or that I think the children may like. Photography books are great for initiating conversation about things and places they may not otherwise see or be aware of. I just leave everything within reach, and sometimes ask if anyone would like to look or watch, or listen with me. Some things that were definitely not my idea included ballet classes, Irish Step Dance classes, video games, DragonBall Z, Japanese animation, Lee Middleton dolls, volunteering at the animal shelter, being a foster parent for mama dogs and puppies from the animal shelter, and creating a web page. I've found that it isn't possible to just plan things and tell the children that they have to do it, because they simply won't do anything that they don't want to do. William makes it absolutely miserable to take him anywhere that he doesn't want to go, so I try to greatly eliminate times like those. I also keep a personal journal to record what books the children read, books I read to them, places we visit, movies we see, things they do on a day-to-day basis. I frequently look back over the journal, and make notes to myself of anything that I think may be lacking, and I will attempt to expose the children to whatever is missing, and they may either accept it or not. If so, great. If not, then I know that we can always come back to it another time.

A frequent criticism leveled at unschooling is that children, if given their choice on curriculum matters, will "do nothing." John Holt countered that children will get involved in a number of things "once they trust us [adults, parents, teachers] and believe that we respect their interests" (1972, 96). Holt argued that the tendency to believe that students will just "goof off" if given free choice of activities stems only from observations of students within conventional models of education, where they have been well-trained to wait for someone else to tell them what to do, and have been made to understand that their own choices cannot be trusted. Sally echoed Holt's ideas, arguing that her children are actively involved in a great many activities. She stated,

> All of my children have very specific passions. William goes from one passion to another, throwing himself into whatever he's interested in so much that he talks of little else. Right now he's very into Japanese animation, computers, and skating. In years past, he's gone through such passions as insects, *Star Wars*, the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, dinosaurs, Brian Jacques books, cooking, *The Hobbit*, time travel, *Animorphs* (books, then TV show), and other things that I can't think of at the moment. Christina has always loved baby dolls, and has gone on to collecting Lee Middleton dolls. But, of course, her main passion right now is with animals. She went through a horse stage, a wolf stage, dog and cat stages, times when she HAD

> to watch *Emergency Vets* and *Vet School Confidential* every day, and now, she must learn all she can about guinea pigs. Rebecca's passions are always things creative: dancing, drawing, dress-up, make-believe, pretending to sing opera, creating stuff out of junk, and recently, an interest in photography.

Sally added that because her children are free to learn about whatever interests them, they have a keen love of learning. Because they are free to choose their own curriculum and their own pace, they are not made to feel inferior if their pace is different from someone else's — a situation which could curtail their love of learning. An example of this individualized curriculum pacing is that nine-year-old Christina is not reading yet. Most traditional educators would be concerned that a nine-year-old is not reading and would suggest evaluation and remediation, which could well result in her developing feelings of inferiority and a loss of her enthusiasm for learning. But this isn't happening. Sally is not worried that Christina is not reading yet, and so neither is Christina. Sally says she has faith that Christina's reading will come together ultimately, when *Christina* feels that it is necessary and important. Sally is beginning to see that her daughter might be getting to that point, for not only has Christina remarked on at least one occasion that her lack of reading ability is "getting in her way now," but she has also requested that her mom help her with some formal phonics lessons. Sally said, "recently every time I turned around, Christina was putting a book in my face, saying 'Read the next chapter.' She usually doesn't want for me to read all that much to her, so this was a change for her."

When I asked Sally how she responds to the criticism that if the children study only what interests them, they will miss out on certain academic subjects and thus not be terribly well-rounded, she responded that the curriculum in this model of schooling touches on virtually all traditional "academic" areas, but often in a much less fragmentary way than in traditional schools. Not only are the subjects closely connected to the learners because the children study what interests them and has meaning for them at a given moment in their lives, they are also not fragmented (alienated) from the students themselves, nor are they are fragmented or artificially divided from each other. In other words, the natural connections between subjects are not lost. For example, when the children did a stained-glass stepping-stone project with me, they were learning about properties of glass and about the conversion of a liquid into a solid (cement), both of which could be termed "science concepts." They were also learning about aesthetically pleasing color combinations (an "art concept"), and about measurement (a "math concept").

Sally stated that her children are in no way deprived of learning the "canon" of subjects. They, like traditionally schooled children, learn about science, math, reading, art, movement, sports, history, music, and countless other subjects. In addition to this "academic" curriculum, these children are also experiencing a "social curriculum." They are involved with a home schooling network of families, with a 4-H club, and they are also active in doing service projects, such as taking care of preschoolers, serving food at soup kitchens, and helping out at the animal shelter. Thus, they learn to interact with all sorts of people in all sorts of settings.

What looks on the surface to be no curriculum, upon closer inspection, seems to be a rich, deep, extensive academic and social curriculum. The key is that there is no "one size fits all" approach to timing of subject choice and skills development, and there is no sense of urgency about getting everything "covered" in 12 years. The Smith family recognizes that learning can (and should) go on throughout one's lifetime, and to ensure this, they are trying to instill in their children a love for the learning process by allowing the children a high degree of choice in what is studied, when, and how.

Teaching Methods

From the description of the curriculum, one can see that the teaching methods are many and varied, and that the teachers are not just Sally and John Smith. The children are sometimes exposed to traditional teaching methods (such as lectures, workbooks, high levels of teacher direction/supervision), as when William heard a lecture on search engines in his computer research class at the public library, or when Rebecca performed exercises in a phonics workbook. But such methods do not make up the majority of the children's learning experiences; rather, they experience teaching

methods that focus predominantly on active participation and hands-on manipulation of resources. For example, at our preliminary meeting, in which I introduced the idea of doing a stained-glass project, the children right away began designing patterns. Similarly, at the Home Educators Science Fair, the children ranged freely from exhibit to exhibit, often taking part in the designed hands-on activities. The children also take part in a number of cooperative learning activities, as when William coaches the girls on how to navigate around the computer, or when the girls play with two other girls, one age 3, and one age 7, in a sandbox making a "cake."

Sally, John, other adults, and/or children who become the "teachers" of the Smith children are not just planners of activities for the children (although they can be). Rather, they are resources, facilitators, "midwives" (to borrow a term from Mary Field Belenky et al. 1986) for the children's learning. They take an active role when asked, but often will step back and let the children experience for themselves with their *own* lenses, not someone else's. The parents hope that a likely outcome of such teaching methods is that the children become active creators of knowledge, rather than passive consumers of information.

Resources

As I have briefly noted, this homeschool uses a wide variety of resources, ranging from traditional school resources such as workbooks, texts, fiction, computers, art supplies, and science equipment, to resources that are rarely available in conventional schools — especially the resources of the community.

The Smiths use the many city and county parks for outings for both play and nature study. They go to the museums in the city, state, and region. They take classes offered by the public library or community and church groups. They are members of a local 4-H club and go to area farms and make use of the 4-H lending library. The children volunteer at local social service agencies such as a food bank, hospice, and animal shelter. They have toured the transit authority, recycling center, and the local news station. They have traveled to major cities outside the state, and they have gardened in their own backyard. With no limitations on what the children study and when they study it, this homeschool is free to use all the resources that capture the children's interests.

Evaluation of Learning

The Smith family and other unschoolers reject the idea that children should all be the same and held to the same standards or criteria. Thus there is no ranking or grading. Sally believes that she gets the feedback she needs by simply interacting with her children, and she continually modifies her interactions based upon this feedback rather than any she might receive from a formal assessment instrument such as a standardized test. Sally stated that

> As the years go by, when you are side-by-side with a person for years and years, you can see where their strengths lie, and encourage them to grow more; and where the weaknesses or gaps may be ... you gently help in that area or introduce things that may help fill in that gap.

Furthermore, the motivational function of grading becomes unnecessary. A's and F's are not needed as carrots and sticks. Unschooling families argue that if students are free to choose what they do and study and learn, then it is unlikely that a student will be "unmotivated."

Sometimes grades are defended as tools of self-knowledge. By grading children we give them knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. But the Smith children possess this knowledge and are quite often working on their weaknesses, as when William works on his division skills to get better at playing a computer game, or Christina works on her reading skills because not reading is "getting in her way now." Moreover, Sally provided a good means of self-evaluation when she suggested that William

> put his ideas in a binder, along with keeping track of the books he's read, places he's gone, movies he's watched, video games played, and projects completed. I thought that this would be a good way for him to look back and remember what he's done this year, and will help him in the years to come, in case he wants to put together some sort of transcript for college one day, and a practical way to get him to write something. When I suggested it, he thought it was a good idea, especially writing down his

> ideas, because he admitted that sometimes he really does want to do something, but forgets easily, and so it would be a good way to remind himself. He also came up with the idea of rating the movies and books with 1-4 stars, depending on how much he liked them. I sit down with him about once a month, and we go over his binder to see if there's anything he would like to do that he forgot, and to update his information.

The reporting-to-parents function of a formal evaluation/assessment system also is unnecessary in the Smith's homeschool. When children get to choose what they study, they don't keep that information to themselves. They are eager to share with anyone who will listen what they're pursuing or spending their time on. Sally wrote, "I know when my children learn something because I live with them everyday, and they come to me and tell me things that they've learned (and don't stop talking about it!)." In the time I spent with them, the Smith children generously shared the information and skills they'd learned. William, for example, demonstrated Manga art techniques in drawing an original stained-glass pattern. Rebecca demonstrated that she knew many letters and numbers when creating templates for our stained-glass project. Christina demonstrated her knowledge of turtles (and her consideration for me) when, after I touched the turtle's shell she squirted some anti-bacterial gel into my hand saying that turtle's shells can carry the salmonella bacteria. In their play, their conversations, and their "academic" activities, the Smith children clearly demonstrated that they had mastery of interpersonal skills, academic skills (like memorization, concentration, categorization, etc.), creative skills (dance/movement, drawing, etc.), physical skills (climbing, skating, running, jumping, etc.), that they had active imaginations, and that they had a solid base of content knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. An A, B, or C was not needed to "prove" that these children have learned something. The proof was the children themselves.

Conclusion

At the end of my time with the Smith family, I asked Sally what she liked best and least about this model of educating her children. She responded:

> What I like least ... is the lack of understanding by so many other people about it, including other home schoolers. What I like best is the incredible amount of freedom. We are free to plan our lives around our schedule, and not the school schedule. We are also free to learn about whatever interests us, and free to actually keep a love of learning, and not be ashamed about that. I've met lots of children in schools who didn't think that learning was "cool," or who had already lost their love of learning. We are free to express our creativity. Only a small handful of students in schools keep their creativity, although we were all born with some amount of it. It just gets squashed out by schools, in many cases, often by having to only create what the teacher says to create, or by being ridiculed by other students about things created. I don't think that my children will flounder about in the years to come, not knowing who they are. They will have had plenty of time of making their own decisions in life, and presented with many different options in life, and will probably not say "I don't know what I want to do with my life. I don't even know what I like, or what my interests are." Sadly, many adults say exactly that, for they've always had someone else making decisions for them, and haven't had much time to figure out how to think for themselves. Time. Time to play. Time to be children. Time to ponder things over in your own head. So many children today have no time, or at least very little, to call their own. They go to school, they go to after school activities, they do homework. Freedom to eat when we're hungry, sleep when we're tired, and to learn how to tell these things, and to know our body well enough that we can keep ourselves healthy. Being able to go to the bathroom when we need to, and not when someone else says we can. Being able to converse with people older and younger than ourselves, and to be okay about that. And peer pressure is practically eliminated.

She ended her answer by showing me a Langston Hughes poem that she had copied into one of her scrapbooks:

A lion in a zoo
Shut up in the cage
Lives a life of smothered rage

A lion in the plain
Roaming free
Is happy as ever
A lion can be

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ESL Students Discover the Rewards of Reading through Reader Response Journals

Helene Dunkelblau

Response journals help foreign students relate their own life experiences to the books they are reading and allow the teacher to participate more meaningfully in their lives.

I teach English as a Second Language (ESL) at a community college in a large urban setting. The students are required to take my class because they have not been able to pass a university-wide reading proficiency exam, a gateway to entering a full academic program at the college. My students come from countries across the globe, and bring their diverse linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds into my classroom each semester. The length of time they have been in the United States varies as much as their backgrounds; some have only been here a few months, while others came when they were young teenagers and went through high school in this country. But despite the differences in their backgrounds, there is one thing that they all have in common: the daunting challenge of being able to read fluently in English. To become proficient readers, they need to persevere in grappling with a barrage of new vocabulary, complicated sentence structures, and unfamiliar rhetorical forms. Needless to say, this effort can turn the act of reading into a huge stumbling block and a source of anxiety and frustration.

At the beginning of the semester, when I first meet my students, I am confronted with a group of very reluctant readers. So I like to meet the matter head on by having everyone introduce themselves, not just in the usual way by giving their name, native country and native language, but by sharing who they are as *readers*. I ask them a few questions: What types of material do they like to read? What subjects do they like to read about? What books have they read in the past six months? What is their favorite book? Then, we go around the room answering the questions.

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While everyone can offer an answer to the first two questions without much difficulty, when we come to the part about books, invariably, at least half of the students just shake their heads and "pass"; only a handful are able to name titles of books they have read, not just in the last six months but, as unbelievable as it may seem, ever. (This often includes books in their native languages). I have gone through this first day "ritual" with my students for four years now, and with each new class I get a similar response. I believe that the explanation is not a simple one, but perhaps one of the key elements is that my students have just not developed a love of reading.

Reader Response Journals

To address this need, I include a complete novel in my ESL reading curriculum, and require reader response journal writing throughout the semester. Reader response journals are informal literature logs in which students focus on their personal reactions to a story rather than on strict literary analysis (Peregoy and Boyle 1997). This instructional activity comes out of a theoretical framework which assumes that all reading involves transactions between reader and text (Knoblauch and Brannon 2002). Proponents of this view argue that text cannot be understood as an isolated entity, and emphasize the active role of the reader as a creator of meaning in the reading process (Beach 1993). Reader response helps students to interact freely with written material, enabling them to discover the meaning of texts from within themselves (Elliot 1990). Reader response can serve a transformative function by providing a gateway to introspection, since journal writing is inherently conducive to reflection (Mlynarczyk 1998). From my holistic perspective, I assign response journals to open a space where my students can "dialogue" with a text — a space where, without penalty or intrusion, they can explore their feelings, memories, and dreams as they relate to a text, or a story and its characters.

Choosing the Novel

When I first learned that I would be teaching advanced level ESL reading, I decided to include *The Alchemist* (Coelho 1993) in my syllabus for a few reasons. First of all, because I wanted to give my students the experience of reading a complete adult novel that they could actually finish, the brevity and simplicity of language in *The Alchemist* made it a reasonable choice. Less than 200 pages long, the novel is presented as an "adult fable," with a simple story line that does not require deep literary analysis to be fully understood. It also has relatively simple vocabulary and sentence structure, so it seemed less likely that the text would become a major obstacle to comprehension. In addition to these practical concerns, a main reason for choosing this particular novel was that it contained content conducive to reflection on universal spiritual themes and values. The main theme of the novel has to do with authentic identity, mission and purpose in life, or personal calling, and I felt that the immediacy and relevance of this subject matter would serve to draw my students into the text and make them want to finish it. I was not proven wrong.

Getting Started

At the beginning of the semester, as soon as I introduce the book, I inform my students that, in addition to basic comprehension and vocabulary assignments, they will be writing eight reader response journal entries (one per week) throughout the time we are reading *The Alchemist*. I also give them specific instructions on how to write a reader response journal. They are told that reader response is a *personal* response or reaction to what they read, which requires honesty and depth of thought. Since many students have never done this kind of journal exercise before, I explicitly offer some questions or prompts to help them focus their responses.

- What does a passage or incident in the story make me think of?
- Have I experienced some of the same things as one of the characters?
- What would I do if I were the character?
- What do I think will happen to a character?
- How would I like the story to end?
- What questions do I have, and what don't I understand about the story?

These points are provided to invite the students to become involved in what they are reading and to relate the text to their own lives. I have found that

without this scaffolding, journal entries become basically a summary of the plot and the purpose of the exercise is lost.

Finally, I tell my students that they will not receive a grade for their journals because there is no such thing as a correct or incorrect response. What I am looking for, however, is the depth and development of their ideas in relation to the story. Furthermore, I explain that I will not be *correcting* their writing. Instead, I will be *responding* in writing to what they have to say, so they shouldn't be overly concerned with grammar or form in their responses. By taking the role of "respondent," a key element in dialogue journal work (Peyton 2000), I am able to become a participant, rather than an evaluator or judge of my students' work. In this way, my students are given the space to focus on the text and express themselves freely without fear of making mistakes or being "wrong."

Student Responses

As I have already mentioned, the plot of the *The Alchemist* is quite simple. Santiago, a young shepherd living in Spain, has a recurrent dream that there is a treasure waiting for him at the Pyramids of Egypt. With the assistance of various characters who turn out to be his helpers and teachers, he leaves his home country and makes his way first to Morocco, and then through the Sahara Desert to his final destination. Right from the start, my students identify with the theme of traveling to unknown places, since they themselves have left their own countries to fulfill a "dream" in a new land. A Korean student explained his identification with the story this way:

> I was surprised after reading this book because I felt as if this book gave an account of my story. Actually, Santiago seemed like me because ... two years ago, I had to decide about my future whether to go to the U.S or not to go. I had lots of good things such as a job, money and a beautiful girlfriend like Santiago. However, I thought my job was not a lifetime job. So I had to decide what I had to do.

A Chinese student summed it up as "a boy trying to find his personal legend in a foreign country. For new immigrants, I think this book can be a good inspiration."

But identifying with the "stranger in a strange land" aspect of the novel is only the beginning. Beyond the simple story line, the lessons that Santiago learns along the way, the spiritual "teachings" that he receives from various characters, and his expanding consciousness of who he is and his true possibilities, are aspects of the story that most inspire my students' writing. Over the years, I have found that my students, most of whom are recently out of high school, are drawn to various themes from the book, such as listening to one's inner voice, living in the present moment, the universal language, and the secret of happiness. However, regardless of their age or their ethnic and religious backgrounds, several themes consistently emerge. What follows are some examples of the major themes.

Discovering One's Personal Legend

Within the context of the story, "Personal Legend" is one's mission, purpose, or calling in life. Discovering that one has a personal legend and then pursuing it to the very end is a key concept that drives the plot. At the very beginning of the story, Santiago discovers that his personal legend is to find a treasure at the Pyramids of Egypt. As obstacles are placed upon his path, the question becomes whether he will persevere in his journey or give up and go back home to Spain. Here the story echoes the archetypal journey of the hero found in so many world myths and legends: the innocent who leaves home, has to overcome the forces of darkness, suffers many trials and finally achieves his purpose (Brown and Moffett 1999). The students reflected on aspects of the theme of the hero's journey from different perspectives. For example, in the beginning of the book, one of the main characters, the King of Salem, explains to Santiago what a personal legend is, saying that while we all know what our personal legend is when we are young, most of us eventually forget about it or just ignore it because it is too difficult to accomplish. This statement seemed to help the students ask themselves whether they have a personal legend, and what their purpose in life it might be. While a few confessed that they really had not thought about this before, many wrote about the importance of knowing who one is and

what one's purpose is in life. A young woman from Bangladesh wrote:

> This is my journey in this world. I should do as I feel like doing, not what others want me to do because it's my life. We live once in a lifetime so we should do as our heart tells us to do.... This story makes me feel so strong about the inner me. I start to realize how important it is to know what I really want from my life. After reading the end of the story, it gives me a hope if I work on my dream or my wishes and face all the problems, I may reach to my goal one day just like Santiago.

Overcoming Obstacles

The theme of overcoming obstacles and the importance of perseverance in the face of difficulty often came up in the students' journals, mostly as a response to reading about the dangers and difficulties Santiago had to face on his journey. I believe that the students focused so readily on this aspect of the story because their own lives present challenges which, in their own way, are just as formidable as Santiago's: being immigrants in an unfamiliar country, struggling to master English well enough to get through college, negotiating the conflict between the traditions of their parents and the "call" of new found freedom, to name just a few. While some focused on fear as a major obstacle in pursuing one's dreams, most students wrote about the positive aspects of Santiago's character — his courage, resourcefulness and inner resolve — as an antidote to fear and inertia, and as an inspiration for finding strength in themselves. One student wrote that "the shepherd tells us a lot about life. His spirit encourages us to pursue our ideal although our ideal looks so far away from us." Some described their own trials as new college students trying to get through their courses in order to graduate. Comments by a Chinese writer were typical:

> I think we can learn something from the boy. In our everyday life, we may meet some difficulties. Sometimes the homework is too hard for us to do, and we know studying is hard. We have no other choice but to study, so we should try to make studying more interesting...If we realize what we are going to face, we will try our best to solve the problem. We don't think of escaping from it.

Santiago's courage is also a source of strength for the students in areas of their lives other than school. At the very beginning of the story, we learn that Santiago opposed his parents' wishes for him to become a priest because he wanted to travel, so he left the seminary where he was studying and became a shepherd. Reflecting on this, one student wrote:

> I feel that he [Santiago] is a courageous boy when he took courage to tell his father that he wanted to travel instead of being a priest.... In my life, sometimes, I obey the will of my parents.... I have no chance to say "no." So sometimes, I can't make a decision by myself. When I read this part, I am a little envious of his courage. Now, I want to be a girl who has a lot of courage any time, anywhere.

Later in the story, the alchemist, a character who serves as a teacher and guide, tells Santiago that he basically has everything he needs to know in order to achieve his objective — except one thing. When Santiago asks him what that is, the alchemist mentions the proverb, "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." Many students chose to write about this saying, connecting it to their own lives. Here is one interpretation:

> This is a very famous sentence. I have known it from the time I was very young. Every person around me who was older told it to me. Before I didn't really understand and believe it ... [but] a few years ago [I began] to understand it. It means when you feel the worst, that's the most difficult time. Another meaning is that if you take only one step more you will feel the best. When I just came to America I was feeling very stressed and lost. I had to learn everything from the beginning. I felt so lonely and often cried during the nights. But after a year, I felt I got a new life. I never felt so great, because [now] I can control my life by myself. I don't need to ask my parents' opinion. I know the happiest thing for a person is to be free.

Santiago did meet many trials, and at each juncture, he had to find a way out. For example, early in

the story, after being robbed of all his money on his first day in a foreign country where he couldn't even speak the language, Santiago makes the deliberate decision not to feel sorry for himself as a poor victim, but rather to see himself as an "adventurer" looking for treasure. This characteristic of Santiago's — the ability to "spin" bad situations into something positive — offered a powerful teaching to many of the students:

> It seems like sometimes you are trying to make your dream come true, but something happens to force you to stop to doing it, and it makes you feel everything has become impossible. Fortunately, Santiago was an optimistic person. He could overcome sadness, although his life changed so suddenly. I think he was a high EQ [emotional intelligence] person, since he knew how to face his bad situation.... He chose to be an adventurer and not be sorry about what happened to him. I think Santiago's experience is the test of life. Everyone could have a similar situation, maybe just with a different story and a different attitude to face it.

In responses such as these, the students could use Santiago's attitudes and behavior as a starting point to think about their own lives from a broader perspective.

Helpers along the Way

Another theme that emerged from writing about personal legends was the yearning for a helper or a guide to accompany the students in their struggle to realize their dreams. In the story, Santiago meets a variety of characters (a king, a crystal merchant, a camel driver, and an alchemist) who seem to appear just at the right moment to offer a teaching and steer him in the direction of his goal. Some students expressed a longing to have someone like these characters to support them in their own search. One student wrote:

> When we are looking for our personal legend, who will be the alchemist? ... I try to listen to god's voice. He might have told something to me already, [but] maybe I didn't notice it. I hope I meet the alchemist. Then he can guide me.

Others simply wrote about the need and hope that a wise person would offer guidance and encouragement when needed.

The Nature of Love

The section of the story in which Santiago meets and falls in love with a desert woman, Fatima, is always a favorite for the students, and one that they seem to identify with quite easily. Here, Santiago's journey to the Pyramids is interrupted by tribal wars, and he is forced to stay at an oasis. He meets Fatima, who lives at the oasis, and he immediately falls in love and asks her to marry him. As they get to know each other in their brief daily encounters, Santiago tells Fatima about his personal legend and the treasure near the Pyramids. When Fatima hears Santiago's story, she does something that he cannot quite understand. She tells him not to stay in the oasis with her, but to leave and continue his search. She says that she has no fear that he won't return because she is now part of his personal legend. She also explains that while he is pursuing his goal, she will be fulfilling her own dream — that of having someone to wait for, like other desert woman.

For many students, this is the first time they encounter the concept of non-possessive love. As one Korean student wrote:

> When I read this chapter, I was so impressed because I have never read this kind of love story.... Love between Fatima and Santiago cannot be explained by our normal language. It can only be explained by the universal language. I am sure that Santiago really loves Fatima and she also loves him. How can I know she loves him? Because she promises to wait for him no matter what happens to him. In general, love requires the people who love to stay together. However, she allows him to go and find his treasure even though she loves him. When I read beautiful sentences that Fatima said, I feel it is like a song.

Later on in the story, Santiago is forced to use the inner resources that he doesn't yet know he possesses to perform an alchemistic feat — to turn himself into the wind. In the process, he speaks to the desert, the wind and the sun, asking for their help, and the subject of these conversations all center on Love. This inspired some students to reflect on the nature of true love:

> I am so glad to read about how Santiago reached his goal. I know it was not easy. However, he did it. He found the Soul of God was his own soul, and a current of love rushed from his heart. Well, that is why I am so excited to read this part of this book. It is because I believe that perfect love will lead us to fear nothing. . . .Love also lets the impossible turn into the possible. Santiago will be the most successful alchemist, because his spirit has already reached real love.

Conclusion

Each semester, as we read *The Alchemist* together, my students have to work very had to get through the novel. They have to learn many new vocabulary words, negotiate grammatical structures, and deal with content which has little to do with their daily lives. Yet, like Santiago, they persist, and in the end, almost everyone succeeds. As one student wrote:

> Finally, I finished reading this book. I was so proud of myself because this was the first English book I have read in my life. Actually, I didn't like to read English novels before because it took a long time to read them. However, now I have a little courage about [reading] English novels.

This journal entry echoes the feeling that many of my students express to me each semester — the sense of joy and accomplishment they get from reading a whole book in English. However, I believe that this feeling comes not only from having read all the words of the novel, but from really knowing, for themselves, that reading in English can be an enjoyable and enriching experience. Reader response journal writing is one way of making reading in English relevant to ESL students. If it is a doorway through which they can glimpse new intellectual, emotional and spiritual horizons, then I'm happy to stand with them at that threshold.

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End Note: Excerpts from student journals included in this article have been edited for grammatical accuracy only.

I wish to thank my students who allowed me to use parts of their journals for this article. I hope they know that their writing has enriched my life, helped me to remember what is important in life, and gave me much to think about.

Book Reviews

The Science of Oneness: A Worldview for the 21st Century

by Malcolm Hollick

Published by O Books (New York, 2006)

Review by Ron Miller

Holistic education is not a particular method but a comprehensive philosophy of teaching, learning, and knowledge based upon an emerging holistic worldview. *The Science of Oneness* is one of the clearest descriptions of this worldview that I have read in the 25 years that I have been working with these ideas.

Malcolm Hollick, an interdisciplinary scholar who has worked for many years in Australia and the U.K., surveys the breakthrough discoveries and radical theories on the frontiers of postmodern science, explaining how each one points toward a meaningful cosmos, a universe that is interconnected, evolving, and guided by coherent patterns rather than dull randomness. Quantum mechanics, systems theory, chaos theory, the phenomenon of self-organization, ecology, and cosmology are providing evidence for a holistic worldview, one which sees the universe as dynamic and unfolding, with consciousness playing an active and formative part.

Mainstream science continues to adhere to a mechanistic worldview, seeing the universe as a purposeless arena in which purely physical forces interact and, thanks to chance events, shape the formation of worlds. But the complexity and unity of the cosmos, as we are beginning to understand it, suggests that this interpretation is inadequate. Hollick points out, for example, that the odds against life emerging through a series of chance events "are astronomical" and that it seems more likely "that evolution has a definite direction towards complexity, life, and consciousness." Where did this direction originate? We don't know. The holistic worldview holds great respect for the ultimate mystery of it all.

Indeed, Hollick remarks that "we cannot know what wonders still lie in store." This, I believe, is the essential message of his book, and it is (not coincidentally) the essential meaning of holistic education. An education that intends to respond to the creativity of a purposefully evolving universe is quite different from an education whose primary goal is to make young people fit into the economic and social institutions of an established culture. To use the categories developed by John P. Miller, the holistic approach supports the *transformation* of individuals, societies, and consciousness, while conventional schooling aims for the *transmission* of what is already known and socially accepted.

The important point is that "transformation" makes no sense to a mechanistic worldview. In the modern world, mechanistic science, technocratic culture, authoritarian institutions, economic materialism, and standardized curricula all fit together. Perhaps modest social progress is allowed, but radical, uncharted shifts of consciousness are incomprehensible. The science of oneness — the holistic worldview — recognizes that transformation is the vehicle of the mysterious process of cosmic evolution, and we just do not know what "wonders" are possible for humanity; perhaps even global unity and peace are on the horizon.

When we take mystery and transformation seriously, we will not be so dogmatic about our beliefs. Hollick describes a more open-ended, receptive epistemology than the "quest for certainty" that, as John Dewey pointed out, characterizes most cultures. The science of oneness, says Hollick, "takes nothing on trust, continually challenging and questioning what we think we know." The only real way to grasp the complexity of the cosmos is to seek to know it through multiple channels, subjective as well as objective. Hollick emphasizes the need to balance and

Ron Miller founded *Encounter* (as *Holistic Education Review*) in 1988, and has written or edited eight books on holistic education. His work is featured at <www.pathsoflearning.net>.

integrate what in modern thinking are seen as opposing polarities, such as intellect and intuition. Every particular view of the world gives only a partial truth, and so there is a need for cooperative inquiry, in which we compare our different perspectives and try to arrive, provisionally, at the most reasonable and widely relevant ways of understanding.

According to this holistic epistemology, the deepest knowledge comes through an experiential, give-and-take relationship with the world and with others' experiences of it. This is wisdom, "a living response to that which is known that engages our bodies, emotions and spirit as well as our minds. It is a dynamic process that changes and develops with time." Holism, then, does not encourage fixed ideological systems or standardized responses to the challenges of living and learning. A holistic education is fluid, adaptable, and responsive to changing understandings of reality. This is the reason that it cannot be defined by any method or technique. Holistic education is a policy of radical responsiveness.

Hollick goes on to describe a way of understanding spirituality that transcends the limiting categories of religions, dogmas, and rituals. Established traditions, he says, "are not definitive. They are products of their particular cultures and times...." Spirit itself, the ultimate essence or source to which spirituality aspires, "is not a dictatorial Creator, but the instigator and sustainer or an experimental creative process.... Higher spiritual states are not predetermined but emerge through communion and cooperation with each other and Spirit." I find this thrilling and powerfully liberating. When we claim that holistic education embraces and honors spirituality, we are, again, seeking *transformation* by hitching our endeavors to the wild creative force of the cosmos. And this is, truly, a wonderful experiment, the outcomes of which we cannot entirely fathom.

Hollick does not address educational questions directly, and the reader should not expect *The Science of Oneness* to provide any specific guidelines for the practice of holistic education. Yet it has been my firm conviction, throughout my career exploring the meaning of holistic education, that a deep philosophical understanding of this emerging worldview is more valuable to transformative educators than any established model or package of pedagogical tricks. Holistic education arises from our authentic engagement with the world and with our students, and holism is an effort to free up this authenticity, which a mechanistic and reductionistic worldview severely hinders.

The Science of Oneness is coherent, comprehensive, and straightforward, but it is not always easy to digest. The chapters on cosmology and breakthrough theories in physics are dense, because these conceptions are mind bending. Trying to grasp the possibility of multiple universes, the meaning of "dark matter," or the "nothingness" that existed before the Big Bang is like trying to solve a Zen koan; ordinary logic and experience are inadequate. Although postmodern science is an integral element of the holistic worldview, I have always struggled to understand the specifics of it, and even Hollick's presentation left me struggling. But he does get across, quite effectively, the dramatic implications of these new conceptions of the cosmos. He very clearly demonstrates that the mechanistic worldview is incapable of embracing the mysteries of Creation.

Love, Peace, and Wisdom in Education: A Vision For Education in the 21st Century

by Jing Lin

Published by Rowan and Littlefield (Lanham, MD; 2006)

Reviewed by John (Jack) Miller

This new book makes an important contribution to the field of holistic education. In the acknowledgments, Professor Lin writes "This is a book that one has to write with one's life. For a book orienting education for love must come from a life experience of understanding life, living with love, and working for love." When I was reading her book I felt the authenticity of this statement. This book is written from what the ancients called "the thinking heart."

In the beginning Lin describes schools as "spiritual wastelands" where students graduate without a sense

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of purpose and meaning and "lack a sense of responsibility for the construction of a loving and peaceful world." Education focuses on training students to find a well-paying job and to passively support leaders who expand the military and engage in senseless wars.

In defining love, Lin cites Martin Luther King, who wrote:

> I have discovered that the highest good is love. This principle is at the center of the cosmos. It is the great unifying force in life. (p. xii)
>
> In the final analysis, love is not this sentimental something that we talk about.... It is the refusal to defeat any individual. When you rise to the level of love, of its great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. (p. 19)

In addition to citing King, as well as Gandhi and others, Lin also draws extensively on her own Chinese heritage to develop her ideas. For example, she refers to the Chinese sage Mo Zi who talked about "interconnected Love" that allows people to see others as themselves and other countries as their country. For Zi and Lin this form of love will lead to world peace; without it, we have chaos.

Lin does not just rely on quotations; she has her own distinct voice, which resonated with this reader. She describes a school based on love which includes the values of compassion, respect, forgiveness, and holism. The pedagogy would focus on reflectiveness so that students can "explore all questions that touch life, nature, and the universe." Silence is also encouraged, which she notes is not sitting still, but listening to our deeper inner wisdom. Lin also stresses the need for direct contact with nature and people around the world.

For Lin, teachers do not just focus on skill development but are seen ultimately as "teachers of souls." This view is in harmony with the American Transcendentalists. Elizabeth Peabody wrote that "education depends on its attitude towards the soul" and Emerson stated that "only the spirit can teach." In Lin's words:

> Thus, they [teachers] aspire to fill children's little hearts with big love; they teach children the values of forgiving others and being forgiven.... They treat their work as sacred work. Teachers do not only teach. They are also active learners. They learn from parents, colleagues, and their students. For them life is first a pursuit of love before they can teach love. (p. 37)

In discussing peace education Lin makes that connection to love with her statement that "love is peaceful consciousness." She believes that teachers working from a framework of love "will form the first wave energy for changing the world for peace"(p. 61). Peace can begin to unfold with schools holding the values of compassion, respect, and forgiveness. Like most holistic educators, Lin believes that each child contains a "divine light" or a "Buddha seed" in their souls and that education should nurture this seed. By making this a central focus in education, peace could be a natural outcome. Lin urges us to bring meditation into classrooms to facilitate this process. She also believes that inequalities and systematic biases must also be confronted. Subjects such as history can be approached in a manner that does not glorify war or a country's "victories." Most of all, we need to see others as ourselves not as competitors or rivals.

Lin realizes that school cannot work alone in fostering peace. The violence constantly shown on TV and computers games is dysfunctional. She also argues that we need to broaden our concept of intelligence so that it includes love, humility, and forgiveness. In short, she posits a new form of intelligence: peace intelligence.

> Peace intelligence is a form of intelligence that is associated with a deep love for all lives, a deep compassion for all existences, a courage and a conviction for unconditional forgiveness and reconciliation. It is the ability to see others' loss as our own loss, others' pain as our own pain.... It is an education that expands love in the heart and reduces and eventually eliminates hatred. (p. 68)

Environmental education is also part of the process in developing peace on the planet. Much of the destruction of the planet comes from an excess of yang (masculine) energy in the relation to the yin (feminine). Lin provides one of the best descriptions of yin and yang that I have read and shows

how these complementary energies need to be brought into right relationship for the ultimate healing of the planet.

The last part of the book deals with wisdom. Lin thinks there will be a debate about how we can develop wisdom in schools in the 21st century. She says that we need to turn to different cultures and religious traditions to help educators in this process. This includes indigenous traditions as well as Asian cultures. It also means an opening to all aspects of life. She writes: "We can learn from a flying bird and opening rose; we can learn from grandmas and grandpas, who may be illiterate but who exemplify a life of unconditional love and giving" (p. 88). In the acknowledgments, she refers to her own grandmother who embodied these qualities.

Wisdom education involves exploring the big questions about the nature of life in an open and contemplative manner as well as critiquing the ills of society. She sees teachers walking the same path as the students on the path of "soul development and social advancement."

I have very little to criticize in this book. Occasionally Lin talks about "molding" children and their souls, which I believe is not consistent with igniting the divine light in the student. In touching this light, there is no need to shape or mold. Specific examples of schools and teachers that demonstrate her vision would also have been helpful.

I met with Professor Lin, who teaches at a major U.S. university, and learned of her struggles to get a course approved in spirituality in education because she used words like compassion in the course outline. Academia has marginalized the search for wisdom and instead has supported cleverness and needless competition. As an antidote and alternative, Lin has provided a vision of education that is inspiring and deeply holistic.

Science Education for Everyday Life: Evidence-Based Practice

Glen S. Aikenhead

Published by Teachers College Columbia University, 2005

Reviewed by Irene Plonczak

Glen Aikenhead's book is about humanistic and social justice agendas in science education. It synthesizes research on innovations that challenge the traditional pipeline perspectives in science education — the common perspectives that focus on abstract curricular content decontextualized from everyday life. This book will be useful for both science educators and educators in general. If you are a science educator, you will be interested in Glen Aikenhead's "humanistic" perspective, where students learn science and technology in an everyday life setting in which they are empowered to contribute to society as informed and responsible citizens. If you are an educator from another field, you will be interested in Aikenhead's review of research that focuses on the results of alternative and innovative educational practices and curriculum policies during the last few decades.

When Aikenhead refers to a "humanistic" perspective of science education, he focuses on science as a human endeavor. As Gérard Fourez (1988) pointed out many years ago, science is "made by humans for humans," and therefore science education should be conceived as a historical construction conditioned by projects that are meaningful and relevant to people's specific needs and contexts. From this perspective, teaching and learning about the greenhouse effect, which scientists agree is the main cause of global warming, includes teaching and learning about the political and ethical debates that surround these topics. Learning the science related to global warming would include learning about the precedent-setting law approved by Congress on April 2, 2007, that authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to control human-produced green-

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house gas emissions. Such an approach allows students to construct a clear understanding of the scientific knowledge as well as the social, economical, political, and cultural issues at stake. As future citizens, it empowers students to make informed decisions, to embrace social justice agendas, and to take political action.

In the first two chapters, Aikenhead presents a detailed description of the history and characteristics of humanistic perspectives in school science. He describes the humanistic perspective as being part of a current global tendency in science education that emphasizes "values, the nature of science, the social aspects of science, the culture of science, and the human character of science revealed through its sociology, history and philosophy" (p. 2). He presents a historical review of research related to alternative rationales for science education, mentioning, for example, John Dewey's (1938) approach as "education being life, not a preparation for life." His review of research is particularly extensive for the period after the1970s, when the humanistic approach became popular.

The humanistic science curriculum, known in the science education research literature as Science-Technology-Society (STS) curricula, grew out of the alternative rationales for science education. It mainly considers the impact of science and technology on societal issues (Solomon and Aikenhead 1994). According to Aikenhead, the STS curricula challenges the traditional and positivist views of Western science, encourages personal or social action on controversial issues, and expects schooling to be an agent of equity and social justice as opposed to reproducing the status quo. As he points out, this curricula is "seen as a vehicle for achieving such goals as science for all and scientific literacy, and for improving marginalized students' participation and achievement in Western science and technology" (p. 21).

One of the highlights of the book is the abundant references to research regarding what Aikenhead calls indigenous sciences, a general term that he uses to refer to what is known in research as aboriginal science, native science, or indigenous knowledge. The research he reviews emphasizes what he calls the cultural relevance of school science, showing how academic achievement improves when relevant cross-cultural, multicultural, and high-poverty urban issues are integrated into the science curriculum.

In the third chapter of the book, Aikenhead presents research concerning curriculum policy embedded in a humanistic perspective. He brings together findings that explain the failure of the traditional science education model, which he defines as declining student enrollment, discrimination and cultural alienation, dishonest and mythical images of science, and learning difficulties. Particularly interesting is his reference to difficulties in learning science. Aikenhead presents research that shows that learning difficulties are in great part due to the focus on teaching ready-made concepts rather than stimulating thought and experimentation. This is what he calls "Playing Fatima's Rules," which consists basically of students memorizing and regurgitating information to pass exams.

In the course of the book, Aikenhead carefully documents how science in schools is presented as abstract and removed from reality and every day life situations. Consequently, students have difficulties connecting science to their own interests. They do not understand, they do not see the point of studying science, and fewer and fewer of them are enrolling in science classes.

Aikenhead also explores how the traditional science education model has discriminated and alienated cultures that are underrepresented, how women and ethnic minorities have not had the same opportunities as white males in careers related to science, and how the whole school system is geared toward an elite that will enroll in science and engineering degree programs. The traditional science education model, according to Aikenhead, is embedded in mythical images of science where it is portrayed as "superior" and only for an elite group of exceptionally bright and white students.

Aikenhead compares science education curriculum policy in Canada and the United States. He presents the Canadian process, in which he is personally involved (Aikenhead 2002), as being the result of a theory-based and consultative methodology and as embracing a humanistic perspective. He also presents what he calls a "very different method" of policy formulation used by the United States' American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) as illustrated in its Project 2061. The consultation includes a series of national surveys and committee meetings with a panel of leading scientists, who according to Aikenhead's research, convey an outmoded positivist and noncontemporary view of science. The panel ignores student relevancy, over-

looks students' worldviews, self-identities, and cultural diversities, and does not clarify its own political agenda (p. 52). As a result, Aikenhead concludes that Project 2061 and the Standards movement use humanistic rhetoric but do not represent a humanistic perspective. Nevertheless, it is arguable that there are enough "spaces of liberty" in these official documents to allow for the implementation of a humanistic curriculum. Indeed, as stated in the official documents (National Research Council 1996), the standards should not be seen as requiring a specific curriculum. Instead, "the content embodied in the Standards can be organized and presented with many different emphases and perspectives in many different curricula" (pp. 2-3).

Aikenhead shows that when students are more motivated to study science that is meaningful and relevant to them, teaching and learning the science content knowledge becomes more complex due to the often unpredictable nature of real life situations. For example, explaining why an apple gets darker when cut in half is part of our every day life experiences, and it can come up as an example of chemical change, but explaining the actual chemical reaction of oxidation to elementary or middle school students can be difficult. Examples like this make teachers hesitant when it comes to embracing humanistic curricula where students may pose challenging questions that are not explained in the textbooks. Teachers, reluctant to move out of their comfort zone, would rather stay in the predictable and reliable world of pipeline science education.

Despite these difficulties and paradoxes, Aikenhead documents research that shows that in most cases motivation overcomes complexity, and students enrolled in humanistic science courses score better on science tests. The future, then, of humanistic science education is optimistic, and Aikenhead urges teachers and researchers to continue to champion what is right for students.

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Multicultural Strategies for Education and Social Change: Carriers of the Torch in the United States and South Africa

by A.F. Ball

Published by Teachers College Press (New York, 2006).

Reviewed by Patricia M. Cooper

The sure sign that multicultural education has finally become the default mode in teacher preparation programs will be when scholarship related to it no longer has to remind us why it is so necessary. Arnetha Ball's Multicultural Strategies for Education and Social Change offers ample evidence that we are not there yet. The good news is that Ball brings the facts to life in her cross-national study of teacher preparation, where sociocultural theory and multicultural education meet in a seamless tapestry of ideas and pedagogy. Far more elegant than its somewhat cumbersome title, this highly instructive book offers a true insider's view of what it takes to create effective teacher preparation experiences around multicultural goals.

Ball's study question is straightforward: "What do we need to know in order to do a better job of preparing teachers to teach all students effectively, particularly students from diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups?" (p. 56). To gather information on this question, Ball undertook a detailed examination of the teacher education courses she taught in the U. S. and South Africa.

Ball's work has obvious resonance for all schoolchildren marginalized by their skin color, gender, and other differences. She points out, however, that "Low teacher efficacy among the teachers of Black students is of particular concern" (p. 8). She begins her study with the premise that teachers of diverse students need to "feel they have the power to produce an effect on their students — (to) believe that all students can be motivated and that it is their re-

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sponsibility to explore with students the tasks that hold their attention and facilitate learning" (p. 9). The underlying question is how to help teachers of diverse students develop sufficient personal efficacy. Her research plan is as follows:

> I developed a project to investigate whether teachers' discourses, practices, and views about teaching diverse students could be positively influenced by engagement with a carefully planned course designed to facilitate teacher commitment and efficacy. (p. 11)

In her introductory comments, Ball takes note of the familiar but still astonishing fact that as the U. S. school age population grows ever more diverse, the teacher force remains overwhelmingly white. She is not the first to ask whether the white teachers, because of their different life experiences, possess the orientation and skills needed to deliver what Banks (1996) calls "transformative academic knowledge." That is, can white teachers really help the students understand their history of oppression and their culture's accomplishments? But, provocatively, Ball also asks the question of black teachers in post-apartheid South Africa, and in doing so sheds new light on the American problem. According to Ball, the South African teachers are not always successful with or committed to black students, despite their shared race. One impediment, she writes, is that many of these teachers come from subgroups in South Africa that differ in language and customs from those of their students. Thus, their teaching lacks the deep knowledge of and commitment to the community that Ball argues is an essential factor in effective teaching. Another problem is that the teachers' own ineffective education in apartheid or post-apartheid schools renders them equally unproductive as instructors, let alone as advocates or change agents in schools. In other words, teachers cannot be expected to embody emancipatory beliefs and practices if they themselves have no experience with them.

Underlying Ball's study is her belief in the power of teachers to change students' lives. Though she extends this power to all teachers, she draws on her own strength as a teacher, teacher educator, scholar, and role model from the "historical study of Black resistance practices" (p. 27) that runs throughout the legacy of black educators in both countries. All shared the belief that all black children can learn. Just as important, they believed that they were the ones who could teach them. Working from this perspective, Ball avoids the growing temptation among educators and education observers to divorce teachers from their responsibilities by hiding behind what the students do not know, have, or bring to the classroom. This is not to say Ball ignores the realities that many teachers of diverse students face every day; she does not. At the same time, she ups the ante on what teachers and teacher educators must know and do to make the most of their role as classroom leaders.

Ball acknowledges the dissimilarities between the U. S. and South Africa that might hamper a cross-national study. Ball argues, however, that the similarities are great enough so as to make the comparison a fruitful one. "Common bonds" range from the institutionalization of White superiority to the segregation of schools and manipulation of resources.

Prior to her "official" study, Ball gathered 100 narratives from participants in various professional development venues. Participants were asked to write on "meaningful learning experiences" and other autobiographical information related to their literacy acquisition, which they then shared with the group. Ball found many "pedagogical implications" in this type of exercise. Participants not only became more reflective about their lives, they began to draw inferences from others. Ball also found that reading and listening to the participants' reflections helped her improve in the ways she communicated with them — and made her a better teacher. Ultimately, Ball used narrative as a tool to not only create course requirements and expectations, but to brand her very purpose ("carriers of the torch") in teacher education.

A Model of Change

To assess change among education students, Ball developed a four-stage model that draws on the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Leont'ev, and Wertsch. Stage 1 indicates students have reached the level of metacognitive awareness that results from situating one's story in relation to others' stories. This can be

brought about by asking students to write and think about their own lives and assumptions

Stage 2 refers to the capacity to become more aware and critical of the ideologies through which one views the world. It refers to how students come to see the world through a system of ideas that they create from experience (p. 54). At this stage, students are asked to critique theory and other discourses drawn from literature, research, and other areas that are chosen for their power to provoke and challenge students' initial dispositions and background knowledge.

Stage 3 requires "internalization," as described by Vygotsky (1978). It is the process by which students internalize what they have learned in a social realm in order to make it their own. At this stage, students take action to the field, and demonstrate an emerging sense of self-efficacy and the beginning of voice.

Finally, Stage 4 gives rise to transformative action, where theory meets practice through "emancipatory action research" and the realization of self-efficacy.

For the purposes of teacher education in general, what makes the model distinctive is the way in which sociocultural theory runs throughout it in manageable, workable "chunks." Ball avoids the pervasive practice of imposing a morass of multicultural and sociocultural goals on top of teacher education courses.

In her study of movement through the stages, Ball's data sources included interviews, journal entries, and teacher action research projects. Ball engaged in both a microanalysis of the changing perspectives of all the participating students, as well as a microanalysis of a smaller subset of the student-teachers. Ball assessed successful participants to be those who moved to the final stage during the semester. They developed a "personal voice on issues related to the teaching and learning of diverse students" (p. 56).

Findings

Evaluating her findings, Ball found significant success in using the course and course requirements to help students advance through her model of teacher change (though percentages are not provided). Her findings are boosted by the fact that she visited with a sample group of participants several years after they took her course and found that they were still actively committed to multicultural practices and diverse environments. At the same time, Ball raises an interesting problem in acknowledging the failure of her approach with some students. She writes, "Just as sociocultural theory helps to explain the success of my work with many teachers, it also helps explain my lack of success with nontransitioning teachers" (p. 81). These are the teachers who refuse "to engage socially or cognitively" in course activities (p. 80). As a result, they may never get to Stage 4. Indeed, they may never even get through Stage 1. In essence, Ball assesses the course demands to be outside the students' zones of proximal development. She holds out hope that the experience of the course may resonate with the students at a later date when this type of learning is within their grasp. This is indeed a possibility. But, given the scope of Ball's overall vision, I wish she had given more space to this particular group of students. What can teacher educators learn from them besides the limitations they bring to class? At the heart of the dilemma, albeit in reverse, is multicultural education's very commitment to students whose teachers hold opposing values. Difficult as some teacher education students make this task, perhaps they have the most to tell teacher educators about multicultural education.

This last point, however, should by no means detract from Ball's achievement in this book. As noted at the start of this review, its value goes beyond its model for teacher change or even its own story. It stands as a model in itself of the need for multicultural teacher education to be grounded in theory, manifestly practical and explicit, and, at the same time, risk taking. Only in this way can teacher educators and teachers make the difference in the lives of diverse students.

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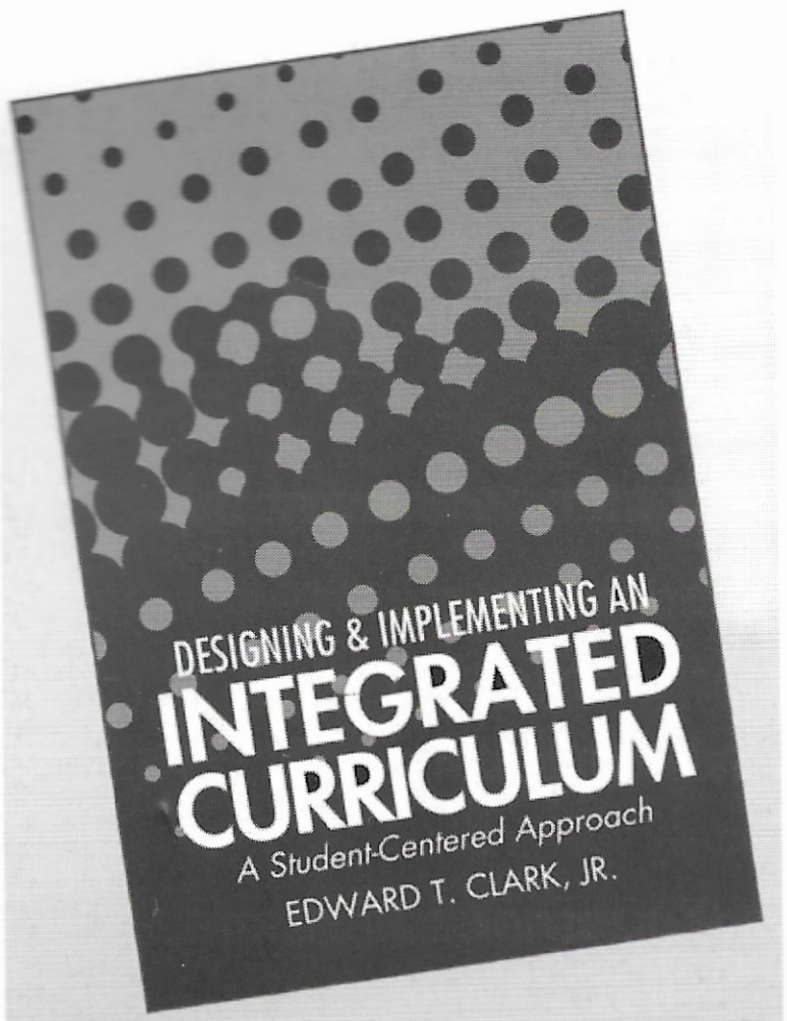

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Edward T. Clark, Jr.

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