ENCOUNTER

EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Table of Contents

Cover photo © 1998 by Robert M. Dean, Brandon, VT

Editorial

Global Trends and Educational Discourse

The relationship between education and culture, school and society, has been acknowledged throughout the history of educational thought. Perhaps the ancient Greek word *paideia*, meaning both education and culture, captures this fundamental interconnection best. Historically, education has mirrored the culture, the political economy, and the basic structures and ideologies of the society within which it is situated. However, we believe that education, when it recognizes the metaphors that shape culture, can participate directly and indirectly in the creation of new social, economic, and political structures.

Two such metaphors have been increasingly influential in the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of the world: (a) globalization, primarily economic, but supported through the construction of a complex system of international political regimes, and (b) the demand for ethnic, political and cultural recognition, primarily based upon the politics of identity and difference. These two trends are occurring simultaneously and they are in conflict.

On one level, the world is becoming a global village, an interdependent web of political and economic relationships dominated by the interests of multinational corporations, and, on another level, differences in culture, ethnicity, race, religion, and language have become accentuated and politically charged. In many places in the world the cost of corporate homogenization is cultural identity; the lure of the dollar is part of the Faustian deal. On the other hand, a failure to come to terms with the power of claims for identity and difference may result in economic, political, and social turmoil.

The conflict is a function of nations, economies, and social systems. There is a desire for autonomy, but independence is an abstraction, a fiction. Actions of all sorts have consequences that transcend national boundaries and interests.

Nowhere is our interdependence more immediately apparent than in the area of ecology or, more bluntly, the planet's health. Everything from the technologies we have at hand and the economic interests that hold sway have created natural imbalances that threaten the quality of life and ultimate survivability of many species, including our own. In the 20th century, the world has undergone a technological revolution that has enabled human beings to intervene and control nature in unprecedented ways. The question here is not the inherent "goodness" or "badness" of technology but of our moral development to guide ourselves by principle rather than self-interest. The question here is whether we work from a fragmented view of ourselves and of the world or from a more comprehensive vision that recognizes the integrity and interdependence of all things.

Furthermore, as the world becomes an interdependent global village, the artificial divorce of international relations from morality and ethics is no longer tenable. Future democratic citizens, who will be simultaneously citizens of their locality, nation, and the international community, will have to confront and make fundamental moral choices regarding the conduct of foreign policy, such as the use of military force and the existence of weapons of mass destruction, the distribution of global economic and social resources, the moral and political status of millions of refugees, and the plight of the starving multitudes.

These developments would seem to necessitate an understanding of the forces and structures of global and ecological interdependence as well as an understanding, tolerance, and respect for a vast range of cultural differences. In the future, our students will be called upon, as private individuals and democratic citizens, to make complex ethical choices. These challenges demand an understanding of the global nature of social justice and the moral sensitivity to engage in social action.

In addition, the dominant cultural metaphor underlying our current worldview lies in the epistemology and language of science. Even so, the nature of science is changing and mindful educators may recognize in the changes possibilities for a moral and spiritual ground for education. Increasingly, science is defined not in terms of a Newtonian paradigm premised on mechanistic determinism, but in terms of one that is premised on indeterminacy, nonequilibrium processes, dissipative structures, self-regeneration and self-organization of systems, ecological interdependence, and chaos and complexity. What these developments suggest is a fundamentally different way of thinking and knowing: a more process-orientated, synthetic, dialogical mode of thinking in which the recognition of interrelationship, uncertainty, and novelty are central.

There are a number of other trends that could be discussed here, such as the future of democracy, the rise of a global feminist movement on both philosophical and political levels, the potential collapse of modernity and liberalism, and the rise of post-modernity. However, what these social trends indicate is the need for a searching exploration of the meaning of human existence, our relationship to the cosmos, our understanding of the true and the good, the meaning and nature of social justice in an interdependent world, the meaning of community, the nature of rationality, our relationship to the mystery of consciousness, the meaning and status of the other, the nature of democracy, our relationship to the natural environment, among many other considerations.

The issues raised by these far reaching social changes demand a fundamental reconceptualization of the meaning and practice of education. However, despite the profound social, political, and moral changes taking place all around us, political and educational officials have chosen to focus on the mundane and the narrow, offering only myopically conceived technical solutions. Their solutions are educational trivial and politically safe, but in their triviality and safety they entail a heavy human cost.

ENCOUNTER is a forum within which a broader exploration and reconceptualization of the meaning of social change and the educational renaissance it portends can be debated, researched, and encountered in the open spirit of dialogue. You are invited to participate by submitting articles and letters to the editor for publication and by participating in the ENCOUNTER listserve and online courses sponsored by this Journal.

— Dale Snauwaert and Jeffrey Kane

ENCOUNTER ONLINE

FREE SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS

- ✓ ENCOUNTER "Preprint" Service. The full text of all articles delivered electronically weeks before your printed copy arrives.

- ✓ ENCOUNTER Listserve. Where you can discuss the content of the "preprints" with your fellow subscribers, the authors in the issue, and the Journal's editors.

- ✓ ENCOUNTER COURSES. On-line focused, facilitated discussions based on selected Encounter articles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

1-800-639-4122

Reflections on Our Common, Life-long Educational Journey

Anna F. Lemkow

The holistic perspective — in contrast to reductionism, rationalism, and relativism — is fundamentally grounded in the eternal wisdom of mankind and is the key to self-transformation.

Anna F. Lemkow is the author of *The Wholeness Principle: Dynamics of Unity within Science, Religion, and Society.* She is retired from the United Nations Secretariat, where she worked in the field of economic and social development.

It has been said that words have mysterious powers, that a word can be a ladder or a bridge to a higher level of awareness. I believe this is true, and that *wholeness* is such a word. In respect to learning, wholeness invites us to contemplate it in its integrity — to contemplate it in the truest way we can. Wholeness suggests encompassing the different dimensions of human experience, because experience is perhaps our best teacher. It suggests as well contemplating the world — the *arena* of our experience. Wholeness suggests that one's life, experience, and learning are co-extensive, and that learning is thus life-long — perhaps, for all we know, many-life-times-long. Learning, it may be said, is a prolonged journey in consciousness, in self-unfoldment. Wholeness suggests it's a holy and healing journey; even an obligatory journey since existence isn't optional. Nor can we alter universal conditions, including the difficult universal human condition of having the power to choose but, together with everything else, being totally woven into the very fabric of existence, utterly dependent on our planet, on the cosmos, on the universe.

Speaking of the mysterious power of words, the two words, *cosmos* and *universe*, are nothing short of revelatory in what they say about our journey. *Universe* from the Latin, suggests a turning in a unitary direction — a dynamic unicity. The word *cosmos* from Greek means order; hence mind, intelligence. These two words combine to tell us that existence is one and indivisible, and that its dynamics are meaningful. By the same token, our own journey is an integral part of a common and meaningful journey.

In exploring learning, I believe we must start with ourselves, the learners, with what or who we believe ourselves to be. This determines what we believe we can know, how we understand our relationship to the world we live in, and the values we affirm. Here

we immediately come up against a prevailing mind-set that is utterly incompatible with holistic learning, the idea that a human being is nothing but the totality of his or her biological, material self, that all human experience is nothing but biochemistry. To borrow someone else's example, the beauty of a sunset is nothing but the brain's dopamine and serotonin at work. If that were true, then we'd be merely automatons, and all talk of learning and responsibility, let alone spiritual values, would be nonsense. But it is not true either scientifically, psychologically, or spiritually. If science introduced the reductionist self-image, science has now outdated it. For instance, it doesn't cohere with the emergent field theory. Frontier scientists, I'm told, including a number of respected medical doctors, believe that our nature, our mind, and our health are constantly influenced by and interacting with the energy fields in which we are embedded, especially the electro-magnetic bio-energy field and a subtler energy field science calls the holofield of the quantum vacuum, described as the fathomless energy sea in which all is embedded, with which we interact, which interconnects us, and also nurtures us. It reminds one forcibly, does it not, of certain long-held spiritual intuitions, for instance, the Buddhist's boundless emptiness that is a plenum.

I heard a well-known astronomer the other day declare on TV: "I'm a committed reductionist. I believe that the universe is a whole consisting of the sum of its parts." He sounded almost defiant, as if he were defiantly rejecting an opposing view — the view in systems theory that a whole, an open or dynamic system, is more than the sum of its parts, and therefore *not* reducible to its parts. From a systems perspective, for instance, an atom is more than the sum of its subatomic particles; a cell is more than its component molecules; an animal more than a plant; a human being more than an animal. Systems science is a major development of recent decades whose effect is to reverse the reductionistic and mechanistic view of nature. Thanks to systems science, evolution itself is no longer viewed as mechanical but as a veritable whole-making process, a process that has generated and is ever generating a vast continuum of successively more inclusive, more capable, more autonomous wholes, or dynamic sys-

tems or "holons." A *holon*, the word coined some decades ago by Arthur Koestler, is an entity that is both a whole and a part, and in fact we know of no whole in nature that is not both a whole and a part of a greater whole. It becomes apparent from the systems view that the universe displays a grand cosmic design — that it organizes itself in the pattern of wholes-within-wholes, or, in systems parlance, systems-within-systems. By the same token, it is apparent that everything is dynamically interconnected — more than that, the entities comprising the universe interpenetrate. Without intending to, science here reveals a profound metaphysical truth — the radical unity of existence — something long intuited in mystical thought, as in St. Paul's dictum that we are all members of one another.

It is worth noting that each whole in the evolutionary continuum contains within itself all the components of the preceding levels of wholeness and is itself a component of all succeeding levels. A human being thus embodies the components of all preceding levels, is not reducible to any of them, and is presumably going to transcend himself or herself into a still more inclusive entity. What apparently happens is that every entity differentiates itself, specializes, but then subordinates itself to the purposes of the next more inclusive holon; subordinates itself, transcends itself, as it were, for the sake of the greater whole in the making. As Arthur Koestler memorably put it, unity is achieved by a detour through diversity. Nature is surely a great teaching. In reality, the continuum of evolution is replete with meaning.

But to get back to the astronomer. I happened to mention the astronomer's remark to Jeffrey Kane and he immediately quoted an extraordinarily apt poem by Walt Whitman. It makes the point I want to make here much more eloquently than I could.

> When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
> When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
> When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
> How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up to perfect silence at the stars.

So much for reductionism!

Closely related to reductionism is rationalism. Rationalism, as we know, has prevailed in the West for several centuries. Rationalists extoll reason and discount subjective experience as unreal. Thus, like reductionists, their idea of who we are and what we can know is inadequate. Rationalists tend not to perceive that marvelous and indispensable as our power of reason is, it is still a limited faculty. Reason

Just as we are all of a piece, so too is knowledge. In principle, knowledge is one and indivisible. Science, philosophy, mystical religion, the arts, psychology, etc., are in principle mutually harmonious and complementary.

is the mode for philosophical discourse. But while reason is the faculty we use for *discussing* truth, goodness, beauty, love, and compassion, reason alone cannot make them realities in our life. We don't love anyone because it's reasonable to do so. Reason alone can't conquer irrational feelings that are impervious to logic. Reason is not the source of inspiration for a great work of art. Nor is it the source of the experience of unity with others beyond all differences.

Before I comment on the transrational faculties we possess, I first must make mention of yet another "ism" — relativism. It, too, misapprehends who we are and what we can know. It is found mostly in political and cultural spheres — at least in our part of the world. Without wishing to discount relativist thought wholesale, I reject their disbelief in transcendent truths — their disbelief in our capacity to know transcendent truths. Not surprisingly, they find no basis for determining between right and wrong. Indeed, one of their mantras is that one should not be judgmental. For a relativist, the difference between right and wrong is simply a matter of where you happen to live. Morality is only relative to culture, not unlike manners and fashions. Relativists in effect

and sometimes avowedly deny the existence of timeless truths or values that transcend different cultures and civilizations.

But the relativists' position is self-defeating: It asserts the nonexistence of universal truth while exempting its own would-be universal assertion. My impression is that relativism would deny the very thing we appreciate and enjoy most in the arts and cultures of different times and places — its universal aspects.

Presumably relativists would manage somehow to deny the undeniable universality of the world's myths of all times and places. Presumably, they would deny the undeniable universality of folklore. As one connoisseur of folk art put it, folk art is bewilderingly varied and astonishingly related; it shows that the whole world is hometown, that there are no foreigners. Could they deny that music and music-making transcends time and place? Personally, I find moving the sight — frequent today —of an Oriental musician superbly performing Occidental works on a Western instrument. Perhaps today's greatest living cellist is Yo-Yo Ma.

I would like to remind relativists that human beings are all of one and the same species. We intermarry; a nuclear family's members may all differ in skin color; cultures are not only permeable but have rarely, if ever, developed in total isolation (They were inevitably exposed to each other by virtue of the trade routes, the silk roads, the roads of faith.). And I'd also remind relativists that human *thought* is continuous throughout our species — that it travels through the air, as it were — that we send and receive each other's thoughts constantly. As Vaclev Havel (1994) put it, "it's as if something like an antenna were at our disposal, picking up signals from a transmitter that contains the experience of the entire human race."

If the arts and cultures of the world were indeed totally devoid of universal aspects, there could be no hope of common human understanding. There could be no hope for world peace. As it is, what we have in common far outweighs our differences.

Is it possible to discern the juncture we have collectively reached in our common journey in consciousness? I do not mean to imply that we are all at the same level. Obviously, individuals vary enor-

mously in refinement of soul; they range in consciousness from the brute to the seer or sage. Yet, I believe a predominant planet-wide mentality is discernible, and it is that of separateness, divisiveness. It parallels the too-narrow self-identity — the truncated self-image I've been discussing. I think it was Huston Smith who described this mentality as "tunnel vision." Ken Wilber's name for this limited outlook is "Flatland."

However named, this mindset is one of ignorance of, disbelief in, or the dormancy of a human being's higher faculties. As we saw, it is common to the adherents of all the "isms" I discussed. The separative mind explains our present shallowness and cynicism. It goes a long way to explain the widespread prevalence of competitiveness, dishonesty, corruption in government, politics, and business, not to speak of the horrible thing called "ethnic cleansing." In many places and quarters, competitiveness has now become so intensive it's downright pathological.

Many of us have grown very weary of all this. But more than that, the planet-wide divisiveness over a range of old and new issues is very dangerous, given the degree of interdependence we have developed — interdependence materially, militarily, ecologically, and in every other way. It seems we've come to a fork in the road of our common learning journey. Many thinkers have long seen it coming and have pointed out that institutional change would not suffice to resolve the serious dilemma — that it demanded nothing short of a fundamental change in consciousness on the part at least of a critical number of us. The rise of the holistic education movement some decades ago is one of many responses aroused by the perception of the undesirable direction in human affairs.

Self-transformation can't occur without the exertion of our higher faculties — our intuitive, aesthetic, unitive, spiritual faculties. These components of ours include reason and the physical senses but transcend them. The reductionists, the rationalists, the relativists among us could not hope to transform their behavior and their values without reclaiming or awakening to their higher faculties. In reality, all of us will have to develop a stronger sense of our unity beyond all differences.

It's thought-provoking that the human constitution parallels the pattern we saw in the evolutionary continuum. Thus, the reasoning mind includes but transcends the physical senses. The intuition includes but transcends the mind. Spirit includes but transcends the intuition. Spirit is not a *personal* faculty; it is impersonal and universal. Yet Spirit is the very source of our powers of knowing and of our illumination.

Self-observation shows that our different faculties work in tandem: One cannot think without feeling, and one cannot feel without thinking. To think without feeling is pathological. Experience also shows that to be divided within oneself is to feel uneasy, even to fall ill. Our deep need for wholeness is entirely self-evident.

This interactivity of a human being's powers of knowing imply a significant thing about knowledge: Just as we are all of a piece, so is knowledge. In principle, knowledge is one and indivisible. In other words, science, philosophy, mystical religion, the arts, psychology, etc., are in principle mutually harmonious and complementary.

Take science and religion. They have been seriously at odds since the rise of modern science. But where the religion posited is mystical religion as distinct from dogmatic or fanatical types of religion, and where the science posited is the newer more organic and holistic and integrative science, their essential harmony begins to come into view. Albert Einstein defined their relationship most succinctly and memorably when he said that religion without science is lame, and science without religion is blind.

I've been suggesting the wholeness and dynamic oneness of everything, of the universe, of the *evolution* of the universe, of living nature, of ourselves, of our knowledge. On reflection, it is evident that wholeness pervades existence. And what is transpiring today in the sciences shows that most, if not all, scientific disciplines have encountered the problems of wholes and wholeness, that wholeness is emerging as a guiding principle in science. It has long been that in the spiritual domain. My book on wholeness attempted *inter alia* to explore all this in a specific way. Wholeness, I think, points insistently beyond itself. It demands a consensual wisdom, a consensual philosophy that could illuminate the *meaning* of

wholeness. Just as critical thought calls for a critical theory to ground it, so holistic thought calls for a consensual wisdom, a consensual frame of reference.

As some are undoubtedly aware, humanity in fact possesses a consensual wisdom, a consensual philosophy, a perennial philosophy, called also theosophy, the tradition from which I myself come, ageless wisdom, integral philosophy, and *Atma Vidya*, among other names.

In the space available for this article it is not possible to do more than cite the most succinct yet satisfactory definition of the perennial philosophy found in Aldous Huxley's (1970) classic, *The Perennial Philosophy*. Huxley defined it as

> the metaphysic that recognizes a Divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to or even identical with Divine Reality, the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being.

Huxley added,

> Rudiments of the perennial philosophy are found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.

It *is* true that Ultimate Reality figures in one or another way in every spiritual tradition. The perennial philosophy and theosophy and other esoteric philosophies see Reality as infinite, boundless, and omnipresent. It *has to be* omnipresent if it is boundless. It can't be apart from us if it is boundless. It can't be only out there. It is here too. It is both transcendent and immanent, as Huxley's definition states. Being boundless, it can't be defined. It is ineffable yet, in an appropriate or meditative state of consciousness, one sees it shining through everything.

Another way of putting this is that transcendent truths are perceived not logically but directly. Mystics, poets, artists, and scientists of the first rank see transcendent truths directly. For example, William Blake's poem, beginning with the line, "To see the world in a grain of sand," illustrates seeing directly. This line does not come from analysis or from critical thinking. Nor is the poet conveying information. Nor is he expressing merely a socially constructed idea.

If evolution is indeed ongoing, more and more of us should be experiencing intimations of transcendent truths. I believe that is indeed happening. I also believe that by the evidence this experience, this insight, does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with knowledge of metaphysics or level of education or even the person's age. It is most often a spontaneous and blissful experience when all boundaries between oneself and everything else dissolve. Incidentally, there are splendid writings today (e.g., Murphy 1993) describing the nature of self-transcendence and the psychotechnologies for developing self-transcendence.

Let me underline that this experience — this expansion of consciousness — has powerful practical consequences, just the kind of impact needed at this juncture in our common journey in consciousness. It vitally affects our relationship to the world. I believe it fosters global mindedness, a sense of being a planetary citizen, irrespective of place of residence. Being a planetary citizen is not at all incompatible with having roots in and love for a particular place. It fosters the sense of the oneness of everything, including planetary affairs — the indivisibility of human rights, world peace, world security, earth's ecology. As planetary citizens we support cooperation and sharing among nations. We appreciate the need for a world-coordinating agency such as the United Nations — an agency, too, that can deal with common problems beyond the capacity of any one nation. We much prefer to see the development of world law to continued international anarchy. Above all, a planetary citizen feels that his or her status as a human being takes precedence over every other personal characteristic, including one's sex, color, ethnicity, religion, and ideology.

The awareness of transcendent truths does not depend on a person's age. Jose Macado, an immigrant from El Salvador, wrote a poem, "Life and Me," (Lyons 1997) when he was a seventh grader with limited experience with English.

> Life is a mystery of hurt feelings and choices.
> It looks like it will never end.
> The sky is blue and water is crystal-like.
> It's like looking though a glass where you can see but not understand.
> When the wind blows on my face I feel like my soul *is* that wind

And all my troubles blow away with it.

In the night I feel angels coming and caring for me in the moonlight.

I feel like my fingers are touching God's fingers.

And when this happens I feel I'm an angel myself.

Not a snake or a lion can have this feeling but I can.

It feels so wonderful — the motion of my body

Is so great that tears come to my eyes

And I ask myself what is this feeling.

I feel my soul transforming into a spirit of fire

And at the end of this feeling there is triumph and a beautiful dream.

Shortly after I discovered this poem, I happened to read the following passage in an essay by the physicist/philosopher David Bohm (1993).

> What is spirit? The word is derived from a Latin word meaning "breath" or "wind" — like respiration or inspiration. It is suggested by the trees moving with the invisible force of the wind. We may thus think of spirit as an invisible force — a life-giving essence that moves us deeply, or as a source that moves everything from within.

Soon after reading this, I happened to converse with someone about the Hebrew language. He remarked that the Hebrew word *Ruah* can mean breath or spirit or wind. And he further observed that from the metaphysical to the scientific levels, breath connects us to the world around us. You may notice, he said, that you are breathed as much as you breath.

Breath is perhaps the ultimate bridge between science and spirituality. As we saw, these two domains are growing progressively more harmonious. I very much like what John White (1990) wrote about the meeting of science and spirit, "it is about the human being as human becoming. We are Spirit materialized, engaged in spiritualizing matter." Ervin Laszlo (1997), in his excellent recent book on science's progress, *The Whispering Pond* states that science is tremendously widening its scope — to the point that it is changing the world outlook and becoming an instrument for the recovery of wholeness. Laszlo added a significant caveat: Inasmuch as science does not deal with matters beyond space and time, we will always have need to complement science with wisdom. I myself suggested something very similar in *The Wholeness Principle* (1995/1990).

Let me suggest that our aspiration for holistic learning comes from an inner call, an insistent call of something mysterious, something greater than ourselves. It arises in the transcendent realm to which wholeness points. It urges us to deepen our understanding, and intimates that we can become more than we presently are.

*W*holeness pervades existence. There is a dynamic oneness of everything, of the universe, of the evolution of the universe, of living nature, of ourselves, of our knowledge.

Together we are embarked on an eons-long learning journey which teaches us to realize increasingly the wholeness of things, the eternal condition. As T. S. Eliot (1971) wrote in "Little Gidding" (*Four Quartets*),

> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive at where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

References

Bohm, D. 1993. Science, spirituality, and the present world crisis. *ReVision* 15(4).

Eliot, T. S. 1971. *Four quartets*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace.

Havel, V. 1994. Remarks made on July 4, 1994, as he received the Philadelphia Liberty Medal. Reprinted in *Brain/Mind* (August 1994).

Huxley, A. 1970. *The perennial philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row.

Lazlo, E. 1997. *The whispering pond: A personal guide to the emerging vision of science*. Rockport, MA: Element.

Lemkow, A. F. 1995/1990. *The wholeness principle: Dynamics of unity within science, religion, and society*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

Lyons, S. 1997. *Ten-second rain showers by young people*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Murphy, M. 1993. *The future of the body: Explorations into the further evolution of human nature*. New York: Tarcher/Perigee.

White, J. 1990. *The meeting of science and spirit: Guidelines for a new age*. New York: Paragon House.

Whitman, W. 1993. *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Modern Library Edition.

Environmentally Induced Damage to Children

A Call for Broadening the Critical Agenda

Sue Books

The reality that children are trapped in environments that are unnecessarily making them sick, damaging them permanently, or even killing them needs to be fully acknowledged by society and addressed as a social *and* educational problem.

Sue Books is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at SUNY–New Paltz where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in the social foundations of education. She is the editor of *Invisible Children in the Society and its Schools* (Erlbaum 1998).

After running a lap at school [8-year-old] Chelsea started to wheeze. She asked the teacher if she could go inside and take her medicine. The teacher told her to wait until class was over. Chelsea's upper lip was turning blue and she was weak-kneed when a young schoolmate walked her to the office. After that, her allergist told the well-behaved Chelsea to disobey adults — or she might die following their misguided advice about asthma.... "Every class she's been in says they have the highest number of asthma kids they ever had," Chelsea's mother said. "It makes me wonder. What is going on?"

Los Angeles Times, October 27, 1996

Although researchers and policy makers now have a fairly sophisticated understanding of environmental threats to children's health, millions of young people in this country are suffering from preventable diseases and health problems. The number of cases of tuberculosis, a contagious but preventable disease, often bred in cramped living quarters, rose sharply between 1985 and 1992 after several decades of decline (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 1996, p. 5). Although often ill equipped to respond adequately, school nurses are seeing more and more children with asthma, allergies, and respiratory disease as well as depression and violent anger (Children's Defense Fund, March 1997, p. 7).

"We've noticed patterns of types of disabilities — waves of children from certain locations," such as those near apple orchards and cornfields routinely sprayed with pesticides, said Gail Cohen, coordinator of early intervention services at Brookside School, site of a program for children with disabilities in upstate New York. "What we're seeing now

are preemies, babies born very small — one pound" (Cohen 1997). "[M]any children in poor neighborhoods such as Mott Haven [in the South Bronx] have been neurologically impaired, some because of low-weight prematurity at birth, some because of drug ingestion while in utero, and many from lead poison in their homes and also, shockingly enough, within their schools" (Kozol 1995, p. 155). As a society, we now know enough about lead poisoning to eradicate it; nevertheless, "in some inner-city communities, one out of two children risks permanent mental impairment due to excessive lead exposure" (Wilson 1996, p. 236).

Like Chelsea's mother, I wonder what is going on. Why has environmentally induced disease and damage to children not become more of a public issue? Why the lack of a collective outcry against this social injustice? And why the relative lack of attention from educational scholars and researchers?

As James Comer (1997) has argued, policy makers, and the public that elects them, need to learn to see children in the whole context of their lives — familial, social, emotional, and, I would add, environmental. Clearly, if children are reared in poisonous environments where infections are spread easily, they are not going to learn well. And pointing to a few cases in which, miraculously, some children do is not an adequate response to the reality that most children denied even minimally adequate learning conditions do not flourish.

Sadly, acknowledgment of the environmental requisites for children's growth and development has been conspicuously absent in the most recent wave of educational reform. Although Clinton's Goals 2000 legislation affirms that "[a]ll children will start school ready to learn," the economically driven standards movement that followed has focused almost exclusively on the desired end-products of a tightly controlled education: measurable skills and simplified test scores. Little has been said about the social, emotional, and environmental conditions under which children learn best — and almost nothing about the conditions that virtually preclude any learning at all. The silence underscores the need for educators and educational scholars to speak up and provide the public with a better education about education, especially about the conditions under

which children can and cannot learn and about the tragedy that lies at the heart of the educational crisis of our times — namely, that "[t]he children of the socially marginal are being denied even minimal learning conditions" (Comer, 1997, 170-171).

Jonathan Kozol (1995) makes this pointed observation about scholars' seeming lack of concern with issues of environmental damage to children:

> Many of the liberal intellectuals I know who are concerned with questions of unequal access to secondary schools tend to focus more on inequalities that may be caused by our selection systems than on those that are engendered by environmental forces that are neurological in nature. In human terms, it's understandable.... It is less painful to speak of an unfair test than of brain damage since a test can someday be revised and given to a child again, but childhood cannot. (pp. 156-157)

It is less painful to speak of biased testing than of brain damage but not only, I believe, because the damage is less consequential. It is less painful also because the cost of responding significantly to the problem is much less, because the delineation of responsibility both for causing and for correcting the problem is cleaner, and because the horror is less shameful. These are explanations, however, not justifications.

In an effort to take up Kozol's challenge, I have reviewed some of the recent medical research on tuberculosis, lead poisoning, and asthma — all diseases or conditions engendered or exacerbated by environmental forces. I have also examined news reports that suggest how schools and the broader society generally have responded to the alarming increase in asthma, especially among children, to the widespread damage suffered by children exposed to lead, and to what the president of the American Lung Association has called the "time bomb" of tuberculosis (Dr. Alfred Munzer, quoted in Pinkney 1994). The discussion that follows first provides information about the causes, consequences, and rates of incidence of tuberculosis, lead poisoning, and asthma. I then comment on how the society and its schools have responded, and speak to issues of framing — that is, to how the issue of environmentally induced disease is being discussed. Finally, I come back to Kozol's challenge — of particular relevance

to holistic educators, I believe — and argue that environmentally induced damage and disease ought to be seen as a social issue and therefore also as an educational issue.

Clearly, if children are reared in poisonous environments where infections are spread easily, they are not going to learn well.

Although environmentally induced damage could be framed in any number of ways, in the medical and popular literature of today it largely is framed (accurately, I believe) as "an affliction of the poor" (Nossiter 1995). At the same time, however, environmentally induced damage commonly is construed as an issue of misfortune — the bad luck inherent in statistical probability or of being born to parents unable or unwilling to offer protection — and as something the unfortunate must cope with, individually, through treatment and education. Cast in this way, environmentally induced damage appears not as a predictable consequence of social policies and inaction — that is, not as an issue of social injustice — but rather as an unpredictable consequence of, for example, poor parental decision making about where to live.

Poor children of color who in disproportionate numbers are being assigned to the very worst public schools (Kozol 1991), are growing up to face the highest rates of unemployment (Rifkin 1995, pp. 77-78), and are spending portions of their young adult years in the nation's jails and prisons (Males 1996, p. 248) also are bearing the brunt of environmentally induced damage. On top of this, these children are being represented in much of the public and professional discourse as unfortunate "others" — a perspective that invites social inaction and, consequently, more damage. A review of reports in national newspapers suggests that what doctors in the Bronx note about the asthma "epidemic" pertains to environmentally induced damage in general: "The epidemic is a singularly quiet one. It has not spawned headlines, demonstrations, advocacy groups or loud calls for public action. One explanation: it is an affliction of the poor, those who have less voice" (Nossiter 1995).

Recognizing the moral horror of environmentally induced damage to children obviously will not reverse the damage. But failure to understand, and speak up about, the gravity of the situation in its social depth and moral urgency insures that responses will continue to be short-sighted and dangerously marred by the prevailing propensity to do little besides teach children to cope as best they can, point fingers at their socially devalued parents, and look on a social level for the cheapest way out.

Tuberculosis

The rate of tuberculosis cases dropped steadily from 1975 (the first year for which data comparable to that collected today is available) until 1985. However, between 1985 and 1992, tuberculosis cases rose more than 20% among all age groups and more than 35% among children up to 14 years old (Centers for Disease Control statistics; cited in Pinkney 1994, p. 11). Among children under 5 living in large cities (with populations greater than 250,000), reported cases of tuberculosis rose 94.3% between 1987 and 1991 (Sass 1996, p. 2087).

Tuberculosis rates began to drop in 1993. However, an outbreak occurred that year at LaQuinta High School in a suburb outside Los Angeles. More than 300 students, close to 25% of the student body, tested positive for tuberculosis. One of the students had had the disease, undiagnosed by her doctors, for 13 months. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [hereafter, CDC] report, the school ventilation system had not been working properly ("California School" 1994). In 1996, the number of tuberculosis cases rose in 20 states and "sporadic outbreaks" of drug-resistant strains continued to occur across the nation (Goldstein & Suplee 1997).

"I've worked in Africa where TB is endemic, and what we're seeing here isn't any different from what we're seeing in other parts of the world," said Dr. Barbara Watson of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (quoted in Pinkney 1994, pp. 11-12).

Children develop tuberculosis faster and more intensely than adults. They "can become very, very

sick very, very fast," said Dr. Jeffrey Starke, director of the TB clinic at Baylor College of Medicine (quoted in Pinkney 1994, p. 12). Unlike adults with tuberculosis, only some of whom are newly infected, every case in a child is a newly acquired infection. "[I]t is an epidemiologic emergency from that point of view," said Dr. Laura Gutman of Duke University Medical Center (quoted in Pinkney 1994, p. 12).

Yet, this need not be. "With adequate resources and decision making, we could come close to eliminating pediatric tuberculosis in just a few years," said Dr. Starke (quoted in Pinkney 1994, p. 12). In fact, the opposite has occurred: A survey of 26 large-city health departments found 11 slashed their TB-control budgets between 1988 and 1992, three of them by more than 25% (Pinkney 1994, p. 12).

Identifiable groups of children are bearing the brunt of these cuts:

> The current outbreak of TB — which most observers link to federal funding cuts for public health programs in the 1980s — has been concentrated among poor children, the homeless, youngsters with AIDS or other serious health problems, and children who have immigrated to the United States from countries where tuberculosis is widespread. The vast majority of children who have contracted the disease are members of racial and ethnic minorities living in inner cities. (Ruben 1994, p. 23)

In this country, non-white children up to 5 years old (African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and American Indian/Alaskan Natives) are 10½ to 12 times more likely to have tuberculosis than their white counterparts. For young people 5 to 14 years old, the racial/ethnic discrepancies are even larger: Non-white 5- to 14-year-olds are 19 to 32 times more likely to have tuberculosis than their white counterparts, CDC data show (August 1996, p. 6).

"Unless we reinvent our badly deteriorated public health system," warns Dr. Richard Jacobs, a national authority on TB, "this thing is going to get nothing but worse" (quoted in Ruben 1994, p. 23).

Lead Poisoning

Largely as a result of federal efforts to reduce exposure to lead, blood-lead levels in the United States have decreased dramatically in the last few decades (Goldman & Carra 1994, p. 315). Nevertheless, in 1991, lead poisoning remained "the No. 1 environmental threat to the health of children in the United States," according to the Secretary of Health and Human Services at the time (L. Sullivan; quoted in Lively 1994, p. 316). Increased understanding of lead poisoning and its damage led the CDC to lower the acceptable blood-lead level three times in recent years. Based on the current definition of 10 micrograms per deciliter, about 4 million children in the United States — almost 9% — now have harmful levels of lead in their bloodstreams (Rosen 1995, p. 16). Although lead paint was banned more than twenty years ago with the passage of the Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Act, about two-thirds of all homes with young children still have lead paint or dust hazards (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates; cited in Goldman & Carra 1994, p. 315).

As with tuberculosis, poor children of color, especially young children in inner cities, have been disproportionately harmed by this "entirely preventable" condition (Goldman & Carra 1994, p. 315). A 1994 study (Brody et al. 1994; cited in Rosen 1995, p. 16) showed 36.7% of all African-American children in the United States were suffering from lead poisoning, compared with 17% of Latino children and 6.1% of white children (p. 16). The poorer the family, the greater the likelihood the child would be affected. When Rosen (1995) looked at the relationship between family income and lead-poisoning among urban white children 6 months to 5 years old, he found 32.4% of the children in families with annual incomes of at least $15,000 had lead poisoning, compared with 50% in families with incomes of $6,000 to $14,999 and 68.2% in families with incomes of less than $6,000 (p. 12).

Also, the younger the child, the greater the risk. A national study carried out between 1988 and 1991 found 4.5% of the U.S. population had blood-lead levels in the toxic range. However, 11.5% of children 1 to 2 years old had blood-lead levels in this range. The highest rates were among poor children of color, many of whom live in older, poor quality homes where they are exposed to the single most concentrated source of lead: paint and dust. Lack of access to routine medical care compounds the problem

(Brody et al. 1994; cited in Goldman & Carra 1994, p. 315).

Numerous studies have documented the damage done to children exposed to lead. "Lead poisoning in children can cause serious, sometimes irreversible, damage, including cognitive and hearing impairment, convulsions, coma, and even death" (Children's Defense Fund 1997, p. 30). "Studies dating back to 1929 have established especially pernicious consequences of high lead exposure to children including retarded physical growth and development, brain damage and learning disabilities, hyperactivity, and impaired hearing" (Lively 1994, p. 314). Studies since 1943 have linked lead exposure with impaired psychometric intelligence. Even at low levels, lead exposure has been shown to impair children's IQ (Needleman & Gatsonis 1990, p. 673).

Elevated lead levels have been linked with reading difficulties, general school failure and, recently, with attention problems, aggression, and delinquent behavior (Needleman et al. 1996). A 1996 study of 300 boys, tested for lead toxicity in first grade, then retested at age 11, found the boys with relatively high bone-lead levels had more attention problems, were more aggressive, and suffered more anxiety and depression than their counterparts — this according to the judgments of parents, teachers, and the boys themselves. "If the findings … are found to extend to the population of U.S. children, the contribution of lead to delinquent behavior would be substantial," the authors of the study concluded. "[A]ltered social behavior may be among the earliest expressions of lead toxicity" (Needleman et al. 1996, p. 369).

Asthma

Asthma, a chronic, inflammatory disease that results in narrowed airways in the lungs, now afflicts about 14 million to 15 million people in the United States, including almost 5 million children and young people under 18 (CDC 1996, p. 350). Symptoms range from mild shortness of breath to severe airway obstruction that can result in wheezing or, in thousands of cases a year, death (Leary 1997). With the right medication, however, even severe asthmatic attacks can be managed (Cowley & Underwood 1997, p. 61).

Knowledge about how to treat asthma has vastly improved in the last 15 years. There are daily medications to calm the inflamed airways to prevent attacks. Pocket-sized inhalers for emergencies that can be tucked into a child's jeans. Lifesaving breathing machines that are carried in a shoulder pack. Support groups for parents. Asthma camps for kids. Curricula for schools. (Cone 1996)

Nevertheless, "At the same time that our treatment regimens and strategies of care have expanded with proven efficacy, the prevalence, morbidity and mortality are all increasing," said UCLA pediatrician Neal Halfon (quoted in Cone 1996).

Between 1982 and 1994 the asthma rate increased more than 61%. Among children under 18, the increase was more than 72% (American Lung Association 1996, p. 4). "Asthma is unquestionably, and unaccountably, on the rise, and some parts of the U.S. population — notably children, and women — have felt the effect more dramatically than others," the American Lung Association (1996, p. 3) reported.

Asthma death and hospitalization rates have accelerated in recent years, especially among preschoolers and African-Americans. Asthma now kills, on average, 14 people in the United States every day. In the last twenty years the death toll has more than tripled (Cone 1996). For people 24 years old and younger, CDC statistics show, the asthma death toll increased 118% between 1980 and 1993 ("Asthma Toll" 1996, p. 350). Asthma "is the No. 1 chronic disease afflicting American children, and it's not unusual for an asthmatic child to miss 20 to 40 days of school each year," the *Los Angeles Times* reported (Cone 1996).

Infections, allergies, and environmental factors, such as dust and tobacco smoke, are known to provoke asthma attacks as well as crowded living conditions where respiratory infections are passed easily from one person to another (Nossiter 1995). However, there appears to be no agreement about exactly why asthma attacks, hospitalizations, and deaths have increased so significantly in recent years. Improved diagnoses may have resulted in more reported cases. The fact that a quarter of all children in this country now live in areas that exceed federal standards for ozone, which irritates the lungs, may be important ("Asthma Toll" 1996). Also, many chil-

dren, especially poor children or color, lack quality health care. "Many African-Americans still receive a large portion of their health care in clinical settings where they don't get exposed to providers who are as knowledgeable about asthma or up-to-date about the latest treatments," said Dr. LeRoy Graham, a pediatric lung specialist with the American Lung Association. "It's tragic because asthma is extremely treatable" (quoted in "Asthma Toll" 1996).

Although asthma has increased in recent years across all races, ethnicities, ages, and geographies, identifiable populations are suffering disproportionately. As is almost always the case, it seems, poor children of color, particularly those in inner cities, are suffering most. As a group, African-Americans develop asthma more often than others, and suffer attacks that are more severe. Statistics for 1993 from the CDC show that, compared with their white counterparts, African-American children under 4 years old were six times more likely to die of asthma, that African-American children 5 to 14 years old were four times more likely to die of asthma, and that African-American children and young people up to 24 years old were 3.4 times more likely to be hospitalized (CDC 1996, p. 351). Asthma among Latino children has mirrored the rise among white children. However, doctors say Latinos in major cities are starting to suffer the same "rampant severity" as African-Americans (Cone 1996).

"The problem is at its worst in cities, especially in Chicago and New York, where children are hospitalized at nearly twice the national rate for asthma," *The New York Times* reported. "The byproducts of poverty — cockroach feces, dust mites, mold, dampness, drafts, and rat and mouse urine — have all been found to exacerbate asthma. Crowded conditions, where respiratory infections can be passed easily from one person to another, can make asthma worse. So can anxiety" (Belluck 1996). Although the United States has an overall asthma rate of about 5%, the rate in New York City is 8.4%, and as high as 25% among children in the poorest urban neighborhoods, according to Dr. Irwin Redlener of New York's Montefiore Medical Center (quoted in Cowley & Underwood 1997, p. 61). Doctors in poor neighborhoods (Harlem, East Harlem, the South Bronx) characterize asthma as "an emerging epidemic" (Belluck 1996). "I

can't remember ever being in another place in the United States in which so many children spoke of having difficulty breathing," Kozol (1995) commented, reflecting on the time he spent in the South Bronx.

> [T]he rate of hospitalization admissions for asthma statewide in New York is 1.8 per 1,000 people. In New York City, it is 2.5 per 1,000, but in Mott Haven [the poorest congressional district in the nation] the rate rises to 6.0 in the St. Ann's neighborhood and 6.9 in the adjacent zip code. The lowest rate of pediatric asthma in the Bronx … is in Riverdale, a predominantly white section; the highest rate, more than five times that of Riverdale, is in Mott Haven, where the rate of child pneumonia is also very high: ten times that of Riverdale. The asthma mortality rate for people in the Bronx, the borough with the highest concentration of black and Hispanic residents, is nearly nine times that of Staten Island, which is the whitest borough in the city.[1] (p. 170)

Not surprisingly, asthma has become the most prevalent health problem in many New York City schools, especially elementary schools in poor areas (Belluck 1996). "School officials say asthma is a leading cause of absences, with serious attacks often keeping children home for a week at a time. School nurses have had to call ambulances for some children. And teachers say the fatigue and breathing problems affect children's concentration and achievement in class" (Belluck 1996). In a 1994 survey of new students in elementary and junior high schools throughout New York City, almost 4% said they had asthma; in poor areas, however, the rate rose to 12% (Belluck 1996). A fourth-grade teacher at P.S. 30 in the South Bronx told *The New York Times* 12 of his 30 students have asthma and eight bring breathing pumps to class. The principal of another school in the South Bronx, St. Luke, said 40% of her school's pre-kindergarten to eighth-grade students have asthma (Nossiter 1995).

Why are poor children, especially poor children of color in inner city neighborhoods, getting sick with asthma and dying from it more often than other children? Lack of preventive care, Kozol (1995) suggests:

When you ride on the Number 6 train from East 59th Street to the racial cutoff point at 96th, you pass beneath an area in which 2,400 private doctors, most of them highly qualified, have their offices and in which the ratio of doctors to residents is approximately 60 to 1,000. When you leave the subway at Brook Avenue, you are in a neighborhood in which the ratio is two per 1,000. (pp. 172-173)

In line with these numbers, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that at Kennedy Elementary School in East Los Angeles, the school nurse discovered none of the school's 30 asthmatic students was receiving preventive medication from a doctor (Cone 1996, A29). Also, poor families often cannot afford inhalers, which "cost between $15 and $40 each and often last only two weeks" (Kozol 1995, p. 171). "[P]eople in dilapidated homes frequently have intermittent heat and use gas ovens to warm their homes. At the same time, these homes are often poorly ventilated, allowing pollutants from stove exhaust to build up, bringing indoor air pollution to unhealthy levels and making asthma attacks more likely," said Dr. Payton Eggleston (1995), director of asthma programs at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

A recent national study found that living in a roach-infested home heightens a child's chances of suffering from asthma. A five-year study conducted in seven major cities concluded that children are at high risk of asthma if they are both allergic to cockroaches and, obviously, living around them. David Rosenstreich, the main author of the study, attributes about 25% of all asthma in inner cities to roaches (Leary 1997).

Also, living amidst fear and violence day in and day out takes a profound emotional toll. A healthcare provider in the South Bronx offers this explanation of the high rates of pediatric asthma he sees: "Some of it is environmental — housing infestation, pesticides, no heat in an apartment. But a great deal is emotional as well. Fear of violence can be a strong constrictive force." He predicts: "If you moved these families into a nice suburb, nine tenths of this feeling of constriction, I'm convinced, would be relieved" (Jesus Gilberto, quoted in Kozol 1995, pp. 173-174).

ENCOUNTER ONLINE
http://www.sover.net/~holistic

Responses: Schools and Society

The numbers I have cited reflect immense suffering. Children literally are gasping for their lives, suffering irrevocable damage to their brains and nervous systems, dying painfully and young from the ravages of tuberculosis. Sadly, it is the same old story: Poor children of color, already suffering disproportionately in so many other ways, also are bearing the brunt of environmentally induced damage. "It is a hard truth that those with the highest risk of exposure also tend to be the most disadvantaged members of society with the fewest options for removing themselves from the risk" (Lively 1994, p. 331).

As several of the people I have quoted note, the problem is not lack of knowledge. As a society we know how to control asthma, how to eradicate lead poisoning, and how to prevent tuberculosis. We are also well aware of the existence of environmental racism.

[R]acial demographics have proved to be a critical determinant of environmental quality.... Private and governmental research has identified significant disparities in the placement of waste sites, enforcement of environmental laws, remedial action, location of clean-up efforts, and the quality of clean-up strategies. (Lively 1994, p. 311)

The problem also, arguably, is not lack of money. By traditional measures, the economy is doing very well (Francis 1996). Although the child poverty rate has increased by a third since 1969, the gross national product doubled in these years (Children's Defense Fund 1997, p. 17).

Given the society's knowledge base and the reputed health of its economy, no child should be suffering the effects of environmentally induced damage. But many are. According to the American Lung Association (1996), "critical gaps and barriers [remain] between patients and appropriate resources" (p. 4). A recent review showed fewer than a third of the states have an initiative targeting asthma in their state health plans, and even fewer have actually implemented a program. Furthermore, "Virtually no state health departments have staff designated to develop, advocate and coordinate asthma programs" (American Lung Association 1996, p. 4). The

CDC's Strategic Plan for the Elimination of Childhood Lead Poisoning (1991), which represents a shift in strategy from "finding cases and then treating them" to "finding the toxicant in the environment, removing it, and breaking the exposure link," (Needleman & Jackson 1992, p. 678) six years later has not yet been fully implemented (CDC 1997).

It would be inaccurate to suggest that the society has turned its back completely on children suffering the effects of environmentally induced damage. Not surprisingly, the growing "asthma market" has unleashed a competitive race for new treatments (Begley 1997, p. 63; Gellene 1996). Also not surprisingly, the broader society has looked to its schools for at least a token response, and the schools are responding in characteristic ways — namely, by helping individuals learn to cope better. *The New York Times* reports:

> To help children and parents learn how to function better with asthma, schools have begun to hold special asthma classes for children, organizing after-school asthma meetings, scheduling weekend asthma fairs and staging ceremonies staring famous asthmatics, like Jacki Joyner-Kersee, the Olympic track star. Some are giving out picture books and coloring books like "The Asthma Adventure" and "Asthma Explorers Official Asthmatic Trigger Book." (Belluck 1996)

Although clearly valuable, such coping-oriented responses do not address the fundamental problem, which is that many, many children — children who cannot "choose" to simply move — are living in unsanitary, polluted, hyper-stressful environments.

The insight expressed in an editorial about lead poisoning in the journal *Pediatrics* is important and worth quoting at length:

> We will not end this man-made epidemic until we understand the reasons for its curious persistence in the face of considerable data about what lead does, and what is needed to rid ourselves of it. Among the reasons for desultory attention to this epidemic is the stubborn belief that this is an affliction of only poor minority children. Related is the tendency on the part of some to blame the mother's rearing style for the elevated blood lead. Many people believe that with the passage of the Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Acts, and the removal of lead from gasoline, the problem somehow disappeared.

> Academic pediatrics, with some exceptions, has not found this commonplace low technology malady as fascinating as molecular disorders.... Private pediatric practitioners generally believe that this is not a problem for their patients. The lead industry since at least as early as 1939 has worked to obscure the effects of lead on human health; this practice continues today. Finally, the size of the problem and the amount of dollars and effort involved result in a reflex wave of pessimism. Self-styled realists, when confronted with a 10-billion-dollar estimate to delead and improve the 2 million dangerous houses in which children live and the paint is peeling, shrug and turn away. (Needleman & Jackson 1992, pp. 679-680)

Given the society's knowledge base and the reputed health of its economy, no child should be suffering the effects of environmentally induced damage. But many are.

In other words, apathy, denial, and self-interest are contributing to the mounting damage from lead poisoning — not "lack of knowledge about the toxic effects of lead, for these have been known for years, not ... a failure of legislative resolve, for lead-based gasoline additives have been eliminated, not ... a lack of industrial alternatives, for lead-free paints are widely used" (King 1993, p. 160).

Since the CDC lowered the acceptable blood-lead level from 25 micrograms to 10 micrograms per deciliter, the federal government has required all states to screen young children covered under Medicaid for lead poisoning. However, the best test is significantly more expensive than its less sensitive alternative. Consequently, most states are using the latter and "many cases of dangerous blood-lead levels ... go undetected" (Stevens 1995). Also, some clinicians are reluctant to screen children for lead essentially for fear of what they will find. Needleman and Jackson (1992) explain: "Clinicians are reluctant to screen because, at levels of lead less than 25 [micrograms

per deciliter], no pharmacologic treatment is currently available" (p. 679). However, "When no children are screened, no cases are found, and the myth that there is no lead problem becomes fixed." In fact, "when screening is put in place, community lead problems have been identified consistently" (Needleman & Jackson 1992, p. 679).

Importantly, the CDC's strategic plan has been stalled *not* because the cost of preventing lead poisoning cannot be rationalized. On the contrary,

> The Plan estimates the costs for deleading homes and the benefits that accrue from reduced need for medical care, for special education and the increase in wages that goes with having a higher IQ.... The conclusion of the analysis, described as conservative by Centers for Disease Control, is that the net return to our society for deleading the housing stock in the United States would be $28 billion more than the costs of the abatement.... The numbers are clear; it makes unequivocal fiscal sense to make this investment in human capital. (Needleman & Jackson 1992, p. 680)

Clearly, more is going on here than straightforward cost-benefit analysis. Reluctance to respond directly and decisively to the problem of lead poisoning, and more generally to environmentally induced damage and disease, reflects judgments of worth (whose health is worth protecting?) bound up in the social values and political struggles of our time. From this perspective, Nancy Fraser's (1989) discussion of the political character of "needs talk" provides a useful lens through which to view environmentally induced damage to children, so I turn next to some of her ideas.

Issues of Framing and Interpretation

"Talk about people's needs," Fraser (1989) argues, "is an important species of political discourse" (p. 161). What will count as a matter of legitimate political concern is an open question, subject to struggle and contestation. Needs once regarded as private matters sometimes become politicized and vice versa. Fraser (1989) uses the example of wife battering — a phrase that did not exist until about 25 years ago. Rather, "[w]hen spoken of publicly at all, this phenomenon was called 'wife beating' and was often treated comically, as in 'Have you stopped beating

your wife?' Linguistically, it was classed with the disciplining of children and servants as a 'domestic' — as opposed to a 'political' — matter" (p. 175). Feminists then changed the language and altered the perceptions of the practice by arguing "that battery was not a personal, domestic problem but a systemic, political one; its etiology was not to be traced to individual women's or men's emotional problems but, rather, to the ways these problems refracted pervasive social relations of male dominance and female subordination" (Fraser 1989, p. 175).

Not only is what will count as a legitimate need deserving of public attention an open question, so too are the questions of how such needs will be interpreted and how people regarded as having these needs will be construed — as individual cases or members of groups, victims or advocates? When matters previously regarded as outside the social realm "break out of zones of discursive privacy" to become the focus of public contestation, "previously taken-for-granted interpretations of these matters are called into question" (Fraser 1989, pp. 167-168). When this happens, newly politicized needs may be reprivatized or translated into claims for governmental response. However, successfully politicized needs still are subject to contestation over how they will be interpreted.

And so it is with respect to environmentally induced damage and disease. The public discourse on lead poisoning, asthma, and tuberculosis reflects, in part, a struggle over issues of interpretation. Although doctors and other medical people dominate this discourse (reporters ask them questions and quote them, as I have), there are those within this "expert" realm arguing that environmentally induced damage and disease ought to be seen in broader social and environmental terms rather than narrower "medical" ones (e.g., Werner 1993). There is also Kozol, along with a few others (e.g., Wilson 1996), insisting that lead-induced brain damage, for example, ought to be seen as an educational as well as an environmental issue.

However, as the editorial writers quoted earlier suggest with respect to lead poisoning, environmentally induced damage generally is being construed not as a socially constructed problem with environmental roots, but rather as an affliction of "other

people's children" (Delpit 1995) and, furthermore, as something for which these children's parents largely are to blame. Consider, for example, the assumptions implicit in these comments: "These kids wind up, more often than not, managing their own asthma, because the parents aren't around or the parents have asthma that they themselves don't know how to manage," said a public health administrator for a school health program in East Harlem, quoted in *The New York Times* (Belluck 1996). "I'm very suspicious of where [children poisoned by lead] are getting the lead from. I've even thought that some parents might be feeding it to them just like there were parents who were throwing their kids out of the window so they could sue for kids falling out of the window," said a landlord in the Bronx, also quoted in *The New York Times* (Purdy 1994).

Meanwhile, schools and public agencies are offering educational programs and making efforts to increase access to treatment. As valuable as such management efforts are, they nevertheless are aligned with a particular interpretation of environmentally induced disease — namely, that this is a private matter for afflicted individuals and their families to deal with on their own through treatment and education, and not fundamentally a social issue with a social etiology requiring a social response. Continuing along this interpretative path almost certainly will lead to more lessons in how to cope, but not necessarily to public outage or to a broad social commitment to providing all children with what they need to be healthy, grow, and learn.

If educators and scholars in and outside the field of holistic education are to play a significant role in shaping "needs talk" around environmentally induced damage, we will need to challenge not only how this phenomenon is being framed in the public discourse, but also ideas about what counts as "educational." This essentially is Kozol's challenge: to rethink what needs are educational — the need to be tested fairly? to compete in unrigged competitions? to be protected from toxins and other socially constructed and environmentally induced hazards? — and to align reform agendas and scholarship accordingly.

It is important to recognize that public health issues, including environmentally induced damage,

have not always been construed as a private responsibility to be coped with, individually, as best one can. The framing of public health issues as problems to be managed primarily through treatment or education of the afflicted and their parents has not always been the norm. During the early 1900s, child health was regarded as a social problem with a social etiology and as a matter of public responsibility, and not primarily therefore as an issue of personal misfortune or parental irresponsibility. "It was recognized that disease was a 'removable evil' and that the elimination of social problems, like crowded housing, poor nutrition, and limited sanitation, could improve children's health" (King 1993, p. 121). This recognition led to a

> moral campaign against the problems that faced American children.... Physicians, social workers, psychologists, child advocates, and mothers worked side by side in local and national organizations ... to further the health of American children.... Mothers and physicians alike were concerned with the care of individual children, but increasingly they addressed the social and political problems that confronted families and professionals across the nation. (King 1993, pp. 121-122)

Not surprisingly, "Many problems were solved, and fewer children died of preventable diseases and injuries" during this time (King 1993, p. 142). Such a perspective on environmentally induced damage and child health in general seemingly could be revived.

It is also important to recognize, however, that these are very different times. Self-righteous victim-blaming and simplistic parent (usually mother) bashing stand in for serious social analysis, and a dangerous antipathy lurks just below the surface of much of our public talk. "[W]e so desperately distrust and dislike lower-class adults that we are willing to let their children suffer as well," speculate Grubb and Lazerson (1988, p. 207; quoted in Polakow 1993, p. 146). "I feel embarrassed by it all; ashamed," confesses a Catholic priest in Brooklyn's Southside neighborhood. "The politicians have decided to treat the poor people like cockroaches, as things to be squashed" (Msgr. Bryan Karvelis; quoted in Sexton 1997).

Identifiable groups of children have already been damaged in wildly disproportionate numbers, and are continuing to be — irrevocably, in many cases. This, at least, is the conclusion I have reached on the basis of the numbers I have cited in this article. It is a conclusion, however, that can be bent to horrible political ends.[2] To speak of damage to children in a society such as ours that lacks any "public love" for them (Grubb & Lazerson 1982, p. 44) is both necessary and in some ways risky. The public discourse on poverty, across most of the political spectrum, already construes the poor as figuratively diseased (Polakow 1993, p. 43). That this appears to be literally true to an unconscionable degree invites at least two very different responses.

One is to recognize the social etiology of environmental damage and disease and respond accordingly — by demanding, collectively, that the fundamental causes (unsanitary living conditions, dangerous and dilapidated housing, toxic pollution, unrelenting stress, and so on) be removed and the damage thereby prevented. Another response, however, is to resolve to keep one's own distance, if at all possible. I can imagine many people thinking: "Environmentally induced damage and disease don't affect my child. Why should I worry about this? If *they* don't want to clean up their homes or take their asthmatic children to the doctor, what can I do about it? And if *their* lead-poisoned children can't learn or won't behave, why should my children suffer alongside them in the classroom!"

Many children are trapped in environments that are making them sick, damaging them permanently, or even killing them, unnecessarily in the sense that the society lacks neither the knowledge nor the money to prevent the damage. This reality needs to be fully acknowledged and taken up as a social *and educational* issue. Attention, however, is not enough. Without insight into the moral horror of inaction, which the framing of the problem as individual cases of bad luck mediates against, and without the ability to arouse public outrage, the facts and figures of damage can be used to rationalize more disregard and unconcern, not less. Perhaps more than ever, these times — our own — require the moral and social vision that has characterized holistic education at its best.
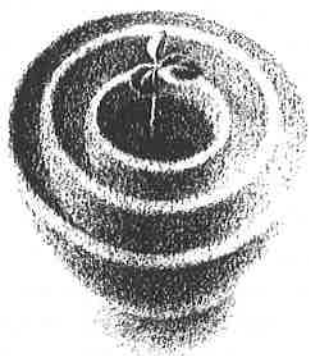
Notes

1. Dr. Robert Massad, a family-practice specialist at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, provided Kozol (1995) with these numbers (p. 171). Other studies have shown similar variations, e.g., see the reference to a 1992 study in Belluck (1996).

2. Consider, for example, Herrnstein and Murray's frightening argument for what they construe as a sort of "humane social segregation" of the allegedly genetically inferior. See *The Bell Curve* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

References

American Lung Association. 1996. *Lung disease data.*

"Asthma toll Is up sharply, U.S. reports." 1996. *The New York Times*, May 3.

Begley, S. 1997. Yearning to breathe free. *Newsweek*, May 26.

Belluck, P. 1996. As asthma cases rise, Tough choices and lessons. *The New York Times*, September 29.

"California school becomes notorious for epidemic of TB." 1994. *The New York Times*, July 18.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1991. *Strategic plan for the elimination of childhood lead poisoning.* Department of Health and Human Services.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1996. Asthma morality and hospitalization among children and young adults — United States, 1980–1993. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 45(17): 350-353.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1996. *Reported tuberculosis in the United States.*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1997. Telephone conversation with Nancy Tips, Lead Poisoning and Prevention Branch, August 14.

Children's Defense Fund. Special report: A healthy start. *CDF Reports* 18(4): 5-9.

Children's Defense Fund. 1997. *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1997.* Washington: Author.

Cohen, G., J. Galante, and M. Johnson. 1997. Personal communication, July 9.

Comer, J. P. 1997. *Waiting for a miracle: Why schools can't solve our problems — And how we can.* New York: Dutton.

Cone, M. 1996. Leaving a generation gasping for breath. *Los Angeles Times*, October 27.

Cowley, G., and A. Underwood. 1997. Why ebony can't breath. *Newsweek*, May 26.

Delpit, L. 1995 *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York: New Press.

Eggleston, P. 1995. Interview. National Public Radio, October 17.

Francis, D. R. 1996. Most economists forecast a happy new year for U.S. *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 27.

Fraser, N. 1989. Struggle over needs: Outline of a socialist-feminist critical theory of late capitalist political culture. In *Unruly Practices: Power, discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gellene, D.1996. Making hay fever: As U.S. allergies grow, So does market for new products. *Los Angeles Times*, September 11.

Goldman, L. R., and J. Carra. 1994. Childhood lead poisoning in 1994. *JAMA* 272(4): 315.

Goldstein, A., and C. Suplee. 1997. District TB rate bucks downward trend. *The New York Times*, March 25.

Grubb, W. N., and M. Lazerson. 1982. *Broken promises: How American fail their children*. New York: Basic Books.

King, C. R. 1993. *Children's health in America*. New York: Twayne.

Kozol, J. 1995. *Amazing grace: The lives of children and the conscience of a nation*. New York: Crown.

Kozol, J. 1991. *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: HarperCollins.

Leary, W. E. 1997. Cockroaches cited as big cause of asthma. *The New York Times*, May 8.

Lively, D. E. 1994. The diminishing relevance of rights: Racial disparities in the distribution of lead exposure risks. *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 21(2): 309-334.

Males, M. A. 1996. *The scapegoat generation: America's war on adolescents*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Needleman, H. L., and C. A. Gatsonis. 1990. Low-level lead exposure and the IQ of children. *JAMA* 263(5): 673-678.

Needleman, H. L., and R. J. Jackson. 1992. Lead toxicity in the 21st century: Will we still be treating it? *Pediatrics* 89(4): 678-680.

Needleman, H. L., J. A. Riess, M. J. Tobin, G. E. Biesecker, and J. B. Greenhouse 1996. Bone lead levels and delinquent behavior. *JAMA* 275(5): 363-369.

Nossiter, A. 1995. Asthma common and on rise in the crowded South Bronx. *The New York Times*, September 5.

Pinkney, D. S. 1994. Our failure to stem the spread of TB is creating a new set of victims: Children. *American Medical News*, 37(6): 11-12.

Polakow, V. 1993. *Lives on the edge: Single mothers and their children in the other America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Purdy, M. 1994. Cost of lead cleanup puts more children at risk. *The New York Times*, August 25.

Rifkin, J. 1995. *The end of work: The decline of the global labor force and the dawn of the post-market era*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.

Rosen, J. F. 1995. Adverse health effects of lead at low exposure levels: Trends in the management of childhood lead poisoning. *Toxicology* 97: 11-17.

Ruben, D. 1994. TB's toll on kids. *Parenting*, 8(4): 23.

Sass, P. 1996. Tuberculosis infection and disease in children. *American Family Physician* 53(6): 2087-2095.

Sexton, J. 1997. A priest faces up to some harsh realities. *The New York Times*, August 24.

Stevens, A. L. 1995. Lead poisoning: The plague of America's inner cities. *USA Today* 124(2602): 88-89.

Werner, D. 1993. Beyond pediatrics: The health and survival of disadvantaged children. *Pediatrics* 91(4): 703-705.

Wilson, R. A. 1996. Healthy habitats for children. *Early Childhood Education Journal* 23(4): 235-238.

Service Learning
A Critique and Affirmation

David E. Purpel

While service learning may be open to practical and theoretical criticism, it is also an example of what is most exalted in human nature.

I want in this paper to focus on the problematics of service learning, i.e., to look at service learning critically, and then I want to look at the problematics of the criticism of service learning, i.e., to carefully examine the nature of these criticisms. In this way I hope to shed some light not only on the particularities of service learning but also on some general issues involving efforts for educational reform and cultural change. I very much accept the vital importance of maintaining a wary and skeptical posture towards so-called new ideas and embrace the tradition of critical analysis as a necessary component of an education directed at human liberation. However, I want to add two qualifications to this affirmation: first that if it makes sense to be critical of an idea then it makes sense to be critical of the ideas contained in the criticism; and secondly, I believe that however necessary critical rationality may be for human liberation, it is not sufficient. In other words, thorough-going intellectual criticism is both vital *and* inadequate. There is the grim reality that those intent on evil rely on critical thinking and imagination as much as the angelic to pursue their goals. Put another way, critical thinking without a moral vision becomes only a powerful and useful tool-kit that can and has contributed as much to what is shameful as to what is exalting in human experience.

Among the broad criticisms of service learning that have been made are those that focus on the likelihood of insensitivity to cultural differences and relevant history, the misuse and abuse of power, the dangers of implicit elitism, its instrumental orientation, and the futility of such projects. Let me try to summarize briefly the essence of these concerns, all of which I share. First, there is the probability that those who seek to serve will be asked to work with the unfamiliar and the marginal, with the mores,

David Purpel teaches at the University of North Carolina Greensboro and is the author of the forthcoming *Moral Outrage and Education.*

sensibilities, and expectations of particular cultures and sub-cultures. In such a situation the possibility for miscommunication and cultural misunderstanding, if not bewilderment, is quite high. The task of gaining sufficient sensitivity to the proclivities of these groups and to their historical and experiential commonalties would seem to be quite daunting. This is an especially acute difficulty for those who have little awareness of their own cultural identity and history, never mind those of remote and marginal groups.

On the related issue of the abuse of power, there is implicit in the concept of "service" the notion that there are those who need help and there are those prepared to help, thus setting up a duality and hierarchy between the needy and the providers, the helpless and the helpful, the powerless and the powered, the takers and the givers. Such a duality allows for the possibility that this distinction, if not already in place, can easily be turned into a relationship of dependence in which the weak become the oppressed and the strong become the oppressor. Furthermore, such a posture lends itself to a consciousness of paternalism and colonialism, which can readily foster a sense of arrogance and condescension on the part of those who presume to know and act to intervene for what is best for other people. Lurking in the background of such relationships is the very real possibility of enhanced resentment, guilt, humiliation, and alienation for all involved, which can culminate in the pain of embittered polarization. Who gives us the right to tell others what to eat, think, believe, wear, take, read, or appreciate? By what authority do we claim to know what is best for those we do not really know? Who really benefits from our solutions and programs? Who should decide what the "real" problems are? What is the essential difference between those who provide service and those who are the receivers? Is it need? awareness? education? class? or is it power? If it truly is better to give than to receive, then why have we structured a relationship in which many receive and a few give?

In addition, there is a way in which service learning is not presented so as much a virtue but more as a necessity, i.e., as an effective technique and means to some other presumably more important goal. In such a formulation, the act of providing service is seen as facilitating understanding and learning such as in "by spending time in a soup kitchen you'll be able to get more insight into the problems of the poor" or "working in a medical clinic for the homeless will provide you with very valuable clinical experiences." This would seem to undercut the notion that these experiences are acts of altruism and compassion than of self-serving expedience.

> *Just as we have the responsibility to plumb the wicked impulses that reside within us, we have the parallel responsibility to take seriously those impulses within us that seek the good.*

Even if all these doubts could be overcome, there remains the question of the efficacy of service learning; that is, what impact will such activities actually have on social problems. Given the enormity of our ills, is it not pretentious, if not disingenuous, to foster the notion that at best such efforts could have anything except the most marginal and tenuous effect on the deeply structured inequities of our society? Is there not a danger of a backlash of disillusionment and disenchantment emerging from unrealistic and romantic expectations? Even more troubling is the real possibility that relatively modest successes can actually exacerbate problems through the process of co-optation in which amelioration serves to prop up the very structures that created the problems in the first place. It is bad enough to believe that service activities may have little positive effect on social problems, but the notion that they may actually serve to strengthen an unacceptable status quo is almost unbearable to sustain. Yet, however painful, that possibility exists and indeed the cliche with perhaps the most staying power across recorded history is the one about the materials used in the construction of the paths to hell.

How then are we to respond to the critics and the naysayers, those who are so skeptical, so wary, so

cautious and alas, so perceptive? Although I am operating on the assumption that these criticisms are acute and valuable insights that require our attention, I want also to insist that this attention should not become a trip to the land of inertia and paralysis. The best criticism ought not to *dis*arm and neutralize but instead should serve to *re*arm and energize. In that sense those of us committed to whatever it is that is represented by the metaphor "service learning" need to be as clear as is humanly possible about what vital and compelling concerns are truly involved. This process involves the necessity of locating our ideas in conceptual frameworks that do justice to our best impulses since criticism is more often than not an attempt to frame ideas in the realm of our worst impulses. Surely, it is absolutely necessary that we be constantly reminded of our human capacity to be self-serving, self-aggrandizing, and self-righteous; and by the same token, it is also vital to remember that we also have the capacity as humans to be generous, caring, compassionate, and loving. What becomes crucial then is how we come to frame our impulses, what metaphors, we use, what discourse we utilize, or to put it in the vernacular, what spin we put on our work.

Let me offer a number of spins by returning to some of the criticisms of service learning with particular reference to the issues of the two extremes: the danger of further enhancing the dominant culture by accomplishing too much, and the futility of all well-meaning but marginal and modest programs of reform. It is actually quite possible to see these seemingly dissimilar criticisms as perfectly compatible, in that one can say that at best, service learning will have little positive effect. I want to make it very clear that I strongly believe that these criticisms are essentially valid and the source of this conviction for me lies in our history.

For purposes of my analysis, I have decided to proclaim the coming of the Long Run — It is here, it has arrived and the news is not good. After all that has been said and done, more has been said than done and what has been done has for the most part made lots of very important things worse. I probably do not need to repeat the litany of serious social and cultural crises that confront us: poverty, homelessness, racism, sexism, polarization, violence, aliena-

tion, despair, ecological devastation, international instability. Perhaps I do need to offer the observation that in spite of, (or more gloomily, because of) a quantum increase in educational research and constant and intense efforts directed at educational reform, that the schools are by and large less lively, less imaginative, less playful, less stimulating places than they were even 10 or 15 years ago. Among other things, this tells me that the establishment has been able to ward off those social and educational changes and innovations that would have produced significant transformation and adopted or co-opted those that worked to preserve the status-quo. There is nothing in my examination of long run effects to indicate that the establishment will be any less willing or less competent to continue in their (should I not say our?) successful resistance to social, cultural, educational transformation. Nor do I see any reason at all that programs in service learning would somehow be immune from that fate — and I am thoroughly convinced that they will not.

Having said all that, I also want very much to support, encourage, and indeed, be part of the service learning movement. What is involved here is of central concern to my present research focus, which has to do with the question of what can be done to significantly improve our schools and transform our society or, at the very least, what can we do as professionals that will not contribute to our growing crises? As educators, we inevitably share to one degree or another in the cultural malaise of pessimism, frustration, and despair, if not cynicism, about the possibility of fundamental positive change. However, as educators, we are very reluctant to add to the problem by spreading the contagion of hopelessness and helplessness for we know that this surely contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom and disaster. We as professionals are continuously asked to walk the thin line between the responsibility to provide both sobering criticism and intoxicating hope and, in so doing, we invite the possibility of losing our balance and falling into the bottomless pit of paralysis or the velvet trap of complacency.

For me personally, it has been a real struggle to find hope and possibility in the many efforts by colleagues who work for concrete constructive changes, since my orientation has been heavy on the

critical, pessimistic, and skeptical side and very, very light on the support of those who are optimistic and enthusiastic about the possibility of real and substantive change. I therefore see my current challenge as finding some balance in my continuing work that has focused on the delineation of the major deficiencies in our social, cultural, and educational institutions and in offering alternative theoretical and ideological models to our present consciousness. One of the most persistent responses to this work has been in one way or another, a question that goes like this "Okay, perhaps there is some validity in what you say and given the enormity of the problems you posit, what then can and should be done?" A very fair question indeed and my initial response has been and continues to be that the first steps involve the acknowledgment of the massive extent of the crises, particularly of our complicity in their perpetuation and our responsibility for their amelioration. Without in any way conceding the enormity of our problems or the necessity for us to come clean on them, I have, however, come to see that there also needs to be recognition of those genuine, well-intentioned, concrete efforts by many of our gallant and hard-working colleagues. As I walk this line between hope and possibility on one side and despair and futility on the other, I continue to be guided by the example of the Biblical prophets whose message was exactly that, i.e., of the importance of balancing moral outrage with the possibility of redemptive action. This consciousness has been eloquently and succinctly described by Reinhold Neibuhr who in commenting on the prophets said the following: "What they were able to do was to see good in spite of evil and see evil in spite of good and in this way they were able to avoid both sentimentality and despair." I believe that I have done a far better job of avoiding sentimentality than I have of avoiding despair and so I, along with I am sure many others, feel the necessity of becoming more open to hope and possibility that resides in those who strive to do good.

Service learning for me is a metaphor for such efforts, nurtured in hope and possibility, whose future is darkened by the clouds of co-optation and trivialization *and* yet is deserving of our attention, support, and good will. How then are we to nourish such efforts without being seduced by them; and by

the same token, how can we be critical of them without crushing them?

Let me first suggest a framework for examining programs in service learning that I came upon as a result of listening to a very brief audio recording of an interview with Willis Harman, former President of the Noetic Institute. In this interview, Dr. Harman offers his response to what individuals can do in the face of the intimidating task of responding to the enormous magnitude of global problems. He has three suggestions:

- First, each person should deal with the need for inner transformation by reflecting on one's identity, one's inner struggles and agenda, on what one tends to deny about oneself, and how one messes up with best intentions. I take this to be an acknowledgment that our individual psyches are inevitably involved in our interpersonal and social activities and, moreover, that we need to attend to our own inner disorder if we are to deal with the outside disorder.
- Individuals should participate in some kind of worthwhile local activity where they can not only make a discernible impact but also receive reasonably clear and fast feedback on their efforts.
- Lastly, we should confront the reality that our whole social system, however destructive and dysfunctional it may be, is in fact supported by beliefs that we individually and collectively have accepted. Harman says that the ability to admit that the beliefs that we have bought into (such as our enthusiasm for a consumer economy) are actually contributing to the world crises is the hardest of the three suggestions to adopt. This is probably because it requires us to face our own complicity in human suffering and the exploitation of nature.

What I especially like about this relatively simple model is the way it provides for an interactive, dialectical process that connects the inner soul, the social persona, and the outside world, thus providing not only for breadth of concern but also for personal responsibility on a human scale. It allows us the space within which we can both do and be, reflect and act, be decisive and contemplative, and to deal simultaneously with short and long-term issues. The implications for service learning are clear as the

model suggests the importance of reflecting not only on the particular contexts of the service activities but on personal and ideological matters as well.

I want to add another dimension to this framework, namely that which deals with ultimate meaning, that which integrates the inner being, social being, and the culture. This, of course, assumes the existence of meaning, of some force or energy that provides coherence and wholeness to our existence. Whether the search for such meaning is delusionary and quixotic is surely not clear, at least not to me, but what is clear is that we as a species continue to engage ourselves in this search in any number of settings and with incredible energy, imagination, and passion. What we yearn for in this process is to relate and connect what we do on a day-to-day basis to that which has enduring consequence, for in so doing we can avoid drabness, emptiness, and idolatry. In this context, idolatry is to be seen as the worship of phenomena that do not have ultimate meaning or whose connection to ultimate meaning has been blurred or forgotten.

My own view is that it is idolatrous to view service learning as a good in of itself, but is worthy to the extent that it is an important part of a larger good. Indeed, my own enthusiasm for service learning is predicated on the strong belief that it *is* implicated with issues of ultimate meaning and significance. I have been maintaining throughout this paper that we should take seriously the criticisms that service learning reflects self-serving or even sinister motivation and I say that because I believe that we as a people are quite capable of being self-serving and sinister. However, I also believe that as a people we are capable of transcending our self-centeredness and mean-spiritedness and of moving to a consciousness of caring, compassion, and love. Just as we have the responsibility to plumb the wicked impulses that reside within us, we have the parallel responsibility to take seriously those impulses within us that seek the good. What I, therefore, urge is that we examine our attraction to and involvement with service learning as a metaphor of something else, as a symptom of a greater commitment, and as a fragment of a larger whole. In a word, I suggest that we engage ourselves in the important task of naming the phenomena for what it really is for each of us.

It would, of course, be presumptuous of me to attempt to say what service learning really is, but I do want to offer a few possibilities by way of clarifying what I mean by the naming process. I believe in the importance of naming because it provides each one of us the opportunity to exercise our responsibility to participate in the creation of a life of personal and communal meaning. Much of the actual naming process is of course done by a small number of people and groups who have the power to do so, a power which controls and narrows public discourse and personal reflection. Perhaps the best known example is the familiar observation that Adam first named the animals and then told Eve what they were. In the present instance, we need to question the very concept "service learning," a concept that like all others serves not only to reveal but to conceal. Clearly, there are other names for the phenomena which emerge when we ask ourselves what is it about these ideas that resonates powerfully within us? Why are we drawn intuitively to the programs? What personal impulses are being obscured and silenced by the official rhetoric of the service learning movement?

For example, do we respond positively to the language of service learning because we are drawn to a consciousness of community in which our relationships and connections to each other are more important that our differences and separations? If so, then service learning is not a very apt term. Do we see in the notion of service learning vestiges of a religious commandment to love others, to be as servants, and to attend to the poor, the widowed, and the orphaned? If so, then such a term masks the impulse to do God's work. Is our connection to service learning by way of a deep commitment to the struggle for social justice and democracy? If so, service learning becomes only one aspect of a larger political and social ideological movement. Do we see in service learning the possibility of fostering a sense of spiritual oneness with the universe? If so, service learning becomes a very flat if not misleading term. Perhaps we are truly excited about service learning because it allows us to give thanks for the gift of life; or because it provides us with the joy of creation; or because it allows a space in which we can reflect on the meaning of our lives; or because.... The basic

assumption I make is that beyond attending to the ordinary dimensions of service learning and its counter-productive possibilities, we need to trust the intuition that there is something of very great worth here, however disguised, masked, and obscured. It is our responsibility to move beyond the conventional professional and psychological discourse and, without apology, acknowledge our deepest impulse to seek meaning larger than raising test scores, increasing voter registration, and staffing soup kitchens.

Finally, I want to address the importance of humility in reference to the criticism that service learning projects are very unlikely to have lasting impact on our society and culture. Here it is important to draw a line between humility and despair, for it is one thing to be realistic and honest about our capacities and another thing to surrender to a consciousness of determinism and fatalism. The humility I speak to is not about modesty or self-deference but to the acknowledgment of the mystery and awesomeness of the human condition as well as our present social, cultural, and personal crises. I have concluded that there is an inverse relationship between the significance of a problem and its openness to solution. Put more baldly, I do not believe that our most significant problems can be solved. Problems surely can and should be ameliorated, suffering and pain reduced, justice and equity increased, peace furthered, violence lessened, meaning strengthened. To accomplish even such limited gains is exalting and exhilarating, for, as the Talmud teaches, "It is not for us to finish the task — but neither are we free to take no part in it."

We also know that often we are not able to achieve even modest gains and, even more disheartening, we sometimes make things worse. How then are we able to sustain our efforts in the face of such obstacles? How do we have the energy to maintain a struggle that promises only modest advances at best and more likely, ultimate failure? My response, alas, is a cliché but an enduring one: that we must have faith and trust. But faith and trust in what and on what basis can we sustain that faith? The best I can say is that the persistent search for meaning provides a powerful enough reason to be faithful. My cursory examinations of faith traditions is that they all involve a commitment to human compassion and social justice, although obviously the source of such faith varies enormously across cultural and religious communities. For many, there is a deep faith in the human process of settling conflicts rationally and cooperatively. For others, it is a spiritual faith that speaks to the oneness of all life. In many of us, faith is fleeting at best and its source murky and unreliable. For example, although I gain enormous strength from the passion and moral commitments of the prophets, I am still not able to share in their faith in the revealed word.

Cornel West as a believing Christian and a philosopher/theologian/social theorist offers a powerful framework for addressing this dilemma. In his distinction between penultimate and ultimate salvation, he accepts a tragic view of the world in which the struggles for peace, justice, and love are destined to fail but those who nonetheless maintain the struggle receive penultimate salvation as genuine, however tragic, heroes. According to West, such people derive their strength and energy in this extraordinarily frustrating task from their faith in ultimate salvation, i.e., through Christian redemption. Those of us who do not share but admire, if not envy, this Christian consciousness can only continue our search for that power that can and does sustain and guide us as we struggle with our moral ambivalences and conflicts. Humanity's greatest achievements would seem to be its persistence in its aspiration for goodness in the face of the incredible pressures for mere survival and self-enhancement.

The arrival of the service learning movement signals that this impulse has been re-energized with fresh urgency and hope. It also provides us with an opportunity to renew our faith in the human capacity to create a life of meaning and wholeness. For that we owe much to those who have had the courage and imagination to challenge the public and the profession to meet its highest aspirations and deepest convictions.

Using Our Worst and Best Relationships to Learn about Social Dominance and Social Justice

Rob Koegel

Exploring students' best and worst relationships is an effective way to introduce them to the concept of social dominance and to offer perspectives that lead to social equality.

Rob Koegel holds a Ph.D. in sociology and is a Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York in Farmingdale. He has longstanding interests in promoting multicultural education and in creating an equitable society in which partnership prevails and diversity is valued. He is the editor of a forthcoming anthology to be published by SUNY Press, Learning from Transformative Educators: An Educational Dialogue for (a) Change. *Reprint requests should be forwarded to the author at the Department of Sociology, College of Technology, SUNY, Farmingdale, NY 11735.*

As a teacher of undergraduate and graduate students, I am deeply committed to exploring the causes of social dominance and the benefits of social justice. I also know that examining these charged issues is not easy. When we encounter ideas that challenge core beliefs about ourselves, our relationships, and our society, we often feel uncomfortable, angry, and/or defensive. As a result, I am constantly looking for better ways of inviting students to address the costs of oppression as well as the need for personal and structural transformation.

There are, of course, countless books and articles that analyze the causes, effects, and alternatives to social dominance. However, they are rarely written for students and often confuse or alienate them. All too often, the abstract concepts that students are asked to study are not clearly grounded in their experiences or readily connected to their perceptions. Hence, students often find it hard to grasp these concepts and even harder to accept or apply them. "Unless I can relate the ideas I study in school to my daily life," students often insist, "most of them will be incomprehensible or meaningless to me." This is why I ask my students to analyze their best and worst relationships before we explore a rather inaccessible concept like *privilege system*.[1]

The aim of this work in progress is threefold: to provide a detailed description of our worst and best relationships, to briefly show how I have used this framework to promote a social justice education in college classrooms, and to open up a dialogue with other educators about these issues.

Our Best and Worst Relationships Have Distinct Patterns

For the past three years, I have asked students at SUNY Farmingdale to describe what they considered their best and worst relationships. The undergraduate sociology students I teach vary significantly in age, gender, religious affiliation, and racial or ethnic background. Since the students are so different, I was not sure if their models, experiences, and descriptions of their best and worst relationships would differ as well. They did not. On the contrary, most students described their relationships in similar terms. In fact, many students even used the same words to express how they view, feel about, and are influenced by these relationships. Moreover, this was true whether the relationships they discussed were with friends, lovers, family members, teachers, or bosses. The similarity of their responses, which I have summarized in the following pages, suggests that certain patterns can be found in most of our best and our worst relationships.

Characteristics of our Worst Relationships

When asked to describe their worst relationships, students often used words such as one-sided, takes advantage of, dominating, humiliating, and damaging.

Worst relationships, students agree, almost always are *unequal* and always are *unfair*. In this sense, these relationships are not respectful and cannot be mutually beneficial. Rather, the dynamics in worst relationships are "win/lose" in that one person gains at the other's expense — whether it be emotionally, sexually, socially, or financially. Time and again, the dominant parties in worst relationships get what they want by using their personal and institutional power (as parents, teachers, bosses, physically stronger individuals) to coerce, control, and abuse the others. The subordinate parties, on the other hand, tend to accept this one-sided relationship because they are unequal, less powerful, and needier in some respect (as children, students, workers, lovers).

Table 1. Worst Relationships	
One Sided ... Takes Advantage Of	Unequal Unfair Selfish Inconsiderate
Judgmental ... Puts Down	Critical Intolerant Degrading Humiliating
Manipulative ... Controlling	Deceitful Inflexible Aggressive Domineering
Diminishes ... Abuses	Weakens Undermines Hurts Violates
The Other Enjoys ... Justifies Relationship	Denies any wrongdoing Blames you for problems

These worst relationships can therefore occur in the private realm between individuals whose status is equal — for example, two friends, lovers, or siblings. Or they may take place in the public realm between individuals whose status is unequal — for instance, between teachers and students in school or bosses and workers at work.

Regardless of where they are located or with whom they occur, the worst relationships that my students describe have much in common. They routinely (a) use intimidation, domination, and manipulation to maintain an unequal, unjust relationship and to resolve conflicts; (b) convert differences into right and wrong, good and bad, better and worse; (c) make one person feel more competent and complete and the other feel more incompetent and incomplete; (d) generate what Abraham Maslow (1968) calls "deficit motivations" for the *subordinate* parties (such as fear, insecurity, shame, distrust of self, mistrust of others) and the *dominant* parties (such as selfishness, intolerance, anger, arrogance); and (e) draw on a widespread cultural belief that supports dominance (for example, males who dominate their girlfriends or wives assume that men should control "their" women). These characteristics are interdependent, mutually reinforcing parts of a larger pattern of relating.

The force-backed, fear-based dynamics of worst relationships help the dominant individuals to intimidate and control the individuals they overpower. By putting us down, pushing us down, and either psychologically or physically knocking us

down, our worst relationships make us feel inferior and weaker. When we are on the receiving end of a worst relationship, we sometimes feel violated, often feel taken advantage of, and nearly always feel diminished.[2]

It seems to the students I teach that most dominant individuals in worst relationships believe that they're superior to the other parties and know what's best for them. Therefore, while the dominant parties repeatedly coerce, control, and manipulate the other people, they typically defend this dominance as necessary and/or desirable. For this reason, they rarely see that the relationship is one-sided and invariably justify it. With few exceptions, the parties who take advantage of the others do not want the relationship to change. Rather, they forcefully and, at times, aggressively oppose the efforts of the other to make the relationships more mutual and balanced.

Characteristics of Our Best Relationships

When asked to describe the characteristics of their best relationships, students often use words such as mutual, respectful, caring, trusting, honest, accepting, supportive, good communication, and on the same level.

Most of our best relationships are mutually empowering and mutually beneficial. Hence, the dynamics of these relationships are "win/win" because both people gain rather than one person flourishing at the other's expense. Equally important, these mutual relationships also help both parties to live more fully outside the relationship.

Table 2. Best Relationships	
Mutual ... Respectful	Fair Equal On the same level Nonjudgmental
Caring ... Dependable	Concerned about other Supportive Responsible
Reciprocal	Give-and-take Flexible Responsive
Empowers	Strengthens Nurtures Energizes

Despite their differences, win/win best relationships are similar in that both members (a) work to promote relational mutuality and to reduce inequality within the relationship; (b) value the process of meeting the needs and enhancing the growth of each other; (c) strive to maximize productive conflict, to minimize destructive conflict, and to honor differences within the relationship; (d) engage in mutual caring, responsibility, and respect; (e) cultivate empathy, compassion, understanding; and (f) reflect an established cultural belief that supports partnership (for example, bosses who foster mutual relationships with their workers often embrace our democratic ethos and/or the religious injunction to "do unto others as we want them to do unto us")[3]

Like the qualities of our worst relationships, these egalitarian characteristics are overlapping and mutually reinforcing. For instance, trust rarely develops in a relationship unless respect, caring, and fairness are present. Likewise, a mutually enriching relationship cannot exist unless it also includes acceptance, support, and understanding.

Students often tell me that their best relationships are fulfilling and uplifting. By filling us up, lifting us up, backing us up, and cheering us up, these supportive relationships enrich our lives. They make us feel happier, stronger, and more complete. Best relationships often make us feel more appreciated, valued, and worthy. They also tend to make us feel more connected to and trusting of others. Unlike most other relationships, this reciprocal connection nourishes, supports, and empowers *both* parties.

If Everyone Prefers Win/Win to Win/Lose Relationships, Why Do We Have So Many Win/Lose Relationships?

The written and verbal responses of the students I teach suggest that most of them have experienced the pain, fear, rejection, manipulation, and dominance embedded in their worst one-sided relationships — and detest these win/lose dynamics. They are also familiar with the care, acceptance, and give-and-take found in their best mutual relationships — and treasure these win/win dynamics. It is easy to understand why most people hate being dominated and treated as inferiors. As one student put it, "Nobody wants to have their life-blood sucked out of them by someone else." Likewise, it makes sense that most people enjoy the equality, respect, and under-

standing we associate with our mutually supportive best relationships.

There are at least two compelling reasons why most people in the U.S. have fewer win/win relationships and more win/lose relationships than we want. First, win/lose relationships depend on some type of *inequality* (wealth, power, status, physical strength) that permits the dominant parties to exploit, mistreat, and harm the others. However, as my students' descriptions of their win/win relationships with some teachers, bosses, and parents suggest, relational inequality does not always have harmful consequences. Rather, depending on the larger social pattern it is part of and the type of connection it promotes, personal and institutional power can be used "with" us rather than "over" or "against" us (Miller, 1976/1986; Eisler, 1987; Kreisberg, 1992).

The process by which this occurs is extremely complex. Nevertheless, whether dominant parties in win/lose relationships use their power for "your own good" or to satisfy their own needs, there is one constant: They routinely impose their will, their beliefs, and their preferences. Regardless of what dominant parties may believe, their actions make three clear statements. First, "What I feel, think, and want is more important than what you feel, think, and want." Second, "I will do what I must to ensure that you do what I want." Finally, "It is in your best interests to follow my lead." Simply put, the dominant parties in win/lose relationships adopt a self-centered, self-serving orientation that leads them to look at others through narrowed eyes.

Since inequality, dominance, and selfishness play a central role in our worst relationships, there may be a hidden link between (a) our worst relationships; (b) the vast inequalities of wealth, power, and status in the U.S.; and (c) the culturally and institutionally supported drive to rise "above," to control, and to dominate others. To the extent this is true, the logic of our culture and the structure of our society may foster these problematic relationships.

What in Our Society Fosters Win/Lose Relationships?

The possibility of moving up the social ladder and climbing to the top is one of the more seductive aspects of the complex set of beliefs known as the "American Dream" (Huber, 1987). Obtaining more wealth, we are told, will enable us to buy the things we need, have the security we yearn for, and command the respect we want. There is clearly some truth in this belief. However, while the desire to have more wealth is often emphasized, there are other pieces of this "dream" that are not stressed as much, such as owning more than others, having power over them, and being superior to them. As the saying "Rank has its privileges" suggests, one of the bene-

The end result of these adversarial cultural patterns and hierarchical institutional structures is that groups of people routinely oppress other groups of people and justify it.

fits of having more social power is that you can use it for yourself and against others.

The following comment by a male undergraduate student suggests that the aim of social mobility in the U.S. is not just to possess more things, but also to command more respect than others and to have power over them: "I want to have as much wealth, power, and status as I can. But having more power and status doesn't really help me if everyone has as much as I do. The point is to be better than others, to have more power and status than they do, to be able to call the shots, to control others. My dream is to be on top and to be superior. I want to be the 'King of the Mountain.'" He not only wanted to have more than others, but to rule, control, and even dominate them.

There are at least two reasons that this way of thinking and behaving appeals to many Americans. First, many of our cultural beliefs strengthen the desire to rise to the "top" and stimulate the longing to be "above" others and to dominate them (Kreisberg, 1992, chapter 2). Consider, in this respect, how often the mass media exposes us to images of ruthless people who climb to the top by using whatever means are at their disposal (Derber, 1996, chapter 5).

Second, the way the key institutions in this society, such as schools and the workplace, are set up also contribute to this dynamic. It is no secret that there is far less room at the top than at the bottom of our social organizations. It is also well-known that most of our public lives, relationships, and institutions are based on the type of competition that produces what Alfie Kohn (1986, p. 4) calls "mutually exclusive goal attainment," which means that my success requires your failure, and vice versa. By its very nature, structural competition of this sort unleashes an "against-ing process" that pits people against one another (Kohn, 1990, p. 90).

It is therefore not surprising that many Americans want to become "ups" rather than "downs," winners rather than losers (Terry, 1993). Likewise, since the way we behave is constrained by the social role we occupy and the social context we are embedded in, people at the top of our social pyramid and those trying to climb up it tend to adopt this adversarial top/down, win/lose model of relating. While the golden rule urges people "to do unto others as you wish they would unto you," the prevailing logic of our society teaches us to "do unto others *before* they do unto you."

Peggy McIntosh (1983) gives a good example of how this dynamic gets played out in college.

> College liberal arts catalogues … make the claim that colleges help students to realize themselves, to discover their individual uniqueness and to develop confidence which will lead to achievement, accomplishment, and success in the world outside the university. Most of this language masks, I think, the actual liberal arts function which is, at present, to *train a few students to climb up the pinnacles and to seize them so as to have a position from which power can be felt, enjoyed, exercised, and imposed on others....* We are taught that the purpose of education is to assist us in climbing up those peaks and pinnacles to enjoy the "fulfillment of our potential," which I take to mean the increased *ability to have and use power for ourselves* (pp. 5-6, italics mine).

After reading a rough draft of this paper, a male undergraduate student indignantly responded, "I don't see why anyone would question this desire 'to have and use power for ourselves.' Of course we want to get as much power and status as we can and to use them for our own purposes. It's only human nature to strive to be above others and to have power over them. Our society is clearly based on looking after Number One. What could possibly be wrong with this?"

There are, I believe, at least two problems with our cultural beliefs and institutional structures supporting this widespread way of thinking and relating. First, this way of thinking and relating plays a vital role in generating win/lose relationships that needlessly diminish and devalue countless individuals. Second, it justifies behaviors that benefit some at the expense of others. As we have seen, though our worst relationships take many forms and occur in many contexts, all of these relationships have a dominant person who takes advantage of and/or mistreats another. Not surprisingly, when you combine a culture that fosters selfishness with authoritarian institutions that produce win/lose outcomes, you provide a fertile ground for the growth of worst relationships.

The end result of these adversarial cultural patterns and hierarchical institutional structures is that *groups* of people routinely oppress other groups of people and justify it (Koegel, 1995). Simply put, dominant groups obtain an unjust share of valued resources (such as wealth, power, and status) by habitually depriving, excluding, and demeaning other groups. To say that specific groups benefit from the ongoing oppression of other groups means that these oppressive relationships are not caused by the flawed psyches of a few "deviant" individuals. Rather, since they are systematically reinforced by key economic, political, and cultural institutions, this problem is embedded in the core of our society.

Although adversarial groups can be based on many different characteristics (such as gender, race, or religion), their *worst group relationships* contain two dynamics: Members of the dominant group repeatedly oppress members of the subordinate group and constantly deny and/or justify this destructive treatment. When this social dynamic is reinforced by an entire social system, these group-based worst relationships become part of a societal *privilege system*.

Analyzing the destructive dynamics of our worst relationships can help us to appreciate the oppressive nature of a privilege system — and vice versa.

However, students often find it hard to understand what a privilege system is, how it operates, and how it affects us. This is why my students watch the video *A Class Divided* and read my article about it (Koegel, 1997).

Learning About Privilege Systems From *A Class Divided*

> Convinced that we best learn about discrimination by *experiencing* it, Jane Elliott divided her third-grade class into "superior" and "inferior" groups for two days (blue-eyed students were "on top" the first day, brown-eyed students the next). Many blue-eyed students took a "savage delight" in harassing the inferior group. They loved being superior: "I felt like I was a king, like I ruled them, like I was better than them, happy." The brown-eyed students felt trapped and humiliated, "like a dog on a leash." In less than an hour, they looked miserable and acted inferior.[4]

Most educators use the film about Elliott's eye exercise as a lesson on prejudice. However, this film also can be used to explore how different forms of social dominance provide a dominant group with more power, resources, and status at the expense of another group. "Do you think you know how it would feel to be judged by the color of your skin?" Jane Elliott asked her third grade class. "No," replied her students, all of whom were white. Since "you can't know how that felt unless you had been through it," Elliott continued, let's "judge people today by the color of their eyes."

In a few seconds, Elliott reproduced many of the unfair assumptions and destructive practices found in privilege systems. The blue-eyed students, Elliott said, are smarter, cleaner, and more responsible than brown-eyed students. This is why, she explained, blue-eyed students have rights and access to resources that brown-eyed students are denied. Since blue-eyed students are more capable, they can sit in the front of the room and be row leaders. They can go to lunch first and go back for seconds. They can play on the playground equipment and line up for the bus first — after all, they are more responsible. Adding insult to injury, members of the "inferior" group had to wear collars around their necks so their subordinate status could be easily identified and readily enforced.

By turning the blue-eyed students into a dominant "ruling class" and the brown-eyed students into a despised subordinate group, Elliott's exercise created a privilege system based on eye color in her classroom.[5] Needless to say, the color of students' eyes had no social meaning before Elliott imposed an unjust social order that used eye color as a marker of privilege and as a justification of social dominance. The blue-eye, brown-eye exercise therefore provides a rich opportunity to understand how privilege systems create, maintain, and justify dominance. By focusing on how the children *feel* about and *respond* to discrimination, the video dramatizes and personalizes a privilege system in a way that students can

---

*S*ystematically exploring the patterns of students' best and worst relationships can nourish the personal and social change that we so desperately need.

---

easily relate to, empathize with, and apply to their lives.[6]

When I ask students what the classroom relationships depicted in *A Class Divided* had in common with their worst relationships, one student responded,

> Everything. For the students at the bottom, this "exercise" was like a nightmare that included all the traits of our worst relationships. They were forcefully pushed into relationships that were one-sided, unfair, judgmental, controlling, abusive, and hurtful. What really pissed me off is how much the dominant group enjoyed, enforced, and justified this relationship. They got off on their "privileges" and the chance to be superior to the other group. Watching, reading, writing, and talking about this made me think about things I've never thought about before. I realized how incredibly hurtful a privilege system is and how easy it is for the people on the top and on the bottom to get caught within it.

Needless to say, this video does not magically change the way that students think. Many students repeatedly insist that it is "human nature" to be

selfish or that life has always been and will always be about "the survival of the fittest." However, whenever I ask how these beliefs relate to their best win/win relationships and to their yearning for more of these relationships, there is often a long reflective pause. Following that, most students willingly engage in the hard work of examining the link between their desires, beliefs, and experiences on the one hand, and key cultural patterns and social structures, on the other.

Using the patterns of students' best and worst relationships as a lens to examine the world within and outside them has many benefits. It invites students to analyze what they want from life, why they act as they do, how this serves them, and how they affect others. It strengthens students' ability to link the personal and the relational to the cultural and the institutional. It enables them to see how the culturally and institutionally supported drive for dominance undermines the partnership-oriented relationships they long for. Finally, it helps students to think about why they might want to develop more partnership in their lives and in our society.

Space constraints prevent me from elaborating these crucial points. However, I have found this relational framework provides a non-threatening opening to talk about different privilege systems, the win/lose dynamics they create, and the ways we become overwhelmed by and/or invested in different forms of social dominance. Equally important, contrasting the destructive forces found in worst relationships and privilege systems with the growth-fostering dynamics embedded in best relationships and just societies encourages students to imagine and to work for more mutual, equitable alternatives.

Conclusion

Despite vast differences in age, background, and academic skills, most of the undergraduate students I teach are similar in three respects. First, they have strong feelings about their best and worst relationships. Second, they are interested in analyzing these relationships and remarkably open to different ways of thinking about them. Finally, they are both willing and able to use the distinct patterns of these relationships to explore the costs of social dominance and the benefits of social justice.

It is not easy to explore the causes or effects of oppression. Examining how we accept that which harms us or how we benefit at the expense of others makes us feel vulnerable. Our resistance to stepping to the edge of our psychic and social circle of comfort therefore makes sense: when we feel that our emotional security, social status, or material comfort is threatened, we fear that we are losing control and will be hurt. When our opposition to injustice leads us to the "edge" of our experiences and to push against our personal limits, we are engaging in what I call "edgework" (Koegel, 1996).

Edgework is more than a source of personal learning, growth, and integrity. It also plays a crucial role in the creation of a more equitable, democratic, partnership-oriented society. Systematically exploring the patterns of students' best and worst relationships can nourish the personal and social change that we so desperately need.

Notes

1. For a brief overview of the key features of privilege systems, see chapter one of Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin's *Teaching For Diversity and Social Justice* (1997). For one of the most frequently reprinted articles on privilege systems, see Peggy McIntosh's (1988) "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies."

2. For a brilliant analysis of the complex issues of choice and responsibility under conditions of oppression, see Susan Wendell's (1990) "Oppression and Victimization: Choice and Responsibility."

3. My students' descriptions of their best win/win relationships are remarkably similar to the growth-fostering relationships described by members of the Stone Center at Wellesley College. For a comprehensive introduction to their relational model, see Judith Jordan et al.'s (1991) *Women's Growth in Connection;* Jordan's (1997) *Women's Growth in Diversity;* and Jean Baker Miller and Irene Pierce Stiver's (1997) *The Healing Connection.*

4. These quotes are from the transcript of the 1985 film of Elliott's work called *A Class Divided.* Unless otherwise specified, all quotes come from the transcript of this film.

5. Elliott was ambivalent about the effects of this learning activity on her students. She knew that this exercise would reproduce the oppressive dynamics she opposed. She also feared that it might destroy the trust, mutuality, and respect she was trying to establish in her classroom. Despite her concerns, Elliott felt that the gains outweighed the costs. Many educators disagree with her.

6. For a detailed discussion of privilege systems and how Elliott's exercise illustrates a privilege system, see my (1997) "Blue-Eyed Students Are Smarter Than Brown-Eyed Students: Learning About Social Dominance From *A Class Divided.*

References

Adams, M., L. Bell, and P. Griffin. 1997. *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook.* New York: Routledge.

Derber, C. 1996. *The wilding of America: How greed and violence are eroding our nation's character.* New York: St. Martin's.

Eisler, R. 1987. *The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Huber, R. 1987. *The American idea of success.* Wainscott, NY: Pushcart Press.

Jordan, J., A. Kaplan, J. Miller, I. Stiver, and J. Surrey. 1991. *Women's growth in connection.* New York: Guilford Press.

Jordan, J. 1997. *Women's growth in diversity.* New York: Guilford.

Koegel, R. 1995. Responding to the challenges of diversity: Domination, resistance, and education. *Holistic Education Review* 8(2): 6-17.

Koegel, R. 1996. Education and oppression: The need for edgework. *Holistic Education Review* 9(4): 5-12.

Koegel, R. 1997. Blue-eyed students are smarter than brown-eyed students: Learning about social dominance from "A Class Divided." *Democracy & Education* 12(1): 11-16.

Kohn, A. 1986. *No contest: The case against competition.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Kohn. A. 1990. The case against competition. In B. McNeill and C. Guion, eds., *Noetics Science Collection: 1980 to 1990.* Sausalito, CA: Institute of Noetic Sciences.

Kreisberg, S. 1992. *Transforming power: Domination, empowerment, and education.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Maslow, A. 1968. *Toward a psychology of being.* 2d ed. New York: Van Nostrand.

McIntosh, P. 1983. Interactive phases of curricular re-vision: A feminist perspective. Working Paper No. 124. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

McIntosh, P. 1988. White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences. Working Paper No. 189, Wellesley College, Center for Research on Women.

Miller, J. Baker. 1976/1986. *Toward a new psychology of women.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Miller, J. Baker, and I. Stiver. 1997. *The healing connection: How women form relationships in therapy and in life.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Terry, R. 1993. A parable: The ups and downs. In J. Andrzejewski, ed. *Oppression and social justice: Critical frameworks.* Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing.

Wendell, S. 1990. Oppression and victimization: Choice and responsibility. *Hypatia.* 5 (3): 15-46.

"...I hear today for the first, the river in the tree."

Emily Dickinson

EDUCATION as *Transformation*:
Religious Pluralism, Spirituality and Higher Education

A NATIONAL GATHERING

September 27-28, 1998

at Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

For more information contact:
Margaret Kowalsky, Project Coordinator
Phone: (781) 283-2659   Fax: (781) 283-3676
E-mail: t1mkowalsky@wellesley.edu
Web Site: www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/project

On September 27-28, 1998, presidents, administrators, faculty, trustees, students, alumni and religious life staff from colleges and universities throughout the country will gather at Wellesley College to explore:

● the impact of religious diversity on institutions of higher education and the potential of religious pluralism as a strategy to address the dramatic growth of religious diversity in America's colleges and universities; and

● the role of spirituality in the educational process, particularly its relationship to teaching and learning pedagogy, the cultivation of values, moral and ethical development, and the fostering of global learning communities and responsible global citizens.

Social Justice

Moral Confusion Amidst the Presumption of Free Will

William M. McLaurin, Jr.

Our failure to achieve goals such as social justice may be understood as an issue of consciousness. We presume that we can freely choose to amend our behaviors, when in reality our lives are highly determined. Yet, there is hope.

Bill McLaurin received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina Greensboro, where he studied hope under David Purpel. He is currently teaching a graduate course at UNCG (*Philosophies in Education*), and running a construction company.

It seems that social justice should be so easy — hasn't it been axiomatic for those of us who endured our political adolescence in the Sixties that the means appropriate to the ends of righting social wrongs lie within our grasp, subject only to the will to employ them? Don't we share a common understanding of what must not be denied to anyone — the conditions necessary for human flourishing? Remembering the last few decades as a personal narrative, it seems that at the beginning we wore an unabashed naivete as if it were a badge of honor. I, and many others, thought that in a country that asserts that its foundations lie in "self-evident truths" about human rights, the process of reform of the injustices we perceived was a simple informational problem: certainly, we thought, the vast majority of people, if we successfully communicated the facts we had come to understand, would turn away from their errant ways and, further, would turn against the few truly evil people who were violating our common morality with conscious intent.

I want the Sixties to have been a time when proponents of social justice were led to political activism because it was "the right thing to do." Similarly, I tend to stamp the Seventies with Jimmy Carter's diagnosis of "malaise" and the Eighties with the stain of a surrender to the principle of unenlightened self-interest. I remember that when the Seventies gave us the opportunity to watch the failure of so much that we thought we had accomplished, we often succumbed either to the malaise that Carter diagnosed, or to some variation of cynicism and despair about human nature. What we had taken to be communities fractured into increasingly smaller special interests. Our optimism had given way to pessimism or anger — our appeal to what we took to

be common American values had proved to be at least ineffective, if not foolhardy.

In the Eighties, the transition from faux-hippie to Reganite businessperson became so stereotypical as to make a Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* cover. I, and many others, lived out at least parts of that stereotype. We responded to a Darwinian environment in effective, adaptive fashion. In that time, there seemed no basis for appeal beyond cost-effectiveness, no human worth other than net worth.

And the Nineties! If we could be said to have learned optimism, cynicism, and greed, respectively, in each of the preceding decades, the Nineties have taught middle-class Americans to fear. In a "globally competitive" society, downsizing reaches from the boardroom to the shop floor to the university. Everyone learns (or is taught) that human resources are as expendable as natural resources, that safety nets are the accouterments of failed cultures, that the productive are to be rewarded and the nonproductive punished, that losers have to get out of the way. We have even learned that, in order to "compete and win in a global economy," these rules must apply to schools and to children.

We have come a great distance from what we thought we were. I doubt that I am alone in the questions that haunt me about our recent history: Why do those who dreamed of Camelot awaken to find that we have lost *both* of Lyndon Johnson's wars? Were we wrong about our culture and the nature of human beings? Were we truly naive, led by nothing more than wishful thinking to see in our culture and our species nobler promises than we could fulfill? How did we come to be on this path, and have we gone too far to change our minds?

Holding these questions in mind has, over time, clouded my own assent to the assumptions we thought we shared — clouded them with a sense of unease, with a suspicion that some fundamental flaw lies just beyond the horizon of attention which I have as yet directed toward my views. In this paper, I want to share the beginnings of my struggle to find the source of that dis-ease — a belated look at my (and I suspect other's) unexamined first principles. Thus far in this process, I have come to realize that we must give more than lip service to the idea that, rather than a technical problem, we confront a

"moral and spiritual crisis" (Purpel 1989). The scope and persistence of this crisis suggest that we are mistaken in considering ourselves to be a species already possessed of the capacity to decide what constitutes social justice and the means appropriate to its attainment, and mistaken in presuming ourselves to be a species without the need of acquiring any new and uncommon skills.

The Problem: Who Can Answer Jiang Zemin?

The People's Republic of China visits us, in the person of Jiang Zemin, and divides us. We split into the loud, the silent, and the effective: While the loud picket, the silent piddle, and the effective pander. Although the "self-evident" principles which we still proclaim as foundational to our republic would seem to support no other response than the loudest opposition to a tyrant, few notice him; meanwhile many chickens are sacrificed in his honor by the Chambers of Commerce. What is happening? Are the cynics right? Are we no better than this?

There seems to be something important missing among the products of this trifurcation induced by the General Secretary. None of these common responses to his visit suggest happy outcomes. The strident pickets, good-hearted as they might be, seem stuck in the dead end we found in the Sixties; the silent (dare I say indifferent?) may be so because of a Seventyish sense of futility; and the effective, adaptively alert to the possibility of serving self-interests, are clearly faithful to their Eighties progenitors. We truly seem without an answer to his pronouncement that Einstein's theory of relativity should also serve to model human rights, a pronouncement clearly intended both to declare that American opinions about his treatment of dissidents and Tibetans were entirely political and self-serving, and to challenge the concept of any cross-cultural or universal standard of social justice. What is missing from the trifurcation is any serious challenge likely to prevail against his positions.

Events such as the visit of Jiang Zemin have the capacity to disturb our consciousness in a way we generally manage to avoid. I for one rather enjoy the fancy that I am part of a complete culture, one that has a formula for dealing with complex and important questions. The General Secretary reminded at

least some of us that holding such a position is more than fanciful — it is also misleading and perhaps nonadaptive.

I believe that the moral crisis of our culture consists of our incapacity to summon a common set of values to support such issues as social justice, and that this moral crisis derives from a spiritual confusion — over agency and free will — so deep-seated as to support social pessimism in all but the most hopeful. In what follows, I propose to develop that assertion around a theme very unpopular among liberal individualists: determinism. I will be using this term in a very broad sense, encompassing the historical, social, biological, psychological and spiritual subspecies of the beast. Given the constraints of a brief paper, I intend merely to assert, rather than to defend, a thesis whose defense, I acknowledge, will require an extended work — in what follows those few elements of a possible defense that are deployed are offered more for the purpose of clarification, rather than demonstration. To the point: *I propose that human behavior is so determined by our ingrained responses to old problems as to eliminate free will in our responses to new ones, except in the most extraordinary circumstances. As a result, our attempts to modify our behavior to attain such worthy goals as social justice almost always yield confusion rather than the stated goal. Further, I propose that we are not without hope in a struggle to change that determined state, that consciousness of our present state is the first stage in attaining free will, a state that is possible (because of our spiritual nature) and precious (because of its scarcity) and attainable (by means not generally employed).*

Historical Determinism as a Case in Point

I would propose that the common thread between the subspecies of determinism mentioned above (e.g., historical, social, biological, psychological and spiritual) is that they each operate at a level of consciousness not available to us without special attention. A straightforward biological example is the near-universal stress response, which we each exhibit, in varying degrees, to our modern environment. It is generally recognized that this response is an artifact of the adaptations required for survival at a time when we were prey rather than predator. Despite the fact that this knowledge is widely avail-able (see, among many others, Pelletier 1977), we typically fail to maintain the level of awareness necessary to notice the inappropriate operation of "fight or flight" in a more complex environment. We thus lose the opportunity to consciously amend the response, which is now non-adaptive, leading to many of the diseases and disorders which characterize our culture. As a result, although we presume that the means for dealing with stress are skills immediately available within our cultural repertoire, attempting to relax (generally unsuccessfully) has become a major industry.

As an equally compelling, if significantly less straightforward, instance of a determined state masquerading as the capacity for choice, I propose the following historical analysis derived from the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (especially 1984). His efforts seem particularly useful because of what I consider to be his effective demonstration that it is possible to examine the validity of those values of liberal individualism derived from the European Enlightenment in ways other than the moral solipsism of the postwhateverists. His criticism of the Enlightenment and its successors is, in his own words, a call for "self-knowledge" much at home with my thesis; this despite the fact that the critique that follows applies as much to MacIntyre's own brand of Aristotelianism as to other contenders for a "cultural repair."

MacIntyre describes one of the most invidious symptoms of our disordered culture as deriving in part from our facile acceptance of a trivialized form of pluralism called *emotivism*, an outcome of the individualization of moral agency. He argues extensively that we have come to be a culture wherein we behave as if we believed the central claim of emotivism, that "all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character (1984, p. 12)." The "disquieting arbitrariness" which thus pervades our cultural life extends as well to our inner lives, leading to interminable, unresolvable rounds of assertion and counterassertion, rather than to resolution or insight, rendering traditional moral language unusable and misleading. In an emotivist culture, social relations imply manipulation. In such a culture, the Kantian requirement to

see fellow human beings as ends rather than means is seen as an illusion:

> If emotivism is true, this [Kantian] distinction is illusory. For evaluative utterance can in the end have no point or use but the expression of my own feelings or attitudes and the transformation of the feelings and attitudes of others. I cannot genuinely appeal to impersonal criteria, for there are no impersonal criteria. I may think that I so appeal and others may think that I so appeal, but such thoughts will always be mistakes. The sole reality of distinctively moral discourse is the attempt to align the attitudes, feelings, preference and choice of another with its own. Others are always means, never ends. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 24)

MacIntyre's work focuses my own vague unease with the shrillness of protest. Certainly in a culture which is complete — in the sense of providing us with the tools necessary to deal with the challenges before us — we must have some better means to social justice than to so "attempt to align the attitudes of others" with our own, and some more substantive reason for wanting to do so than the emotivist's creed of preference. We thought we knew what those means and reasons were, but our earlier answers seem to be failing us. What MacIntyre argues is that our culture suffers for the absence of any functional definition of the "good"; and without the concept of some function, some central purpose to human existence which defines its true end, some *telos* if you will, efforts to regard moral statements as statements of fact are destined to fail.

Not only does this begin to suggest why our radicalism in the Sixties was a dead end, but also why the same failure is implicit in conservative responses as well. MacIntyre says that "the modern radical is as confident in the moral expression of his stances and consequently in the assertive uses of the rhetoric of morality as any conservative has ever been. Whatever else he denounces in our culture he is certain that it still possesses the moral resources that he requires in order to denounce it" (1984, p. 4). I agree with MacIntyre that this confidence is sorely misplaced. Our presumption that this culture possesses such resources, combined with the presumption of our capacity to employ them, has led each faction to a common misunderstanding.

Central to MacIntyre's argument is the contention that in attempting to liberate ourselves by discarding the traditional functional concepts of good provided by Aristotelian teleology and substituting the "Enlightenment project" — a rational defense of morality — our culture has committed a grave error. That error is illuminated by considering the highly effective mutual deconstruction of each subsequent moral philosophy, a deconstruction so thorough that if the Enlightenment philosophers are the only alternatives, MacIntyre is able to hold that

> Nietzsche is the moral philosopher of the present age.... Whenever those immersed in the bureaucratic culture of the age try to think their way through to the moral foundations of what they are and what they do, they will discover suppressed Nietzschean premises. (1984, p. 114)

What premises are these? What has MacIntyre found at our moral foundations that would bring him to this conclusion, which he clearly regards as an indictment? He himself holds to the Aristotelian view of human nature as capable (with proper education) of desiring virtue; such an Aristotelian humanity is in turn capable of producing a culture that promotes justice. He is accusing our "bureaucratic culture" of fostering an entirely different view of human nature and of social possibility. The Nietzschean premises he finds at our foundation support and define emotivism — they assert that moral language is nothing more than a vehicle for someone's arbitrary will, the only open question being *whose* will. Under such circumstances, the "good" is defined as that which is desired by the powerful; and "the powerful" may be an autocrat or an electoral majority.

MacIntyre awards the laurel to Nietzsche in the battle to the death between these Enlightenment-spawned moral philosophies, *conditionally* granting the truth of one central thesis upon which Nietzsche's position depends, "that all rational vindications of morality manifestly fail and that therefore belief in the tenants of morality needs to be explained in terms of a set of rationalizations which conceal ... the will (1984, p. 117)." If we truly do have such premises lurking at our moral foundations, then it is no wonder that we are unable to contradict the General Secretary. Supposing that we *do* un-

knowingly hold Nietzsche's position, is it defensible? The aforementioned condition, which MacIntyre imposed upon Nietzsche's laurel, was that such defensibility

> turns in the end upon the answer to the question: was it right in the first place to reject Aristotle? For if Aristotle's position ... could be sustained, the whole Nietzschean enterprise would be pointless.... [Thus] either we pursue the enlightenment project until it collapses into the Nietzschean diagnosis or we conclude that [the Enlightenment project] should never have been undertaken in the first place. (1984, p. 117-118)

MacIntyre charges that our culture, having chosen to pursue the enlightenment project to its collapse, has produced a modern state "unfit to act as moral educator of any community" (1984, p. 195). He says that "our society cannot hope to achieve moral consensus" (1984, p. 252), and that

> the tradition of the virtues is at variance with central features of the modern economic order, and more especially its individualism, its acquisitiveness and its elevation of the values of the market to a central social place. It now becomes clear that it also involves a rejection of the modern political order.... Modern systematic politics, whether liberal, conservative, radical, or socialist, simply has to be rejected from a standpoint that owes allegiance to the tradition of the virtues, for modern politics itself expresses in its institutional forms a systematic rejection of that tradition. (1984, p. 254-255)

Yet, after his own (in my opinion) triumph over the objects of this criticism, he is left in a position similar to the one he diagnosed for Nietzsche: better at deconstruction than at the construction of a new world; a position not redeemed in his subsequent *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988). After a formidable historicist defense of his "central thesis ... that the Aristotelian tradition is the best example we possess of a tradition whose adherents are rationally entitled to a high measure of confidence in its epistemological and moral resources," and after declaring himself "not at all" a social pessimist in the mold of Plato, he concludes *After Virtue* by saying, "What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellec-

tual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us" (1984, p. 262).

MacIntyre (1987) has been brought by his consideration of our historical situation to despair of the possibility of an "educated public," which he calls the necessary antecedent to a culture that can both fit the young to their place in a society and simultaneously teach them to think for themselves. He argues that, in our culture, these two goals are mutually incompatible, due to the self-dissolving nature of the culture of the Enlightenment — Hume and Adam Smith convinced their countrymen to produce a society in which Hume and Adam Smith could not have arisen. Thus, "teachers are the forlorn hope of the culture of Western modernity" (1987, p. 16).

I said earlier that I was quite taken by MacIntyre, despite his being subject to his own critique (I suppose that, in part, this is because he serves my argument in the way Nietzsche serves MacIntyre's) he clears the field of all other contenders and makes way for the new — but is there anything new? In effect, MacIntyre has us already come full circle on the wheel of history, ready once again for the rack of barbarism. Is it credible that we might thus be condemned to such a repetition? Most modern arguments incorporating historical determinism eventually refer back to Marx; however, a relatively obscure Italian historian of the eighteenth century, Giambattista Vico (1984/1744), seems to me to offer a most believable, if chilling, account of our condition. He developed a fascinating concept of historical cycles, within which my "sense of unease" over our present efforts for social justice might find clarification. Suppose that unease arises from some incipient awareness that instead of furthering social justice and the progress of humanity toward its *telos* through our criticism and protest, we are instead the deconstructors whom Vico describes in the final stage of a culture — those who render the society dysfunctional by laying bare its assumptions and causing it to cease to function (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1967). According to Vico, such deconstruction allows the collapse of morality and the disintegration of the consensus upon which justice stands. In effect, we might be the enablers of the emotivists, rather than the vanguard of justice. No wonder that, according

to Pompa (1971), Vico's view of human nature was profoundly pessimistic:

> Human achievements were the result of the historical development of society, and were largely communal in character. Human vices, however, were always the property of each individual person. They could be held in check only while the individual lived in fear of the pressures society could bring to bear against him and the retribution it could deal out. And they were most likely to be held in check when man conceived society as having objective characteristics ... as he did, for example, when he thought it represented an order of existence established by the Gods. But when he came to see through this ... the various mechanisms through which society had regulated his own conduct would lose their grip on him.... So, at the very moment when men appeared capable of setting up the perfectly organized society ... man's vices would reassert themselves ... until finally the very notion of morality, of right or wrong, would disappear. (1971, p. 11)

MacIntyre and Vico make clear the immense difficulty of holding in awareness the historical determinants of our worldviews, while illustrating the possibility of such analysis leading to a changed consciousness. Similar arguments are readily available from psychology, sociology, anthropology, Christian theology, Buddhism, and a myriad of other fields; however, what might be more appropriate at the moment would be some support for the second element of my thesis — that we are not without hope. In order to investigate that element, the mechanism of our susceptibility to such determinisms needs to be explored. Increasingly, I am coming to hold that this mechanism is an issue of consciousness. That same consciousness, which in other guises performs the voracious deconstruction detailed by Berger and Vico, may also be seen as freeing us from dogmatics and the worship of other people's errors. The question remaining in either case is that which confronts MacIntyre and Nietzsche and Vico's barbarians (as well as the postwhateverists): I have freed myself from the constraints that I thought had limited my freedom to choose; now — how and what to choose?

Alternatives: The Possibility of Hope

My own life experience and my study of the experience of others tell me that a common feature of being human is the yearning for the knowledge of how to live our lives well, how to find meaning amidst the confusions and conflict so characteristic of societies in transition. We ache to know how we might behave so as to honor our intuitive understanding that compassion for others is a basic requirement for being human, that social justice is not an optional element in a society suitable for our species. Somehow behind that yearning, so often focused upon some idol, there seems to be a vague perception of some reality, some lost understanding of human *telos*, seen "as if through a glass, darkly." We seem to share a conviction that there is a right way to be a human being, a real purpose to human existence — we just seem condemned to disagree about what it is. As individuals we really do seem to have a desperate need to believe one of the many answers offered; however, as societies we also have a desperate need to take whichever one we choose with a grain of salt, so we don't kill each other.

The various elements that tend to reduce us to the burning of witches and the enslavement of our fellows are the very mechanisms that I have lumped together under my broad blanket of determinism. We find ourselves unable to respond to our intuition for justice because of our socializations, limbic programming, neuroses, brainwashing, conditioning, and so on, almost *ad infinitum* (Winn 1983, Deikman 1990, Cialdini 1993). However, I propose that the beginning of hope lies in the understanding of this process: Just as social mechanisms are dismembered by our awareness of their means of operation, the iron grasp of determinism is also subject to being broken by a process that begins with our continuing awareness of its operation.

This position is not to be confused with the reductionist arguments associated with scientism. Those familiar with active spiritual traditions will recognize that these schools are also, in their initial training, iconoclastic psychologies struggling with the same efforts to remove the conditioning of earlier life experience and free the capacity for choice. Beatrice Bruteau reminds us that even though we must use such models and paradigms in our efforts to contem-

plate reality, we must be conscious that this is what we are doing. To confuse the model and the Reality may be reification to the academic — it is idolatry to the mystic:

> I have said that we should not identify ourselves with our descriptions but should try to remember that we are...something that transcends all description and definition.... And similarly ... the Reality itself (God, World, We) is ... indescribable, but we deal with it through ... mediation.... To use a new model now may not be a correction of an earlier model or the achievement finally of a true view, but simply an appropriate model for this particular age. (1993, p. 121)

What we are being asked to accomplish in such a process requires dealing with a paradox: We are required to hold, at the same time, both the belief that there exists some truth to which we may learn to approach ever more closely, as well as the belief that we cannot contain the sought-after truth within the same consciousness that asserts that it exists. William James (1897, p. 12), MacIntyre (1984), and David Purpel (1989, p. 94), as well as many others, call upon us to do this.

Once again disclaiming reductionism in advance, I propose that by attending to some of the scientific students of consciousness we may find a beginning to the resolution of our paradox. Robert Ornstein, most familiar for being one of the early contributors to the study of lateral differentiation in brain hemispheres has written recently (1997) of how our culture — and as a consequence our educational system — has so emphasized the detailed linear capacities of our minds that we are unable to step back, defocus, and see things whole, see a *context* within which the details (he says "texts") may be said to have meaning. He derives his remedy for this lack of context from the example of traditional training methods that encourage the mind to utilize the well-established lateralization of pattern perception in the right hemisphere. Ornstein suggests that "the religious and esoteric traditions are specifically mental training systems ... [which have always sought] a deepening framework for the meaning of life, and the meaning of one's life. This means that a special place is given to perceiving events in the aggregate (1997, p. 165)." He says that

an emphasis on the activities of the right hemisphere, I submit, is the way many of the esoteric Christian, Jewish, Sufi, and other mystical traditions operate. They listen to low tones, view spatial diagrams, puzzle over phrases that have no rational meaning, and attempt exercises to produce a state of "no conceptionalizing while remaining fully awake." (1997, p. 164)

Ornstein suggests that, in addition to our loss of a sense of meaning in the absence of a larger context for our lives, critical basic life-skills are now absent from many areas of our culture which had previously been derived from the teachings to which we no longer attend:

> Much of what the genuine spiritual traditions — Christian, Muslim, esoteric — really teach is more like a skill, or a knack, knowing where we are in life, knowing what our role is, when to do what, when to be angry, when to allow our emotions full flow, when to suppress, when to use different parts of the mind. A sense of where we are and what to do, an interest in a higher context, wisdom, or a framework for one's life is basic to these traditions.... (1997, p. 166)

Speaking of how this understanding might be used to make education more responsive to human needs, he makes a criticism that is also a prescription for our curriculum: We need to emphasize the larger systems within which we live, at least aiming for a better balance between the text and the context of our daily lives.

> Still, educating people to consider the overall view, or big picture of what is happening in the world, isn't a strong suit of our contemporary education and life. It should not go unnoticed that the kind of out-of-context information that students receive is a part of a trend in society away from an organized framework for interpreting the world.... [T]he lack of context has been cited by more than one writer as a key to both the increasing amount of mental disorder, and to the mainspring of much of modern art and writing, information ripped from its well-set place in society or in our minds. (1997, p. 172-174)

You might say, using Ornstein's terms, that mistaking a text for context is another definition for idolatry. Certainly the incapacity to make that distinction tends to be supported by our educational

balkanization and might explain the obsessive nature of so much of popular culture. Another psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, speaking of the message of Eastern religions, says that

> most intentions we form spontaneously are to be mistrusted. To make sure that we survive in a dangerous world dominated by scarcity, our genes have programmed us to be greedy, to want power, to dominate others. For the same reason, the social group to which we are born teaches us that only those who share our language and religion are to be trusted. The inertia of the past dictates that most of our goals will be shaped by genetic or cultural inheritance. It is these goals, the Buddhists tell us, that we must learn to curb (1997, p. 25).

Such an effort is doubly difficult given our lack of context, the absence of what MacIntyre called a functional definition of good. Acknowledging the same difficulty that Vico and Berger have seen in the dissolution of the constraints imposed by older beliefs, Csikszentmihalyi has it that "one of the main challenges of our time is to discover new bases of transcendent goals that fit with whatever else we know about our world" (1997, p. 140), a task which he approaches with courage, because of the flexibility he sees in human consciousness, "And those who believe this are the ones with the best chance to break free of the grip of fate" (1997, p. 8).

It may be somewhat surprising that it is to Jonas Salk, of polio vaccine fame, that I turn for a description of the mechanism for such an escape from fate. He writes (1983) that it is when we live out our lives in ignorance of our responsibility and capacity for consciously undertaking the further evolution of our species that we remain in that grip, that in the absence of human initiative, our successful adaptation to the environment which we are continually modifying becomes a matter of chance:

> We are an organism that has not yet been tested for adaptation to the new conditions and circumstances which have come into existence for the human species, to which we have and are continuing to contribute. The sense of urgency and the feeling of crisis to which contemporary thought is responding is related to an uncertainty of our time, part of which is evoked by the possibility that human beings may not be suited for the changes in conditions and circumstances

> of life so suddenly imposed by a greatly accelerated rate of metabiological evolution (1983, p. 27).... We may have reached the limit of our tolerance for change. (1983, p. 44)

MacIntyre blames the Enlightenment for the consequences of moving from a view of human nature that saw virtue as a natural desire in human beings to a view that saw human desires as destructive and in need of restraint. He describes the Enlightenment as taking the decision to discard a view of human nature that held that the Aristotelian virtues were expressions of that which humans naturally desire, and to substitute a view which required the imposition of morality as a set of rules designed to curb egoism and a natural desire wholly destructive in character:

> [T]he content of morality became largely equated with altruism. For it was in that same period that men came to be thought of as in some measure dangerously egotistic by nature; and it is only once we think of mankind as by nature dangerously egotistic that altruism becomes at once socially necessary and yet apparently impossible and, if and when it occurs, inexplicable. (1984, p. 228-229)

In arguing for altering the value structure of our culture so that self-interest is seen in terms of mutual interest, Salk similarly holds that "the assumption that all individuals are guilty of greed and selfishness at the expense of others, and that generosity and altruism are unnatural states, is a disadvantageous premise for society" (1983, p. 85).

Salk speaks of the critical importance of our capacity for intuition in addressing these problems and in assuming responsibility for our own evolution

> a new way of thinking is needed to deal with our present reality, which is sensed more sensitively through intuition than by our capacity to observe and to reason objectively. Our subjective responses (intuitional) are more sensitive and more rapid than our objective responses (reasoned).... We first sense and then we reason why.... I suspect that if appropriately cultivated, the two would work best together if the intuition were liberated ... and put in charge of a respectful intellect. If a respectful intellect becomes conscious of intuition and reflects upon what it observes, a self correcting [evolutionarily viable]

and self improving process is established. (1983, p. 79)

We are, according to Salk, so immersed in the consequences of sharing the planet with 4.5 billion (soon to be 11 billion) fellow human beings that we are disturbed directly or indirectly in ways to which we have not yet learned to adapt.

> We are more often disturbed than quieted for reasons related to the relatively greater number of minds. We often seek surcease in various ways; we seek comfort or a way to feel less disturbed. We seek the comfort of other minds, or the balance of activities, or the solace of music, or drugs, or even of vengeance against those we feel to be the source of our discomfort or plight....We are, in effect, parts or elements of the collective mind of humankind even though we have the illusion of being enclosed in our respective body-spaces. (1983, p. 96)

Yet, he says that we might also use that sensitivity to our common plight to increase our awareness of injustice and to respond more effectively to violations of human rights.

By means of a reconciliation between the intuitive and reasoning powers of the human mind, Salk foresees that we have the potential for becoming "the trustees of evolution," teachers of a new philosophy (which he calls *individual mutualism*) which

> would require the collective to respect the individual and individuals to participate in the collective. The same idea is shared in many different ways by religions ... the world over; many of them were appropriate in the past but are no longer as useful as they were when they were first conceived. (1983, p. 109)

This new philosophy would recognize the importance of individuals learning how to optimize their minds to "correct the errors of the past and the present and invent ways for dealing with the present and the future," because, as it stands our present society does not perform these critical functions.

Reflecting Paul's lament in *Romans* 7:15, Salk reminds us that we know all the things that are wrong, yet seem to have great difficulty in acting. He reminds us of how unfree our will is, in its unexamined, unevolved state. And he asks us if we think that those who come after us will see us as having been good ancestors, if we make no effort to change. He

asks us to use our intuition and reason, our science and religion, to become stewards of our own evolution.

> We can only do this if we project a map of the future, a map that contains all the possible futures that we can now imagine. I would conceive of some to which we would be drawn, some that will be more appealing than others.... The basic principles of the new tradition are inherent in the old, reappearing in a new and unfamiliar form....It will have a greater equilibrium and a deeper sense of humanity. (1983, p. 123-124)

This same struggle to find a map engages the most prophetic of our educators as well. David Purpel finds that our cultural and educational crises have moral roots, and that in turn, "these moral difficulties emerge from our inability to deal with the even broader and deeper religious or metaphysical bases of moral, political, and social policies" (1989, p. 68). It may now be more apparent that this disability resides in our lack of consciousness of our determined state and that the cure for that disability lies at least partly in developing our capacities for greater consciousness. Perhaps it is here that we find the educator's place in founding hope for our future. If the capacity to enlarge our context to allow for meaning and the capacity to consciously correct errors in our own evolution are truly human possibilities, then they are also skills which we might learn to teach. And if, in doing so, we were able to help to heal this moral and spiritual disability, what might we come to know that would finally render us capable of social justice? Surely the language has already been used and overused, but we can say that we might actually come to *know* what we have previously only *said* about our need for human unity and compassion. Not a bad map.

References

Berger, P., and T. Luckmann. 1967. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* Garden City: Anchor.

Bruteau, B. 1993. *Radical optimism: Rooting ourselves in reality.* New York: Crossroads.

Cialdini, R. 1993. *Influence: Science and practice*, 3rd Ed. New York: HarperCollins.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1997. *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life.* New York: HarperCollins.

Deikman, A. 1990. *The wrong way home: Uncovering the pattern of cult behavior in American society.* Boston: Beacon Press.

James, W. 1897. *The will to believe and other essays in popular philosophy*. New York: Longmans Green.

MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After virtue* (2nd Ed.). Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1987. *Education and values: The Richard Peters lectures*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

MacIntyre, A. 1988. *Whose justice? Which rationality?* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Ornstein, R. 1997. *The right mind: Making sense of the hemispheres*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Pelletier, K. 1977. *Mind as healer, Mind as slayer*. New York: Delacorte.

Pompa, L. 1971. *Vico's theory of the causes of historical change*. Kent: Institute for Cultural Research Monograph Series.

Purpel, D. 1989. *The moral & spiritual crisis in education*. New York: Bergan & Garvey.

Salk, J. 1983. *Anatomy of reality: Merging of intuition and Reason*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Vico, G. 1984/1744. *The new science of Giambattista Vico*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Winn, D. 1983. *The manipulated mind: Brainwashing, conditioning, and indoctrination*. London: Octagon Press.

Unsettling Our Pedagogical Assumptions
Lessons from Psychoanalytic Theory

Michael O'Loughlin

Essay Review of
Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address

by Elizabeth Ellsworth

Published by Teachers College Press, 1997

Using psychoanalytic theories to analyze teaching and learning, as Elizabeth Ellsworth does in this book, is part of a trend in educational theorizing that will be of interest to readers of this journal. Psychoanalysis, with its focus on relational and unconscious processes, offers a welcome antidote to cognitive, rational, and deterministic analyses of pedagogy. If holism has a meaning in education, surely it is that pedagogical interactions transcend individuals to include intersubjective relations, and transcend consciousness to include unconscious modes of being and ways of knowing. Alan Block's recent work, *I'm only bleeding: Education as the practice of violence against children* (1997), for example, employs object relations theories to document the psychic violence institutional schooling can inflict on children. Ellsworth's work is more ambitious. She takes on the task of unsettling — or "troubling" to use the latest jargon —progressive pedagogies. Her book *is* unsettling. Although the work falls short of her ambitions, it frames the possibilities inherent in thinking of teaching as an unknowable act. Ellsworth's argument is intriguingly paradoxical:

Michael O'Loughlin is Associate Professor, Literacy Studies, Hofstra University, and Candidate, Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy, Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies, Adelphi University.

What makes teaching possible, she suggests, is the inherently impossible nature of pedagogy. Her book is devoted to unraveling features of the paradox of unsettling our pedagogies by exploiting the gaps in our best laid teaching plans.

The notion *of addressivity* is at the center of Ellsworth's analysis. Drawing on film studies, Ellsworth explains the importance of addressivity both to film makers and film theorists. For film makers, addressivity identifies the audience segments to which a film is directed: "Who does this film think you are?" (p. 23). In imagining possible audiences, film makers usually have a primary audience segment to which a film is marketed — e.g., twelve-year-old heterosexual white males — and secondary audiences such as suburban male teenagers, suburban teenagers, or teenagers in general. Describing the address of a film is more complex than it might, at first glance, appear. Any target audience is inevitably an idealization. No audience segment can be expected to mirror it exactly. As Ellsworth notes, in imagining an audience to address, a film will always miss its mark. Audiences are not monolithic either and audience response is never entirely predictable. Film studies strive to understand the ways in which people are influenced by the predetermined address of a film, and the degree to which audiences allow their own fantasies, desires, and intentions to shape their response to the film. These are issues of some significance. Mainstream film makers have a vested interest in lulling the collective unconscious of target groups into accepting the social and commercial messages they peddle. Revolutionary film makers (e.g., Stephen Frears, *My beautiful laundrette* 1985;

Isaac Julien, *Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Mask* 1995), on the other hand, have an interest in understanding how to usurp the status quo. They want to tap into fantasy, desire, and representation to encourage novel and potentially transformative ways of knowing and ways of being. Film theorists argue that the gap between a film's addressivity and audience response has transformative possibilities because it provides a space in which unconscious fantasy, desire, and transgression can come into play to usurp intended meanings and predictable outcomes.

In *Teaching positions* Ellsworth, who has agonized over the sterility of critical pedagogy for many years (e.g., 1989), argues that pedagogy can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of address. Drawing on film theory and psychoanalysis, especially the works of James Donald (1991, 1992) and Shoshana Felman (1983, 1987; Felman & Laub 1992), and from writings on the politics of representation, Ellsworth invites readers to consider how "teachers make a difference in power, knowledge, and desire, not only by *what* they teach, but by *how* they address students." (p. 8). Educators, she suggests, need to consider what happens in the space between "who a curriculum thinks its students are or should be" and "how students actually use a curriculum address to constitute themselves and to act within history" (p. 37). As with film, curriculum address will miss its audience to some extent. In the space between the intended address of curriculum and student response lies pedagogical opportunity. In this space we can expect "fear, fantasy, desire, pleasure and horror [to] bubble up in the social and historical space between address and response, curriculum and student" (p. 41). Student responses, therefore, open up unpredictable pedagogical possibilities because of the power of the unconscious to transcend socialization.

> This resistance is tied to an often unconscious feeling that we are — we must be — *more* than the selves that our culture, our schools, our government, our families, our social norms and expectations are offering us or demanding us to be. It is this resistance to the banalities of normalization that makes agency possible. (p. 44)

Ironic Readings

Before examining Ellsworth's understanding of the role of the unconscious, and the kind of psycho-analytic dialogue that she believes would help disrupt the closed meaning-making of conventional pedagogies, a number of ironies are worthy of note. First, and perhaps most ironic, the address of the book is unclear. Since the work is grounded in introspection about the author's experiences teaching graduate students, it seems to be addressed primarily to college teachers. Although the work will be of interest to teachers at all levels, no mention is made of the goals of public school and undergraduate education. In the space between kindergarten and graduate school the degree of freedom teachers have to construct their own curriculum is often narrowed by the vicissitudes of imposed curriculum and institutional surveillance. Extrapolation from unconscious engagement with films to a similar engagement with works of fiction in advanced graduate classes, as Ellsworth does here, requires a leap. It is nothing, however, compared to the leap that is required to articulate a pedagogy that will allow students to engage imaginatively and transgressively with the sterile prepackaged materials that often pass for curriculum in public schools. It remains for future writers who resonate with the ideas in Ellsworth's work to develop illustrations of the delicate pedagogical improvisations her ideas suggest.

The aspect of this book that I found most puzzling was the author's choice of rhetorical strategy. Although all of us are bound by the conventions of the language and discourse worlds we occupy, Ellsworth's deployment of a positivist "straw person" mode of argument is puzzling. Her plea that we think of pedagogy in complex terms is undermined by her invocation of a binary opposition between the pedagogical ideas she advocates and a reactionary alternative. In response to the question, Who does this book think you are?, Ellsworth appears to assume that her audience is ignorant of the politics of curriculum. On the contrary, I suspect her readers are unlikely to need convincing of the hegemonic characteristics of reactionary pedagogy. The work would appear most suited to readers who occupy a middle space — people interested in multifaceted and potentially liberatory ways of knowing who might find in the author's ideas ways of enriching their own pedagogical understandings — people like the readers of this journal, for example.

Part of the problem is that Ellsworth reduces *curriculum* to static *curriculum materials* (p. 37). This is in contrast to the dynamic notion of curriculum as *currere* championed by William Pinar and the curriculum reconceptualist movement (e.g., Pinar, 1975, 1988; Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992). Ellsworth is correct in worrying that too much of what we do is bound up with assumptions of understanding as getting the right answer, as engaging in "innocent, disinterested reading" (p. 93). However, her failure to acknowledge the legitimate struggles of feminist and critical educators around these issues lends the argument a totalizing air of authority. Ellsworth's selection of *Dialogue in teaching* by Nicholas Burbules (1993) for detailed critique is illustrative. Ellsworth convincingly reads his approach as authoritative, rational, and closed. Instead of seeking out more thoughtful dialogical educators, Ellsworth uses her critique of Burbules to support a sweeping indictment of all dialogical approaches to pedagogy.

> Many educators invoke dialogue, endlessly, it seems, as a way of coming to an understanding without imposition. They offer dialogue to teachers as a strategy capable of being more democratic than lectures and other one-way determinations by the teacher of the student's understandings. Educators constantly associate dialogue with democracy, as in, when we enter into dialogue we agree to be open-minded and open to being changed by the process of hearing and coming to understand another's arguments, experiences, viewpoints, and knowledge. And as when dialogue is seen as a neutral means for fulfilling a shared desire for understanding even if differences of opinion and power remain. (p. 82)

While I agree with her critique of the rationalist notions of autonomous reason underlying "the pre-mapped nature of the territory within which the call to dialogue is addressed" (p. 89), it is hardly novel. The duality of the argument again implies that all dialogical teachers are trapped within these oppressive frames.

In a work focused on address in teaching, the absence of reference to Bakhtin's work is also notable. There is no mention here of Bakhtin's writings (1981, 1986; Hirschkop & Shepherd 1989) or of the ways in which her theorizing might connect with,

complement, contradict, or usurp Bakhtinian notions of voice, heteroglossia, and addressivity.[2] The book's mode of address may have missed its mark by a wider margin than intended. Since reading is not a passive act, readers can position themselves so as to talk back to the challenging ideas in the book while resisting the sense of alienation that Ellsworth's presumption of audience imposes. Reading my own pedagogical practices back to myself through her work was, however, rendered more difficult by the constant need to resist the dualism of the address.

Nevertheless, Ellsworth is correct in arguing that many educators are trapped in Enlightenment notions of truth, authority, and objectivity. She marvels at the minimal impact on education of the debates about representation that have transformed literary and cultural studies. "I'm curious," she says, "about what doors to what other kinds of knowledges might be opened to educators and students if we also gave up the fancy of full direct understanding, and of the transparency of representation" (pp. 81-82). Can we imagine and enact a pedagogy of not knowing?, Ellsworth seems to ask. Surely there is more to learning than a rational exchange of ideas between two people?

> Advocates maintain that communicative dialogue as a process *can* result in transformative, not just additive, change in its participants. But if conscious self-reflection between two participants is to be transformative beyond the mirrored summation of the knowledge of the two participants in a dual structure of address, where would the "something else" or "something beyond" of what each participant brings to the exchange come from? (p. 96)

For Ellsworth, the answer lies in a consideration of the role unconscious processes play in disrupting the given in pedagogical encounters.

Pedagogy as Analytic Dialogue and the Role of the Unconscious

Rejecting the certainty of critical dialogue, Ellsworth suggests that teaching is messy and undecidable. She argues that "the unconscious constantly derails the best intentions of pedagogies" (p. 55). She challenges us to "engage in teaching with a full recognition of the existence of the unconscious" (p. 55).

As the flirtation between pedagogy and psychoanalytic theory continues, the issue of greatest contention is likely to be specifying precisely what is meant by "the unconscious." Rucker and Lombardi (1998) acknowledge that with the decline in interest in classic Freudian theory, with its definition of the unconscious as repository for drives and dynamically repressed wishes, the role of the unconscious has diminished, particularly in American psychoanalytic theory. Object relations theorists in the U.S. tend to advocate a two-person psychology in which the unconscious has a reduced role as container of "internalized interpersonal configurations that have been unarticulated and that continue to exert control over the course of one's life" (Rucker & Lombardi 1998, p. 6). Rucker and Lombardi object to this "archeological, unipsychic view" which, they argue, fails to articulate the distinct and dynamic role of the unconscious in human life. They propose a "subject relational" approach to the unconscious. Instead of the unconscious as a container or *thing* within individuals, they imagine it as a dynamic and creative force.

> We wish to move … to a concept of the unconscious existing in dynamic relation to conscious processes, serving a linking or translating function between the internal and external worlds, between self and other, in ways that are the source of intimacy, creativity, and discovery. (p. 10)

The unconscious, they argue, surrounds and enfolds us: "The notion of unconscious *surround* conveys the idea that unconscious experience encompasses the individual, in contrast to the conventional idea that unconscious experience is contained within the individual" (p. 32). This leads to the notion that unconscious experience is communicable between people: "Unconscious experience becomes shareable and shared, and the cocreation of a related unconscious and its dialogues becomes evident, when individual subjectivities give way to mutual subjective experience and two persons fall into things with each other" (p. 34).

Ellsworth's understanding of the unconscious, coming from Freud, as filtered through Lacan, and ultimately Felman, is somewhat fuzzy. It has certain elements of *thingness* that are reminiscent of Freud, but Ellsworth seems to be groping toward the kind of dynamic, creative unconscious processes articu-

lated by Rucker and Lombardi as "the related unconscious." Teaching, Ellsworth argues, involves engaging with students who have a "passion for ignorance" (p. 57), embodied in unconscious resistance to new ways of knowing and ways of being. Thomas Ogden, writing of similar resistances in the analytic relationship, names them "systematic misrecogni-

For too long educators have focused on rational, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of pedagogy, neglecting emotional and sociopolitical components. Psychoanalysts, for too long, have focused on intrapsychic events to the detriment of ethnic, social, cultural, and political factors in the formation of individual subjectivity.

tions" (1989, p. 197), and views them as a defense against "the terror of not knowing" (p. 195). Those of us who have taught classes addressing issues of ethnic, class, and gender identity with students will readily recognize the deep seated resistances under discussion here. The challenge, in such circumstances, is not getting students "to know," but enabling them to grapple with the possibilities of not knowing. This will not happen, Ellsworth reminds us, if teachers have truth and certainty as their pedagogical aim. We must reckon with the many unknowables presented by a student's unconscious.

> This presents us, teachers, with a who, a student who thinks s/he knows one thing, but who really knows and thinks something else. A who who knows something but doesn't mean it. A who who knows something but doesn't want to know it. A who whose unwanted, unintended, self-subversive knowledge leaks out in her words and actions — but she doesn't realize it, can't own it or use it. A who who always says more than she knows she's saying. A who, for

whom learning about the unwanted, unintended, self-subversive knowledge she already knows but has forgotten, is not necessarily pretty. A who for whom learning is often more or less traumatic, surprising, uncomfortable, disruptive, troubling, intolerable — entailing a loss of self thought to be here and a finding of the self elsewhere, caught up in different patterns of relation to self and others. (p. 59)

Ellsworth advances the Lacanian notion that in any openly dialogical encounter the unconscious is present as a "third participant in the pedagogical situation" (p. 63). Her argument against the notion of "a dual structure of address, or dialogue, between two fully conscious egos who learn as a result of having passions for knowledge" (p. 63) is consistent with Rucker and Lombardi's objection to the duality of separate psychic structures in contemporary object relations theories. In practice, however, Ellsworth's notion of the unconscious is less dynamic. While her understanding of the transgressive and fantasy components that bubble up from the unconscious seems valid, the reduction of the unconscious to a *thing* (p. 63) or container for "the *repressed* of a society, a culture, and the individual lives lived there" (p. 64) restores some of the original Freudian dualism. No real insight is offered into the creative or transformative possibilities that might arise from the dynamic merging of unconscious experiences between teacher and students, nor indeed how this might come about.

Turning to the method by which learners come to terms with their own misrecognitions, Ellsworth draws on psychoanalytic technique to describe how an analyst poses interpretations that "return to the patient traces of her inaccessible knowledge from *a different vantage point*" (p. 68). Ellsworth is frank that "[t]eaching is not psychoanalysis" (p. 70), but she goes on to argue that the essence of psychoanalytic training, the notion that there is no single correct interpretation of a patient's material, is applicable to teaching. She argues for "cultivating a third ear that listens not for what a student knows (discrete packages of knowledge) but for the terms that shape a student's knowing, her not knowing, her forgetting, her circles of stuck places and resistances." (p. 71). Ellsworth has a good grasp of analytic technique,

and her argument here is plausible. However, it raises some complex ethical questions for teachers.

If teaching is not psychoanalysis, what boundaries ought a teacher place around classroom conversations so that unmanageable analytic material does not bubble up? Are teachers to be trained in handling resistances, and in techniques of analytic interpretation? If not, I fear that like the many progressive pedagogies that preceded it, psychoanalytically informed teaching will be reduced to simplistic bromides such as cultivating a "third ear." We need to be cognizant of the dangers of well-intentioned but misinformed teachers playing with the deep structures of students' psyches. I chose to return to school to study psychoanalysis in part because I was concerned that I was getting out of my depth as I engaged my students individually, and in groups, in exploring deep aspects of their own psychic and intersubjective formations. In addition, most pedagogy occurs in group situations, yet Ellsworth's discussion is confined almost exclusively to the two-person analytic encounter. The dynamics of group analysis are very different from two-person analysis, and the ways in which classroom interactions mirror and differ from group analysis need to be explored very carefully. On the one occasion in which Ellsworth ventures an example of the possibilities of group teaching, it seems as if she is arguing simply for the kind of benign and searching self-reflection in which many of us routinely engage our students.

> Picture a student-teacher seminar. The focus is not on, What is this author saying in this required reading, what does she mean? The focus is on, What happens to my own processes of thinking, my own symbolic constellation when I read this author's words? Where, as I read this author, do I get stuck, do I forget, do I resist? Where, when I listen to a classmate's response to this reading, does my own project of "becoming a teacher" get shifted, troubled, unsettled — why there? Why now? (p. 73)

This latter position troubles me because it seems to reduce the unconscious to acting in the service of cognition or understanding. Such a compartmentalization of the unconscious and its role in psychic life robs it of the dynamic richness that is the essence of analytic work.

In the latter part of the book Ellsworth offers examples of pedagogical approaches to developing partial understanding through analytic dialogue. In discussing Felman and Laub's (1992) analysis of *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann's (1985) documentary about the Holocaust, for example, Ellsworth shows how the addressivity of the work was structured so as to engender in viewers the kind of engagement that yields further questions and partial understandings rather than simplistic, authoritative truths. As she notes, "it offer[s] us textual knowledge as it refuses full understanding" (p. 116). Rather than using reading as a mirror reflecting back its truths, Ellsworth argues for readings that open up further readings: "Lacan's 'quintessential service to our culture,' Felman (1987) argues, is to enact a way of reading that keeps systems of signification open to other readings." (p. 126). At times Ellsworth's tone is defensive as she worries about being accused of advocating unbridled relativism. She demonstrates, nevertheless, a good understanding of analytic technique as returning difference in interesting ways to patients, and argues energetically that teaching could benefit from the same kind of openness.

> In analytic dialogue, then, learning happens when the self has been subverted — it happens when "self-reflection" describes an ellipse, rather than a circle. Learning happens when the very question we asked in order to seek a learning has been displaced by the return of a difference, a surprising, unexpected, interfering encounter with the ignore-ances of one's "very point of observation," of one's very point of asking. (p. 147)

On Disquieting Readings

Teaching positions is a disquieting book. It intends to unsettle pedagogy. As the book indicates, critical psychoanalytic theory has the potential to usurp our complacency about the nature of human interactions. Things are never what they seem. For those of us interested in the politics of difference and the formation of subjectivities, widening the discussion to the unconscious is very promising. If our consciousness develops through internalizing social, linguistic, and discursive norms, using the unconscious to usurp the "banalities of normalization" (p. 44) is enormously tempting. After reading this book, however, I felt that there must be *more* to the story. Reading Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) convinces me that psychoanalytic insights have much to teach educators about the complexities of racial formation and the construction of Self and Other. We need to understand ways in which we can surface issues of difference, subjectivity, and individual and collective identity safely in pedagogically productive ways. The question, I think, is not how we might use the unconscious to get to a better form of consciousness, but how we might understand the ways in which individuals embody social constructions of difference in their unconscious. Rucker and Lombardi, with their understanding of the related unconscious, invite us to consider how we might enable individuals to transcend Self-Other dualisms to engage each other's unconscious experiences.

For too long educators have focused on rational, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of pedagogy, neglecting emotional and sociopolitical components. Psychoanalysts, for too long, have focused on intrapsychic events to the detriment of ethnic, social, cultural, and political factors in the formation of individual subjectivity. What is needed now is to bring psychoanalytic theory and pedagogical discourses into conversation with a view to gaining insight into these issues. The historical rereadings of identity formation engaged in by postcolonial theorists (e.g., Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995; Bhabha 1994, Morley & Chen 1996; Read 1996) offer one window into the possibilities this kind of critical interdisciplinary inquiry can yield. *Teaching Positions*, with its focus on the transgressive potential of pedagogical address offers another.

Notes

1. Deborah Britzman's new book, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects* (1998), uses Freudian theory for similar purposes.

2. See Hongya Wang (1997) for an application of Bakhtin's theory that is quite congruent with the ideas under discussion here.

References

Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin (Eds.). 1995. *The postcolonial studies reader*. London & New York: Routledge.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The dialogic imagination*. Houston: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1986. *Speech genres and other late essays*. Houston: University of Texas Press.

Bhabha, H. 1994. *The location of culture*. London & New York: Routledge.

Block, A. 1997. *I'm only bleeding: Education as the practice of violence against children*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Britzman, D. 1998. *Lost subjects, Contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Burbules, N. C. 1993. *Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Donald, J. (Ed.). 1991. *Psychoanalysis and cultural theory: Thresholds*. London: Verso.

Donald, J. 1992. *Sentimental education: Schooling. popular culture and the regulation of liberty*. London: Verso.

Ellsworth, E. 1989. Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review* 59: 297-324.

Fanon, F. 1967. *Black skin, White masks*. New York: Grove Press.

Felman, S. 1983. *The literary speech act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin or seduction in two languages*. (C. Porter, trans.). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Felman, S. 1987. *Jacques Lacan and the adventure of insight: Psychoanalysis in contemporary culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Felman, S, and D. Laub, M.D. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history*. London & New York: Routledge.

Frears, S. 1985. *My beautiful laundrette*. Produced by A Working Title Limited/SAF Productions for Channel 4.

Hirschkop, K., and D. Shepherd, D. 1989. *Bakhtin and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Julien, I. 1995. *Frantz Fanon: Black skin, White mask*. Produced by the Arts Council of England. Distributed by California Newsreel.

Lanzmann, C. 1985. *Shoah*. Coproduction of Les Films Aleph and Historia Films. Distributed by New Yorker Films.

Morley, D., and K. Chen. 1996. *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*. London & New York: Routledge.

Ogden, T. 1989. *The primitive edge of experience*. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson.

Pinar, W. J. (Ed.). 1975. *Curriculum theorizing*. Berkeley: McCutchan.

Pinar, W. J. (Ed.). 1988. *Contemporary curriculum discourses*. Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Pinar, W. J., and M. Grumet. 1976. *Toward a poor curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Pinar, W. J., and W. Reynolds (Eds.). 1992. *Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Read, A. (Ed.). 1996. *The fact of blackness*. Seattle: Bay Press.

Rucker, N. G., and K. L. Lombardi. 1998. *Subject relations: Unconscious experience and relational psychoanalysis*. London & New York: Routledge.

Wang, H. 1997. Curriculum as polyphonic authoring: A pedagogy through the "loophole," *JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 13(4): 20-24.

Book Reviews

The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places

by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble

Published by Beacon Press (Boston), 1994. 184 pages, paperback

Reviewed by Meg Kanne

The *Geography of Childhood* is timely in its significance to education that is sensitive to community and environmental restoration. It is a source of understanding and inspiration for educators concerned with the relationship between children and the natural world in current times of disagreement regarding cultural and educational priorities. The collection of essays, written by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, describes the relationship that children have with nature as a critical aspect of their own human development. Through a combination of described personal experience and related research, Nabhan and Trimble explain that children need wild places as part of their own development of self-esteem, understanding of diversity, respect and care for the natural world, and sense of community. These essays serve the reader a banquet of touching memories delicately woven with theory and research, suggesting that children who experience this relationship with nature develop a capacity for maintaining a natural awareness and respect for all aspects of community, including the natural world.

The *Geography of Childhood* has been important to me because it resonates with my own professional and personal life. As a doctoral student in a program entitled "Community and Environmental Renewal," a teacher of four- and five-year-olds, and a child development instructor for high school students, I choose to acknowledge the relationship between children and natural places as a significant influence in all aspects of my work. Personally, this book describes my own connection to "place" and reliance on the natural world for wisdom and guidance. It validates memories of feeling and discovery. It theorizes and values what has been culturally ignored as a critical childhood experience and source of community and environmental health. Through story, Nabhan and Trimble explore the relationship between humans and natural places and offer a compelling argument that children need wild places as part of their psychological development in a post-industrial society.

In the chapter entitled "A Child's Sense of Wildness" Nabhan identifies the "loss of wildness" in the lives of children as "play has become too domesticated and regimented while playgrounds themselves have become more and more barren. Many today are void of vegetation with which to form nests, shelters, wands, dolls, or other playthings" (p. 9). Nabhan and Trimble identify the reasons for adults to "let children roam beyond the pavement, to gain access to vegetation and earth that allows them to tunnel, climb, or even fall" (p. 9). This "roaming" will strengthen their connection with the non-human aspects of the natural world.

With the understanding that my young students need the place and time to form a relationship with the natural world, I have been able to support them in their experience with the natural environment. We visit a field behind our school weekly in the winter and more often as the weather allows in warmer months. I marvel as the children delight in the tall grass and approach tiny red grasshoppers with a gentleness and grace unique to such a setting. The result of this is a blossoming and admirable passion for the natural world. This was not done by any form of direct instruction or lesson planned with specific objectives and goals on my part; instead, it has occurred through understanding the ecodevelopmental needs of the children and trusting them to move forward in this context. From reading *The Geography of Childhood* I have learned that the best environmental education I can provide for young children is to stand by them as they build their own relationship with the earth. It is one of my greatest teaching pleasures to join hands with the children as we explore and revel in our place.

Meg Kanne is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Portland State University. Her field of study and teaching interests include community and environmental renewal and early childhood education. Currently she teaches an integrated preschool and high school early childhood program in West Linn, Oregon.

One of the more critical understandings I drew from Nabhan and Trimble's collection is the developmental stages of the relationship children have with the natural world. In the chapter entitled "Scriptures of Maps, The Names of Trees: A Child's Landscape," Stephen Trimble describes how children's naturalist experiences change from the first years of life through young adulthood. The journey of a child begins in the first six years with gaining critical components of a healthy self, including a sense of security, comfort, and confidence. This development is enhanced by the lack of academic or social expectations and rules in nature, and by the intimacy a child can have with nature, whether in a small bit of backyard, public park, or local forest. When exploring the natural world, children are not evaluated or judged. During middle childhood (ages 5-7) the children's minds becomes capable of more sophisticated and concrete learning and fill up with memorable information and experiences that surround them. Throughout this time students are forming the scaffold that will support their thinking in the future. With thoughtful environmental education the earth will be a natural focus of their thinking both during this period and in the future. During adolescence, they begin their own distinct journey in the natural world as they enter into the rituals of adult life. As young adults, students who have experienced environmental education learn names and patterns as a form of understanding the order and formally acknowledging the presence of the species of trees, wildflowers, and reptiles. Overall, young adults gain a sense of comfort and confidence in the natural world and move toward a desire to organize their understanding of the environment through taxonomy and field guides. These conclusions are drawn based on the work of such naturalists and educators as E. O. Wilson, Edith Cobb, and Paul Shepard. The authors explain that to be a naturalist on one's home ground is the oldest occupation in the world. Humans survived for thousands of years by understanding and sustaining a balanced relationship with the earth. To have such an understanding is my wish for children so they will be capable of thoughtfully participating in communities that sustain ecological balance.

Nabhan and Trimble construct a profound argument for the inclusion of environmental education in each child's learning experience, using their stories and those of others to explain that such an educational relationship will lead children to develop caring respect and self-confidence. I believe they will also gain an understanding of the natural world as a sustainable community, as they witness and relate to the balanced complexity of the natural world.

As a valued reading for a psychology or educational theory course, as recommended parent reading, as a book for discussion group in a parenting class, or as a focus of professional development, *The Geography of Childhood* deserves to be read by people who work with children and hold the hope that our children will develop ways of knowing that naturally integrate sustaining community, culture, and the natural world.

Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education

Edited by Arthur B. Powell and Marilyn Frankenstein

Published by State University of New York Press (Albany, NY), 1997, 440., Paper

Reviewed by George Milliken

I recall a lecture by my fifth grade mathematics teacher discussing the Greek "founders" of mathematics. I remember him portraying them as the fountains from which all mathematical knowledge was disseminated. When questions were called for, I asked, "What about African mathematics?" He asked that I explain my question further so I responded by mentioning the pyramids and other architecture. He responded with "They don't have any." It is from interactions like these that the study of ethnomathematics has developed. Ethnomathematics is defined as the mathematics which is practiced among identifiable cultural groups, such as national-tribal groups, labor groups, children of a certain age bracket, professional classes, and so on (D'Ambrosio 1985).

George Milliken is a seventh grade mathematics teacher at Alverta B. Gray Schultz Middle School in Hempstead, New York, where he uses an interdisciplinary multicultural approach. He uses collaborative groups and contextualized notes to help relate the mathematics he teaches to students' cultural identities and their future aspirations.

Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education is a collection of previously published and new research presenting this emerging academic discipline from a critical perspective. It was developed by those in the mathematics education community desiring to liberate themselves by changing the ideas and practices that lead to the assertion that there is only one underlying logic governing all thought. The editors of this volume have chosen authors from around the world, crossing disciplinary boundaries. They bring these authors together in a holistic examination of the impact of history and culture on the development and use of mathematical thought.

The volume is organized along six strands of ethnomathematical investigation: (a) Ethnomathematical knowledge, (b) Uncovering distorted and hidden history of mathematical knowledge, (c) Considering interactions between culture and mathematical knowledge, (d) Reconsidering what counts as mathematical knowledge, (e) Ethnomathematical praxis in the curriculum, and (f) Ethnomathematical research.

The first strand on ethnomathematical knowledge describes both early work and current theory. The chapters by D'Ambrosio and Ascher describe ethnomathematics as a discipline. D'Ambrosio suggests that if we abandon notions of general universality, which often cover for Eurocentric particularities, we can acquire an awareness that different cultures can produce different mathematics. (p. 6) Their challenge to the classist and elitist views of mathematics is one that respects the influences that a culture exerts upon the development of mathematical knowledge. They show that the construction of logical thought, including mathematical thought, is divergent and the circumstances for this construction are based on the needs of a particular culture. Marcelo Borba furthers these ideas by connecting what is considered academic mathematics with the mathematics necessary to function in society. Uncovering the connection between the academic and the everyday is an essential component of meaningful reform.

The second strand in the volume is devoted to uncovering the distorted and hidden history of mathematical knowledge. George G. Joseph challenges European scholarship and suggests that "the

standard treatment of the history of non-Europeans exhibits a deep-rooted historiographic bias in the selection and interpretation of facts" (p. 63). The consequence is that mathematical activity outside Europe is ignored and devalued. Joseph challenges Rouse Ball (1908) who contends that mathematical activity cannot be traced, with any certainty, to any school or period prior to the Ionian Greeks, nor can it be traced to women and people of color. In their own writings, noted Greek mathematicians describe how they were educated in Egypt and place Africa in the middle of mathematics history and development.

Joseph also challenges the claim by Morris Kline (1953) that, "with the decline of the Greek Civilization, [mathematical development] remained dormant for a thousand years" (in Powell & Frankenstein, p. 64) until the Renaissance. His research indicates that China, India, the Hellenistic World, Persia, Iraq, Egypt, and Spain played significant roles in the development and spread of mathematical thought while Europe was still in the throes of the Dark Ages.

In the introduction to the strand "Considering interactions between culture and mathematical knowledge" the editors state that "mathematics is a cultural product and therefore, is created by humans in the interconnected midst of culture" (p. 119). Mathematical thought and development is dictated by the culture that uses it and is promoted by engaging the mathematics through varied, yet integrated activities. For example, members of a culture develop accurate strategies for performing daily mental mathematics based on real-life contexts. Inherent in most of the teaching of mathematics in schools is the belief that there is only one correct method for solving a problem. This practice ignores how mathematical terms have multiple meanings, some of which are developed within the social relationships existing within different cultures.

Eurocentric historians of mathematics have a longstanding practice of dismissing the mathematics of other cultures. For example, mathematical discovery is regarded as following only "from a rigorous application of a form of deductive axiomatic logic" (p. 194). This Eurocentric view dismisses Egyptian mathematics as primitive because it lacks "proofs" which are supposedly universal. The strand on "Re-

considering what counts as mathematical knowledge" opens up discussions of mathematical knowledge. The various chapters in this strand can challenge school curricula that ignore the effects of racism, sexism, and classism by narrowly defining what counts as mathematical knowledge.

The authors in this strand also argue that broader definitions must encompass the mathematics of everyday life. Students often give answers to mathematical problems that make no sense. They believe that mathematics makes no sense because they cannot make connections to it within the context of their daily lives. Repressing the practical mathematical knowledge learned from daily living is accomplished in the classroom by an emphasis on narrow and decontextualized processes. One of the goals of mathematics education is that students should be able to transfer and apply their knowledge in a variety of problem-solving environments. By doing so, our students' understanding of what mathematics is will increase and they will become more aware of mathematics around them. Mathematics will make sense to our students because they will see the connection between their daily lives and the classroom.

The central idea of the strand on "Ethnomathematical praxis in the curricula" is that the curriculum can be enriched by investigating the enthnomathematics of a variety of cultures. This provides students with a more realistic conception of mathematics and a variety of problem-solving strategies. It also allows students to express their own ideas as well as reflect on the ideas of others. Students from diverse backgrounds are culturally affirmed and gain an appreciation for the contributions of many cultures, including their own. This inclusion helps students value mathematics through personal identification and ownership of its products. Traditional curricula focus on what the students do not know. Enthomathematics provides a focus on what students know and builds from there.

Teachers also gain important insights from an ethnomathematical perspective. They gain understanding of the kinds of mathematical ideas their students posses, which in turn helps teachers to challenge and extend the knowledge of their students.

The infusion of ethnomathematical content into school curricula also provides teachers with a wellspring for illustrating and applying mathematical ideas while at the same time correcting the historical record to include mathematical knowledge from all cultures.

Among the findings included in the final strand on "Ethnomathematical research" is one that shows that ethnomathematical knowledge increases students' self-confidence and opens a critical appreciation for the nature of knowledge. Moreover, through ethnomathematical practices, students learn more about themselves and the world around them, and the authors hope that these students will seek new alternatives and perspectives as they strive to build a global society.

I found this collection to be an excellent compendium of the history and the future of ethnomathematics. It is informative, well-organized and provides excellent reference materials for the classroom teacher and teacher educators. It also provides a radically different and powerful approach for reforming mathematics education. As educators, we must be perpetual students of our disciplines. This is critical for providing students with the best possible opportunities for understanding, learning, and applying the lessons taught by mathematics. This book is an excellent tool in the pursuit of that goal.

Creating a New Educational Vision

Edward T. Clark, Jr.

The fundamental obstacle to creating a truly integrated curriculum is our failure to question underlying assumptions about teaching, learning, and the meaning of "curriculum."

Edward T. Clark, Jr., specializes in integrated curriculum design and site-based educational change. He has been involved in teacher education for over 30 years — as Director of Teacher Education at Webster University, as Professor of Environmental Education at George Williams College, and as an independent educational consultant for the last 15 years.

Until modern times young people could anticipate a future rather like that of their parents. Social change was that slow. Now young people face futures for which their parent's culture cannot prepare them. *The young must create the future themselves.* (Margaret Mead; emphasis added)

Before we can begin to design an integrated curriculum, we must define what is meant by curriculum. Most of us still think of *the curriculum* as content or subject matter — information that is the focus of classroom attention and what, presumably, students learn in school. Given this context, it logically follows that the only difference between the present, textbook-based curriculum and an integrated curriculum is the content/subject matter that is to be studied. Implicit in this view is the tacit assumption that if there is something wrong with the curriculum, it can be fixed in much the same way that a defective machine part can be fixed — by replacing the flawed part with a new one. Ideally, this would involve little more than purchasing a new set of integrated textbooks with different, integrated information in them. Nothing could be further from the reality.

Seventy-five years ago Alfred North Whitehead (1967) proposed that "There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations." Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) reinforces this point of view when she points out that the educational model created by our Western technological culture is the only one that defines curriculum in such a narrow way. "In other societies and times … most of learning occurs outside the settings labeled as educational. Living and learning are everywhere founded on an improvisational basis." In their discussion of educational reform more than 15 years ago, Ernest Boyer and David Levine (n.d.) suggest that the curriculum focus on "the fundamental relationships, common experiences, and

collective concerns that all humans share." Such a definition would include, as a minimum, *everything students experience/learn in school — by feeling, watching, thinking, and doing*. But even this definition is not broad enough to reflect "the fundamental relationships, common experiences, and collective concerns" of the real world. If we are to redefine *curriculum* as life in all its manifestations, we must also redefine the classroom to include the home, the community, and the world. In this expanded classroom everyone becomes both teacher and learner. Perhaps the *least* important component of this expanded educational experience is subject matter or content *as it is traditionally conceived*.

In order to reflect Life, an integrated curriculum must bridge the extensive network of chasms that exist among the various academic disciplines. Since the perspectives from which science, history or philosophy, mathematics, and art view life are obviously different, it should be equally obvious that these multiple viewpoints are complementary — no one of them can possess the ultimate or definitive perspective. Since the focus of each is the same, i.e., LIFE, it should also be obvious that there are extensive patterns of similarities and correlations among the many disparate academic subjects. Although it may be possible to catalog some of these similarities, the possible permutations are so numerous that no textbook could possibly accommodate them.

Our integrated curriculum must also bridge the chasm that currently exists between the classroom and the world beyond its doors. Since what lies beyond the doors in Los Angeles may have little in common with life in Evanston, Atlanta, Dallas, or Fort Dodge, any curriculum that reflects the interests, questions, and concerns of students must be situation-specific. This means that *teachers must design their own integrated curricula*. But even that is no longer enough. If the curriculum is to be relevant to students in today's global information society, *students should be involved in the design process as much as possible*. In short, when designing a curriculum about life, there are no fixed rules and certainly no fixed content. There are, however, models, guidelines, and strategies like those presented in this book that may be used by teachers anywhere.

It is not necessary to start from scratch to design such a curriculum. Indeed, an integrated curriculum can even emerge within the constraints of traditional curriculum requirements. As seventh grade science teacher Bill O'Hagan discovered, it is possible to design a curriculum that meets all of the guidelines proposed here, while at the same time fulfilling departmental curriculum requirements. In this case, the departmental guidelines called for a unit on the human body. Bill began by asking students to identify the questions they wished to explore concerning the body. The results showed far more sophistication than he had anticipated from seventh grade students. Among some of the more obvious questions like "How do we hear?" "How do I speak?" and "How do I see?" were other more reflective questions: "What is puberty and why is it important?" "How are humans different from other animals?" "How do drugs affect the human body?" "What are the chances of getting skin cancer if I stay in, and stay out of the sun?" "How do organs work together?" "What happens when I am stressed?" "What do we really know about AIDS?" "How do I remember things?" "How do the cells in the body change?" Teams of students then decided on which questions they would research and present to the rest of the class. Integrated? Relevant? Provocative? Interesting? Substantive? The response of the students and the success of the unit was answer enough.

Barriers to an Integrated Curriculum

There are many barriers that keep teachers from embracing an integrated, learner-centered curriculum. My experience suggests that the major one may be fear of losing control of the classroom. Many teachers assume that a learner-centered classroom will lead to chaos. This is, of course, not true. Students recognize the necessity for structure and rules and when they "own" the rules, their will act responsibly. For example, students in one second grade classroom established their own rules: 1) We work quietly — library talk. 2) We share. 3) We put things back. 4) We plan our work and ask our questions before the teacher starts an instructional group. Needless to say, the rules worked.

A second barrier concerns motivation. The conventional wisdom which says that children won't learn without some external reward or punishment

as a form of motivation is widespread among educators. It is a great irony that in any discussion of motivation, the one factor that is almost universally overlooked is student interest. Like the rest of us, students learn what they are interested in learning! Every teacher has experienced the "teachable moment" when a student's interest is suddenly aroused by an "a ha!" event. Unfortunately, as teachers admit, such moments are rare. But they don't have to be. One creative and flexible kindergarten teacher designed an entire year's curriculum around a cocoon that one of her students brought in the first week of school! Under her imaginative, inspired, and nurturing guidance, the kids kept making new connections, seeing new patterns and relationships, and expanding the scope of their interests. She reports that the year was chock full of "a ha!" experiences as kids explored their world with new eyes, new questions, and newly acquired competencies. Like the rest of us, students don't want to spend time learning what someone else thinks is important. If they are forced to, unless we bribe them, they respond in the only way available to them — they tune us out!

But resistance to a learner-centered curriculum goes beyond discipline, control, and motivation. Teachers who embrace the latest theories on teaching and learning and are the first to implement new classroom methods like cooperative learning and portfolio assessments may still agree with educators like E. D. Hirsh (1987), author of the *Cultural Literacy* curriculum of core knowledge, that there is a basic set of concrete facts and hard data — what Bateson calls the "hallowed certainties" — which children in America need to learn in order to succeed in this society. This perspective is reinforced by both district-and state-mandated curriculum guidelines and by standardized testing programs that give priority to content-related evaluations. These, of course, reflect a general cultural expectation evident in the move to establish a national, content-based set of "world class" standards for educational success. This perspective is perpetuated by the great majority of textbooks whose publishers are more concerned about presenting noncontroversial content in an attractive package than with relevance and substance. Unfortunately, since most adults today are products of an education based on such standards, it is diffi-

cult for them to appreciate their inherent fallacies.

There is still another concern — that students don't know enough to ask intelligent questions and certainly aren't ready to make decisions about their own learning. As one high school history teacher argued vehemently, "My students don't even know anything about world history. How can they ask intelligent questions about it?" There is also the tacit assumption that the only thing of interest to adolescent kids is learning how to get along with their peers in general, and the opposite sex in particular. While there is a great deal of truth in both observations, when students' interests are taken into consideration, such reservations are unjustified. Like Bill O'Hagan, Sharon Mulcahy decided to give students a chance to explore their own questions within the context of eighth grade departmental requirements, which called for a unit on light and sound. Admittedly with a high level of anxiety, Sharon asked her students what they wanted to know about light and sound. At the end of a month's investigation, students studied everything from lasers to the Hubble telescope — moving far beyond the scope of any eighth grade textbook. The unit had been the most successful, diverse, and sophisticated — and not so incidently the most enjoyable — she had ever conducted.

Finally, there is the assumption among some middle school teachers that many, if not most, of their students are still "concrete" learners who are not yet capable of the levels of abstraction called for by an integrated curriculum. However, even elementary teachers who have implemented the ideas discussed here have found — often contrary to their own expectations — that their students are almost uniformly capable of highly abstract and speculative thought. Because they have misunderstood Piaget's work, many teachers haven't recognized that *when learning is made relevant in "concrete" ways to their own experiences, students can make highly abstract associations and imaginative speculations* — in short, systems thinking.

Thompson teacher Ruth Ann Dunton describes the response of her sixth grade class to a systemic exploration of "culture."

As students became familiar with terminology, they seemed able to make astounding connec-

tions. Their understandings of the workings of cultures seemed to be beyond their years. They were able to relate what they were discussing in class, regardless of time frame, to themselves. They took off on their own, finding answers to questions they wanted to answer. It was truly impressive. Learning seemed so natural, discussions were lively, reflections were personal yet worldly. Imagery writing done the first week of school and then at the end of the year on the same topic showed tremendous growth in concern and knowledge of their world.

Ironically, some of the more encouraging responses to this kind of curriculum have been from children with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. One high school special education teacher reported that "acting out" virtually disappeared in the classes where she was implementing some of the strategies discussed here. Where special education students are included in regular, grade-level science and social studies classes, instead of their normal struggle to retain facts, these students do quite well when shown the "big picture" and how it relates to them.

Jean Humke, special education teacher at Thompson, has described how two of her students were able to participate fully in an eighth grade science class where the integrated content was far more sophisticated than would have been considered possible for them in previous years. Although one "bright" boy had good auditory and mechanical reasoning skills, he could not read a traditional science textbook. In lab and group project work, he became the leader in his group. Someone else did the reading and recording, and he took over the hands-on part. His motivation improved and disruptive classroom behaviors disappeared. Another of Jean's students — an eighth grade girl — at first wouldn't even answer questions in class. However, by the end of the semester she was making oral presentations on team projects right along with the other members of her team. One of the surprises was seeing how much the regular children benefitted from having the "specials" in the classroom.

Of all the barriers to substantive curriculum change, the most pernicious is the cynicism with which so many teachers have learned to live. It doesn't take long for a new, enthusiastic, visionary young woman or man to discover the political realities of institutional education. I have been confronted with this skepticism more times than I can remember from teachers who want to do things differently but whose hopes have been raised and dashed once too often. Because cynicism is difficult to express openly — especially to an administrator and sometimes even to oneself — teachers often raise the barriers discussed above as facades to protect themselves from the frustration, hurt, pain, and anger that many of them carry.

The point is that the barriers to an integrated curriculum, like most barriers to change, exist primarily, if not exclusively, in the mind. They reflect long-held, culturally conditioned assumptions that are not easy to relinquish — assumptions about schools and kids, about teaching and learning, and about life in general. Once these assumptions are identified and questioned, teachers are more willing to explore new ideas and risk new behaviors. Even then it is not easy. As eighth grade team leader Bonnie Pettebone observed, "These last three years have been the most difficult of my 19-year professional career. It's been like climbing out of a very deep hole." After a pause she added, " At the same time, they have been the most exhilarating and rewarding three years of my life." This kind of change is exceedingly difficult when faced alone. For most, it may be possible only with the support of a team of colleagues and the encouragement of an enthusiastic principal. This is why learning communities are so necessary if substantive transformation is to occur in our schools.

An Integrated Curriculum
Must Reflect a New Vision for Education

In a culture that actively fosters instant gratification, we seem to have forgotten the meaning and power of a long-term vision. In our frantic efforts to embrace the current fad, we are like the man who "jumped on his horse and rode off in all directions." In his conversation with Alice, the Cheshire Cat was more pragmatic. "If you don't know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which way you go from here." And so educators continue to promote whatever new program is in vogue, e.g., "multiple intelligences," "Outcome Based Education," or "TQM" (Total Quality Management), without any serious

thought given to its long-term implications.

It seems to be a basic human need to have some sense of direction, a "vision of potential," for one's personal future. Children usually have some idea of what they want to be when they grow up; while their dreams may change as they approach adulthood, they will often spend many years and thousands of dollars in professional training in order to fulfill a personal vision. As might be expected, most of our personal visions are shaped by the dominant cultural norms of success reflected in the ubiquitous bumper sticker, "the one who dies with the most toys wins." Whatever vision exists also reflects the equally ubiquitous cultural norm of progress — the incremental expansion of human potential — engineered by technology — "ever upward" toward some undefined infinite horizon. In spite of the "downturns" in the economy, foreign competition, political chicanery and gridlock, and even holes in the ozone layer, most Americans seem to have an almost childlike faith that the *long-term future* is going to be a continuation of the present — only better. Only recently has this vision begun to be suspect. Unfortunately, few of us have an alternative vision to replace the one we have tacitly accepted.

Although most of us take our personal life-goals for granted, we are oblivious of the degree to which such cultural visions shape institutional behavior. For example, as long as the dominant cultural vision is that the next 25 years will be essentially an accelerated version of the past and present, educational policy and practice will continue in its present form. While a few new programs will be introduced, nothing essential will change. As teachers become increasingly cynical, their cynicism will be tempered by the never-ending seductive promises of powerful new technologies designed to make their jobs easier by transforming teaching and learning. According to this scenario, educational reform will consist of an endless series of innovative, patchwork programs, each of which has its "day in the sun" and then quietly fades into oblivion. Instead of embracing nicely packaged programs, we should be embracing visions.

If educational transformation is to become a reality, we must create a vision of education that is powerful enough to call forth the passion, energy, and untapped potential necessary to bring it into being. Peter Senge of MIT's Sloan School of Management has found that the level of commitment required to bring about *any* substantive organizational transformation requires a long-term perspective that is inspired by a powerful vision. "People do not focus on the long term because they *have* to, but because they *want* to. In every instance where one finds a long-term view actually operating in human affairs, there is a long-term vision at work" (Senge 1990).

A generation ago John Kennedy created a national long-term vision of placing a man on the moon. Based on certain untested assumptions about our scientific and technological potential, this evocative vision literally transformed that potential into a reality. It wasn't long before the impact of Kennedy's long-term vision was felt in schools throughout America as science and math programs were strengthened and, in time, transformed.

The challenge to our generation is to create a cultural vision of a possible future for the next century that can capture our collective imaginations in the same way that Kennedy's vision did a generation ago. To paraphrase Daniel Burnam, chief architect of the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago and author of the first master plan for that city — no small dreamer himself — "Have no little visions. They have no magic to stir men's blood!"

In the absence of a coherent cultural vision that challenges the status quo, it will not be easy for educators to evoke a vision of potential compelling enough to transform educational policy and practice. For some, the possibilities of liberating the unrealized potential of their students is challenge enough. For others, the challenges presented by a learner-centered, integrated curriculum will energize them because it taps into their own imaginative idealism. For the majority who have seen too many programs come and go, these challenges alone are not sufficient to cut through their passivity. Although a few schools and classrooms will be transformed, education as a whole will continue relatively unaffected. The only thing that will overcome the cynicism and apathy and lead to systemic transformation is a vision of potential that will challenge the imaginations of educators in the same way Kennedy's vision challenged an entire nation. Since no

such vision seems to be forthcoming in the political arena, enlightened teachers may have to create their own vision of the future.

It is appropriate that the space program — probably the greatest scientific and technological achievement of the twentieth century — provides us with the perspective necessary for such a vision. In a recent interview, America's senior astronaut, F. Story Musgrave described his space walk to repair the Hubble Space Telescope.

> The view of Earth — as something whole and interconnected — may be the most important thing to come out of the space program. That and a new sense of oneself as a 'planetary citizen' — a citizen of the globe.... You have that big picture which can be really magical, of the entire forest as opposed to just seeing one tree at a time.

Given the twin realities that, like it or not, we are "planetary citizens" who face a set of ubiquitous global dilemmas, I suggest that the only vision that is powerful enough to reshape our educational system is a vision in which the present generation of students are *planetary citizens living cooperatively at peace in the global village.* Just as Kennedy's grand vision transformed science and math education, so a vision of global cooperation, because of its profound relevance to every facet of life, can transform the entire educational system. The relevance of this "macro" vision to educational transformation lies in the fact that it resonates at many different levels with the "micro" visions held by many teachers. For one thing, it reflects the cooperative learning and community building experiences that are beginning to make a real difference in many schools.

Even more significantly, a vision of cooperative behavior often touches teachers at a deep personal level because it reflects the dreams and aspirations that inspired them to enter the profession. Time after time over a 20-year period, I have asked teachers in my workshops to share the vision that motivated them to become teachers. When they begin to describe what their ideal or dream classroom would look like if they could teach the way they always wanted to, invariably they envision a classroom and curriculum similar to that discussed here. They have no difficulty imagining kids freely and cooperatively pursuing ideas, activities, projects, and questions of genuine interest to them.

Finally, a vision of global cooperation triggers a hope that lies deep within the human psyche — to live in a peaceful world in which everyone has enough and people can be free to pursue their own interests. While most teachers suspect that global cooperation is little more than a fantasy, they are willing to embrace it because they see the obvious correlation between the attitudes and behaviors being learned in cooperative classrooms and those necessary to make global cooperation a reality. In the absence of a cultural vision of this magnitude, the schools may be the best place to plant the seeds for a vision of global cooperation. Because children are by nature optimistic and because it is *their* future we are talking about, at least we can make certain they gain the knowledge and competencies necessary for participation and success in a global information society. In addition, it just may be that by prefiguring global cooperation in thousands of classrooms across our country, we are nurturing a vision of a possible future that will capture their imagination and energize them toward that end.

Since people only pursue long-term visions *because they want to* — I suggest that the first step in educational reform should be to invite teachers to "think big" and *create a vision of the future they desire.* In situations where teachers have been encouraged by superintendents or principals to create visions that reflect their deepest aspirations and dreams, they respond with the enthusiasm, passion, and commitment that can turn their dreams into reality precisely because they want to do it. Indeed, my informal surveys suggest that in many cases teachers would prefer having the freedom and support necessary to create their own ideal classrooms and schools than receive annual salary increments.

A Vision Must Relate to the Real World

While it is necessary that a vision for education reflect the dreams of teachers, it must also reflect the real world. Otherwise, it will be little more than fantasy. But educators cannot continue to think like the generals who, it is said, are always preparing for the last war. Because, as Margaret Mead observed, "young people face futures for which their parent's culture cannot prepare them," we cannot base a

long-term vision on present, short-term realities. The world of 2020 A.D., when today's students achieve positions of responsible leadership, will not look like today's world. In order to prepare these students to *create the future themselves*, we must exercise what James Botkin (1979) calls "anticipatory thinking" or what I call "systems thinking." Unless we can antici- pate what life may be like in the early decades of the next century, we cannot identify the kinds of knowl- edge and competencies that students will require to fully and creatively participate in the decisions that shape their lives. There are three arenas in which students must be prepared to participate. The first and most immediate is the marketplace.

Any discussion about education for life in the twenty-first century must begin with what is euphemistically called economic necessity. Students must acquire the knowledge and competencies to successfully compete in the marketplace — a mar- ketplace that has been literally transformed over the past century. Until World War II, the marketplace for most Americans was local. People found jobs where they lived. In part due to the Great Depression, but primarily because of wartime demands, the market- place became national with more and more people moving to where the jobs were. Today the market- place is global. And while most Americans will never actually work overseas, the global nature of the marketplace will shape the economy of every nation in the world in ways that as yet cannot be fully anticipated.

Robert Reich (1992) is probably correct when he identifies the symbolic analyst as the prototypical occupation for which many of the brightest and the best will compete. These will be the professional managers and technicians whose job will be "to iden- tify, solve, and broker problems" that may arise any- where in the world. Although Reich's implicit as- sumption is that there will be enough of these jobs for everyone who wants one, this clearly will not be the case. Since the majority of students will have neither the capability nor the inclination to become symbolic analysts, they will look for well-paying jobs in the more traditional occupations. However, if projec- tions are correct, these are often the very jobs that are being eliminated by downsizing or replaced by auto- mation. Given such limitations, the successful will be

those who are skilled at what Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) calls "learning along the way." They will have the ability to master new competencies quickly and adapt previously learned ones to new and often diverse circumstances. Many others will become self-employed entrepreneurs. A decade ago Peter Drucker (1985), probably America's foremost management authority, noted the emergence of a new entrepreneurial economy that was even then transforming American business, the American workforce, and American society. He predicted that this "middle tech" and "low tech" economy, based on "systemic innovation, entrepreneurial manage- ment, and entrepreneurial strategies," will continue to shape major sectors of the national economy in the foreseeable future. Ten years later, as the accuracy of his predictions suggests, it is possible to project an even greater impact of entrepreneurial activity on both the national but global marketplace in the dec- ades to come. In order to be prepared for such a role — and who at 18 or 22 knows if they will someday work for themselves — functional literacy for poten- tial entrepreneurs will include those skills necessary to be self-directed and work well alone or with oth- ers. These are, of course, the proficiencies that are essential for learning how to learn.

The second arena in which today's students must be prepared to actively participate is the social/po- litical. Just as economic necessity dictates that people work for their living, social necessity dictates that in a democracy unless they are willing to allow others to make decisions for them, people must participate responsibly in the decisions that shape their lives. Observing the increased apathy of the American electorate, the late historian Christopher Lasch (1995) argued that the greatest threat to democracy will come, not from military dictatorships, but rather from the new, elite class of scientific managers of whom Reich's symbolic analyst is the prototype. Al- ready, in the face of massive apathy and inertia, *by default* these professional managers and technicians are already making the political, economic, social, and environmental decisions that are shaping life in the global village — decisions that nations will not or cannot make for themselves. Lasch writes,

> Today it is the elites — those who control the international flow of money and information,

preside over philanthropic foundations and institutions of higher learning, manage the instruments of cultural production and thus set the terms of public debate — who … abandon the middle class, divide the nation, and betray the idea of a democracy for all America's citizens.

He argues that the only viable alternative to some form of benign global oligarchy is one Thomas Jefferson proposed two centuries ago.

> I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, *the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.* (emphasis added)

While thoughtful people may disagree about the extent of the danger facing democratic institutions, I think we would all agree that education for the twenty-first century must prepare students to embrace both the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship in order to participate fully and thoughtfully in the decisions that will shape their lives.

The rationale for a third arena of participation has already been established in the discussion above. Whether our children like it or not, they will be planetary citizens. Whether they are prepared or not, they will inherit a set of profound and seemingly intractable global dilemmas that, if allowed to continue unresolved, may destroy civilization as we know it. If they are not prepared to exercise the privileges and responsibilities of planetary citizenship, there already exists an elite class of technocrats prepared to address the multiple crises that will become full-blown in the next decade. The only alternative may well be some form of global cooperation based on democratic principles of self-governance. To accomplish this goal will require a fundamentally different way of thinking about ourselves and our relationship to the world — a way of thinking psychologist Roger Walsh calls a "global psychology" — the ability to think globally and act locally. Without negating the necessity for effective scientific management at both national and global levels, I am suggesting that *unless scientific management in all its myriad forms is shaped and driven by a powerful vision of an egalitarian form of global cooperation based on democratic principles of self-governance,* it will become a tool of absolute control by an elite class of technocrats

whose benign vision of "one world" is a global village held together by military and technological might — Orwell's *1984* twenty-five years later. To counter this, today's students must be prepared as adults to assume both the privileges and the responsibilities of global citizenship.

In light of these real-world necessities, our educational vision/mission must be one in which *teachers and students are working cooperatively to insure that every student who graduates is functionally literate, that is, they are prepared to respond deliberately and creatively to the demands of economic necessity, enlightened and informed social responsibility, and qualified planetary citizenship.*

In a generalized way, functional literacy includes flexibility, transferability of skills, proficiency in anticipating problems, an aptitude for knowing more with less information, the capacity to improvise by making decisions without enough information, a willingness to do more and be satisfied with less, tolerance for and the ability to work and live cooperatively in the midst of diversity, change, ambiguity, uncertainty, and paradox, a high level of self-direction and personal discipline, and skill in listening carefully, articulating clearly, and resolving conflicts peacefully. Finally, functional literacy must include the capacity to consciously and deliberately create personal and collective visions of desired futures and the competencies necessary to make those futures manifest. This is a tall order. But I would argue that functional literacy is, and always has been, the essentially innate capacity that has enabled humans to not only survive but thrive. If functional literacy is a desired outcome for our graduates, teachers must find ways to tap their own and their students' innate capacities, thus enabling students to acquire the intrinsically different and distinctive types of insight, knowledge, and skill competencies discussed below.

The Insights, Knowledge, and Skills Required for Functional Literacy

The primary insight for calling forth this innate potential is the intuitive understanding that we live in a universe where everything is connected to everything else. Fundamental to a global psychology, this insight is also the indispensable source and essence of personal empowerment. If everything is

connected to everything else, then each individual makes a difference because everything one does affects everything else. While for most of us this understanding will begin as an espoused theory, once it is transformed into a theory-in-use, thinking and acting in terms of connectedness will become second nature.

The core of common knowledge that unlocks our innate knowing is *an intrinsically different kind of knowledge* than the fact-based knowledge that has dominated education since its beginning. In a society "drowning in information and starved for knowledge," an educational system that stresses the *quantity* of information over the *quality* of information is woefully out of touch with reality.

The kind of knowledge necessary to become a lifelong learner is the kind that enables one to know more with less information. To return to Story Musgrave's analogy, while in the past education has focused on the trees, it must now focus on the "big picture ... of the entire forest as opposed to just seeing one tree at a time." This "big picture" knowledge highlights the whole rather than the parts. Like the picture of a jigsaw puzzle, it provides a context for understanding the structure and the relationships that enables one to see how the puzzle pieces fit together.

Every academic discipline is in essence a thought system with its own internal structure or conceptual framework. This structure consists of the concepts and principles that are essential to the discipline and the way it is organized. Once you have grasped this structure (the big picture), it is relatively simple to identify the specific relationships and detailed information that you wish to investigate or is relevant to your need. In short, with this systems perspective, *you know how to learn what you need to learn, when you need to learn it.*

This common core includes the knowledge of whole systems, knowledge of the principles that govern all living systems, intuitive knowledge, and contextual knowledge.

Knowledge of whole systems. Our understanding of how living systems work as undifferentiated wholes is based on studies in ecology. Because the planetary ecological systems are the most basic systems on Earth, they are the prototype for all systems. Indeed,

a case can be made that all living systems are intrinsically ecological systems.

Knowledge of the fundamental principles and concepts that govern all living systems. These principles and concepts provide the conceptual framework for understanding the connectedness of things. Because of their universal applicability to all thought systems, they are powerful cognitive bridges that make possible the transfer of learning from one arena to another.

Intuitive knowledge. Intuition is our way of tapping into the genetic knowledge and archetypal wisdom that characterize the human species. This capacity for direct knowledge of the world is the source of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity.

Contextual knowledge. This is the kind of knowledge that emerges from what Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) calls "peripheral vision" — the ability to recognize patterns and relationships. This knowledge of connections and correlations is the kind of knowledge that enables one to explore, understand, and create contexts of meaning.

The skill competencies necessary to become a lifelong learner are embedded in and activated by the integrative process I call systemic thinking/learning. These include competence in what are often referred to as the basics, self-reflection, communication and dialogue, and living responsibly.

The so-called basics: Reading, writing, math, and computer literacy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, both research and experience make it clear that success in the so-called basics is contingent upon having a "big picture" perspective. Just as children learn language and numbers experientially and contextually, when given an appropriate conceptual framework, people can readily master the details of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Self-reflective consciousness: Thinking about the way we think, the way we make decisions, and reflecting on the consequences of those decisions. Our ability to make conscious or thoughtful — full of thought — decisions is contingent upon the capacity to reflect upon our thought processes, feelings, and actions. Self-reflection includes the capacity for unbiased self-assessment and is essential to critical and creative thinking, indeed, to all of the so-called higher order thinking strategies. In addition, self-reflective consciousness includes the capacity for disciplined con-

templation, visualization, and imagination.

The fundamental human capacities for communication and dialogue, cooperation, conflict resolution, empathy, and artistic self-expression, e.g., through art, music, dance, drama, and storytelling. Humans are by nature social animals with the innate capacities necessary to live harmoniously in close association with other humans. These human potentials can only fully emerge when one is an integral part of a community of learners. Here one can learn to listen with open ears and see with open eyes. Here one can experience empathy. Only in community can one learn to speak directly, without dissemblance or ambiguity. When we are members of a learning community, we are free to express ourselves in whatever modes we choose, knowing that the community is enriched by our presence.

The capacity to live responsibly. Responsibility comes from a Latin root word meaning "to pledge or promise." This means that responsibility is a way of living in relationship. Responsibility is grounded in what might be called emotional literacy or personal integrity, that is, the integration of all of our relationships — to ourselves, to others, and to the great mystery of life.

Genuine responsibility can only be learned when one is free to make mistakes. Thus, it has little meaning apart from a community of learners where mistakes are understood to be integral to the learning process. Here, one learns to be accountable for one's own feelings, beliefs, values, learnings, decisions, and life choices. Here one can fully accept, honor, and celebrate one's humanness with all of its paradoxes, ambiguities, uncertainties, and inconsistencies. Because responsibility can be learned and expressed only in community, its ultimate expression is learning to live with and do for others as we would have them live with and do for us — the Golden Rule. In essence, to live responsibly means living a life of service to fellow humans and to all living things.

All of the above might be summarized in two well-known injunctions: "Know thyself" and "To thine own self be true." While at first glance the list of knowledge and competencies may appear idealistic, they have been part of the lives of women and men throughout history and are evident in the expe-rience of humans in every culture from prehistory to the present. They describe what Jean Houston calls "the possible human" and represent the *sine qua non* for our children and succeeding generations.

Whether they are prepared to do so or not, our children will create their own future. Their choices may well be between global cooperation or interminable armed conflict; between living productively in a world that honors human rights and community values or existing marginally in a world filled with greed, anger, crime, violence, and fear; between accepting the necessity to share scarce resources so that everyone has enough or facing the inevitable destiny of ecological catastrophe. Given these alternatives, every thoughtful person would choose the former. Just as future choices will be made by our children and their children, at this juncture in human history, the choice is ours to make. Although we prefer to deny it, to a significant extent *our children's future will depend on the future that we choose.* The great educational challenge is to adequately prepare the present generation of children to make wise decisions about their future.

Conclusion

Many men on the Western frontier taught themselves to read and write. Carrying dog-eared copies of the Bible, Blackstone, Dickens, and other nineteenth century classics, they learned to read by firelight and pondered what they had read as they rode herd in the stillness of the night. A few, without the help of any formal schooling, became competent teachers, ministers, lawyers, and politicians. This leads one to wonder how they were able to do this without the aid of teachers, textbooks, phonics, worksheets, or a grading system. It also raises the question of why people today can't seem to learn as naturally as men and women did a century ago before modern schools were invented.

I believe the answer is succinctly stated in the words of my middle son who on the night before he began school said to his mother, "You know mom, today was the last day of my life that I could do what I want to do when I want to do it." And so he went off to be educated — to be socialized — to be enculturated — to learn to be a productive citizen. And what did he learn? He learned that knowledge was

clearly divided into neatly labeled little boxes like science and math and history. He learned that life was ruled by clocks and bells. He learned that the rewards came when you listened to the teacher and memorized what she told him was important. He learned to raise his hand to ask questions, and that some questions — like "What is life all about?" aren't good questions to ask in school. He learned to tune out when things got tough.

And while, in spite of the system, my son "made it," many don't. And, ironically, the price of failure is paid not only by those who didn't make it, but also by our society that — believe it or not — seems bent on stamping out most of that enormous energy, curiosity, potential, and creativity that is the heritage and birthright of all children. The time has come to transform the educational system so that this generation of children and the next and the next are truly empowered to embrace an educational perspective that is contextual and to create a better and more humane world for themselves and for humankind.

References

Bateson, M. C. 1994. *Peripheral visions: Learning along the way.* New York: HarperCollins.

Botkin, J. et al. 1979. *No limits to learning: Bridging the human gap.* New York: Pergamon.

Boyer E., and D. Levine. n.d. *A quest for common learning.* Washington, DC: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Drucker, P. 1989. *The new realities.* New York: Harper and Row.

Hirsh, Jr., E. D. 1987. *Cultural literacy.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Lasch, C. 1995. *The revolt of the elites and the betrayal of democracy.* New York: Norton.

Reich, R. 1992. *The work of nations.* New York: Vintage.

Senge, P. 1990. *The fifth discipline.* New York: Doubleday Currency.

Whitehead, A. N. 1957. *The aims of education.* New York: Free Press.

International Journal of Children's Spirituality

EDITORS
Clive Erricker, *School of Religion and Theology, Chichester UK; and The Children and Worldviews Project, Chichester Institute of Higher Education, Chichester, UK*

Jane Erricker *King Alfred's College, Winchester, UK; and The Children and Worldviews Project, Chichester Institute of Higher Education, Chichester, UK*

International Journal of Children's Spirituality provides an international and multi-cultural forum for those involved in research and development of children's and young people's spirituality, within which this debate can be addressed and widened.

The editors believe a constructive and wide-ranging debate is necessary, involving educators, academics, religious communities, parents, local and national government and employers, and that this should take account of international perspectives and contributions from a broad range of subject disciplines.

- -

ORDER FORM
Please send a completed copy of this form, with the appropriate payment, to the address below.

Name   ....
Address   ....
               ....
               ....