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EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Editorial

Transforming The Way
We Think About Thinking

As editors, we have the opportunity to review many manuscripts submitted to ENCOUNTER. They range dramatically in their content and style, but together they constitute a cohesive body of interest. It is clear from our reading that ENCOUNTER is not a disciplinary journal or even one focused on a particular domain within education. We are not at the cutting edge in science or redefining history, literary criticism, or the educational landscape.

Rather, ENCOUNTER seems to be an expression both of dissatisfaction with materialism and reductionism and the longing for a deeper, more meaningful approach to teaching, learning, and human development. Despite the enormous developments in understanding human growth and development, the function of the brain, learning theory, intelligence theory, the nature of human understanding, modes and methods of teaching, curriculum development and assessment, it seems that our authors and even our readers often search for more.

The biological paradigm used to understand the human being and, particularly, human cognition has long since faded. The teachings of Skinner and other noted behaviorists continue to have their place in education but no longer dominate the way we understand human learning, thinking, or action. Beginning in the 1970s, a computation paradigm emerged and we began to think of human beings not in terms of particular behaviors but rather as computational systems with the brain acting as some sort of computer. Some authors suggested that our understanding of human cognition has evolved sufficiently to dismiss once and for all the notion that there may be a soul within us, a domain active within us beyond that which can be not only mimicked but expanded by computers. Others have gone so far as to say we are now entering the age of spiritual machines—a time when machines will develop reflective and self-directive capacities beyond human capacity.

This confusion—this computational model of human beings and spiritual model of machines—we believe is a product of longstanding, root cultural metaphors for human thinking. In short, we mistake human beings for machines and vice versa because our thinking itself is lifeless, dead. We are prone to think in concepts and to tie them neatly together, when possible, according to rules of logic and reason. We construct the world from abstractions and guide our thinking by rules just as do the machines we have created. But there is more to the human spirit. All of us, to some degree or another, long instead for inner experience. We tacitly but passionately wish to think not through abstractions but to be guided by the direct light of life experience itself. We long for connection rather than detachment; for imagination rather than ratiocination; for inner sustenance rather than executive power.

This is not to suggest that computational metaphors are wrong but simply that they are inadequate to understand human beings. We need more than concepts, suppositions. We need for our thinking to become alive.
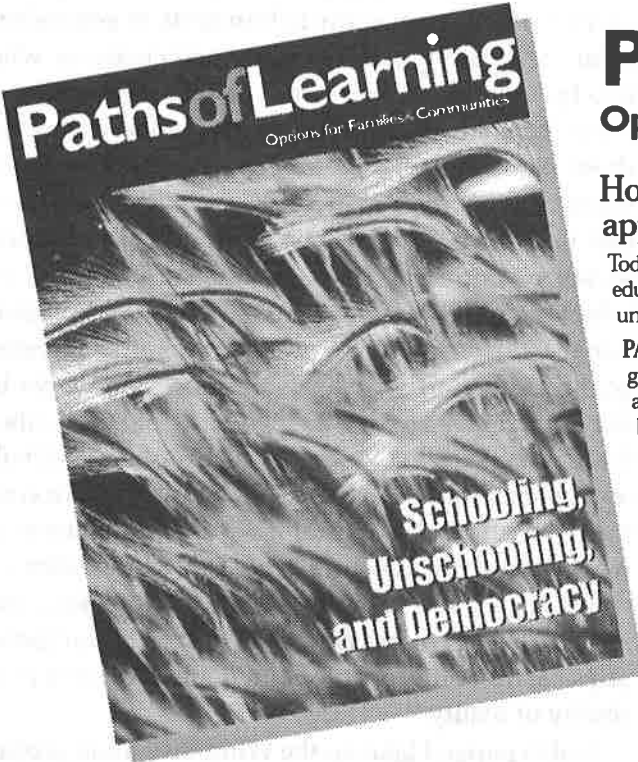
Herein lies ENCOUNTER's most central task and one it may never be able to fulfill. It must appeal to the intellect with rigor and clarity; yet it cannot be cold. It must speak with image and narrative as much as with word and rule, as much with passion and conviction as with uncompromised rigor. The point here is that the journal cannot be in a position of substituting one set of concepts for another. What is needed and what lies only as a glimmer of hope, is that

our journal speak from the heart to the heart. We are not in the business of educational innovation. We are concerned with a transformation of not what we think but the very way we experience thinking. If we analyze, disseminate, or otherwise promote holistic educational theories, policies, and practices, we have accomplished half our task and the lesser half at that. We seek writers who speak from their own inner experience and passion to provoke or stir similar experiences within our readers. It is simply not enough for intellect to speak to intellect; person must speak to person; the word spoken must resonate in both the author and the reader.

Of course, this is too much to ask, but we have little alternative if we are going to encourage education that satisfies us as human beings. We cannot speak of the sense of connection children might feel with world, the sense of responsibility that may unfold, the sense of purpose they may find even with struggle at some point in their adult lives without ourselves becoming alive. So it is that this journal has a unique task. It must respect all of the requirements of an academic journal and yet has the responsibility to transcend academics. As we think of what is needed in the future for this journal, and as you do the same, let us each reflect on our deepest longings. What is it that we most profoundly desire for ourselves and the children we teach? There is no doubt that the answer lies in the experience of knowledge.

—Jeffrey Kane and Dale Snauwaert

Challenge for Education
Learning to Value the World Intrinsically

Heesoon Bai

Since the ultimate source of instrumentalism and alienation is the dualistic consciousness, the only way out is the recovery of nondualistic consciousness. One approach is through *ch'i*'s focus on aesthetic apperception.

[T]he universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. (Thomas Berry)

The Path

In a celebrated passage in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1996, 103) states his view of philosophy: "What is your aim of philosophy?— To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." Although his remark was directed specifically at philosophers whom he likened to trapped flies in their metaphysical fly-bottles, it can apply to humanity in general insofar as we are linguistic-conceptual creatures who live by ontological "pictures" of what the world *is like* and what we *are like*,[1] all the while assuming these pictures to be the reality itself. This unconsciousness happens because we have internalized— that is, reified—these pictures through having been socialized into particular historical, sociocultural, intellectual, religious, and other personal and institutional contexts of situatedness. Moreover, as pictures go, some pictures of reality are more conducive to our living in harmony with the world and each other than others. So, for the sake of living in moral balance, we should choose those pictures that are conducive to this balance. But, if we are not aware that we are living by a picture of reality, the question of choosing a more morally viable picture does not arise in the first place. We are entrapped in our metaphysical fly-bottle, unable to imagine a different possibility of reality.

In this paper, I take up the Wittgensteinian project of showing ourselves a way out of the fly-bottle of a certain ontological picture of the world which, I shall argue, underlies our destructive treatment of the earth, as well as continuing inequities and exploitation in the world. The first part of my paper approaches the problematic ontology first through ex-

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posing the hegemony of instrumentalism. The analysis of instrumentalism reveals that its root belief and value system is rationalist anthropocentricism. I then trace the consolidation of rationalist anthropocentricism to the seventeenth century's ontological vision of the Mechanical Universe. I shall argue that this ontology has legitimated the duality of Mind and Matter, and then reduced Nature to the order of Matter, thereby authorizing humanity, whose essence is supposedly the Mind (the so-called "rational nature"), an absolute dominion over Nature. The consequence is the radical alienation of human presence from the natural world. Moreover, as I shall contend, this ontology is also implicated in the exploitive treatment of fellow human beings.

Moving beyond the terrain of understanding the problem, the second part of the paper addresses the question of practice, arguing that the key to breaking out of the mold of the problematic dualistic, mechanist ontology is the recovery of our capacity to value the world intrinsically through the cultivation of aesthetic consciousness. I contend that the aesthetic consciousness can restore a non-instrumentalist perception of the world, thereby healing the self's existential alienation from the world and establishing our consanguinity with it.

Thesis

Metaphysical realism[2] is a common affliction: People tend to believe that the way they perceive and relate to the world is the way the world *is*. Implicit in this view is the reasoning that there is a direct one-way causal relation between how the world is (that is, independent of our views of it) and the way we perceive and relate to it. I challenge this reasoning on the grounds of comparative ontology.[3] If the world we have in common brings out completely different perceptions and responses from different individuals (or peoples), then we have to suspect that different individuals or groups are interpreting the same world differently. Moreover, since interpretation is dependent on the conceptual framework,[4] we then have to account for the difference in our responses to the world in terms of the different interpretive frameworks we adopt.

Here is a case in point: According to the Haida Nations' traditional beliefs, trees are fellow beings who,

therefore, had to be treated with the same due respect that we normally pay to our fellow human beings. Thus: "[w]hen a Haida basket weaver collects bark for her craft, she asks the *consent* [italics added] of the cedar tree and sings its praises for having

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The aesthetic consciousness can restore a non-instrumentalist perception of the world, thereby healing the self's existential alienation from the world and establishing our consanguinity with it.

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made something as beautiful as bark" (Klassen 2000, 42).[5] Presumably, it may happen sometimes that the cedar tree that a crafter asks says "No" to the crafter's asking and then she would have to go to another tree. Or, it may even happen that for now she has to give up on the idea of making a basket altogether since no tree would consent to give the bark!

Contrast the above to our usual treatment of trees. While most of us may not deny a certain kind and degree of sentience to trees, we do not consider the kind and degree sufficient a reason to accord them something like the moral status of person[6] as the Haida do. To us, a tree is a "thing," a commodity, although living: We have no intrinsic regard for the tree's own "personal" mode of being.[7] Hence, we have no reservations about cutting down trees for our purposes, whether for Christmas trees, for lumber, or just to make a road, without considering their own well-being, let alone "consulting" them.

The above example illustrates the decisive contribution that a person's (culturally acquired) ontological interpretive framework makes to his or her perception and conduct. In other words, how we perceive the world and respond to it—that is, our moral orientation—is largely a function of our prior understanding of what the world is *like* and what we are *like* in relation to the world. Our perception and conduct are the enactment of our metaphysical notions about the self and the world. *Hence my thesis that on-*

tology entails ethics. A practical implication of this thesis is that if we want to change the way we act in this world, because we have found it to be damaging both to ourselves and to other beings, we have to change our ontology. But, as I shall address later, changing our ontology is not a matter of simply adopting a set of new beliefs.

Do we have reasons to believe that our own ways in the world are damaging? And what ontology underlies them? In the next section, I will briefly review the state of the world to reveal our ways as rampant instrumentalism. Following that, I will trace instrumentalism to rationalist anthropocentricism, and the latter, to the ontology of a Mechanical Universe.

Instrumentalism

We have entered the new millennium to a world of mounting environmental and social disintegration. Everywhere around us are symptoms of ecosystems and human communities suffering from stress and imbalance (Brown and Flavin 1999). To name a few notable distress signs: the serious depletion of aquifers and its consequence on world food scarcity; the phenomenal scale of deforestation[8]; global warming due to increased fossil fuel use and its impact on climatic change; the severity of air, water, land pollution; critical soil erosion and its impact on agricultural productivity; dwindling biodiversity; increasing hunger worldwide and increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. Moreover, consider the estimate that the affluent countries, 20% of the world's population, consume 80% of the world's resources (Harrison 1996, 50) and that "[i]f 7 billion humans were to consume as much energy and other resources as do today's industrialized countries, five planets Earth would be needed to satisfy everyone's needs" (p. 50). Or, to think in terms of social justice, consider the fact that "[w]hile the industrialized and rich countries have not paid for the ecological damage resulting from their activities, many of the consequences and their cost (e.g., global warming) will fall upon developing, poor countries" (p. 50) not to mention on future generations.

It is now an unequivocal recognition that economic growth as the organizing principle for societies around the world—the legacy of the western industrial development—and the resulting acquisitive and consumptive mode of existence are at the root of our environmental and social deterioration. Brown and Flavin's appraisal is widely shared:

> [T]he western industrial development model that has evolved over the last two centuries has raised living standards to undreamed-of levels for one fifth of humanity. It has provided a remarkably diverse diet, unprecedented levels of material consumption, and physical mobility that our ancestors could not have imagined. But the fossil-fuel-based, automobile-centered, throwaway economy that developed in the West is not a viable system for the world, or even for the West over the long term, because it is destroying its environmental support systems. (Brown and Flavin 1996, 15)

The throwaway economy is concerned principally with making profits, regardless of such concerns as whether the goods and services produced are inherently beneficial, whether their benefits are shared widely throughout the society, and whether these benefits outweigh detrimental effects of growth on the natural environment and other parts of society (Korten 1995). Under the universal ideal of profit-making, everything is viewed as resources for human consumption. Nothing is spared from being turned into a means to economic growth, which has been equated with the nation's "progress." The change in label from "personnel" to "human resources" is one of the more recent witnesses to the legitimation process of the view that everything, including human beings, is just a means to creating financial wealth. Economy subordinates all human activities to production and consumption. This economism is a supreme expression of instrumentalism. By all accounts, we live in an age of instrumentalism (Taylor 1991).

Instrumentalism is a mode of perception and interaction wherein entities are valued not for what they are in themselves but primarily or only for their utility to the self.[9] That is, we do not value the other for its own sake, as an end onto itself—as a subject. Thus we reduce the other to the status of an object. We call this objectivization, that is, turning the other into an object for the self. The flip side of this process is the corresponding subjectivization of ourselves with respect to the other: The self becomes the sub-

ject. Now, when an entity is objectivized, it is abstracted out of the total complexity of its *being* and is reduced to a material, function, feature, force, or any other single variable. For example, we say Johnny is a problem. How can a person in all his complexity of being be reduced to a problem? Another example: How can the land which is a biocommunity of countless life forms be a monetized property? Likewise, how can animals whom the many billion years of complex evolution equipped to live independently of us in their natural habitats be treated solely as our factory-farm products? Here, other beings are abstracted or disembedded out of their own totality of being. Thus reduced, they are then ready to assume a status of raw material, means, or abstract function for instrumental treatment.

Implicit in the subject-object relationship is value disparity: The subject embodies a higher value than its object. Thus, humanity embodies a higher value than the rest of the life forms; also, the folks in the "developed" nations have a better, higher life than the "primitive" folks in the "underdeveloped" nations. This value comparison signals normativity: The higher value is what we all ought to aspire to and work towards. Hence the notions of progress and development. If these notions signal social agenda, their private counterpart is the notion of "good life." All over the world, the North American image of good life characterized by conspicuous consumption and mobility is sold to the so-called developing and underdeveloped countries. Examples abound. Mothers in Third World countries who would otherwise breastfeed give baby formula to their newborns because that is what the women in developed countries do. The tragedy is that, lacking the developed countries' standard of hygiene, they are unable to sterilize their bottles properly and their babies face life-threatening infections. Another example: Countries whose streets are too crowded even for comfortable walking aspire to the North American lifestyle of owning and driving cars. Given the global entrenchment of this ideal of a good life, we (the folks in the "developed" nations) can hardly blame the "underdeveloped" nations for clamoring to copy our throwaway economy. The "developed" nations have successfully managed to convince others to adopt the "value program"[10] behind our throwaway econ-

omy, which include such values as growth, development, money, speed, efficiency, mobility, consumption, and convenience. And we take this success at converting others to our value program as a sure sign of its inherent superiority.

But the evaluation of success is criteria-specific. By what criteria are the instrumentalist claims of superiority and success supported? What is the ground of justification for such claims? I shall now turn to exploring what I will term "rationalist anthropocentricism," showing that instrumentalism has its justificatory source in this ideology.

Rationalist Anthropocentricism

Instrumentalism is a logical consequence of rationalist anthropocentricism, the belief that humans are placed at the top of the value pyramid presumably because of our superior intelligence or rationality. The figure of Kant looms large in this connection because his rationalist anthropocentricism has had a lasting major influence on moral thought to this day. Kant made a sharp distinction between intrinsic value ("kingdom of ends") and instrumental value ("kingdom of means"), rightly equating the former, but not the latter, with the moral point-of-view. To quote the famous moral dictum by Kant (1948, 96): "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." To view something morally is to view it intrinsically; that is, to value it for its own sake, as an end onto itself, as a subject.

Now, for Kant, to be sure, this intrinsic valuing is to be practiced with respect to humanity only because, according to him, only human beings are capable of "setting ends."

> Man has a duty of striving to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality and to realize ever more fully in himself the humanity by which *he alone is capable of setting ends*" (Kant 1964; emphasis added).

Kant identifies this capacity for setting ends as the "rational nature." We are obligated to treat beings with *moral* consideration only insofar as they possess this rational nature. Consequently, we have moral duties only to other human beings but not to animals or plants. This does not mean that Kant condones

abuse and cruelty to non-human beings. Kant, in fact, has argued that we should not harm animals but the reason is not because they have claims to our moral respect but because cruelty is unworthy of us, the rational beings (1963, 239-241).

But why should possession of the rational nature be the criterion for ascribing intrinsic value? Just because intrinsic valuing has to do with valuing something as an end itself, it does not follow from this that only the beings capable of rational determination of their *telos*—only human beings, according Kant—deserve our intrinsic valuing. Also, the assumption that only humans are capable of setting ends is highly contestable. Kant's argument here reflects the anthropocentric and rationalist bias of his time and culture, the bias from which we still massively suffer. This bias radically limits the possibility of our moral relationship with the larger world since we can only have a moral relationship proper (that is, the relationship of intrinsic valuing) with rational beings. Accordingly, with beings deemed to fall short of full rationality, we are justified to have merely instrumental relationships. The logical consequence of this way of thinking has been amply borne out in our increasing mass scale destruction of biotic communities throughout the world in the last two centuries.

The moral implication of the rationalist anthropocentricism is nowhere else more starkly revealed than in the current trend in species extinction. Under this ideology, we believe that, whether it is through God's ordination or the workings of evolution, humans are at the apex of the hierarchy of terrestrial lifeforms by virtue of our rationality or superior intelligence; hence, naturally (so we reason), we have the dominion over the "lower" lifeforms. The recent decades' holocaust of species extinction[11] is a logical consequence of this worldview.

Many have tried to dispel the commonly held misconceptions about evolution as ascension of lifeforms culminating in homo sapiens. For instance, Stephen Jay Gould, eminent paleontologist and authority on Darwinism, argues in *Full House* that it is variety, not the "upward" movement towards complexity, which is the meaning of the word "progress" in the context of evolution. Speaking in metaphor, Gould calls homo sapiens "a tiny twig, born just yesterday on an enormously arborescent tree of life"

(1996, 29). This humble image contrasts sharply with the more conventional image of evolution: the pyramid on whose apex stands "man," peerless and sublime. Notwithstanding the weight of expert opinions such as Gould's, many of us, including professional scientists, find it difficult to let go of the anthropocentric and hierachical worldview and the accompanying sense of self-importance and superiority. Our whole self-image or -identity is bound up with this view of ourselves as superior to other beings on the basis of our higher cognitive capacity.

The rationalist bias of anthropocentricism is not bad news only for "non-human" (note the anthropocentric label) beings; it also threatens the possibility of moral relationship with fellow human beings. For rationality as a cognitive capacity of the so-called "higher order" thinking—that is, symbolic representation and manipulation—is not uniformly distributed among human beings. Even if we take into consideration that standards of rationality change time to time, the fact remains that we always end up with the evaluation that some folks are less rational (less "intelligent," "smart," and so on) than others. Since, according to the Kantian logic, lack of rationality implies not deserving intrinsic valuing, we would be justified in our instrumental treatment of people deemed to fall below the given norms of rationality. (And, who sets the norm?) Indeed, consider the long history of oppression suffered by women, colored people, children, and others all on the basis of the alleged claims about these groups' falling short of full rationality. This is also how the so-called "underdeveloped" nations came to be the suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor for the provision of goods and services to the the so-called "developed" nations. Protests against such inequity and injustice have tended to take the form of showing that these marginalized and excluded groups were just as intelligent, or at least potentially so, as, say, white European males—the norm of rationality. Such rebuttal, however, does not challenge the very criterion of conferring moral perception and treatment, namely possession of rationality. For the possibility of more generous moral relationship with the world, including fellow human beings, the rationalist criterion is decisively a limiting condition. Whence does this criterion come?

In the next section, I argue that the rationalist anthropocentricism as the source of our superiority complex is predicated upon the historically constructed ontology of the Mechanical Universe, an ontology that reduces everything in the universe except the Mind to the order of dead matter.

The Mechanical Universe

Although anthropocentricism has been a perennial strand in human thought, as can be evidenced by Thales' famous remark about man being the measure of all things, it is to the genius of the seventeenth century that we owe the most decisive formulation of rationalist anthropocentricism. The seventeenth century marks a radical shift from a by and large animistic ontology and the accompanying "participatory consciousness" that pervaded the previous ages to the mechanical, rationalist ontology of modernity and its accompanying "objectivist consciousness." (More on these two types of consciousness later.) Crucial to this shift in ontology is the emergence of modern experimental science supported by the philosophical justification intent on stripping the universe of any principle or sense of animism, that is, the sense that the universe is alive. Of the triumvirate architects of modernity—Bacon, Descartes, and Locke—it is to Descartes that we owe the definitive argument for the mechanical universe. Descartes (1985, 224) argued that "[t]he nature of body consists not in weight, hardness, colour, or the like, but simply in extension." By extension, Descartes meant the property of "being extended in length, breadth and depth" (p. 224). The significance of this argument lies in its ethical implication that the material things are now seen as completely lacking in properties that are capable of affecting us sensuously. They merely occupy space! Nothing else. Indeed, Descartes goes on to argue that "[t]here is no real difference between space and corporeal substance" since "the extension constituting the nature of a body is exactly the same as that constituting the nature of a space" (1985, 227). He thus concludes: "The matter existing in the entire universe is thus one and the same, and it is always recognized as matter simply in virtue of its being extended" (p. 232). Having reduced the entire material universe to the order of nondescript, indifferent matter, his only account for the incredible phenomenality is that "[a]ll the variety in matter, all the diversity of its force, depends on motion" (p. 232).

Let us consider how Descartes's reductionism would change our relationship with the world. If material beings of our world have no properties other than being extended, then we would be mistaken in our previously held belief that they have the power to affect us sensuously and emotionally. In other words, according to the Cartesian reductionism, perception is not a matter of sympathy, resonation, or communion between the perceiver and the perceived. Cartesian perception is no more than the complex mechanism of lights impacting and exciting nerve cells. Any affective qualities that are adjunct to this mechanical process are mentalistic epiphenomena which are best accounted for in terms of the perceiver's cognitive ability to attach symbolic significance to perception. If we are moved at all by what we see, the credit goes not to the perceived at all but to ourselves, that is, to our well-furnished Mind.

I am not here criticizing the scientific validity of the Cartesian account of matter and perception. In fact, we may even grant that, *at the level of physics and chemistry,* all that we have is indeed matter in motion or some other physicalist description. But it is the reductionism, the exclusivity, and hegemony of physicalist explanations that are problematic. Cartesian reductionism leaves no room to think of perception as *also* the perceiver's participation in the perceived, that is, as a communion, a transfusion, between them. Both Berman (1981) and Skolimowski (1994) refer to this sort of perceptual consciousness as participatory mind. With the Cartesian ontology, the sympathetic bond that ties the perceiver and the world is irrevocably cut, and the two do not come together except as a mechanical process of perception. The world, thus bereft of our participation, stands "out there," in ready submission to be manipulated and violated as mere objects, "stuffs," and resources. Stripped of the animating power that makes a being its own subject, the world is a collection of objects.

Thomas Berry (1996, 410) gives us this dramatic account of the Cartesian legacy of the Mechanical Universe:

> The devastation of the planet can be seen as a direct consequence of a loss of this capacity for

human presence to the nonhuman world. This reached its most decisive moment in the seventeenth-century proposal of Rene Descartes that the universe is composed simply of "mind and mechanism." In this single stroke [Descartes], in a sense, killed the planet and all its living crea-

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The moral implication of rationalist anthropocentricism is nowhere else more starkly revealed than in the current trend in species extinction.

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tures with the exception of the human. The thousandfold voices of the natural world suddenly became inaudible to the human. The mountains and rivers and the wind and the sea all became mute insofar as humans were concerned. The forests were no longer the abode of an infinite number of spirit presences but were simply so many board feet of lumber to be "harvested" as objects to be used for human benefit. Animals were no longer the companions of humans in the single community of existence. They were denied not only their inherent dignity, but even their rights to habitat.[12]

That we feel superior to other beings is a direct result of our seeing them as belonging to a domain of mere matter and objects. That we dominate and exploit the world is a logical consequence of this perception. Before we could propose to conquer and manipulate Nature—as Francis Bacon persuaded his contemporaries—we first had to reduce it to the order of matter. Such was Descartes's philosophical contribution.

In the next section I shall reflect on the psychic consequence of embracing the ontology of the Mechanical Universe. With this discussion, I will bring my argument full-circle back to my earlier observations about the connection between instrumentalism and consumerism.

Alienation

The Cartesian self as the possessor of Mind or Reason stands absolutely alone in the center of the immense Mechanical Universe—"a senseless, impersonal aggregate of matter in motion" (Kohák 1984, 211) whose intricate workings may perhaps provoke awe but not a sense of belonging and kinship. In this ontology the universe is an absolute Other to the self. Since there is no sense of consanguinity and communion between *I* as a person and the depersonalized world of objects, my foremost sense of being in the world is alienation. Now, alienation is not just a private emotion that we suffer inwardly and has no moral impact on the world. On the contrary, it has grave moral consequences. Loy (1996, 107) states:

> As long as we experience ourselves as alienated from the world and understand society as a set of separate selves, the world is devalued into a field-of-play wherein we compete to full-fill ourselves.

Alienation is a state of existential lack which relentlessly drives one to fill oneself by taking possession of the world. In this understanding, domination and possession are the result of alienation. Alienation creates a radical hunger for the world. This is the root of our century's manic consumerism. To quote Fromm (1976, 27): "The attitude inherent in consumerism is that of swallowing the whole world. The consumer is the eternal suckling crying for the bottle." He goes on to state:

> [T]o consume is one form of having, and perhaps the most important one for today's affluent industrial societies.... Modern consumers may identify themselves by the formula: *I am = what I have and what I consume.* (p. 27)

But, it is an insatiable hunger that can never be relieved by any amount of possession and consumption.

The existential lack that Loy speaks of or Fromm's radical hunger for the world is at root the problem of the dualistic consciousness wherein the self, the subject "in here," externalizes the world, the object, seeing it as an Other, "out over there," entirely separate and categorically different from itself. This is existential alienation. Since its source is the dualistic consciousness, the way out of alienation is to recover the nondual consciousness. Any other ways of overcom-

ing alienation while remaining a dualistic consciousness are bound to fail, sooner or later. Loy (1996, 170) explains: "The basic difficulty is that insofar as I feel separate (i.e., an autonomous, self-existing consciousness), I also feel uncomfortable, because an illusory sense of separateness is inevitably insecure." All our ways of securing the self as the subject in the objectivized world are like pouring water into a bottomless pit. *Stop pouring the water; discover that what we thought was a bottomless pit is really a deep well filled with water already.* Translation: Stop seeing ourselves as self-existing, self-contained, autonomous, and separate from the world; realize that we *are* the world. Loy (1996, 176) again:

> ...I can discover that I have always been grounded, not as a self-contained being but as one manifestation of a web of relationships which encompasses everything. This solves the problem of desire by transforming it. As long as we are driven by *lack*, every desire becomes a sticky attachment that tries to fill up a bottomless pit."

In suggesting the above transformation of consciousness, I do not minimize the difficulty involved. It seems we have nothing less than the weight of the human evolution to struggle against. Loy's assessment of the prospect (n.d., 155) is both cautious and encouraging:

> The evolution of homo sapiens into self-consciousness alienated the human species from the rest of the world, which became objectified for us as we became subjects looking out at it. This original sin is passed down to every generation as the linguistically-conditioned and socially-maintained delusion that each of us is a consciousness existing separately from the world. Yet if this is a conditioning, it raises the possibility of a deconditioning, or a reconditioning.

Conditioning by definition "rules out thought beyond it," as McMurtry has said. Before we can convince people to try a course of deconditioning, we have to persuade them to even try imagining a different possibility. Imagine a nondualist ontology. But this may be so challenging that our imagination draws a blank: It could use a little stimulation. In the next section, I shall introduce as a stimulant the example of the Chinese *ch'i* ontology.[13] This ontology

has made a commitment to nonduality of self/other, subject/object, and mind/matter. I am particularly interested in the *ch'i* philosophy because of its suggestion that aesthetic apperception, the essence of the contemplative mode of being, is a way to cultivating nondual consciousness.

Ch'i

Ch'i, usually translated as "vital energy," is considered in classical Chinese thought as the basic "stuff" of the cosmos, common to all that exists. Moreover, *ch'i* is psychophysical, meaning that it is both spiritual (mental) and material. The meaning of "both" here is not a conjunction of two categorically separate substances, which would be dualism, but the negation of dualism. As Wei-ming (1989, 69) notes, it is not that the Chinese thinkers were unable to analytically distinguish spirit or mind from matter. Rather, they refused to "abandon a mode of thought that synthesizes spirit and matter as an undifferentiated whole." This refusal was their moral choice: To embrace dualism would lead to existential alienation.

The *ch'i* ontology with its understanding of *ch'i* as psychophysical "stuff" that permeates humans and nonhumans alike would naturally lead to the sense of "continuity of being," and therefore kinship with "the ten thousand things," to borrow the Chinese expression for the phenomenal world. Humans are not radically separate from other beings, such as rocks and trees; for all beings, that is, all that exist, are "modalities of energy-matter (*ch'i*)" (Wei-ming 1989, 72). Thus, the following statement of the Taoist philosopher Chang Tsai (1020–1077) is more than just a figure of speech but expresses exactly how he felt about his relationship with this phenomenal world: "Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst.... all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions" (Wei-ming 1989, 73-74). We cannot get a more direct and concrete statement of our consanguinity with the world than this.

All beings, whether vegetative, mineral, or animalistic, insofar as they are formed of and partake in the dynamic flow of *ch'i*, are animated, therefore, alive. If so, there is not a "thing" that is not alive in

this cosmos. In fact, there are no *things*, that is, *objects*, in the universe. I note here how this view converges with Thomas Berry's (1996, 410): "[T]he universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects." Communion presupposes a possibility of sympathetic resonance among beings, which in turn requires an ontology, such as the *ch'i* philosophy, that sees no categorical separation, therefore essential barrier, between different beings. The moral import of sympathetic resonance as our primary mode of interaction with other beings is that it is less likely to lead us down the path of control, mastery, and domination—the modernist paradigm in which we have been entrapped.

The *ch'i* ontology does not deny that we are endowed with superbly developed reason or intellect. But there is no privileging of the latter. Given this ontology's commitment to a moral view of the cosmos wherein all beings are consanguineous and support each other, what is, in fact, privileged as an especial human endowment is this capacity for empathically perceiving and sensing the animate, dynamic *ch'i* shared by all beings. I find the passage from Ch'eng Hao (1032–1085) especially lucid and useful for my purpose of drawing out an ethical implication of the *ch'i* ontology:

> A book on medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of humanity (*pu-jen*). This is an excellent description. The man of humanity regards heaven and earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity? If things are not part of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force (*ch'i*) no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self. (Wei-ming 1989, 75-76)

The dualist (of both the objectivist and the subjectivist varieties) who looks out at the world as an Other, categorically separate from the self, is enormously restricted (above: crippled and paralyzed) in his scope and degree of sentience, for his sentience is basically limited to his own atomistic self, often coinciding more or less with his physical body at whose epidermal boundary the self ends and the world of otherness begins. Given this ontology, the rest of the vast world is often more or less a dead, indifferent, irrelevant, or at the most, usable matter to him. If we subscribe to this ontology, is it any wonder that we would not feel much kinship with other beings, whether human or non-human, with whom we share the earth?

The kind of axiology that goes with the dualist ontology is, naturally, instrumentalism. Values of other beings are never intrinsic but *only* instrumental. Other beings are valued only to the extent that they serve and satisfy our needs: This is the mindset of exploitation. Even the enjoyment we seek is, more often than not, obtained in this exploitive manner by reducing the other merely or predominantly as a means to our pleasure. The name for this mode of pleasure is entertainment. In contrast, the *ch'i* metaphysics gives rise to a different basis of enjoyment: *resonance, attunement,* or *communion.* These intersubjective modes are the basis of the aesthetic sensibility necessary for contemplative appreciation. Again I quote Wei-ming (p. 77) who offers a definitive statement on classical Chinese aesthetics:

> To see nature [or any perceptual "object"] as an external object out there is to create an artificial barrier which obstructs our true vision and undermines our human capacity to experience nature from within. The internal resonance of the vital force is such that the mind, as the most refined and subtle *ch'i* of the human body, is constantly in sympathetic accord with the myriad things in nature. The function of "affect and response" (*kan-ying*) characterizes nature as a great harmony and so informs the mind. The mind forms a union with nature by extending itself metonymically. Its aesthetic appreciation of nature is neither an appropriation of the object by the subject nor an imposition of the subject on the object, but the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation.

This particular characterization of aesthetic apperception or consciousness, namely its essential connection to nonduality, gives us a strong clue as to where we may look for the learning of intrinsic valuing: in the contemplative mode of being. In the following penultimate section, I investigate this possi-

bility through an example of Frederick Franck's zen practice of drawing.

Technologies of Contemplative Consciousness

Any sustained practice conditions and forms a particular mode of consciousness, or if you like, a way of seeing and being in the world. I shall adopt Foucault's handy term "technologies of the self" to denote such practices that the self can undertake:

> [T]echnologies of the self ... permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." (Foucault 1988, 18)

The specific state we seek after, however, is nonduality, and the particular way of relating to the world, intrinsic valuing. Since what we are interested in is not just knowing the various possible technologies but understanding just how these work, I shall again look at a particular example with the aim of gleaning some general principles.

For Frederick Franck, drawing is a transformative technology whereby the usual tendency to *look at* the world as a collection of objects gives way to *seeing* the world nondually. But just how is the transformation achieved? What is the key to this practice? Succinctly put, it is intense, total, and sustained attention. Such attention disrupts the usual pattern recognition at which we are amazingly efficient. For example, one quick glance is enough to identify something as a forest. After such identification, either we move on to thinking of something else, say the next paycheck, or we engage in a discursive thinking about the forest, say, how much lumber there is. In either case, what does not happen is a sustained contemplation on the object, the kind of sensuous dwelling in the perceived that would enable one to get to know the other intimately. Franck (1963, 109) illustrates well the difference between looking as identification and seeing as in-dwelling: "Driving through the redwoods of California I see 'timber,' until I stop and sit down in front of one tree and start drawing it, with or without pen or paper."

Thus the first act we have to accomplish in learning to see is to stop. We have to stop the usual rushing around with discursive labeling and calculative chattering. Without this stop, we cannot achieve enough inner silence, that is, freedom from the fracturing commotion of the discursive mind, to undertake a sustained attending to the other. The act of drawing in Franck's practice is one way to distill and sustain attention.[14] Note that drawing as a technology of the self does not aim at a particular artistic product: Beautiful or realistic or other manner of drawings are not the point. One knows when the drawing is going well by self-checking the quality of concentration and engagement: how focused and quiet one's mind is and how intensely one's attention is engaged by the perceived. Franck states (1963, 38):

> The bad drawings happen when, as I start to draw, the world remains closed to me. I am a mere onlooker, "He is Italian," "She looks ridiculous," goes through my head.... As long as I recognize objects and name them, I am impotent. There is no greater contrast than between recognizing and seeing. Drawing is, before all else, seeing.

When we direct such an intense attention to the "object" of our face-to-face encounter, there occurs this singular experience of the "subject" and the "object," the self and the other coming together, co-present and co-emergent. Again, here is Franck (1993, 6): "Every dot, every line on the paper had gone through my whole organism. I was no longer the onlooker.... Drawing the landscape, I 'became' that landscape, felt unseparated from it." It is as though, finally, the two arbitrarily separated parts—the perceiver and the perceived—of one whole come together to belong to each other. This is healing and end of alienation. As a result, a tremendous sense of aliveness is released: The world is alive, and one feels its pulse and rhythm within oneself. One comes to dwell once again in an animated universe in which all beings are consanguineous with oneself. Whether one calls it the work of *ch'i* or some other force, it really does not matter. It is the quality of experience that matters. Here is Franck again commenting on this sense of animated universe:

One day I was drawing a cow in a meadow near our house. As I stood drawing, our eyes met, and at that instant she stopped being "a cow." She became this singular fellow being whose warm breath mixed with my own in the cold fall air." (1993, 15)

Of course, drawing is not the only "technology of consciousness" capable of delivering us to nondual experiences. All contemplative endeavours requiring a sustained, total, selfless attention, whether found in arts, sciences, or other endeavors, can be such technologies insofar as they yield the nonduality of the subject and the object. However, I would like to emphasize the word "sciences" just because our conventional way of thinking of sciences entrenches dualism between subject (the scientist) and object (the world). But there is no *a priori* reason why scientists cannot experience nonduality with respect to the objects they are working with.

Nobel laureate Barbara MaClintock is a good example. Here are her own words describing her indwelling experience:

> I found that the more I worked with [maize chromosomes under the microscope] the bigger and bigger [they] got, and when I was really working with them I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system.... It surprised me because I actually felt as if I were right down there and these were my friends. (Quoted in Dash 1991, 86)

She said the same about her cornfield:

> No two plants are exactly alike. They're all different, and as a consequence, you have to know that difference.... I start with the seedling, and I don't want to leave it. I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along. So I know every plant in the field. I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them. (Quoted in Dash 1991, 85)

It is up to each individual to discover particular "arts" congenial to her being and can take her most deeply into the experience of nonduality. Franck (1993, 25) affirms this understanding:

> I learned that every art has its mystery, its spiritual rhythm, its *myo* in Japanese. The *myo* is intimately related to all the arts. The true artist, the artist-within, is the one who is really moved by the *myo*, the as-is-ness of things, of their intrinsic, unhallowed sacredness.

For some, it may be pottery; for others, poetry. From *zazen* (sitting meditation) to scientific observations, the art that disciplines the mind-body-heart to alter one's perception of the world, from that of alienation, duality, and instrumentalism to that of co-emergence, participation, and intrinsic valuing, are suitable pedagogical tools for an education devoted to rediscovering our sacred bond to the world.

Arriving

Ours are nations addicted to action and production. We measure progress by how much we produce and consume; consequently, how much we alter the world. This is the instrumentalist orientation—the "having" mode. The opposite is the intrinsic orientation, the "being" mode, wherein we enter into a sustained contemplation and intrinsic appreciation of the phenomenal world. Obviously, we cannot live solely in one orientation. We need both but in balance. By all accounts, this balance has been broken in the present regime of instrumentalism. We need to regain this balance by recovering the intrinsic orientation. Essential to this orientation is the aesthetic sensibility: the ability to dwell in the sustained contemplation of the phenomenal world and to experience the fullness of Being. Lacking this aesthetic sensibility, we are unable to "metabolize" the infinitely rich nutrients of Life in this phenomenal world. We work harder than ever, produce and consume more than ever, and yet we feel evermore psychically empty and starved. This problematic situation is analogous to the metabolic disorder where the afflicted is hungry all the time, is addicted to food, and eats ravenously, but is unable to derive proper nourishment. As a treatment for our existential metabolic disorder, I have suggested the cultivation of contemplative, aesthetic consciousness. I am convinced that the more we can dwell in the contemplative/aesthetic mode of being, the less damage we will incur to the world through hyperactivity and hyper-production/consumption. "Do less and be more" should be our motto.

In closing, I would like to share the first stanza of a poem by Daisaku Ikeda. The other day on campus where I teach, I chanced upon an exhibit of Ikeda's

"Photo Essays" which was accompanied by a few poems of his own. What I have been calling the contemplative, aesthetic consciousness, Ikeda calls the "poetic mind."

> Poetry is the spiritual bond
> That links humanity, society, and the universe.
> The gaze of the poet is directed at the heart;
> He sees things as more than mere objects.
> At times the poet converses with the trees and the
>   grasses,
> Talks with stars, greets the sun, and befriends
>   all beings.
> In these he sees life and breathes life into them,
> Finding in the changing phenomena of the world
> The unchanging principles of the universe.

Notes

1. Traditionally, ontology is defined as a study of what there is or exists. But, since I don't subscribe to the objectivist epistemology and hence don't think of what-there-is as a question apart from our interpretive conceptual frameworks, for me, ontology comes to mean a study of different conceptual "pictures" of the world, that is, what the world *is like*. At the same time, I am not committed to the view that denies experience (or even, existence) of reality outside our conceptual, interpretive frameworks—a position pertaining to the subjectivist epistemology. Subscribing to neither the objectivist nor the subjectivist epistemology, and charting the middle course, I claim that we can experience reality outside language (read: conceptual pictures), and I theoretically base my claim in the Buddhist psychology of nondual perception. This discussion, however, is outside the scope of the present paper. See David Loy (1988).

2. There are other better known designators for "metaphysical realism," such as "direct realism," or "naïve realism." (Obviously, the latter is a scornful labeling.) I prefer "metaphysical realism" because it highlights my earlier point that this view, too, is an ontological theory.

3. For those interested in exploring the complex epistemological grounds for contesting realism, I recommend readings in enactivist theory of cognition, for example: Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Elenor Rosch (1991). Enactivism radically challenges the traditional notion of cognition as recovery and representation by the human mind of the pregiven information inherent in the world.

4. This understanding has by now become an intellectual commonsense. But we owe its early articulation to such thinkers as Norwood Russell Hanson (1958) and Owen Barfield (1965).

5. This information comes from a Haida basket weaver whose words were recorded by Linda Klassen (2000) during her seminar participation in a course that took place on the Queen Charlotte Islands, B. C., Canada, in the summer of 1998.

6. For the reader interested in the historical evolution of the concept of personhood, I refer to a study by Marcel Mauss (1985). The key point from Mauss's study is the notion that "person" is a moral category. Persons, thus, deserve to be treated not as mere means or tools but with due respect for their own ends. It is this understanding that prompted me to characterize the Haida's perception of trees as "persons."

7. I am deeply influenced by Kohák's (1984) eloquent and passionate argument that we recover the moral sense of Nature by adopting the philosophy of personalism.

8. Forests are the "lungs" for the biosphere. The health of forests is one of the best measures of the health of the whole Earth. But consider the estimate that almost half the forests that once covered the Earth are lost, and of these, less than half are ecologically intact, natural forests.

9. A point of clarification: Instrumentalism refers to the hegemony of instrumental values or valuing. If one objects to instrumentalism, what one objects to is not our valuing something instrumentally at all, but the predominance of instrumental valuing which makes us forget and lose the capacity to value intrinsically. I fully recognize that things and beings have instrumental values to each other, and that in order for us to survive, we rely on each others' instrumental values. Now, the fact that an entity has an instrumental value does not necessarily preclude that it has any intrinsic values. We can attribute both the instrumental and intrinsic values to an entity. Moreover, out of moral consideration, we can prioritize the intrinsic value over the instrumental value in our relationship with things/beings.

10. This is John McMurtry's (1998, 15) term: "A value system or ethic becomes a program when its assumed structure of worth rules out thought beyond it."

11. Tuxill (1999, 97) states that "the natural or 'background' rate of extinction appears to be from 1 to 10 species a year. By contrast, scientists estimate that extinction rates have accelerated this century to at least 1,000 species per year. These numbers indicate we now live in a time of mass extinction—a global evolutionary upheaval in the diversity and composition of life on Earth."

12. In truth, "[t]he dualism of mind and body was the product of several centuries of intellectual development, the progress of science and the newfound respect for individual autonomy" (Solomon and Higgins 1996, 185).

13. Please note that I am neither prescribing this ontology nor holding it up as a scientific theory. My interest in the *ch'i* ontology is for edification purposes in this paper.

14. In zen practice, traditionally this distilling and sustaining of attention is accomplished through the sitting practice, *zazen*. It is interesting to note that the revered Zen Master, Abbot Kobori Nanrei in Kyoto, confirmed Franck's drawing practice as his authentic zen practice in lieu of *zazen*.

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Matthew Fox's Four *Vias* in Holocaust Education for Teachers

An Integrated Curriculum of the Spirit

Donna Glee Williams

Many teachers experience life-changing renewal by intensively studying the Holocaust through the prism of Fox's four *vias*.

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When I tell people I direct a Holocaust education program for teachers, there is a moment of social awkwardness. Some people literally cringe. Others fumble for something politely supportive to say. Many wonder aloud why people would expose themselves to something so "depressing." People want to know why teachers, who are already dealing with so many painful and difficult issues, would want to put themselves through the ordeal of an intense week-long seminar on the Holocaust.

What can I say to this? There are many motivations drawing people into the study of the Holocaust: the drama of tragedy; the existential riddles posed; the titillation of horror; the excitement of war and heroism; family connection to the war or genocide; sadomasochistic interest in pain and powerlessness; the desire to know the worst, to face the Shadow; interest in Jewish history; identification with the victims—many cloudy personal tics and tendencies cause people to study this material.

Some would say that even the motivation of seeking to learn lessons from the Holocaust is in itself not ethical. The tragedy of the Holocaust, the loss of life and culture and possibilities that occurred, is so obscene that it would be a further obscenity to benefit from it, even to benefit by learning lessons that might prevent future atrocities.

But what would happen to a world that forgets the Holocaust? What would happen to a world that pretends to itself that mass exterminations and extinction are unimaginable? Without our knowledge of the darkest possibilities, where would we find the energy and creative imagination to see us through

the next crisis of humanity? Many philosophers, risk-taking adventurers, and cancer and AIDS patients have noted that our awareness of death summons our energy to live fully and deeply. This may be as true for cultures as it is for individuals. Brian Swimme, the cosmologist and author, writes:

> What is especially exciting about our own time is the vision of the death of the species, and of the planet as a whole. Frightening, terrible, horrible, yes, certainly. But this is exactly what has the power to ignite the deepest riches within us. We can no longer live within the previous world-picture. We know that we have to do something, create and change in the essential dimension of things. The terrifying vision of an Earth gone black is psychic food for the human species. It brings us the energy that we need to re-invent ourselves. (1988, 118)

To the well-armored Western imagination, the Holocaust says, "Sometimes the end comes." We are going to need to know this in the coming years. We are going to need this awareness in order to see the signs of imminent planetary disaster (nuclear or environmental) with clear eyes, without telling ourselves, "Things like that just don't happen, and they certainly don't happen to me." If the Earth sends us communications marked "Urgent," we have to be able to read. The Holocaust teaches our imaginations the alphabet of catastrophe.

And so we study the Holocaust. My part of that work is to direct the Holocaust Education Program at The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, a renewal center for public school teachers. In this role, I plan intensive week-long learning experiences to prepare educators to teach about the subject. As I have led them year in and year out, I have observed that these seminars that are superficially about history give teachers more than information. Teachers leave the week with a sense of purpose, of connection to a Great Work, of commitment to life and to teaching. In essence, they have a spiritual experience of education.

Why does this happen? The content of the seminar is not explicitly uplifting or spiritual. Why does studying one of the darkest episodes in human history leave many teachers fiercely, even joyfully, energized to return to their classrooms? How does the spiritual dimension emerge in a prosaic, non-religious educational effort?

Spirituality in education—The calls for it come from many voices, ranging from the religious right's demands for ritual prayer[1] in schools to Parker Palmer's gentle entreaties to readmit the soul to the classroom. The cries against it come in the name of separation of church and state, a value closely bound up with the birth of American-style democracy. As a nation built of people from many different traditions, the United States has been forced to find ways in which a heterogeneous population can live and work together. The separation of church and state affirmed by the First Amendment prevents the power and weight of the government from coming down on the side of one particular set of beliefs to the detriment of another, but has had the unintended side effect of "dispiriting" public education and public life in general.

The quiet—and not so quiet—desperation of our culture tells us that education without spirit is not satisfying our hunger for meaning. The rising environmental crisis, with planetary catastrophe becoming visible just beyond the horizon, suggests that we urgently need to seek insight from all the world's wisdom traditions, not just our own single perspective. The tightening net of globalization means that the heterogeneous population that must now learn to live and work together is no longer limited to the residents inside one set of borders. The whole world has become our community.

For these and other reasons, it has become important to find ways to open non-coercive spiritual space in our public life and public education. But if this space plays favorites we will drum it out of our schools and government as unfair and dangerous—public spiritual space needs to be inclusive. The word "ecumenical" needs to mean more than working together on occasional uncontroversial charities and learning just enough to avoid major religious *faux pas*. The concept of "deep ecumenism" has emerged to refer to this openness to sharing more than social causes and information.

Deep ecumenism explores the assumption that there is a fundamental spiritual unity at the root of the lush diversity of religious traditions. Like the blind men and the elephant, the different traditions

are grasping different parts of this underlying unity and can tell each other interesting and useful things about it—if we can learn to communicate across our differences. This communication requires us to develop a new language. We need a vocabulary for spiritual experience that does not privilege one tradition and disrespect another, that does not trigger reflexive defenses based on old memories of oppression and prejudice, and that does not ask people to lean too far out from their spiritual center in order to be part of the conversation. Such a language would enable us to discuss spiritual matters in public schools in an articulate and substantial way, without high-handedly promoting particular beliefs.

Matthew Fox

Matthew Fox and other thinkers who are cultivating the field of deep ecumenism have laid the foundations for such a language. Building on classical traditions of Catholic mysticism, Fox has offered a vocabulary for a cross-cultural understanding of the spiritual life as four movements in a swirling dance: the *via negativa* (the way of darkness, emptiness, and silence), the *via positiva* (the way of appreciation and celebration), the *via transformativa* (the way of justice and compassion), and the *via creativa* (the way of creativity). Even though it springs from the well of early Christian mysticism, Fox's terminology has proven widely useable describing spiritual experience across many traditions: At his University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland, respectful teaching and learning flows in all directions between Christians, Hindus, Jews, Pagans, Sufis, Wiccans, and all styles of self-directed spiritual seekers. His conceptual "score" for the four-part harmony of the spirit can also help to clarify the mysterious spiritual renewal that comes with Holocaust education.

When we consider it through the lens of Fox's nomenclature, we can see that Holocaust education provides teachers with an educational experience that moves along all four of the spiritual paths. Teachers face the darkness of despair and the silence of unanswered questions. They celebrate the lives of survivors, their own power as teachers, and the ordinary blessings of life. They feel moved towards compassion and justice. They create new realities to embody their vision. Is it possible that by interweaving

the *via negativa*, the *via positiva*, the *via transformativa*, and the *via creativa* in a single educational experience, we are somehow offering a synergistic whole, a sort of integrated curriculum of the spirit?

Via Negativa

If we use Fox's vocabulary to speak about Holocaust education, perhaps the most obvious of the spiritual compass points is the *via negativa*. In his book *Original Blessing* (1983), Fox describes the tone of the *via negativa* using phrases like "letting pain be pain" and "letting silence be silence." Studying the Holocaust sets a person's feet on the *via negativa*, the dark path, in two ways. First, it requires a person to be willing to entertain consciousness of cruelty, suffering, and death. Second, it takes a person into the silence of unknowing in the face of the great questions.

Anyone who voluntarily consents to learn about the Holocaust is, in the act, consenting to a ministry of accompaniment that can bring no relief to the suffering they witness. Walled off by the passage of half a century, the events of the Holocaust are impervious to our interference in the present. But the willingness to become aware of suffering, especially of suffering that we can do nothing about, seems to be a kind of spiritual work that has its own merit, quite apart from the practical work we do to prevent future suffering.

As a psychiatric nurse, I learned that it seems to be impossible for the human mind to turn off emotions and sensitivities selectively. For example, if a person "turns off" their experience of fear or anger because their family of origin doesn't like the flavor of these emotions, they are also likely to lose some of their experience of tastier emotions like joy and playfulness. Trying to erase an overwhelmingly painful memory may also mean losing the seeds of healing that come packaged with the trauma. The human condition is an integral whole and shutting down our experience of any of it—even what we ordinarily consider "negative" emotions—may mean turning away from our full humanity.

This may be true in our sense of connectedness to the world, as well. If we disconnect ourselves from the cruelty, suffering, and death on our planet, we also seem to cut ourselves off from some of the dancing vitality of creation. Sensing ourselves as part of

the great unfolding cosmic whole seems to require a willingness to open our awareness to suffering as well as to joy.

Teachers from many schools all across the state of North Carolina have told me again and again how deeply engaged their students become with Elie Wiesel's book *Night*. It is a beautiful and heroic book, but there are other beautiful and heroic books and I have wondered why students find this particular book uniquely powerful in their lives.

Recently, I was with a group of writers and teachers of writing as we told each other our stories of "coming of age" as writers. One of them, Anne Vilen, essentially attributed her awakening as a human being and as a writer to reading *Night* when she was a young teenager. Later, as a teacher herself, she also observed the electrifying impact that Wiesel's book had on high school students. I asked her if she had a theory why this book is so important to young people.

"I know exactly why," she said firmly. "That book was the first time I had ever read anything that dealt explicitly with pain and cruelty. It was all around me, in my family and in my school, and nobody talked about it. For lots of kids, *Night* is the first book that gives language to the reality of pain and cruelty, that lets them know they are not crazy."

Studying the Holocaust airs one of humanity's dirty little secrets, one of the things we prefer not to talk about. This secret is both social/historical—that the Holocaust could happen—and individual/psychological—that ordinary humans could participate. As with all secrets, when that which is hidden is brought out into the light of day, there is a great release of energy. All the psychic energy that has been tied up with avoiding the secret, suppressing the knowledge, and stepping around the topic is suddenly freed for other purposes. "Letting pain be pain" in the study of the Holocaust forces us to let go of certain pretenses about history and human behavior. We can "drop the act" and get on with life.

For nearly every student of the Holocaust the question "Why?" comes early and stays late. As a person's historical understanding of the events of the Holocaust grows in complexity, the question may become more nuanced: "Why the Jews?" "Why Germany?" "Why so few rescuers...?" "Why didn't the Allies...?" "What about the other genocides?" The

haunting questioning doesn't leave us, even after years of study.

Studying the events of the Holocaust is, for many, a process of searching for the answers to these questions. And if the search is authentic, well-guided, and based on good sources, information can be gleaned that is relevant to the questions. Missing pieces can be filled in.

But it is almost a truism of Holocaust education that this search doesn't lead to the completed, tucked-in, resolved experience of "answers." From students at every level, I hear that study leads merely to a fuller sense of the questions. And for many students, the historical questions lead off the map into the wilderness of Great Questions: "What would *I* have done...?" "How could humans...?" "Where was God in the camps?" "How could God allow...?" "If these things happened, does God really exist?" In the face of these kinds of questions, "answers" would feel facile, trivializing, and inauthentic. These questions take us to the edge of the dark, where the only true response is the unflinching embrace of the question. The answer is silence.

Awareness of this appalling silence around the unanswerable questions appears in the evaluations teachers write at the end of our week of studying the Holocaust together. *"There are no easy answers." "The more I have learned, the more I realize how much I have yet to learn." "I have been forced to question my own beliefs, my own motives—in my personal life as well as [as] a teacher, a leader, and a fellow human being." "I have suffered racial prejudices. As a child in first grade, I can vividly recall being assigned a seat at a table with all black children. They were my friends. I wondered why we were separated from others who were also my friends. As I heard the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, I remember I questioned 'Why? Why? Why?' No bitterness, no revenge, no hatred. Just empty and hurt."*[2]
"Just empty and hurt"—the cry of the soul walking on the *via negativa*.

Via Positiva

Fox speaks of the *via positiva* in terms that mirror, or reverse, the *via negativa*. The "negative path" is said to be "befriending the darkness"; the "positive path" is "befriending creation." Psychologically, the *via negativa* relates to pain, despair, depression, and dissolution, while the *via positiva* relates to celebra-

tion and joy. In terms of spiritual practices, the *via negativa* is traveled in meditation and silence, the *via positiva*, in praise and song. Theologically, the *via negativa* acknowledges that every single image we construct of God is in fact *not* God, while the *via positiva* focuses on the fact that every single form we encounter is an expression of the divine—*is*, in fact, God. Physically, the *via negativa* expresses itself in terms of darkness and emptiness, while the *via positiva* is related to light and fullness.

The *via positiva* is full of light and appreciation for the myriad creatures that dance the ordered dance of Creation, and so it may seem strange to relate it to the great darkness and destruction of the Holocaust. It may seem strange to relate *anything* positive to the Holocaust, but there is a strain of celebration in responses to Holocaust study that can't be denied: the celebration of the lives of the survivors, a vigorous sense of one's own power and importance as a teacher, and a renewed appreciation for the blessings of life.

Every Holocaust education seminar I plan includes an opportunity for the participants to listen to the story of a survivor and to meet and talk informally with that person. Now, it is true that not everyone who survived the camps was a "good" person or even a "nice" person. All kinds of people were caught up in the machinery of destruction, quite regardless of their personal attributes, and the camps were not some kind of purifying ordeal that burned away human flaws. And the dehumanizing trauma of the Holocaust left psychological scars that in many cases caused later difficulties for survivors and their families. But it is also true that the people who give their time and energy and emotional toil speaking as witnesses to the events of the Holocaust tend to be a special type of person. Many of them have defeated Nazi intentions by building families and lives rich in meaningful work. They are people who care passionately about a future they will not live to see. They care about their grandchildren and the schoolchildren they speak to and generations yet unborn. On the altar of this concern they are willing to sacrifice precious hours revisiting the most difficult memories of their lives and sharing very personal stories with strangers, in order to arm the present against bigotry and protect the future against genocide.

Both adults and children who have an opportunity to connect with these survivors are deeply moved, often awed, by them. They see them as heroes, not so much because of the unimaginable sufferings they endured or because of the bravery they showed in crisis, but because of the lives they lived afterwards. That they could find the courage to live, love, make meaning out of the events of their lives, and create a philosophical or religious "place to stand" for themselves—*this* is the miracle. One teacher rejoiced at how "*[human beings can] rise from horrible circumstances and live a full life, if we can put our past defeats aside and go on.*" People look at these survivors with wonder, as if for the first time taking measure of the beauty, strength, and resilience of the human spirit. This wonder calls forth celebration: learners express the urgent desire to tell others about this particular person they have met and talked to. Teachers speak of their intention to return to their classrooms, tell the survivor's story, and never let it be forgotten. One teacher reported learning "*a deeper appreciation for the survivors and their respect and need for our profession to help fulfill their promise to 'tell the world'.*"

This comment not only expresses the typical appreciation for the lives of survivors, but also connects this with the typical renewal of esteem for the profession of teaching. The history of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s blazingly illustrates what happens when education ducks its responsibility for teaching critical thinking, respect for diversity, and moral courage. Schools became fundamental in spreading Nazi racial and political ideology. "Those who have youth on their side control the future," proclaimed Hans Schemm, the leader of the Nazi Teachers' League. Children's books like *The Poison Mushroom* and *Read Along!* were produced to indoctrinate the very young. Organizations like the Hitler Youth became feeder streams for the flooding river of fascism. Teachers had to make many decisions—whether to sign loyalty oaths, how to respond to the exclusion of Jewish children and faculty, whether and how to teach Nazi "race science" (Noakes and Pridham 1984).

As teachers today learn about the history of teachers, children, literature, and conformity in the Holocaust, many feel a surge of commitment to teaching

as a significant activity. *"I hope to develop within my students sensitivity to human suffering and a determination to see to it that atrocities such as these never happen again. 'Our children are the living message we send to a time we will never see.' With this in mind, I remain committed to my mission."* Seeing the enormous cost and consequences to society underscores the importance of courage and competence in teachers. One teacher reported, *"I feel appreciated—that what I am trying to accomplish as a Holocaust teacher is what is needed in the classroom today, and in society."* Another simply described *"a sense of value and appreciation for being a teacher."*

Another source of celebratory responses to Holocaust study is the gift of re-valuing one's own blessings. As they walk in memory with the victims of the Holocaust, students introduce their imagination to a world where nothing can be taken for granted. The most basic of human needs can vanish: Food, warmth, family and community, name, cleanliness, hygienic waste disposal, and autonomy can be taken away. Envisioning a world in which basic rights and needs are not automatic entitlements allows students to see these riches with new eyes, as *gifts* to be appreciated in the moment. Our ability to bathe when we choose, to drink our fill of clean water, to eat enough food, and to be safe and warm—undervaluing these things becomes an affront to those who have walked in the valley of the Shadow. When we live in the spiritual presence of those whose dearest dream of heaven is simply to have enough bread, can we eat our own bread unconscious of our blessings?

Via Transformativa

The *via positiva* opens us to treasuring creation and the *via negativa* opens us to the existence of darkness, silence, and pain. Where these two paths come together, a third path emerges, the *via transformativa*. When what we love and celebrate is touched by suffering, two terminals of a battery come into contact, and the spark that jumps is compassion and the impulse towards justice. This is exemplified in teachers' response to learning about the Holocaust. They meet victims—in books, in videos, in photos, and in person. They learn about them. They "befriend them," coming to treasure their lives as individuals and as members of communities. They learn about their culture. This is celebration and appreciation. This is the

via positiva. But they also learn about what happened to them. This is pain. This is destruction and death. This is darkness and unanswerable questions. This is the *via negativa*. From where the two come together spring compassion and a desire to set things right. What happened sixty years ago cannot be set right, so the justice-making impulse turns to the present, something we still have a say about. The visceral energy to transform reality channels itself towards washing away the ignorance, prejudice, and poverty that still face us today.

Teachers express this in many ways: *"[A survivor's story] reminded me of the awesome responsibility I have as a classroom teacher to both model and teach tolerance and respect for all." "[W]e must make the world understand and be tolerant of our individual differences.... [O]rdinary people can make a difference." "I feel as though a spark has been ignited in me. I am anxious to pass on my limited knowledge and fervent hope that this terrible act will never take place again." "I must teach my students about the deep underlying causes of hatred and racism so that future generations have a chance at life." "This is a story that must be told." "I feel it is still my duty, even more so now, to 'bear witness'."*

Via Creativa

Out of the *via transformativa* springs the *via creativa*. Out of the need to transform the world, to make justice and enact compassion, comes the need to create new realities. Psychologically, the *via transformativa* is flavored by compassion, while the *via creativa* relates to the passion for making. Theologically, the *via transformativa* focuses on the divinely delegated human responsibility for righteousness, compassion, and justice, while the *via creativa* focuses on human responsibility for co-creating, with God, the world. If the *via transformativa* is expressed in physical metaphor by something being changed into something else, or by scales being brought into balance, the *via creativa* is expressed in terms of something new being called into being.

In the immediate post-seminar evaluation forms, even before teachers have gone home and taken stock of the possibilities, they express creative plans: *"I can't wait to share the fresh ideas and new knowledge I have with my students. I plan to rewrite some parts of my Holocaust unit." "I have new ideas for web sites, CD-ROMs, and lessons on the Holocaust that I will incorporate*

in my teaching." "I will remain committed to going beyond the vague, general, uninspiring requirements of my class." "I plan to go back and revamp the presentation I make on the Holocaust." "I have more ideas and lesson plans that I want to try."

Some teachers are moved to write poems about their experience of the seminar, and many send us poems and artwork their students create later in their own Holocaust classes. We learn, through later contacts, about the new realities that our teachers have devised in order to fulfill their intention to tell the Holocaust story. Where school systems were supportive, some of them have created entirely new semester-long classes. Where there was less support or even frank opposition, some teachers have ingeniously created new projects to link Holocaust studies to other parts of the required curriculum. Some

have created Holocaust memorial observances. Some have created field trips to Holocaust museums as joint efforts between schools of different dominant ethnicities, in order to link the lessons of the Holocaust to the problems of today. The impulse to transform the world drives the need to create new structures through which to accomplish that transformation, and successful creativity is one of the tastiest privileges of humanity. Out of new realities impassioned teachers create, many of their students find their own passion for tolerance, justice, and compassion. The work of mending the world rolls on.

When we look at Holocaust education for teachers through the prism of Fox's four intertwined paths of the spiritual life, it becomes apparent that the subject evokes experience along all four of the *vias*. It is possible that the life-changing renewal that many teachers experience through intensive study of the Holocaust relates to integrated four-fold spiritual movement. Although the four movements seem to emerge spontaneously from this area of study, it may be possible to use Fox's taxonomy to help us present other subjects in ways that balance and highlight the four paths to a similar effect. Spiritually integrating the curriculum offers the possibility of planning for transformative education, for education that stirs the soul.

Notes

1. We have to specify "ritual prayer" here because it would be impossible to prohibit the inward component of prayer, which is private and ungovernable.

2. The italicized comments from teachers in this essay were taken from anonymous end-of-seminar evaluations and signed unsolicited thank-you notes written by participants in NCCAT's seminar, Teaching the Holocaust: Resources and Reflections, from 1994 through 1999. Participants' verbal comments during and after the seminar were much more extensive but went unrecorded. In order to keep quotations from teachers brief and verbatim, I've limited myself in this article to the written sources, which tended to cluster around the same themes as the verbal comments.

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Conceptions of Power
Liberating or Limiting?

Trenia L. Walker

Power should no longer be seen as a dichotomy, operating in a linear, top-down fashion, but must be seen as coming from everywhere in a continuous cycle of reinforcement. Those who are powerless may only enter the discourse when they understand their complicity in the power arrangement.

Will you help me? Can you help me?

You don't need my help any longer. You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.

I have?

Then why didn't you tell her before?

Because she wouldn't have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.

(*Wizard of Oz* 1939, MGM/UA)

Education in the United States today is in a "state of crisis" (Kanpol 1994, 1). The sense that something is very wrong pervades much of the contemporary thought about public education. Criticism of public education in this country is not unusual; in fact, it has been under attack almost since its creation. And these criticisms are as varied as their sources. Currently, we are at the beginning of a third straight decade of government and complicit media criticisms regarding the state of American education. These, along with a myriad of criticisms by academics who criticize not only public education, but also the views of other critics and their critiques, have convinced the public that something is wrong. But, are we a "nation at risk"—or a nation deceived by a manufactured crisis?

The contemporary rhetoric of education is particularly powerful because it focuses on one of America's greatest resources: our future generations. This tactic unbalances our reason and makes us particularly susceptible to these messages, especially those that inspire the greatest fears. These periods of heightened anxiety have spawned many educational reform movements. Since its inception, public education has been both the greatest hope and biggest disappointment to Americans. Review and reform have become the norm in public education in the

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United States. In the last half of the 20th century alone, a variety of reform efforts have dramatically changed public education several times. One of the most recent reform efforts has centered around school choice and tuition vouchers. In the 1990s, choice advocates began promoting the idea that if parents and students are given a choice of either remaining in a "failed" public school system or attending private or parochial schools—with tax dollars paying all or part of the tuition—the public schools will be forced, through the competition for funding, to improve or collapse. Interestingly, the voucher issue, unlike many other reform efforts, seems to appeal to a broad segment of the American public. Support for choice appears to cut across demographic categories such as race, appealing to both black and white families, and income, appealing to middle and lower income families.

This should not be surprising since, as David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (1995) explain, voucher supporters have intentionally sought poor, minority support. Who could blame them:

> Given the advantages of the rich, private academy in an affluent suburb over the miserably funded public school in an urban ghetto, which parents would not choose to send their children to the former if they could afford to do so? (p. 176)

However, there are indications that there may not be the broad-based support for vouchers once thought. In the November 2000 elections, voucher initiatives in both California and Michigan were defeated overwhelmingly. It seems that in an election where the NAACP spent $12 million on a Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) campaign "resulting in the most massive GOTV effort in the Association's 91-year history" (from NAACP website) African Americans must have helped to defeat these initiatives.

Despite this recent setback, school choice and vouchers remain a significant part of educational reform. In part, this is because these issues fit into the important discourse of *power*. And while vouchers and other reform efforts are thoroughly examined, the idea of power is rarely placed under the same microscope. Given the current climate of the country, this examination is possibly overdue.

A first step in this examination is to discover the conceptualizations evident in the way power is currently used by contemporary theorists. For example, E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (1988) ascribes power to a limited few. And it is the responsibility of these powerful to act as guardians for those without:

> to acknowledge the importance of minority and local cultures of all sorts, to insist on their protection and nurture, to give them demonstrations of respect in the public sphere are traditional aims that should be stressed. (Hirsch 1988, 98)

In this hegemonic view, power is not transferable. There is no call for an *empowerment* of the powerless, but rather an urging for *empathy* for their position (D'Souza 1992, 186). According to this view, schooling should perpetuate this conception of power.

Other theorists also believe that power rests in the hands of a few. However, unlike Hirsch, these *critical pedagogists* do not believe that the present division of power is inevitable. Perhaps the most influential critical pedagogist is Paulo Freire. Beginning in the 1970s, Freire gained recognition for his writings about the oppressed *illiterates* in his native Brazil. When introduced, Freire's view of pedagogy varied considerably from the conventional views. Freire (1997, 30) referred to this as a

> pedagogy of the oppressed, a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity.... The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization.

Many contemporary educational theorists have acknowledged Freire's influence on their scholarship. Peter McLaren (1999, 49) writes that Freire is

> generally considered the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy.... Long before his death on May 2, 1997, Freire had acquired a mythic stature among progressive educators, social workers, and theologians as well as scholars and researchers from numerous disciplinary traditions for fomenting interest in the ways that education can serve as a vehicle for social and economic transformation.

Similarly, Henry Giroux (1988, 117) states: "I attempt to develop a discourse appropriate for a critical pedagogy, one that draws on the works of Paulo Freire and Mikhail Bakhtin." Michael Apple (1993, 180-181) writes,

> There are very few people I am willing to sit at the feet of, and Freire is one of them.... Freire's approach is such an advance over the normal ways of how we think about nonformal education, about whose knowledge is appropriate, and how we can articulate that in a very critical way, that it would be an act of bad faith not to allow it to influence much of what we do.

Freire is often said to be a *"Marxist"*[1] because of his emphasis on *struggle* and *class-consciousness*, the clearly delineated classes of oppressed and oppressors (Macedo 1994, 6). Even Freire acknowledged this:

> When I wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I was so influenced by Marx's class analysis, and given the incredibly cruel class oppression that characterized my developing years in Northeast Brazil, my major preoccupation was therefore class oppression.... In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, if my memory serves me correctly, I made approximately 33 references to social-class analysis. (Macedo 1994, 108)

Marxist theory clearly influenced Freire's call for eliminating class oppression, as well as his advocacy of a collective struggle for power.

Freire wrote that "it is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they believe in themselves." The oppressed rising up in organized struggle against the oppressors in a struggle over power is one of the fundamental tenets of Marxism. It is this idea of a power struggle between the oppressed and their oppressors that is one of the main ideas found in many of the writings of contemporary critical, neo-Marxist, and, at times, postmodern theorists.

Power, according to these theorists, is a pyramidal construction operating hierarchically from the top (oppressors) down (oppressed). Donaldo Macedo (1994, 6) writes that "if you have oppressed, you must have an oppressor." From a pedagogical perspective it follows that the oppressors are responsible for the *savage inequalities* that are perpetrated on the children of the oppressed, and ultimately perpetuate these class divisions.

In the United States it is commonly believed that education will address inequities of power. David Purpel and Svi Shapiro (1995, 107) advocate

> education that was more than memorizing information and competing with our fellow students for grades or school honors ... instead, an education that was concerned with giving people an understanding of their own lives, so that they might be better able to challenge, and change, the social conditions in which their lives were lived.

Similarly, McLaren (1998, 461) believes that education must follow the "example of a Marxist-inspired pedagogy" in order to "foster collective dreaming ... that speaks to the creation of social justice for all groups." This will be possible only when

> schools are able and committed to help students analyze the ways in which their subjectivities have been ideologically formed with the exploitative forces and relations of globalized, transnational capitalism. (McLaren 1998, 461)

In other words, education would redress the inequities of power caused by capitalism by, first, exposing the categories that the system has relegated them to, and second, explaining how and why the categories were developed, and third, helping students understand how it was that they came to be a member of a particular group. Again, Marxist theory calls for collective action for change. McLaren, through his call for "collective dreaming," seems to believe that change will occur when people understand their position in society and come together to change it.

It seems that Michael Apple might disagree with McLaren on the end of class struggle. Apple (1995, 24) cites Robert Everhart's "Marxist-oriented" ethnography of junior high school students which shows that the "working-class youths" he studied spent a large portion of their time "goofing off" and

> recreating cultural forms that give them some degree of power in the school setting. While these students do not totally reject the formal curriculum, they give the school only the barest minimum work required and try to minimize even those requirements.... They gave only

what was necessary not to endanger the possible mobility some of them might have. Yet, they already "knew" that this was only a possibility, one that was not guaranteed at all. Most of them would, in fact, remain within the economic trajectories established by their parents.

According to Apple (1995, 24-25) it was the "relative autonomy of the culture" rather than the needs of the "economic apparatus" (capitalist system) that drove the "disadvantaged" students to behave as they did. The hegemony of the *advantaged* was a "process in which dominant groups and classes manage to win the active consensus over whom they rule." Apple (1995, 157) calls for "appropriate teaching" or "political pedagogy" as a counter-hegemony. To counter the educational system's mandate to perpetuate the existing hegemonic relationship, teachers must join with labor activists to build a group of "intellectuals who are organic members of the subordinate classes" (Apple 1995, 157). This group's "educative" task is to

> help labor recapture its partially lost traditions ... the history of what people strived for, of the visions of a more equitable society, and of the demands for and struggles over them, all of this needs to be made visible and legitimate once again. (Apple 1995, 157)

Apple does not seem to advocate class struggle in the same way that Macedo and McLaren do. Class struggle should not be to transcend (and overtake) those in a "higher-class"; rather, it should be about the struggle for the legitimacy of your own class.

As those who believe they are disadvantaged have risen up to challenge the hegemonic power of the advantaged, many have formed subgroups to offer further challenge. The Marxist idea of a monolithic oppressed class that would rise up against its oppressors does not seem likely. The issues of race and gender have caused many "disadvantaged" to join in the struggle of those in their subgroup, eroding the unified power that Marx envisioned. Freire addresses this concern by advocating the need for those in the subgroups to support the main drive first (ending male economic oppression) and that would remedy the remaining inequities (Macedo 1994, 111-118). Many people, especially many feminists, did not agree with Freire's priority or with his ideas of power as universal and categorically dichotomous. Their

move toward an *empowerment*, in fact, necessitated a rejection of this idea of power.

Much of critical pedagogy's vocabulary of *empowerment*, *dialogue*, and *voice* has entered the contemporary lexicon. This is further evidence of the Marxist influence on critical pedagogy. It is also an indication of how those in power can coopt the ideas of those criticizing the dominant ideology. Marxist theorists tend to view the world as divided into a binary of opposites; in Freire's case, oppressed and oppressors. One question might be, Would *empowerment* mean that an oppressed person assumes a position of power equal to the oppressor? Would that, then, make those who are *empowered*, oppressors? Freire (1997, 30) does address this "central problem." He asks:

> How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? ... As long as they live in the duality in which *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible.

Many contemporary critical theorists who follow Freire's model of dichotomous categories have attempted to define empowerment. Barry Kanpol wrote *Critical Pedagogy* (1994) as an "introductory text" to explain many of the concepts and essential vocabulary. Kanpol (1994, 52-54) defines two types of empowerment: traditional (institutional) empowerment and critical (cultural) empowerment. Traditional, or institutional, empowerment typically refers to school personnel (administrators, teachers, and students in particular) who are granted, grant others, or possess the institutional power to make decisions. Interestingly, Kanpol refers to students as school personnel. This term suggests students are an integral part of the central operation of the school; however, the term also evokes the idea of worker. Kanpol demonstrates the same Marxist influence found in many critical pedagogists. He does explain that this type of empowerment is within the Modernist tradition and is problematic:

> In the modern tradition, what is assumed within traditional empowerment is fair play for all ... unfortunately, an inherent contradiction exists. Although the notion of traditional empowerment is a good and noble one, it exists

within a hierarchical tradition. Power in this mode is unequal. In other words, teachers are empowered into unequal social relations where it is decided for them who will be empowered…. I felt equal to others, had a sense of control … and a sense of freedom. I was hegemonized to feel good…. There was never a question raised, for instance, about race, class, or gender (Kanpol 1994, 52-53).

Conversely, critical, or cultural, empowerment requires informed decision making related to the various cultures of the school. The following questions must be asked:

> For whom and why is the decision made? …[T]he teacher must seriously investigate multiple forms of knowledge as related to race, class, and gender with the intent to modify and/or change curricular usage to alleviate alienation, subordination, and oppression of others … to help ameliorate inequalities. (Kanpol 1994, 53)

Institutional empowerment is functional, whereas critical empowerment involves more teacher reflection and teacher action to

> instill change within a school system teachers are employed under…. [They] are culturally and critically empowered when they begin to transform culture at the school—for example, challenge stereotypes and various forms of tracking. (Kanpol 1994, 54)

Because this is an "introductory text," Kanpol tries to objectively define the terms; however, although both do exist in educational settings, he does seem to favor critical empowerment over institutional empowerment.

Henry Giroux (1988, 133) writes that "empowerment is defined as central to the collective struggle for a life without oppression and exploitation." He criticizes radical educators for having

> failed to develop a language that engages schools as sites of possibility, that is, as places where particular forms of knowledge, social relations, and values can be taught in order to educate students to take their place in society from a position of empowerment rather than from a position of ideological and economic subordination. (Giroux 1988, p. 115)

And ten years later, Giroux (1998, 57) still describes empowerment as a struggle for "emancipatory social change."

This is one of the criticisms of Marxist conceptions of power as dichotomous and pyramidal, where the collective struggle for class consciousness is the principal objective. It seems that either class consciousness is not possible, or at least has never been realized. In any event, advocacy of class struggle does not seem to have brought any longlasting challenge to the power structure of the class system (oppressed and oppressors) in more than 150 years of Marxist theorizing. Therefore, it makes some sense to reconceptualize power outside the Marxist paradigm.

One of the fundamental concerns of many feminists is the lack of challenge (and substantive change) to the power structure. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1994) wonders about critical pedagogy, asking "why doesn't this feel empowering?" Ellsworth (1994, 300) writes that

> key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy—namely, "empowerment," "student voice," and "dialogue," and even the term "critical"—are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination.

According to Ellsworth (1994, 302-303), "critical pedagogy" is a code word that hides the actual political agenda intended in academic scholarship: "it offers only the most abstract, decontextualized criteria for choosing one position over others, criteria such as 'reconstructive action' or 'radical democracy and social justice.'" Effecting change requires "moral deliberation, engagement in the full range of views present, and critical reflection" (Ellsworth 1994, 302-303). In other words, teachers who desire to change the status quo should not cover their political objectives with all-purpose words and phrases such as critical pedagogy, empowerment, voice, and so forth; but rather declare them specifically—"antiracism, antisexism, antielitism, antiheterosexism, antiableism, anticlassism, and anti-neoconservatism"—so that students could "identify and choose between sufficiently articulated and reasonably distinct moral positions" (Ellsworth 1994, 302-303). Ellsworth seems to be saying that if teachers focus atten-

tion on general, universal ideas such as critical pedagogy and empowerment they are not likely to achieve longlasting changes in the status quo. However, if specified agendas are pursued, the likelihood of longlasting change becomes greater. This is very different from the Marxist-inspired idea of a unified collective struggling together toward a universal goal.

Carmen Luke (1992, 30) writes that the

[M]arxian legacy in critical pedagogy goes unchallenged on questions of gender. For Marxist theorists the "taken-for-granted" "monogendered" universal class dynamic was the center of their scholarship.... Historical materialism is the history of domination and exploitation among men in the public sphere. The historical struggles inherent in laboring for the other—classes of men for men, not women for men—it the "motor" of history, the history of class struggle. (Luke 1992, 30)

Gayatari Spivak (1987, 82) writes that "Hardcore Marxism at best dismisses and at worst patronizes the importance of women's struggle." To draw from a male-dominated historical experience is to relegate women to the periphery of history. Critical pedagogy, according to Luke (1992, 27), "constructs a masculinist subject which renders its emancipatory agenda for 'gender' theoretically and practically problematic." Luke warns that skepticism and critical attention must be paid to these "critical" narratives which claim to be emancipatory, but remain theoretically fixed in gender-blind patriarchal delineations.

Many postmodern theorists, like many of the feminist theorists, disagree with the conceptions of power put forth by the Marxist-influenced critical theorists. Traditionally, power has often been thought of in negative terms and been seen as an essentially judicial mechanism: as that which lays down the law, which limits, obstructs, refuses, prohibits, and censors. It denotes a sovereign whose role is to forbid; to have power to say no (Foucault 1979, 130-131). The challenging of power conceived in this way can only appear as transgression.

Michel Foucault and other postmodern theorists do not conceive of power as negative or sovereign, nor as unified and universal as the Marxist theorists

suggest. Postmodernists reject the totalizing texts of the Marxist explanations of power. According to Foucault (1990, 92-93),

power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and

> *For Foucault, power is not simply a substance that one person exerts on another, but a circuit flowing between oppressor and oppressed so that ultimately these categories become obfuscated.*

confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.

Central to the theory of power developed by Michel Foucault is the idea that power is not simply a substance that one person exerts on another, but a circuit flowing between *oppressor* and *oppressed* so that ultimately these categories become obfuscated. Foucault (1990, 93) explains that "the omnipresence of power ... is produced ... in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."

Foucault does not tell us what power really is, but only where to look for it (Spivak 1993, 27). He does tell us what power is *not*:

By power, I do not mean "Power" as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By

power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body.... Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (Foucault 1990, 92-94).

Foucault (1990, 94) does describe several ways to find power:

> power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.... Power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rules and ruled at the root of power relations.

Foucault deconstructs the totalizing Marxist narrative of power.

Focusing on power as a possession has led to the location of power in a centralized source. Perceiving power *not* as unified or as if deployed from one source creates the conditions for detecting its workings in different forms and within different spaces. Helene Cixous, one of the "French 'anti-feminist' feminists" according to Spivak (1987, 145), explains the idea of power differently than the feminists previously discussed. Cixous's discourse on power distinguishes between "bad" and "good" kinds of power:

> I would indeed make a clear distinction when it comes to the kind of power that is the will to supremacy, the thirst for individual and narcissistic satisfaction. That power is always a power over others. It is something that relates back to government, control, and beyond that, to despotism. Whereas if I say "woman's powers," first it isn't *one* power any longer, it is multiplied, *there is more than one* (therefore it is not a question of centralization—that destroys the relation with the unique, that levels everything out) and it is a *question of power over oneself,* in other words of a relation not based on mastery but on availability (Moi 1985, 124-125).

According to Cixous, the idea of *gender* is a narrative which also cannot be universalized. To discuss the

position of "women" in regard to the issue of power, as many feminist theorists have, collectivizes and universalizes a power that is not de-centered but merely re-centered.

The Italian theorist, Antonio Gramsci, theorizes power as "bad" and "good." According to Adrianna Hernandez (1997, 29), "Gramsci distinguishes power as both negative and repressive, and also as positive and educative." Central to Gramsci's analysis about power are the conceptions of domination and hegemony (Landy 1994, 24). Gramsci (1988, 348) writes that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship." In this context, Gramsci was not referring simply to teaching in the classroom, but to the political process through which citizens are socialized to recognize and validate state power. This process includes all components of the society: businesses, churches, museums, and particularly, schools. If these institutions are recognized as sites of potential ideological persuasion, then Gramsci's theory of education assumes great political significance.

Clearly, hegemony and domination are educational relationships. That is, these perceptions of power are learned (and taught). Renate Holub (1992, 199) writes that

> Foucault and Gramsci share, or perhaps this is something Foucault adopted from Gramsci, is the notion that power and domination function in so far as those dominated consent to that domination. Without consent there is no domination.

Again, this is the idea that power is a circuit flowing between oppressor and oppressed rather than in a pyramidal, top-down design.

For Gramsci, it was "culture" that reinforced the perceptions of power. For Gramsci, and other members of the Frankfurt School,[2] "culture was perceived as little more than an advertisement for capitalism, and thus directly reflected the manipulative interests of the market" (Trend 1995, 11). These theorists described a system in which the masses were "systematically duped into lines of servitude and consumption ... cultural objects functioned as propaganda, and the citizenry was incapable of resisting the seduction of the dominant 'culture industry'" (Trend 1995, 11).

Douglas Kellner (1989, 8) borrows from Frederic Jameson[3] when he writes:

> in "late capitalist" social formations, culture, far from being an occasional matter of the reading of a monthly good book or a trip to the drive-in is in the very element of consumer society itself; no society has ever been saturated with signs and messages like this one.

Anticipating the importance that culture would come to hold, Jean Baudrillard made the role of the cultural sphere in every day life the main focus of his work. In Baudrillard's writing, the masses passively consume commodities, television, sports, politics, mass-produced simulations to such an extent that traditional politics and class struggle become obsolete. This is the era of consumer culture, and consumer culture, for Baudrillard, is effectively a postmodern culture: "traditional distinctions and hierarchies have collapsed, polyculture is acknowledged; kitsch, the popular and difference is celebrated" (Sarup 1993, 166). According to Baudrillard, the center has collapsed and there is no distinction between the sender and receiver (oppressors and oppressed). Discourse circulates rather than going from one point to another. Thus,

> there is no instance of power, no instance of transmission—power is something that circulates and whose source can no longer be located, a cycle in which the positions of dominator and dominated are exchanged in an endless reversion that is also the end of power in its classical definition. The circulation of power, of knowledge, of discourse puts an end to any localization of instances and poles. (Baudrillard 1994, 41)

Given the collapse of the center and the obfuscation of the categories, it seems that in the postindustrial era, it has become necessary to reconceptualize the idea of *power*. To continue discussing power in the traditional paradigm seems inadequate.

This seems especially critical now given the present reactionary climate in the United States. Americans see the proof of society's destruction. Doomsday headlines bombard us daily (repeated hourly if we have cable) describing a country that few of us would be familiar with otherwise. This atmosphere, strengthened with the advent of the millennium, has produced heightened tensions and created, among some, a desire to find someone or something to blame for the perceived problems of our nation.

A great deal of the blame for placing our nation "at risk" has been placed on our educational system. The public education system in the United States reflects many years of history, as well as the contemporary sociopolitical climate. Politically, liberals and conservatives have always fought over issues of nationalism and national identity. But in the current era there is a further distinction. David Trend (1995, 3) points out that unlike ideological conflicts of the past, which focused on tangible issues, the new "political warfare is conducted over the more subjective terrain of identity and representation. Battles once restricted to laws and money are being waged over ideas and symbols." This means more conflicts over our cultural hegemony, specifically over the issues of political correctness, literary canons, and arts censorship. The stakes of this cultural battle are well characterized by Pat Buchanan, who urged his fellow conservatives to "launch a cultural revolution in the 90s as sweeping as the political revolution of the 80s" (Trend 1995, 2-3). Of course, this is more likely a cultural counter-revolution. In the broadest sense, these revolutions can be construed as issues of pedagogy. They signal efforts to control what people know— the ways they come to know who they are and what they can become. This broadened notion of pedagogy was an important element of the theories of Gramsci; that is, hegemony is an educational relationship. Culture, then, is the means of insuring that hegemony will be internalized and naturalized.

This expanded view of education, along with a reconceptualized paradigm for power, are seemingly necessary for examining issues in education in the postindustrial era; however, Marxist models that conceptualize power as pyramidal and top-down are pervasive in the contemporary discourse regarding education policy. This point might best be illustrated through a closer examination of the voucher issue using the traditional (Marxist) paradigm of power.

The contemporary debate over vouchers is essentially an issue of power, specifically of conceptualizing power within the Marxist model. The idea of vouchers is not new; Milton Friedman, a prominent economist, proposed a voucher plan in 1962 but was unsuccessful in attempts to influence policy. Again

in the 1970s, voucher initiatives were brought up several times in Congress, only to be defeated. During his first term in the early 1980s, Ronald Reagan reintroduced the issue of vouchers and again found that there was insufficient support. Voucher support was generally divided along social and political lines. Vouchers were seen as yet another program to benefit the wealthy.

By the early 1990s things began to change. It was during the Bush administration that voucher supporters began to target their message for a different audience: poor and minority families. School choice funded through vouchers was one of the central tenets of the 1991 Bush administration's *America 2000: An Education Strategy.* Support for vouchers came from organizations such as the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, and the Republican National Committee. Their primary argument in support of vouchers is that school choice has become a function of income, and not of what is best for the particular student. They claim that parents are being forced to send their children to inadequate, underfunded schools that produce poor academic results and are grossly mismanaged. The Heritage Foundation advocates reallocating Title I funds ("Education for the Disadvantaged") into a voucher fund. Arguing that the current system of Title I funding "appears to do no harm," but questions that it "does much good" for "poor youngsters—particularly poor black youngsters," vouchers are a necessary tool for the "poor families—not bureaucrats—[to] decide where their children will go to school" (Heritage Foundation Online, May 1996). Research, they claim, shows that a "school with a shared culture and a shared commitment to academic excellence makes a difference" in the education of poor children. The phrase "shared culture" seems to indicate possible support for racially segregated schooling. And since their phrase "poor children" was generally defined as "poor black youngsters," the power categories seem fairly clear. Based on Heritage Foundation's arguments, vouchers may be seen as a tool for class, collective struggle for power between the oppressed (poor, black children) and the oppressors.

The ultimate goal in power relationships in a Marxist paradigm is to subvert the powerful. This has been, and will most likely continue to be, more rhetorical than real. There are many labels for the powerless: oppressed, disadvantaged, disenfranchised, at-risk. All these represent a similar view of power as a dichotomy: Either one is powerful or one is powerless.

At the core of the Marxist conceptions of power is the idea of collective struggle. Within this conception, power would remain a dichotomous construct, with the powerless rising up against the powerful and, in effect, switching categories. Obviously this would leave the categories intact and the struggle for power would continue indefinitely. Further, the idea of collective struggle forces people to give up their individual differences in the name of a universal cause. McLaren and Giroux (1997, 17) warn about "focusing on identity at the expense of power." In the example of women in Latin America, Paulo Freire asked them to struggle first for the empowerment of men and that would ultimately lead to the empowerment of all others.

Voucher arguments become problematic for poor families. To believe that vouchers will be able to effect meaningful education reform seems to ignore the fact that collective action has not achieved any longlasting successes in this country. Even if there were the possibility of effective struggle, vouchers would prevent the formation of class consciousness, necessary for collective action, by subdividing the "poor" into schools of "shared culture."

Power must become the central focus for the voucher issue; however, it should not be argued (either for or against) using the Marxist model. This exploits those it targets. Part of the problem is that many contemporary critical theorists are still using the Marx-inspired model of power—pyramidal, top-down, and dichotomous. To effect meaningful and longlasting change, power must be reconceptualized. Power should no longer be seen as a dichotomy, operating in a linear, top-down fashion, but must be seen as coming from everywhere in a continuous cycle of reinforcement. Those who are powerless may only enter the discourse when they understand their complicity in the power arrangement. This is when meaningful change will be possible. Individuals must be recognized rather than collectivized. This will be the point at which the discourse of power becomes meaningful.

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Notes

1. Marxist theory and rhetoric permeated Latin American scholarship in the decades following World War II. Prior to World War II, through it's *Good Neighbor Policy* initiatives, the United States, provided substantial economic aid to Latin America; however, after World War II, Europe became the primary focus of United States economic aid programs. Latin American animosity toward the United States grew steadily during the 1950s, as many people in the region began to regard the influence of American corporations in their countries as a form of imperialism. In 1952, with American assistance, the military dictator, Fulgencio Batista, toppled a more moderate government. Then in 1954, mainly to protect the investment of the American corporation, the United Fruit Company, the Eisenhower administration authorized the CIA to topple the government of Guatemala. Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, justified the American intervention arguing that the Guatemalan leader, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, was *potentially* communist. The fear of the spread of communism permeated U.S. foreign policy until around 1989. This fear justified American initiatives in Latin America (and other parts of the world). These initiatives also generated justifiable reaction in Latin America, as well as other countries (Brinkley 1993, 799-800).

2. The Frankfurt School is the name given to the Institute for Social Research which opened in 1924. Their project was to modernize Marxism and understand modernity (Osborne 1992, 166-167).

3. Jameson uses the term "late capitalism" in reference to the "postmodern" period.

Existential Encounters in China

Gene Thibadeau

An American professor describes some of his experiences with Chinese universities and students.

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Recently, the Director of a research institute in Beijing made a novel proposal: He suggested that full professors receive the same salary as waitresses at the nearby Shangri-La Hotel. It might come as a surprise to the American reader that there is little chance that the government will approve the proposal, as it would involve huge pay increases for the professors. A professor in China averages about $250 a month, a bit less than the average for employees in Chinese business enterprises, and much less than taxi drivers or waitresses at international hotels. The late senior Chinese leader, Mr. Deng, once told a visiting dignitary, "Our biggest mistake in the last ten years has been that education has not developed sufficiently." Not only do teachers receive miserable pay, but also according to official figures, 80% of primary schools and 60% of secondary schools lack proper buildings and books. The Director's idea underscores the humble circumstances of teachers in China, contributing to what is today widely perceived as a crisis in education. At the annual session of the National People's Conference that was held in April 1999, one of the topics that generated the most complaints was education. The outpouring of criticism appears to have galvanized top officials to acknowledge the problem and take action.

I am in a position to judge the effectiveness of these criticisms and the changes that are likely to occur should there indeed be action. I spent seven months in China teaching at Shanghai Teacher's University for the Institute for Educational Research, the Department of Educational Administration, the Graduate Department of Education, and the Foreign Language Department. In addition, I visited scores of public schools, gave numerous lectures at private evening colleges, technical institutes, and key universities such as Fudan University. There is no question that the Chinese teacher education program needs major revisions, as evidenced by the fact that party leaders are in agreement that the education

system must be updated and made to serve the needs of society more effectively.[1]

A Painful Gap

More than a year before the Pro-Democracy Movement erupted in Beijing, the Chinese Communist Party had statistical evidence of widespread skepticism among Chinese university students toward the party's basic teachings. Professor Stanley Rosen of the University of Southern California, who analyzed the data for a recent International Conference on Chinese Education held in Taiwan, had concluded that there is a strong trend toward independence of thought among university students while, at the same time, a significant decline in the beliefs of collectivist values. His findings (Rosen 1989) noted that 87% of the students felt that their peers had "no interest at all in classes on Marxism, or at best, only a minority had some interest." Most of the students surveyed were unwilling to reorder their belief systems to reflect official values while many students challenged traditional Chinese moral concepts like "Money is the root of all evil." Rosen concluded that the Chinese Communist Party could no longer simply dictate proper attitudes and behavior for Chinese youth and confidently accept compliance.

That there was a painful gap between the official educational goals of the government and the reality of the student's perception of their education was made evident to me at a lecture I gave at Jiao Tong University during the summer of 1988. An arrangement was made for me to talk on Leadership for the Chinese-English Association at their campus on the outskirts of Shanghai. When my wife and I entered the room it was absolutely packed; students were even standing on the balconies looking in and sitting on windowsills. Since most of the students had at least ten years of instruction in English, the lecture proceeded smoothly until the question and answer period. Then, a student stood up in the middle of the room, tall, thin, and intense, and asked me whom I thought was the greatest leader in China, Premier Li Peng or Deng Xiaoping, China's top leader. Immediately I realized that no matter which one I picked, I was in trouble. I walked back and forth, pacing, appearing to be deep in thought. Then, I stopped, turned to the audience and shouted, "The greatest leader in China today is my wife!"

When the laughter died down, an inconspicuous male student with glasses asked me what kind of future I saw for China. My message was to move slowly because change has a habit of getting ahead of us. I counseled caution and said that real educational reforms should take at least five years. Silence. Total silence. The American professor who had made the necessary arrangements for the lecture was sitting in the front row and he could actually feel the hair on his neck stand up. The hostility was so great that it immobilized most people. Admittedly, patience is not one of the many characteristics of the young, but the Chinese students in the room were very impatient. They wanted it all now. We excited quickly and in the car driving back the four of us—my wife, the American professor, the President of the Chinese-English Association and myself—drove in silence. I realized that I was lucky to get out of there without being hurt.

Existential Encounters

Before we left the States, my wife chided me on the fact that I had packed 13 boxes of materials for a graduate course that I was scheduled to teach in curriculum theory. "Why do you need so much material," she said, "after all, it isn't as if you've taught that much in the past!" But my fears got the best of me and we hauled them all the way to our apartment in Shanghai. There were 24 graduate students in the course, each with a minimum of ten years instruction in English. The first couple of days I had difficulty pronouncing their names until they told me that I could call them by their English names, which they had selected for themselves, "Call me Gary Wang." When I inquired as to how they selected their English names, they said that they had picked the names of movie stars or noted figures in American or English literature. For example, many students called themselves "Mark" after Mark Twain, or "Tom" after Tom Sawyer, or "Gary" after Gary Grant. They were hard working, respectful, and appeared to be seriously interested in curriculum theory. We went through the 13 boxes in about ten weeks and I had to scramble around for more data. I worked hard but they worked harder.

They were the best students I have experienced in more than 35 years in the classroom. Imagine, then, my surprise when I learned—after we had developed a warm relationship—that students in China are told the school that they are to attend, and, in addition, their major area of study was picked for them. Many of my students did not want to be teachers and they knew that once they entered the classroom they were tied to a national curriculum which allowed no room for changes or innovations. Why, I asked myself, were they taking this course if they would not have an opportunity in the future to make curriculum decisions? I knew why I was there—I like to teach and I was interested in the material—but why were they so motivated when the school, subject area specialization, and this particular class were assigned to them. Where did they get their motivation?

The debate over low salaries for school teachers and college professors has created and publicized the idea that "education does not pay," an idea so widespread that it has created a large class of disgruntled academicians. During my stay in China, I heard intellectuals bitterly complain about their low salaries and lower status, aware of the virtual contempt in which they were held by workers and even street peddlers, who earn more money in two months than university teachers earned in a year simply by selling down jackets from a street stall.

Consequently, the value of an education is diminishing. Education has become irrelevant in the feverish quest for wealth—an irrelevance reflected in the fact that forty million children between the ages of ten and sixteen simply are not attending school. While virtually all children enroll in primary school, one-third do not continue on to junior high school and high school enrollment has plunged by 27% over the last decade. Some rural children attend school in converted Buddhist temples or abandoned buildings where conditions are often unsafe; in Beijing, children have been known to bring their own chairs to school. In rural areas, children trudge hours each way through fields to classrooms in dilapidated shacks, or they learn from teachers with barely a high school diploma.

The fact that many of the teachers in the primary and middle schools were seriously unprepared and not properly trained was brought to my attention when I visited the university English Corner. Throughout China, students, office and faculty workers, determined to learn English, gather together to practice their language skills, usually on a weekly basis and usually in a local park or on a university campus. In Beijing, they go each Sunday afternoon to a hilltop glade in the Purple Bamboo Park famous for five years as the English Corner; in Shanghai, it was held on Sunday afternoon in People's Park; at Shanghai Teacher's University it was held on Thursday afternoon at the western edge of the campus. There, the students awkwardly greet each other and launch into careful but determined conversations in English. Many of the university students who frequented the Corner were studying English on their own and it was their only opportunity to try out words they learned from tapes or books. "I learn a lot from other people. I think my English has really improved," a student once said to me. The university students consider English their best hope for going abroad—to study and perhaps, whispered a young man, "to stay for freedom."

However, a great majority of the students that I met at the English Corner were studying English at Shanghai's Teacher's University for only ten months, and then they would be assigned to a school in their province as an English teacher. These students had not passed the grueling three days of examinations that high school students are required to take to determine whether they would be admitted to a University. They would never be allowed to study for a degree, since they were required to return home at the end of their short period at the university. The English teachers they had studied with in their middle schools could read and write English, but not speak it; the teachers they had in their university English classes could not speak English. These students, who would be responsible for teaching English in their hometown schools, could barely complete a sentence and it was evident to me that their grasp of English was seriously inferior.

Each year more than 2.7 million Chinese high school students are required to take entrance examinations in seven subjects, from Chinese and Mathematics to Politics and Foreign Languages. Of the country's children who start first grade, perhaps 2% will be allowed to attend college. The young people

are permitted to retake the examination each year until they reach the age of 25 and many who fail the first time continue trying until they become discouraged. Of those students who do complete college, about one in four will be admitted to graduate study. Consequently, my graduate classes provided me with the most satisfying teaching experiences I have encountered.

The students preferred lectures and were reluctant to get involved in classroom discussions. Another American professor that I worked with structured the lesson around classroom discussions with the result that her attendance seriously dropped off: Out of 14 students, on the average, three students would attend class. They loved to laugh and definitely appreciated a teacher with a sense of humor. Unfortunately, some failed their first test because they memorized all the facts in the text but were asked to synthesize the knowledge they gained from the readings and lectures, something they had never been asked to do before. They wanted to succeed and they were willing to work hard but they needed to be given insight into the expectations of their American professors.

About midway through the semester, I learned, quite by accident, that none of my students would be allowed to fail; that is, if I failed a student then the university authorities would change the grade once I returned to the United States. It had something to do with "saving face"; they were the best and brightest and a foreigner could not indict 16 years of their educational judgment. At first, I believed that the students excelled because of my high expectations and because they liked me; instead, they coveted a scholarship to an American University—a possible route to permanent residency in the United States. The real educational tragedy in China was explained to me by a Visiting Scholar from Shanghai who is now teaching at an American university. Of the 30 graduate students who completed the Master's degree in his department, 20 of his classmates are now living in the United States, Canada, or Europe.

Periodically, about every three weeks, I would be invited to visit a middle school located in the outskirts of Shanghai Province or in a neighboring Province. We would leave early in the morning and during the four-hour drive the Chinese professor would fill me in on the history and academic status of the school we would be visiting. We would return to the university late in the evening and these days, while exhausting, were interesting and exciting. In one of the schools I visited to observe their mathematics education program, I was seated in the back of the classroom for the entire lesson. The teacher, a Chinese woman in her late forties with a master's degree, walked into the classroom and faced the students. The entire class stood up and you could hear a pin drop. At her signal the students took their seats. She wrote on the board a binomial equation. She called on a student who stood up and verbally proceeded to find the roots of the equation. I was amazed—and my background includes degrees in mathematics and eleven years public school teaching experience as a mathematics teacher. I had to write the equation in order to find the roots. If a student hesitated, she would immediately select another student to proceed with the solution.

The Chinese believe in a tracking system and their secondary mathematics courses are conducted with a heavy emphasis on verbal solutions to mathematics problems. At first I was suspicious and thought that the lesson had been rehearsed for my benefit. My Chinese colleague at Shanghai Teacher's University, a mathematics professor with a Ph.D. from New York University, invited me to take over the class. I wrote an equation on the board, selected a student and my English translator, with a background in English literature, provided me with the student's response. There were no incorrect responses. The Chinese students spend a minimum of twelve hours each week studying mathematics on the elementary level and more than ten hours in special classes with quality teachers on the secondary level. At the end of the school day, I would meet with the teachers whose classes I had observed and they were, without exception, in their forties and fifties. They had lived through the Cultural Revolution. They were resigned to staying in China.

Conclusion

I met them everywhere—at parties, lectures, friend's houses, just taking a walk—and each time I was astonished by what I can only describe as the near miracle of their energy, their seemingly unflap-

pable resilience and, in many cases, their lack of bitterness. They are young adults, usually with a college education, and their main goal is to get out of China. They dream every day of leaving their country. They seemed to me to be a kind of army of survivors—not out of any kind of sameness or lack of individuality, but because they are living a testimonial to a generation. They have survived broken promises, abandoned commitments, and they have no more hope for their future in China. Each one has their own, though highly individualized, story. At first I thought only my students wanted to go abroad, but gradually I realized that everyone wants to get out.

Traditional Chinese culture requires the complete negation of the individual and values patterns of well-defined, hierarchical personal relationships. The youth culture of China today stresses immediacy, sensation, and the self. Chinese college students are rebellious against all sorts of authority and the favorite word among the youth in China is "NO." Because Chinese college students are preoccupied with who they are, they are in conflict with traditional values and the current political system.

Fortunately, the recent significant shift in the strategies of the Ministry of Education has made it easier for many university graduates to leave and study overseas. Students interested in taking the English-proficiency test required by most universities in the United States and other English speaking countries no longer must obtain written permission from their college departments or work units or, if they are unemployed, from their neighborhood committees. The new policy has increased the number of students able to study abroad and thereby realize their dream. Prior to 1995, students were required to work at least one year doing manual labor on farms or in factories after graduation with the result that the number of Chinese students studying in the United States declined. Because this policy has been abandoned, the number of Chinese students studying overseas has increased significantly. According to current statistics, China is the leading country of origin of foreign students attending American colleges or universities, sending more than 30,000 students each year. However, many of the students cannot leave, partly because of financial considerations and partly because of the difficulty in obtaining an American visa.

The "best and the brightest," and those who show independence of spirit, are leaving. But many of them are trapped. They have no hope. But I will always remember the faces.
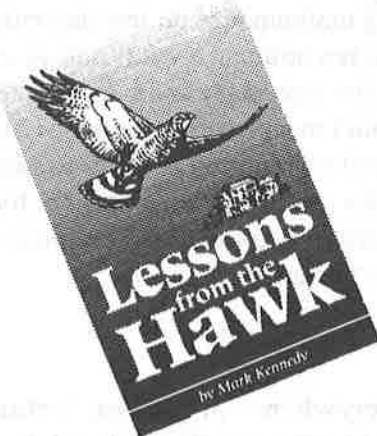
Note

1. This theme has been underscored in a report called the *Draft for the National Development of Education, 1989-2000*, a document that has been revised many times by educators and government officials.

Reference

Rosen, S. 1989, August 2. Chinese had evidence of campus skepticism over a year before pro-democracy movement. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. 21.

The Fragility of Community and Function

A Snapshot of an Alternative School in Crisis

Aaron Schutz and Ian M. Harris

Field research at a midwestern alternative school reinforces the finding that it takes more than staff commitment and caring to be successful.

In many respects, it is during the middle grades that the battle of urban education is lost.... [S]tudents become disengaged from school and fail to receive the academic preparation they need to succeed in high school. Alienated, unsure, and having received a very uneven and substandard middle-grades education, up to half the students in the nation's largest cities are unable to make a successful transition to high school.

—Balfanz and Mac Iver (2000, 138)

Educational institutions are increasingly using the term "at risk" to treat the challenges children face as if they were problems they carried within their bodies. This approach allows schools to avoid either addressing aspects of their institutions that may make them unwelcome places for some or examining the intersection between school, family, community, and the students (e.g., Margonis 1992). In lieu of self-examination, many large urban school districts have created small alternative schools for students whom they can't handle, don't want, or are falling behind standardized school norms.

This is a relatively new use of the idea of "alternative" education. In fact, in this country early alternative schools were "established in reaction to what was believed to be the authoritarian and oppressive atmosphere of the public schools" (Spring 1994, 354). These schools were often quite progressive and democratic in their structure (Kozol 1972; Neill 1960; Raywid 1993). But while some of these earlier schools are still around, and while new ones are always being developed, throughout the mid to late 1990s the idea of "alternative" schooling increasingly took on a new and more negative valence. In our city, for example, the term "alternative" has come almost entirely to refer to schools for "at-risk"

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students, schools that are often perceived by others to provide low quality remedial education (Gregory 1988).

Mary Ann Raywid (1993, 1994) describes three basic types of alternative schools. Type I schools are the kind of progressive schools most prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, generally called "magnet" or "specialty" schools today. They tend to feature a strong sense of community and student-centered, flexible learning strategies, maintaining high academic expectations for all students; they are the kinds of programs middle- and upper-class parents of high achieving students often fight to get into. Type II schools are essentially the opposite. They are "programs to which students are sentenced—usually as one last chance prior to expulsion … [and] they have been likened to 'soft jails'" (1993, 28). Type II programs generally focus on behavior modification, and their curriculum is rarely innovative, often stressing "the basics, emphasizing rote, skills, and drill." Finally, Type III alternative schools focus on students who are "at risk" for a wide range of reasons:

> students who are presumed to need remediation or rehabilitation—academic, social/emotional, or both. The assumption is that after successful treatment students can return to mainstream programs. Therefore, Type III alternatives often focus on remedial work and on stimulating social and emotional growth—often through emphasizing the school itself as a community. (p. 28)

Thirty years of research on alternative schools indicates that they can make significant contributions to helping students who have not been successful in mainstream settings catch up with their peers and continue with their education (Korn 1991, Sarason 1993, Wehlage et al. 1989). Some of the characteristics of alternative schools that have been identified as successful, characteristics that map well onto Raywid's (1993) Type I model, include:

- Students and teachers are active participants in decision making.
- Teachers hold high academic expectations for students.
- Teachers and students (and/or parents) choose to attend the schools.

- An effective administrator provides academic leadership.
- Experimentation is encouraged and valued.
- Teachers are skilled, and there are ample opportunities for ongoing teacher development.
- Learning is an engaging activity.
- There is low teacher and student mobility.
- Small size is maintained.
- A strong community with shared values and a respect for diversity is developed.
- Students are given individual attention and treated as whole individuals. (see, e.g., Cole-Henderson 2000; King, Silvie, et al. 1998; Raywid 1994; Dryfoos 1996; Franklin 1992).

In this paper, we present a case study of a relatively small (about 67 students) alternative middle-school that we call "New Hope," located in a relatively large, highly segregated Midwestern city. We discuss the history of the school, and then present a snapshot of teaching and learning at a moment when the school was essentially in crisis. We explore the ways in which this school struggled to develop from a mixture of type II and III characteristics into a more Type-I-oriented institution. As this case study shows, however, the development of more than a few of the characteristics listed above is a tall order for inadequately funded, isolated, and marginalized institutions like New Hope. This case study contributes to a relatively thin literature on how alternative schools often fail—academically and otherwise—students who have already been marginalized and rejected by the mainstream institutions of schooling (cf. Kelly 1993).

New Hope Alternative Middle School: An Overview

New Hope is located in a large comprehensive community center that we call Neighborhood Settlement House (NSH). New Hope was initially founded as an afterschool tutoring program that evolved into a small (originally 15 students) alternative high school, and finally, in 1985 into a middle school for at-risk students. At the time of our study, the school operated a full-day program from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Classes were 55 minutes long. The academic program consisted of four core classes in the morn-

ing—English, math, science, and social studies—and three other classes in the afternoon—art, gym, and health. The staff at New Hope consisted of a principal, an administrative assistant, and seven teachers: two math teachers (one Chapter I), and one teacher each for language arts, science, social studies, and art. (The school was supposed to have a gym teacher, but did not for the academic year we were involved with it.) The teaching staff was supported by three full-time and one half-time aides. New Hope served approximately 67 "at-risk" students in grades six, seven, and eight. The staff informed us that most of the students were African American, with a few Latino students, and one or two white students. In terms of staff, four teachers (social studies, mathematics, science, and art) were African American, one (English) was a black African, and one (Chapter I mathematics) was white. One of the six teachers was a woman. All four paraprofessionals were African American; two were women. The administrative assistant was an African American woman, the principal during the Fall semester was a white woman, and the principal in the Winter term was an African American woman. The school was very proud that its faculty were representative, in terms of race, of its student body.

The school was what was called a "partnership" school, the result of a cooperative venture between NSH and the local school district. Although officially a public school, the District gave wide latitude to staff at the school to develop their own academic programs and provided two District (usually certified teachers): a Chapter I mathematics teacher and an English/language arts teacher. All of the rest of the staff were employees of the Center, and their pay and benefits were substantially lower than those of the District employees. The local public school district also provided a school psychologist (who did mostly testing) and a social worker (who often conducted family visits) for a half day a week. Some additional social work and nursing support was provided for individual students by interns from the local public university through a program located at NSH.

The school was funded, in part, by a state statute that supported students designated as "at-risk," defined as: in grades 5 to 12 and one or more years behind their age group in the number of high school units attained, or two or more years behind their age group in basic school levels; and one or more of the following: dropouts, habitual truants, parents, or adjudicated juveniles. About six students were in the adjudicated category during 1998-1999.

Students were recruited through an open house held at the school and through referrals from public school counselors. For example, during a discussion with the principal, we were interrupted by a phone call from a counselor. The principal explained to us that this counselor was referring a young woman to New Hope because her teachers felt they could not handle her and had given up on her. The principal also stated that this young woman had been abused at home. Such stories, she noted, were not uncommon at New Hope, an observation confirmed by the social worker. Thus, although technically a "choice," enrollment in this school actually provided a last chance for teenagers who were being pushed out of the local public school system, and who were often struggling with issues outside of school as well.

Neighborhood Settlement House was located in the middle of a large public housing development that we will call Uptown. The center started operations in 1960, focused mostly on youth programs and daycare with some activities for seniors. Program participants were mostly white and working class. The organization continued on a small scale through the mid 1970s. Starting in the late 1970s, the demographics of Uptown and the surrounding neighborhood began to change, and more African Americans starting using the organization. At the same time, with the aid of a dynamic director, NSH began to attract federal funds and expanded. Beginning in the 1980s the focus of the agency programs began to change from more general community activities to social service activities like a food pantry, a childcare center, safety services, and the alternative school. At the time of this research project, at the end of the century, NSH had grown from a community center providing primarily youth programming to a comprehensive center which includes a satellite welfare agency, adult education, service programs for at-risk families, community development support, senior citizen programs, and a variety of afterschool programs.

The neighborhood surrounding Neighborhood Settlement House was built up in the 1950s with single family homes occupied by working class people. By 1990 portions of this neighborhood had become largely African American. The housing project and the community surrounding it had the largest African-American presence. Forty-nine percent of the

> # *We should not expect small, under-resourced schools to successfully serve students who have been rejected by, and have often rejected, the mainstream school system.*

Uptown population, compared to roughly 7 and 8% of the population of the rest of the neighborhood were below the poverty level. Educational attainment for the neighborhood was fairly stable across all sections except the Uptown housing project. Nearly 47% of the Uptown residents had not completed high school. According to the 1990 census between 25 and 31% of the adult population in the neighborhood surrounding NSH had not completed high school. We were told by the school's longtime social worker that many New Hope students had originally come from NSH's surrounding community, but, because their families were precariously housed, many had moved away, so many students sometimes traveled great distances to attend.

At the time our study, New Hope was located in the basement of a wing of the building that was originally built to house it alone. The school had five fairly small dedicated classrooms and an administrative office. Three of the classrooms were separated by accordion partitions and could be merged into one large room. Two of these three classrooms were the only ones with small windows, high up on the walls. The fourth classroom, for mathematics, was the smallest, had no windows, and was often extremely hot. The fifth was used for tutoring. The school's single hallway was painted with a brightly colored civil rights mural, and often decorated with art from the school's art class. A computer room also in the base-

ment, with fairly old IBM computers in it, was shared with NSH. After school hours, the school's space was assigned to a range of Center activities. Aboveground, the school shared a cafeteria and a gym with the Center.

Methodology

The data for this study were drawn from a qualitative evaluation of New Hope Alternative School conducted by the two authors who had been invited by the school's principal, Ms. Morris (All school personnel names are fictitious). Each of the four core classes (math, social studies, English, and science) was formally observed from 6 to 9 times, with an observer jotting notes during the lesson and writing up extensive fieldnotes afterwards. The authors made a few formal visits to the afternoon classes (gym, health, and art) and numerous more informal visits to the school and different classes.

Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted during the academic year 1998-1999 with four of the five core teachers; the science teacher declined to be interviewed. Some questions focused on a particular class that had just been observed in an effort to understand teachers' pedagogical philosophy, while others explored their experience and their opinions about the school more generally. The three staff members with the longest tenure in the school—Mr. Barber, the Chapter I math teacher (5 years), Ms. Donner, the administrative assistant (11 years), and Ms. Morris, the principal (3 years)—participated in a second interview focused on the history of the school. Other staff members were engaged in more informal dialogue. Finally, an early draft of our written evaluation of the school was distributed to the outgoing principal, Ms. Morris, the incoming principal, Ms. Jenkins, and the assistant principal (who was also the social studies teacher), Mr. Murphy, who were interviewed about their impressions of the report and who provided additional comments and information about the school. Formal interviews averaged about 45 minutes and were tape-recorded and transcribed.[1]

In addition to this qualitative data about the school, limited quantitative data, including information on attendance, retention, and the percentage of students who had passed their English and mathe-

matics classes, was available from the District's central office. Further, Jo Anne Schneider and a team of researchers, including Jamie Harris, a doctoral student who conducted an ethnography on aspects of the internal structure of NHS, were conducting a larger study of the Center and its relationship to the community. This paper draws to some extent on their work.[2]

Recent History of the School[3]

In 1994-1995, four years before the year of our study, the principal was let go near the end of the year for reasons unknown to our informants, and the school had no principal from April until the end of the year. Mr. Barber and Ms. Donner reported that many of the teachers during that year had been at New Hope for an extended period of time: A District English teacher had been there for nine years; a social studies teacher for three; and Mr. Barber was in his second year. At the end of that year, the English and social studies teachers left the school, along with two other shorter term teachers.

At the same time, a principal was hired for 1995-1996 whose background was in social work, and who had little experience in educational settings. "She had never been a teacher," Mr. Barber noted. "She had never been a principal.... That was a very chaotic year, just discipline-wise," and "there were numerous problems with the [new] staff."[4] For example, he said, during that year "we had one of the District teachers who had a problem, and so they got rid of her, and the math teacher that I worked with got another job, so she left mid-year." During that year Ms. Morris, the future principal—who, with Ms. Donner, affirmed Mr. Barber's assessment—was hired as the science teacher and a Ms. Heckman was hired halfway through the year as the social studies teacher and the lead teacher and curriculum advisor for the school. Both Ms. Morris and Ms. Heckman were certified teachers, and Ms. Heckman, although she came to New Hope directly out of college, had done her student teaching in an alternative school. Even though she had taught before, Ms. Morris noted that she had struggled because it was her first experience with "at-risk kids" and because there was no curriculum in place. "Fortunately," she said, she and Ms. Heckman "were able to bounce off of each other. I

was very strong in curriculum; she was very strong with the at-risk type of behaviors. So we were able to complement each other." Despite numerous problems, then, at this point the school actually had four certified teachers—two employed by the District and two by the Center—as well as the beginnings of a focus on a coherent curriculum for the school.

The following year, 1996-1997, Ms. Heckman became the principal of the school and Ms. Morris became the lead teacher. The English teacher from the previous year remained, as did the math teachers, and they hired a new social studies teacher to replace Ms. Heckman. A vice-principal was also hired to work mainly on discipline issues. That year, Ms. Morris said, a sense of the school as an educational community "was beginning to develop." Almost wistfully, she noted that that had been the best year for her, personally, at New Hope. Mr. Barber noted that Ms. Heckman "was pretty powerful, and everything just worked really [well]." He also pointed out that, for one of the first times, "everything was covered.... We had a lot of staff."

Ms. Heckman left at the end of that year to pursue her doctoral degree. So in 1997-1998, Ms. Morris took over as principal, when, she noted, "the school blossomed out even more." The non-Chapter-I math teacher, Mr. Murphy, and the social studies teacher were new that year, but the rest remained. For the first time, Ms. Morris brought the teachers together two weeks before the school year began so they could "come together as a unit, talk about what was going on, how it was going on, to forewarn the new teachers about what they were getting themselves in for.... So there was a support system put in place."

Although some cooperative learning and collaborative teaching had gone on in 1996-1997, the following year saw "a lot of hands-on experimentation, a lot of cooperative learning, a lot of group work in all of the classes." Ms. Morris described interdisciplinary projects like "Simple Machines," in which students were "tearing apart a motor [and] finding out how the motor works." She noted that the interdisciplinary projects even had an impact on the sense of how much "space" the school had, with students spread out through the hallway working on projects and with the partitions between classrooms often opened for cooperative projects. Mr. Barber dis-

cussed the "Sim City" project started this year "which went on for quite a few months. It started off with a computer activity and then they had to go and do the writing on it and analyze how their city went. And then they had to do their art project. So there was math, social studies, science, English..., everything was included." Ms. Donner noted that each of the different projects that year was designed to lead into the next one, and that this was perhaps the first time that the school had a planned curriculum that spanned the entire year. This year, the first year they participated, the New Hope students won the city-wide Sim City competition.

Mr. Barber said that this year "the students were more under control.... [T]here were higher expectations.... They [the students] seemed more interested. There seemed more of a bonded student body." Mr. Barber also noted that "the staff communicated really well. A lot of us had been together for at least two years and I think we got to know each other well."

It was also in 1997-1998 that the school first developed a student government, which Mr. Murphy reported "really [worked] well," a "peer judicial panel" to address student discipline, and regular school assemblies that brought the whole school together as a community.

The Year of the Study

Before the 1998-99 school year began, the school lost two core teachers: the district English teacher, who left to teach in elementary school, and the science teacher, who enrolled in an airline mechanics program. The art teacher also left, but her assistant moved up to fill her position. The full-time vice principal position was eliminated because, Ms. Donner reported, he had become increasingly physical with students and because his approach to discipline did not fit with Ms. Morris's. The vice-principal title was added to Mr. Murphy's job description, who, it was intended, was to do this work in the afternoon after teaching his morning classes. The school was also short a gym teacher, and for the first time in a number of years had no supervisor for the computer room. Nonetheless, Ms. Morris was very positive about the coming year. In historical terms, the staff was relatively stable, with many key teachers still in place from the previous year. She felt she had hired a very

strong new science teacher, and she again had brought the staff together for two weeks before the students arrived in an effort to build a cohesive teacher community, a shared set of goals, and the foundation for a strong curriculum. She had also managed to raise teacher salaries, although they were still, by a few thousand dollars, below the entering pay level for District teachers.

As the school year began, however, things began to fall apart. The social studies teacher left right at the end of the two-week preparation period, according to Ms. Morris, to get a higher paying job. Mr. Murphy, who had been the math teacher, but whose degree was actually in history, shifted into the social studies position. At the beginning of the year, then, Mr. Barber, the Chapter I math teacher, was teaching mathematics (illegally) by himself. And the first attempt to hire a new regular math teacher ended in failure; as Mr. Barber put it, "he came in for two days (laugh), saw it wasn't worth the money to put up with, so he left." Finally, a couple of weeks into the school year, the English and science teachers had a serious altercation, and both quit. "It's really hard to get teachers after Labor Day," Ms. Morris noted, "because you are really panicking. You need to fill those teacher seats." Unable to find a certified district teacher willing to work at the school on such short notice, the English position was filled by Mr. N., a long-term substitute who was not certified, and the science position was filled by a man who had previously been a school counselor. The math position was finally filled by Ms. Weiner, an engineer who had left the corporate world and who had taught science at the local community college.

By the time we entered the school in mid-October, then, New Hope was in crisis. There was little or no community or shared vision among the teachers or staff. Attendance, especially in the morning, was plummeting. There were discipline problems in many of the classes, and students were continually being sent to In School Suspension (ISS), or even being suspended. The changeover between classes had become a great source of conflict and disturbance, with teachers and students often shouting at each other, and frequent minor and sometimes not so minor altercations between students. It took a long time to clear the hallways, and students tended to wander

in and out of the classrooms. The art teacher, who also served in the morning as the ISS supervisor was so overwhelmed by the constant conflict involved in his job that he was unable to fulfill his other function, that of mentorship coordinator for the school; thus, few students were placed with mentors.

In this difficult context, each teacher focused on his or her own classroom. There were no collaborative units going on, nor were any planned. Because of the loss of staff and the challenges the school faced, important aspects of student community were lost as well. The staff members that had run both student government and the peer judicial panel had left, and no other staff members stepped in to fill these functions. There were no school assemblies during the first semester. Mr. Murphy did stage a basketball tournament between groups of students and between students and staff, but this was the only concrete effort made to foster community.

By her own admission, Ms. Morris saw herself as more a teacher-leader than a strong administrator. When she had taken over as principal, she had largely retained her duties as lead teacher, and tended to frame herself more as a collaborator than as a supervisor, seeking to foster curricular innovation and risk-taking. With respect to students, her approach focused on nurturing individual students. Despite her many strengths, once her effort to construct a school community had disintegrated, she appeared unequipped to respond to the chaotic nature of the school and to a staff without a shared vision or a commitment to working collaboratively. By November she accepted a new job in a nearby city as the teacher for a small, in-school, high school at-risk program—something she acknowledged was more in line with her skills and interests. She left New Hope in early January.

It was at this point of crisis, during October and November, that the bulk of classroom observations and more informal discussions with the faculty and staff at the school were conducted.

Quantitative Data on the School

The trajectory of this history seems to be reflected in the limited quantitative data available about the school (See Table 1). Note the slow improvement from 1994-1995 to 1997-1998 in mathematics, and

then a drop in 1998-1999. As we note below, however, the meaning of "passing" in English for 1998-99 is uncertain given the teacher at that time. Nonetheless, the largest drop comes in 1998-1999.

Table 1
Profile of New Hope School

Year	Enrollment	Students Enrolled and Retained (%)	Students Passing Math (%)	Students Passing English (%)
1994-1995	86	97.01	65.67	68.65
1995-1996	87	85.50	69.56	86.95
1996-1997	60	91.66	76.66	86.66
1997-1998	NA	97.20	85.70	84.20
1998-1999	79 [~67][a]	84.5% [~72.04][a]	81.50%	81.50%

[a] Recalculated number based on a more accurate enrollment figure

We are convinced that the retention rate in 1998-1999 is inaccurate, because the enrollment of the school in fact averaged about 67 students, while the district chart shows an enrollment of 79. When one plugs in the more accurate number of 67, the retention rate for 1998-1999 drops to about 72%. Because those students who are most struggling (students expelled because of fighting, for example) are the ones most likely not to be retained, and because only those students who are retained are counted in the math and English passing rates, the 1998-1999 mathematics passing rates are almost certainly inflated. It is important to note that these numbers should be seen only as indicators, since there was quite a lot of incentive from the point of view of the school to ensure that these numbers were high, and little incentive to ensure their strict accuracy.[5]

Pedagogy, Teacher Community, and Control

In this section, we give a sense of the pedagogy we observed in the school during October and November of 1998-1999, focusing on two of the core classes (English and social studies) and discussing the other two core courses (science and mathematics) more briefly. We then discuss the pedagogy, the teacher community, and the techniques of order and control used in the school.

English: Mr. N

Mr. N., a black African teacher, was a long term substitute employed by the school district. Although he had a college diploma and had taught in a number of other city schools, he was not certified to teach. Mr. N.'s classroom was the middle of three classrooms (science and social studies) that were separated by accordion partitions, and from the other two classes one could often hear loud conversations and sometimes shouting, Mr. N.'s voice booming out over those of the students. When we observed, Mr. N. and his paraprofessional, Mr. Allen, often told students to "be quiet," and to "do your work," although at other times they appeared to let students mostly alone. Mr. N. would often eject a student from class, although it was difficult for us to determine why one student was ejected while others were not. At the same time, however, Mr. N. often got up and wandered around the classroom, engaging individual and groups of students in animated discussions. At the end of class, the noise level tended to rise as students finished (or stopped) working and began chatting and sometimes roughhousing with each other and Mr. N., making it difficult for the few students still working to continue.

We observed, and Mr. N confirmed, that students in his classroom largely engaged in one of four different tasks: reading out loud from a written passage, working individually on answering worksheet questions, writing an essay in response to a prompt, or finding and writing out word definitions from the dictionary. Mr. N. argued that these tasks were representative of what students needed to know for proficiency exams. Mr. N. made no distinctions by grade, so all students in a particular day were engaged in the same tasks.

From Fieldnotes:[6] *October 27*

First period. For about half the period there are only two students in the classroom. Mr. N. asks me[7] to work with one of them on the day's worksheet. Mr. N. walks in and out of the classroom. Halfway through the period, other students start coming in, talking loudly with each other and Mr. N. Mr. Allen, the paraprofessional, comes in at this point, but neither encourages students to get to work. A student who is brand new to the school is brought in by a staff member and introduced to Mr. Allen. He is handed a worksheet but he doesn't do anything with it. He just sits in the back, holding it.

Second period. Students slowly trail in, picking up worksheets and sitting down. Mr. Allen asks one young woman to sign the attendance form. She asks him to put it down; he asks her to take it. Mr. N. is not in the room. They stare each other down; eventually he puts it down. Later, I notice that the girl has signed it. Three young women sitting together are working through the worksheet very quickly, occasionally chatting with each other. Three guys just sit and talk with each other for most of the period. At some point, one of the guys gets a hold of a paper with the answers on it, and they trade it around, copying. Other students are mostly sitting quietly alone. Few are working on the worksheet. When the three young women finish, they start chatting with each other, and one starts drawing pictures. About halfway through the period Mr. N. comes in and announces that he wants everyone to do an essay, noting that they need to write every day. He pages through a book (of essay topics?) and writes "What can I do to diffuse family tension?" on the board. No one seems to pay much attention. He walks up to the three guys, who hide their answer sheet, and tells them that they are going to write every day, that they aren't just punching a clock. They don't look at him. Mr. N. says "I understand you resist me." The guys ask him to say something in his native language, and he does. Then Mr. N. asks, "Why don't you try to give me one page?" No one in the room works on this, and Mr. N. does not mention it again. He spends the rest of the period alternately at his desk and going around the room chatting with students.

We interviewed Mr. N. after observing in a class during the next semester where students were to write out definitions of a list of words from the dictionary. He argued that this was an effective way for them to learn vocabulary for their proficiencies and to ensure that "they'll be able to carry on a conversation without cussing." When he noted that students usually can't remember the meaning of these words even after they have written them out, we suggested some alternative strategies for learning vocabulary. He responded that he had already cut the number of

definitions they had to write out from twenty-five to fourteen. He then told a story about how he had learned to study when he was younger by figuring out that the more successful students in his classes drilled themselves on the material after school. His students "hate to work," he noted, "and that's why I still have to drill them with vocabularies." At the end of the interview he agreed to "try" some different strategies, but stated that his students "just want to go home and get high. That's all they think about. I say, well, you can go home after you do things in my class."

He said he felt most successful when he was "giving them work, even though they don't feel like working. When I can get them to come through with it, you see, that's a start. Because these kids don't really like school." He also cited his success at "getting them to get up and come every day." When asked how he did this, he said,

> I've become like a big uncle, a daddy, and everything for them (laughs) which they don't get at home. A lot of them don't have any male figure in the house. So it's an ongoing process … [to] put your arm around them like my own.

Social Studies: Mr. Murphy

Mr. Murphy was an African American teacher, uncertified, who had received his degree in history from the state's most prestigious institution, where he had played on their football team. This was Mr. Murphy's second year in the school, but his first year teaching social studies. He was also the assistant principal in the school, and because of the continuing discipline issues during the first semester, he was constantly pulled out of his classroom to deal with problems. Nonetheless, students were often on-task for at least part of the time. Students seemed to respect him, and he them. He said, and we observed, that "I keep my classes really open," allowing students the "freedom to speak up and talk," to bring up issues that were important to them from their own lives.

From our observations and discussions with him, his classes during the Fall semester tended to be dominated by full-class discussion and individual work on worksheets, with some other activities like learning the state capitols and constructing timelines.

From Fieldnotes: October 21

Second period. Students sit facing the teacher's desk and blackboard. I come in and Mr. Murphy is talking to two male students. He asks one student "why did you get into that" and points out that when the student blames someone else, the student is responsible for his own actions. He warns a different student that if he keeps it up, he'll end up in detention. "Only me?" the student asks with a big smile. "Everyone," Mr. Murphy said, "but especially you, because you have a habit of doing this." The student doesn't respond. "Do you understand?" Mr. Murphy asks. They stare at each other until the student's smile drops for just a moment and he nods. Mr. Murphy nods back. He asks students to get out their copied textbook chapter on Julius Caesar. He asks a couple questions, but no one answers, so he tells them about the similarities between Caesar and Hitler, relating this to youth gangs and the way friends who join different gangs suddenly start hating each other, which he calls "ridiculous." The students begin reading out loud from the chapter, one after the other. When they finish, Mr. Murphy assigns them to answer the questions at the back of the chapter. Chatter between students increases. Mr. Murphy works at the front and occasionally tells someone to stop talking. Few of the students are actually working on the questions. I watch one student who seems to understand the factual questions (even if he seems to be largely guessing at the answers), but who can't figure out what to do with a "critical thinking" question that doesn't have a clear answer.

From Fieldnotes: November 3

Second period. Students go to their seats fairly quickly. Mr. Murphy refers to the chapter on ancient Rome they had been reading last time, and notes that he is happy to see two students who had been missing the day before. He starts going through the "Lesson Review" questions at the end of the worksheet. At the question "What did Jesus teach?" he notes that many of the evils of the world are the result of money. They have a long discussion about what an "empire" is, with Mr. Murphy giving many different possible examples from students' present day expe-

rience. A number of different students are throwing out answers to different questions, and most of the class seems to be paying attention. Mr. Murphy seems to search for the "right" answer with his questions, but often acknowledges the worth of student contributed ideas.

Mr. Murphy said that in his classes he tried to "generally broaden what is generally taught [about history] in schools." For example, he said, "because 99% of our population is African American" he looked at how this affected African Americans at that time"—partially in response to his own school experience when he had gotten only "the dominant perspective." He worried that "history could be a very boring subject" and tried to "tie it in to what is going on today."

When we discussed the limitations we were seeing with individualized work on worksheets, he agreed, noting that, "One of the things I noticed early on is that if you give a kid a worksheet and give him the questions, he can answer every question and not know what he read." In response, he said, he had increasingly moved away from having them read silently, and had begun to avoid giving them the questions right after the end of the "packet," sometimes even making up his own questions. Increasingly, he said, he aimed to "discuss what we read as we go through it" instead of simply answering questions afterwards. "I know that if we just read it, they wouldn't get the information."[8] Even by mid-April, however, he still acknowledged "an over-reliance on worksheets."

When asked what he most needed help with and what his strengths were, he complained about limited resources. Further, he noted that "we're not able to get as much training as we would probably need to get," both in-service training, and trained teachers who are willing to work at New Hope. He said he thought his

> strength is being able to relate to these kids, being able to build them up as people within the class and make them feel good about themselves so that they can succeed. But I need to understand and get training on long-term curriculum class planning. I'd like to see how other teachers go about their classroom management,

> [and] get other ideas about how to present material.

He also noted that he sought out two students, a male and a female, at the beginning of the school year to mentor outside of school.

> I try to help them in life. And ... generally ... other kids see that ... and they gravitate to me, and I try to do the same thing with them. It's very time consuming, but it works. When they develop a strong relationship with you, there's nothing they won't do for you in school.

Science

The science class, taught by an African American teacher who had been a school counselor, was largely silent, with students working individually, or sometimes quietly in groups on worksheets. No experiments were done in the time we were there, and there was no large group discussion except that the teacher said he occasionally brought in topical speakers. All four grades did the same worksheet on the same day. As the teacher said once at the beginning of class as he handed out worksheets, "you know what to do. This is what we do here every day."

In an early meeting with the teachers, the science teacher noted of the students in the school that "most of their lives are filled with difficulty. So there are other things they get when they come here. Every student is bonded with somebody here." He mentioned two brothers in specific who "want a mentor, ... wanted some love. All they wanted was" and he hit his two fists together. "It is so trivial, but to them it is not." He argued that "all kids are the exception and not the rule" and that a key duty at the school was to get them to believe in themselves.[9]

Mathematics: Mr. Barber and Ms. Weiner

Although Mr. Barber was the Chapter I teacher, he taught the upper level mathematics classes himself, and Ms. Weiner taught the lower grades. Although they tended not to work together much during the Fall semester, Ms. Weiner, who acknowledged that she was learning from Mr. Barber, seemed largely to follow his lead. Mr. Barber argued that the chaotic nature of Fall semester limited his repertoire of teaching strategies, and when we observed, most of

his and Ms. Weiner's teaching, like Mr. Murphy's, focused on whole-group discussions and individual (or informally paired) seatwork, although they did speak of engaging the class occasionally in group efforts like data collection. Worksheets were often constructed by the teachers themselves and included, for example, word problems that they felt would relate to the students' experience. Often they had students come up to the board to work through problems. Students in their classes seemed to be paying attention and willing to participate, although they tended to lose focus when asked to do seatwork. Mr. Barber was stern with the students, but always responsive to student questions and concerns, even apologizing to a student he had accused of something when the student requested it. At one point when one of Mr. Barber's approaches to a problem failed, he stopped and asked the class "Why didn't this work?" A number of students chimed in with ideas, and he tried to figure it out with them on the overhead.

In an interview during the Fall semester, Mr. Barber noted that

> my expectations have not changed from year to year. But I find that sometimes the students are not doing something in one class, and [when] I get them I have to get them rolling. Last year they knew every day they were going to come in and do something.

"This year," he acknowledged, "has been very challenging." He argued that while the staff had changed, "the students pretty much have been constant through the whole thing in terms of capabilities of grade level, behavior," etc. Despite challenges, he and Ms. Weiner worked to get the students ready for next year's material.

Discussion

Most of the teachers resorted to what we interpreted as a strategy of imposed silence and isolation, using individualized worksheets as much as a tool for control as for pedagogical reasons. Despite important differences, in all the classes, to one extent or another, there was an effort to ensure that students did not talk with each other, that they remained focused on their own work.[10] In mathematics and social studies we saw more flexibility than in science and English, but Mr. Barber (who had a history of en-

gaging students in more cooperative projects) and Mr. Murphy (who had recently attended a 6-week seminar on cooperative learning) both stated that the climate of the school and the lack of a shared set of expectations across teachers that year made collaborative learning efforts extremely difficult. The only sanctioned interaction in these classes, then, was generally between students and teachers.

Students who were ejected from classes for a range of reasons were sent to the In-School Suspension (ISS) room where, again, they were expected to work quietly without talking. Thus, silence was both a common structure for regular courses and was used as a punishment for students who were often having difficulty for whatever reason keeping silent. When we observed in the ISS room, students were bored and resentful, constantly challenging the authority of the art teacher whose unhappy job it was to control student behavior. Students who did not conform were sometimes threatened with afterschool suspension. Many students who ended up in ISS were known to be facing crises outside school. Yet, although students often arrived at ISS angry and upset, no effort was made to understand what their issues might be, or to speak with them compassionately, nor was there any effort made to negotiate their eventual return to the class from which they had been ejected.

A second strategy that appeared at least partially designed to assist in student control—and one that apparently was shared by all of the staff—was the attempt to form strong personal bonds with individual students. As one of the paraprofessionals noted: "If they act up in school, they want attention. Something as simple as a hug can quiet a kid for an entire day."[11] Individual students were taken to lunch by teachers, staff members had contacts with students throughout the school day, and a few staff members met with students in out-of-school activities. Often staff could speak in detail about individual students' lives. The idea of the school as a kind of "family" seemed important to many staff.[12] And most staff noted that such relationships did, in fact, improve the climate at the school.

Despite some similarities, the broad diversity of pedagogical styles and philosophies evident in the school, the fact that the teachers had little time to

work together before the start of school, the tendency of teachers to retreat to their own classrooms in response to the difficult climate, linked with the lack of teacher training and/or experience with effective middle school teaching, blocked the development of a common vision in the school.

The Students

Students at New Hope were labeled "at risk," a term that Placier (1996, 237) has argued was in large part "intentionally created (borrowed, actually) to draw new attention to the same groups of students labeled by the discarded CD [culturally disadvantaged/disabled] terms" of the 1960s and 1970s.[13] As Margonis (1992) and others (e.g., Fine 1995, Swadener 1995) have noted, while the term "at risk" was originally created to focus on the ways schools and other structures of society failed students, it was quickly transformed into a description of failings and limitations of the children themselves.

In our evaluation of New Hope we did not collect detailed data on individual students. Thus, we cannot say much about the students' backgrounds, although discussions with staff and the school's long-time social worker indicated that many had faced, and continued to face, very difficult experiences in their lives. What we did observe, however, were some of the creative practices of resistance that students evolved. Furthermore, we observed, and teachers reported, that when presented with engaging and challenging material, New Hope students were, in fact, capable of often sophisticated academic work.

Much of the time in school was spent filling out worksheets. So students developed innovative strategies for quickly completing their worksheets. Students found ways, for example, to use the structure of the worksheet itself to help them answer questions without needing to achieve much comprehension. In one case, the last page of a worksheet asked students to match words with their definitions. The questions looked like the following:

    1. to degrade, _ u _ _ _ _ _ _ _

On the surface, it might appear that such an exercise would require that students actually know what word corresponded with "degrade." However, as we watched, we began to see more and more students flipping back and forth between the last and the next to last page. It turned out that the "word maze" on the previous page had a list of words next to it that exactly matched the words the students needed to fill in their blanks. Many students had completed this "word maze" early-on in their work on the worksheet, perhaps because it was one of the easier parts of the worksheet (requiring no comprehension to complete). Students quickly realized that they simply needed to find the words in the list that fit with the blanks.

In fact, as other scholars have found (e.g., Weis 1990), in those classes most focused on worksheets we observed that students very often "cheated" when teachers were not looking. We would argue, however, that the idea of "cheating" loses much of its moral meaning when little clear and direct connection is being made to learning. In this context, copying from others, when one can get away with it, may appear to be simply another strategy for getting one's "work" done, a kind of "penetration" (Willis 1977) into the true "economy" of the classroom.

Furthermore, when students were provided with challenging and engaging learning opportunities, they often participated quite energetically. We saw this most in social studies, mathematics, and in the few art classes we visited.

Resources and Relationship with Neighborhood Settlement House

The major resource issue mentioned by nearly all interviewed was the low salaries of non-District teachers at the school. "That's why they can't keep teachers here," Mr. Barber said, looking back over his six-year tenure, "because they can't pay…. That's why every year there's a whole new slew of teachers." Ms. Morris agreed, noting that although she had fought for and gotten a raise for the teachers in 1998-1999,

> it's still not going to be enough. What draw would there be for a teacher that's coming out of the [local university], who is certified, to go and teach at New Hope? There isn't any…. The feel I get is that teachers come here for the year or two, because it looks good on a resume, and then they leave.

Not only were salaries at New Hope lower than the entering salary for District teachers, but New Hope's budget, paid through a flat fee per student from the District, was topped out, leaving little room for future raises, given their configuration at the time, while the salary schedule for District teachers went quite high over time. The pension for District teachers was quite generous, while there was no pension for New Hope staff.[14]

The school also lacked a full-time counselor or social worker, something many staff members mentioned as a crucial problem. The school's half-day social worker was augmented by a social work outreach program from the local university located at the Center, and a number of individual students met with social work students doing internships. However, Mr. Murphy echoed other staff comments when he noted that "the [interns] are pretty close to not effective," since they weren't there all the time and didn't know the students, staff, or the school. However, we tended to agree that with enough qualified teachers, the school might be able to work relatively effectively without more of such support. Staff also complained about other resource problems, like limited access to textbooks.

Finally, the school's relations with NSH were generally not good. NSH was pursuing a charter school for elementary students, in part because some of the staff of the organization and their clients felt threatened by the older New Hope students. Although 34% of NSH's clients also came from outside the neighborhood, staff resented students bringing what they perceived as gang conflicts and other problems from "outside" the community.[15] Certainly the recent history of the school was one of marginalization. Perhaps the best indication of this was NSH's progressive movement of the school into the basement. Originally the school was located in a specially built wing, and as recently as three years before our study about half of the school was still above ground. But by the time we arrived, the entire school was in the basement with the exception of lunchtime use of a room upstairs for a cafeteria and afternoon use of the gym. This meant a significant loss of space (and window light) for New Hope. Furthermore, all of their space was in use after the school day ended, making it difficult to engage students in afterschool activities. In addition, few students participated in NSH's range of services. For example, no student had his or her child in NSH's daycare center, and students were often forced to bring their children to school.

Conclusion

> We could get things perfect this year, starting over next month could be perfect, and that would be till June. And then we'd be starting over next year again with a whole new batch of teachers, which brings in different styles and beliefs and everything else.
>
> —Mr. Barber

What we perceived at New Hope was a school that had begun a slow shift away from what Raywid (1994) termed a Type III institution towards a Type I institution. Yet such development moved slowly in the face of constant turnover in critical staff members. And when the school faced a major crisis, the school appeared to begin to decline into the model of a Type II institution, increasingly depending, perhaps in spite of itself, on punitive action against disruptive students. We generally did not observe practices associated with successful alternative schools: Students were not active participants in decision making; often teachers did not hold students to high academic standards; students were not generally engaged in learning; and there was little experimentation.

In their efforts to improve low-performing, high poverty middle schools, Balvanz and Mac Iver (2000) learned a series of lessons relevant to our tale. First, they argue that "inattention to the technical core of schooling is a major source of poor student performance in high-poverty middle schools" (p. 142). Simply altering the nature of a school community, while important, is not enough to raise student achievement without qualified teachers and a strong curriculum, something New Hope generally lacked. Second, reforming such schools "requires multiple layers of sustained technical assistance and implementation support" (p. 147). Yet both NSH and the District appeared to expect New Hope to be able to reform itself (to the extent they were actually concerned about this) by drawing primarily on its own limited pedagogical resources. Finally, Balfanz and Mac Iver argue that "the pervasive mobility of teach-

ers, administrators, and students continually threatens the sustainability and institutionalization of even proven reforms" (p. 150). Even as they were providing extensive technical and other supports to the schools they worked with, Balfanz and his colleagues struggled to maintain their momentum in the face of staff and student mobility. In fact, Cole-Henderson (2000), in her study of schools that successfully serve low-income African American students found that one of the key characteristics of these schools was that they had highly qualified teachers, with very little teacher turnover.[16] Faculty quality and stability, however, are luxuries that New Hope has rarely been able to achieve.

One of the suggestions we made in our report on the school was that it consider rethinking its staffing structure. As an epilogue to the report, in the Fall of 2000 we spoke to the fourth principal that the school has had in the two years since Ms. Morris left (nearly all the other staff had left as well), who told us that for the first time the school was paying teachers the same as the entering salary for District teachers, in part, apparently, by eliminating the art teacher and some paraprofessional positions. This is also the first year that all teachers in the school have been certified. Again, however, the school's budget is essentially topped out at this level. Nonetheless, the new principal spoke of her hope that she could at least keep teachers for three years before they left to seek higher salaries and benefits. Thus the school is beginning yet another cycle of rebuilding. It remains to be seen whether this new pay structure will lead to stability.

Our fundamental message is that we should not expect small, under-resourced schools to successfully serve students who have been rejected by, and have often rejected, the mainstream school system. Small alternative schools that wish to have small class sizes and extra support for students require more, not less, funding. Commitment and caring, as Balfanz and Mac Iver, among others, point out, are simply not enough. Linking a school to a large community center, like Neighborhood Settlement House, while certainly a move in the right direction, is no panacea if the core functions of the school itself are not supported, and if the larger organization is not fully supportive of the school and its challenges. A

coherent curriculum, effective pedagogy, and a strong teacher and student community do not arise simply because we wish them to, or because a group of caring but not particularly qualified individuals come together, even if teacher-student ratios are as low as they are at New Hope.

Such stories are important to tell. In the literature, as we noted in our introduction, we tend to mainly hear of successful programs, like Deborah Meier's (1995), or many of the schools profiled in different issues of the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*. Sadly, we observed students at New Hope disengaging from academics. We fear that these students, having received an uneven and substandard middle grade education, are being set up for further failure in high school. While there are certainly exceptions, we generally cannot expect high quality "alternative" education to be achieved on the cheap, or as a part of some quick fix. And even where achieved momentarily, in small schools like New Hope where institutional memory, trust, and community lie not in the cold data banks of a computer but in the daily practices of staff, the loss of even a few key staff members can weaken or even destroy these practices. This case study indicates that even the limited success of such institutions is extremely fragile.

Notes

1. Unlike this paper, the evaluation which was given to the NSH Board of Directors and distributed to the staff of the school focused on general issues in the school without describing or identifying the specific pedagogy of any individual teacher.

2. See J. Harris (1999) and Schneider (1999). The work of this team was funded by grants from the Opportunities Industrialization Center and the Petit Foundation.

3. Parts of the discussion in this section about NHS and its surrounding neighborhood were drawn from Schneider (1999).

4. Quotes from interviews have been edited for clarity. Anything that was cut from a quote that was deemed substantive by the authors is indicated with ellipses. Quotes that are not from taped interviews are as jotted down at the time and partially reconstructed afterwards; thus they are usually probably not entirely verbatim and at least partially paraphrased.

5. In fact, we know of at least one case in which reports on students who had been M-teamed were not completed on time by teachers and were quickly constructed by others in order to meet District requirements. Further, when we collected this information from the central office, the administrator for the partnership program noted in surprise that both the reading and mathematics passing rates were exactly the same in 1998-99.

6. Fieldnotes have been rewritten and often summarized for readability, focus, and space reasons.

7. These are from fieldnotes taken by Schutz.

8. Although this is from an interview conducted during the Spring semester, as the example from November 3 indicates and as other observations also showed, he was already moving in this direction in the Fall.

9. These quotes are taken from fieldnotes.

10. This was even true in the one formal visit we made to the art class, the only class where we overheard a student ask, "Is it [the class period] already over?" At one point the instructor left the room. Although students were fairly diligently engaged in their individual drawing tasks, a couple of the students started talking quietly to each other as they worked. When the teacher returned to the class, however, the students were immediately told to work without talking, and a radio was turned on.

11. From fieldnotes.

12. Interestingly, this approach does in fact seem to resemble what Clark 1987, 3) has described as the "home management strategies" of parents of high achieving students who justify "restricting a ... youth's decision-making powers" by telling her what is "right" and "good," and, among other things, by "providing liberal and emotional support."

13. Both Margonis (1992) and Placier (1996, 238) note that the term was originally designed as a critical response to the "excellence reports" of the early 1980s, but "the transformation of the concept *at risk* into a deficit notion has been accomplished as policymakers have conveniently neglected the account of institutional injustice that previously accompanied the term."

14. In fact, J. Harris, the center's ethnographer, noted that among some of the administrative staff at the center there was almost a feeling of pride that they paid lower salaries, across the board (not just in the school) than other similar sites around the city.

15. There was, J. Harris stated, a fear among staff that a negative perception of the Center might develop that could prevent people from coming, leading to a general shift towards more adult programming. They worried that the image of a metal detector (for the students) and fights presented an image not conducive to increased private funding. Because of a lack of data collection, the staff did not have the perception that so many of their clients actually came from outside their service area.

16. "Quantitative analyses" in recent work by Darling-Hammond (2000, 2) "indicate that measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status."

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Silence in Praxis

A Good Word on the Good of Silence

Molly Quinn

Silence has an important place in the curriculum, education, and pedagogy because it is the ultimate source of the living, creative word.

Though generally unbeknownst to us in contemporary times, there is an art of keeping silence—what the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh (1995, 49) calls a "sitting and looking deeply … like being a mother hen covering her eggs. One day insight … [is] born like a baby chick." Sages through all the ages, in fact, have discovered wisdom and attained enlightenment in the stillness upon solitary mountains, in lonely deserts or empty caves, attesting to the power and beauty of silence. As educators, of course, we may not be so bold as to aspire to wisdom or enlightenment or divine revelation, yet certainly we are concerned with the jewels of knowledge, understanding, and insight into the nature of things. At the heart of the academic tradition, even in the West, lies the Socratic notion that the unexamined life is not worth living, that understanding truly comes only through the contemplative turn in which we withdraw from life momentarily to listen to it and hear its voice in the stillness. In order to really see what is, and learn of it, we must examine the life-world by attending to it, being present with it, and closing our mouths long enough to let it speak to us and manifest its treasure.

Even so, silence is generally unthought, and certainly not an aim, with teachers or teacher educators, curriculum theorists, or philosophers of education. Teachers and teacher educators may strive for silence, but by this they mean the absence of noise—particularly from students, an external manifestation of order and control. Or, alternately, they may actually seek the end of silence, working rather to give voice to students whose silence represents timidity or disinterest, perhaps even confusion, more than reflective intent. Theorists and philosophers may attend to silence, and its reality in relation to power, though generally their focus is also on silence as an oppressive rather than expressive influence, one

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which operates to impede the educational process. Here silence is painted in the negative—the absence of expression or voice, its repression or subjugation at the hands of that which is louder. Their interest lies in uncovering and critiquing the monologues, diatribes, and unequivocal agendas that dominate educational thought and practice, that work to silence and thus marginalize a host of others. For instance, Dwayne Huebner (1968; 1999) has underlined teaching as a way of being with others primarily in language; the focus is drawn to language and its use with the aim of giving greater voice to all, given the detrimental impact of silencing. Consequently, with the kind of thinking about silence which prevails, we might be tempted to conceive of it principally as dictatorial, as evidence of injustice, the weight of which we must seek to eradicate.

But what do we really understand or know of, or see into, the heart of silence? Is there not some side of silence that we are in fact silencing in envisioning it solely in this way? Is our present portrait enough? Do we have the full picture? Have we reached the final word, or might we not add to this work—extend, enrich, and complicate it by inquiring further into silence? What of the silence through which insight is said to be born? What of the silence called for in the reflective moment that leads to genuine understanding? Fully aware, then, of the importance of voice and the horror of silencing, and not wishing in any way to undermine the significance of attending to such issues, let us here inquire into these questions. Let us also see if we may formulate some argument in defense of silence by highlighting the good of silence, a lost beneficence—particularly in curriculum, education and pedagogy; by suggesting that there is no true voice—liberating, living, creative word—that does not come out of, emerge from, that is not born of silence; and positing a dialectic or dialogical relationship between voice and silence.

What, first, is good about silence? It is written, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:28), a proverb generally meant to be inclusive of women as well. The message is that if we want to just look good, all we have to do is shut up! What is affirmed here is that silence is related to understanding; just shutting the mouth can not only save but enhance a reputation. We, in academia, who trade in words and make a living at language, are of course slow to recognize this truth; yet, could we not think of but one faculty meeting and imagine the beauty and wisdom of silence? Profoundly present is the unacknowledged call of and longing for silence, a welcome relief and marked contrast to what we are rather generally mired in: an addictive attachment to voluminous voice, verbal excessiveness. More seriously to the point, if language revolves around the "I" and the articulation of the self, silence turns on the "eye," getting beyond the ego-identity, opening oneself to a bigger view, the place of in-sight or understanding that transcends the self (Das 1998; 1999).

Silence not only makes us look good, it is good for us, literally, at a cellular level. A number of medical studies like those done at Harvard by Herbert Benson (1984; 1997; 1999; Benson & Klipper 1976) have provided evidence that silence of a certain sort effects positive physiological changes. During silent meditation, participants exhibit decreased oxygen consumption, metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing and brain wave rates. This state is opposite physiologically to what is called the stress or fight/flight response, and is biochemically and metabolically different from sleep or hibernation. Such findings speak to the importance of the intentional and conscious practice of silence. Another study has shown that silent meditation can reduce PMS symptoms by 53% and increase the ability to conceive, positively impacting pregnancy rates. The timeless truth that there is "a time to speak, and a time to be silent" (Ecclesiastes 3: 7b) seems to be "hard-wired" in us, and clearly mirrored in the physical world: For example, the heart must fill and then empty to sustain life in us. Benson, a physician and researcher who studies the "physiology of silence," surveyed world religious literature and found that all religions included the practicing of silence as a path for achieving union with the divine. He also went on to test devoted religious meditators, who showed the same metabolic changes in their bodies as randomly sampled participants in the stress studies mentioned above. A Christmas favorite, the hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night" alludes to the connection silence has with peace of mind (and body),

and the act of entering into the sacred. Susan Osborne (1999), drawing from her experience with indigenous traditions, speaks of silence as one of four well-known balms or salves that heals the soul, as well as the body.

Given the empirical evidence of the beneficial impact of silence upon the body, it is perhaps not surprising that the wisdom traditions the world over praise and promote the good of silence. Human encounter with the ground of truth, and the apprehension of wisdom, accordingly, is said to require an experience beyond language, inexpressible in words but profound and transformative. This inarticulable practice is deemed a prerequisite for understanding deeply what it means to be human, for living life in the full field of awareness. In this sense, silence is, perhaps paradoxically, about waking up, about being actually present in life rather than unconsciously following our human tendency to control, change, run, know. The advocacy of silence critiques the way in which we are wed to our own knowing, to intentionality and agency, and equates such with power (Kabat-Zinn 1994; 1999). Being silent is here not a sign of passivity or resignation, but rather it is an incredible challenge, an immensely courageous act of commitment—an act of love in the sense that we seek to genuinely meet and embrace what is present, and be changed through such an encounter in ways we cannot predict beforehand. For, in itself this being-with is transforming, and draws us into a deeper kind of awareness and knowing.

We generally look to the East for the best known proponents of silence, yet our slighted Western traditions provide them as well. There are the Christian mystics, regarded by many to have adopted in a more authentic way the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth than the institutions of the Church; and they are known to have dwelt much in silence for holy revelation and for the experience of divine love. Socrates, credited with the founding of much of the Western academic tradition, extolled the contemplative life, as consummation and summation of the practical life; a silent retreating from the marketplace seen to be necessary to a life of wisdom that apprehends the good, the true, and the beautiful. The very project of education, as inherited by Socrates' student Plato,

represents in part the fruit and nurturing of this contemplative call.

The Buddha, of course, has more directly and perhaps successfully inspired the path of meditation. Presented with some of the contemporary portraits of the meditative turn, from New Age spiritualities to corporate business inspirational strategies, we might be misguided, though, into thinking of the contemplative as some spiritual individualist; we may misconstrue this commitment to silence as an essentially narcissistic act of the self which does good only to the one who practices it.

Yet, the Buddhist pursuit is clearly the practice of silence for insight, and this enlightenment is not perceived to be for oneself ultimately but to relieve the suffering of the world. In both Eastern and Western traditions, this silence, then, is integrally related to voice and action and is vitally connected to praxis, thoughtful action: It is creative, effectual, and operates in the way of justice, of the good. We must not be mistaken: The practice of silence, while not always explicitly so, is implicitly political; we might add, partly because it is transformative. The one who is silent hears, sees the world anew, or we might say, touches reality, and is changed thereby; the one who is silent is alone deemed capable of genuine response, because only this one has become truly present, perceiving what actually is, and who realizes the self and its freedom within a larger view. From this "centering" comes awakening, insight into the pain borne of our fear of freedom and flight from it, and a deeper and broader understanding of suffering. This silence gives birth to a wisdom, then, which empowers and stirs one up to a compassionate response in the face of human suffering, powerlessness, injustice—to the call of the political. Thus, even Socrates, accused of impiety toward the gods and of corrupting the youth, is put to death, in part, through his proclamation and practice (Plato 365/1994); and many a mystic has been imprisoned, burned at the stake, or persecuted or executed in some other fashion: Contemplation calls forth questioning, critique, and compassionate action.

We might consider, for instance, a more contemporary figure, honored for his political courage and influence, Ghandi, who actually took a vow of a year's "political silence" in 1926. Here is an inspira-

tional figure and world leader who intentionally built silence into his life as necessary for his work, a practice he reports learning from Trappist monks in South Africa. Says Ghandi (in Fischer 1962), on the blessings of silence:

> Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man and silence is necessary to surmount it. A man of few words will rarely be thoughtless in his speech.... We find so many impatient to talk.... All this talking can hardly be ... of any benefit to the world. It is so much waste of time. My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth. (p. 27)

> [I]t has often occurred to me that a seeker after truth has to be silent. I know the wonderful efficacy of silence ... we are frail human beings. We do not know very often what to say. If we want to listen to the still small voice that is always speaking within us, it will not be heard if we continually speak. (pp. 239-240)

> [When one chooses to dwell in silence,] ... there is time for thought.... Experience has taught me that silence is a part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth.... Silence of the sewn-up lips is no silence. One may achieve the same result by chopping off one's tongue but that too would not be silence. He is silent who having the capacity to speak utters no idle word. (p. 240)

In the words of the poet Theodore Roethke (in Cameron 1992, 11): "A mind too active is no mind at all." And while those who labor in the fields of education may make no claim upon the pastures of spiritual enlightenment, the terrain of the mind is one they cannot ignore, and thus the import and impact of silence demands here a hearing.

Some correlating scholarly research examines the study and art of silence, from which we might draw to strengthen our defense of silence and elucidate further its relationship to the creative word, as well as to freedom and praxis. From the legacy of Socrates, we sense that silence is highly important to the impulse behind education: We undertake the examination of the life-world toward worthy living in part through the call of detachment: a disengagement

from the world, and the word, in order to perceive it more clearly. Herein is affirmed the implicit role silence plays in the work of theory; the apprehension of truth—enlightenment, as it were—can only occur when we step back momentarily from doing and speaking in order to see, behold, discern, and hear. True, by and large, silence itself is under-theorized and under-mined; even the theoretical turn often amounts to the act of merely stepping back to hear ourselves talk, rather than to really listen and see, and then speak the truth, or wisdom, which emerges from the place of silence.

Yet, the power and necessity of silence is at least also implicated in the works of several modern philosophers. For example, Jacques Derrida (1967/1974, 1998), along with others who follow him in post-structural criticism, has focused on our partiality for "the metaphysics of presence," drawing attention to the force of what is "said" in the absence, the puissance of the unspoken; or what Hans-Georgs Gadamer (1960/1992) speaks of as "the unsaid." Derrida's critique suggests that we tend to paint reality in the positive, attending only to being; thus, he seeks to highlight the negative space, which, as in art, is critical to the substance of any composition but often goes unthought and unexamined. He strives to show how being is constituted in part by non-being, by nothingness; how the force of what is said is likewise constrained and shaped by what is not said. For Gadamer, the unsaid deeply impregnates the hermeneutics, or interpretation, of understanding. The moment of understanding is deemed to be an experience, a happening. This happening involves a fusion of horizons—an encounter in which the borders of our own being and boundaries of our own knowing meet other borders and boundaries. The happening of understanding, viewed in this way, includes confrontation with the limits of the word and its participation with silence. Martin Heidegger (1927/1962), in his discussion of being, speaks of our need to dwell in being, to call ourselves back from lostness in the "they" (Heidegger's term for the "established" way of being and believing; the norms of convention) through the art of attunement. This art achieves a being-present that involves the awareness and consciousness of no mind—silence. Of course, these

thinkers do not engage or address the concept of silence directly.

In the field of education, in curriculum and pedagogy, there exists, as well, a basis for legitimizing silence, however tacit. Any defense of theory (with respect to the theory/practice split, for instance) is an implicit endorsement of silence, even if the concept is explicitly ignored or reduced to a theoretical dispute with practitioners and technocrats. William Pinar and Madeline Grumet (1988) have affirmed the legitimate place of theory in its own right, calling for a return to Socratic *caesura*, "the contemplative life" or way of being in the world. Involving a silent retreat from the practical affairs of everyday living—in fact, transcending the practical—the way of theory was for the Greeks the path to wisdom or insight into the invisible nature of things. Reviving this view of theory, Pinar and Grumet contend with the notion of theory as that which is principally to be applied in educational practice, or which consists solely in a reflection on present pedagogical practices. Rather, "theory seeks to restore the contemplative moment in which we interrupt our taken-for-granted understandings of our work, and ask again the basic questions practical activity silences" (Pinar and Grumet 1988, 99). Theory, in attending to this silence, opens us up to new vistas, visions, and voices.

Phenomenological perspectives, in general, like those explored by Pinar and Grumet, highlight the knowing of experience which precedes and supersedes language, and thus hint at the import of silence. David Smith (1988) speaks of our addiction to interpretation and hermeneutic understanding; we privilege the word, he claims, and the understanding born of silence is neither known nor sought. David Jardine (1992) also endorses an education which seeks to return life to its "original difficulty" where there is no "living word"—one which *educes* (from the Latin root of education, *educere*) or brings forth life in students—without silence. Ted Aoki (1988) affirms the attunement of care, which he identifies as the ever-present, silent call in the vocation of teaching. Dwayne Huebner (1995, 1999) calls our attention to what he calls the *moreness* that is life, through which we teach and learn—that "moreness" that is language and is also beyond it, and that is us; eluding

our grasp, it dwells in silence. Huebner (1995, 15-18) says:

> [W]e know more than we can say, and often say more than we know…. There is more than we … can know, will ever know. It is a "moreness" that takes us by surprise when we are at the edge and end of our knowing…. One knows of that presence, that "moreness," when known resources fail and somehow we go beyond what we were and are, and become something different, somehow new…. Not only do we know more than we say, we "are" more than we "currently are." This "moreness"] is that which transcends the known, the expected…. It is the source of hope.

A less ethereal body of literature in pedagogical scholarship lends further implicit support in sanction of silence. The work of Donald Schon (1990; 1995), with innumerable others who draw upon and advance his thought endorsing the art of reflective practice, is one such example. The difference that makes a difference, Schon posits, is this time for reflection—this space for silence—in teaching and in teacher education. Skilled practitioners who excel in their arts are those who maintain the habit of stepping back from activity—from doing and speaking—to be, in the quiet, to listen and receive and learn. Yet, clearly, with an emphasis upon the practice, and the material, this line of thought is often marked by the reduction or oversight of reflection, which amounts to something of a dismissal of the concept of silence altogether. The critical necessity of silence in the educative moment becomes research on "wait time" in teaching, which in its small way also unwittingly lends credence to silence. For example, one study observes a marked difference in outcome when teachers moved from waiting a second or less for student responses to questions to a mere three-to-five seconds. Results have indicated positive changes in terms of increased length and variety of response, and questioning from students; greater student initiative and confidence, as well as participation by those generally identified as slower students; and decreased failure to respond (Rowe's 1974 study, cited in Freiberg and Driscoll 1996). Another "wait time" study concludes that waiting communicates care. The silence speaks, in fact, to the impor-

tance of voice. Pausing after student response as well is felt to be an unspoken encouragement of discussion and dialogue (Barrell 1991, cited in Freiberg and Driscoll 1996). In some research, "wait time" is actually correlated with higher achievement in students (White and Tisher 1986, cited in Freiberg and Driscoll 1996).

Corroborating with the mythos of creativity, the research done on creativity also suggests that creative invention emerges from a sort of silence: The discoverer experiences a kind of gestalt in which the insight comes, seemingly from out of nowhere, in the midst of a-musement, no-thought, amid the mundane shadows far from the reaches of the light of the intentional creative endeavor. These creative breakthroughs, though they have been documented to occur in these moments of emptiness, follow on the heels of periods of intensive labor. Here, however, we do well to take note of the necessity of the ensuing silence, a time of rest and gestation that seems to be required for creative work (May 1975). In creativity "lore" there is the idea that art and poetry happen by being engaged in live conversation with the sacred creation of the world; these arts are said to involve the discipline of overhearing, as one is silent, the muses of poetry and painting perhaps, or the divine Creator her- or himself. For example, Giacomo Puccini has declared that "the music of [Madame Butterfly] was dictated to me by God" (cited in Cameron 1992, 2). Rollo May (1975, 56) defines creativity as "the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world." This full engagement with reality and this heightened consciousness are not possible without this quieting of the self, this space of silence through which the other may be truly met. Unfortunately, these findings regarding creativity are still generally translated through our love affair with "presence," action and word, and with linearity—foolproof explanations that, if they cannot fill gaps, erase them. Thus, in the realm of education, we rely on "creativity training": step-by-step instructions to develop originality and inventiveness in students, without the need to honor the mystery, the emptiness, and the silence.

There is a growing number of scholars interested in education, however, whose thoughts concerning it may be deemed explicitly spiritual; if not directly drawing on some religious or wisdom tradition(s), these thinkers affirm a spiritual perspective in their articulation of what education is and might effect—most of them also calling our attention to and honoring the import of silence in what we call learning or growth. In a recent volume (1999) edited by Steven Glazer entitled *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, we discern at the heart of its message an attunement to the silent sacred as the very ground from which learning is born. The voices of a multitude, it seems, concur on this point: Huston Smith, bell hooks, the Dalai Lama, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, and Naomi Remen, among others. Learning itself, in this way, is seen as a creative act in which order emerges from chaos, a realized something from the mute nothing. Bernie Neville (1989), author of *Educating Psyche: Emotion, Imagination and the Unconscious in Learning*, highlights the pedagogical necessity of sitting quietly, of incorporating meditative practices in schools, particularly in our hyper-extroverted culture. These practices, he reports, require us to turn away momentarily from the outer world to attend to the inner one. We must suspend the mind's activity and our usual assertive engagement with the world, and become receptive, to find a meaningful unifying center in the midst of all the noise of schooling and fragmentation of modern life. Thomas Merton (in Del Prete 1990) and Parker Palmer (1983), concerned with the education of the whole person, think of silence and attention as modes of learning; without silence, there is no attention, and if the art of attending is not taken up, neither can learning occur. For example, the learning that we call "scientific" even demands of us the attention of silence: Integral to the scientific method, and the knowledge gleaned though its practice, is the process of "sitting quietly," which is an openness in observation that allows one to gather data vital to new understanding.

The Freirean contribution (1970/1993) to educational theory and practice, emphasizing *conscientization* and *praxis*, probably represents the most penetrating and profound—though tacit—endorsement of silence in the field, particularly with respect to the breadth and depth of its impact. Freire's work, with the innumerable others who have built upon it, illustrates the dialectic, dialogic relationship of silence and voice, stillness and action. In the spirit of the

Buddhist tradition and in harmony with the posture of Ghandi, silence is conceived by Freire as constitutive of praxis, thought in action. Conscientization, waking up to the true conditions of our existence, requires a withdrawing from the world to consider its totality, to authentically see and hear, and thus give birth to thought and action which transforms the world, which changes us. The Freirean aim is always not only the empowerment of the individual but the full humanization of humanity, social justice. Through his critical thought and pedagogy, we are brought back to this idea of silence as essential for the relief of suffering, and for healing.

Ultimately, then, there is no true voice—liberating, living, creative word—that does not come out of, emerge from, that is not born of silence. Creation stories the world over tell us that from the void light and life are born; that from chaos emerges order, a cosmos; that even through death comes the song which calls forth the day (Hamilton 1988); from the void, from nothing, from that which is without form, from the place of silence, the word speaks the world into being. Gadamer (1960/1992) suggests that the very happening of understanding occurs in this encounter between the spoken and unspoken, in this space where the word meets the silence. To learn is to encounter otherness, within or without, and to be transformed in some way by that experience, often changing that otherness through it, as well. Yet we cannot really hear the other, the world, the divine, ourselves even, without listening; being silent, we receive the gift of the stranger, whoever or whatever that may be. Through this gift, we are made anew; and darkness, ignorance, confusion give way to light, enlightenment, coherence. In the words of Thomas Merton: "If I give you my truth but fail to receive your truth in return, there can be no truth between us." (cited in Smith 1988, 420). Understanding, teaching, learning, are predicated, thus, on silence. Huebner's assertion, then, that teaching is primarily being with others in language, means also being with them, and for them, in silence. Voice finds its home, its abode, its source and summit, in silence.

This is not the age of information.

This is not the age of information.

This is not the age of information.

It is the time of loaves and fishes.

It is the time of loaves and fishes.
People are hungry and one good word is
    bread for a thousand.
                        —David Whyte, 1996

And, good words, we know, come forth from the depths of silence. Let us try to enter into them consciously now and again—and encourage the same in teachers and students, in all those who hope to educate. For, only then may we truly in our educating educe life in ourselves and others; life rich in wisdom, justice and freedom; life emanating truth, goodness, and beauty—all good things, to relieve the sufferings of the world, to heal a humanity that has lost its peaceful dwelling-place beside the still waters of silence.

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Book Reviews

The Politics of Early Childhood Education

Edited by Lourdes Diaz Soto

Published by Peter Lang, New York, 2000, 226-page paperback

Reviewed by Sharon G. Solloway

> Technique without understanding leads to enmity and ruthlessness, which we cover up with pleasant-sounding phrases. (Krishnamurti 1953, 19)

The essayists in *The Politics of Early Childhood Education* who wish to "reconceptualize" or bring "critical theory" to early childhood education do not quote Krishnamurti. But their red flags denoting the brutalizing of young children by the "politics" of the conventional Western scientific research lens certainly reveal the kind of enmity, ruthlessness and the "cover[ing] up with pleasant-sounding phrases" of which Krishnamurti spoke.

Soto has succeeded in bringing together in one volume a variety of revelations, which refuse pleasant sounding phrases in favor of strident unmaskings—unmaskings that implicate us all in the injustice we see. At the turn of each page readers are forced to confront the ways in which "early childhood development education's over-reliance on child development paradigms, cognitive psychology, and exclusive western ways of seeing the world" (p. xvii) are deceptive in their blatant claims of objectivity and neutrality. The authors carefully point out that this way of seeing actually *creates* what it sees: a particular knowledge, truth and reality. As a reader, you see yourself because you recognize you always thought the Western way of doing things was just naturally right.

In each section of the book nothing is deemed too sacred—Disney is called to account for the way it poisons childhood in two ways. The reader is asked to weigh evidence that each new animated movie is a

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carefully planned campaign aimed at not just entertaining the child, but most especially to train or entice the child into consumerism. Further, and just as disturbing is the evidence for the way race, class, and gender stereotypes are constructed in young children's minds through Disney's calculated use of "exotic and stereotypical villains, heroes, and heroines" in its popular animated movies. Both these claims suggest strong reason for questioning the innocence of these films as just "fun and entertainment" (p. 103).

How are adults trained to interact with children? What are the effects of those interactions? Who benefits? Beginning with Bloch and Popkewitz, the three essays in Part One: Child Development Paradigms in a Postmodern Society, set the tone for this book as they trace the way child development knowledge is embedded in "a system of reason that shapes and fashions how educators 'see,' think, talk, and act toward teaching, children, and schooling" (p. 7). It is a way of looking at others, children in this case, in which you frame what you see by prescribed notions while you simultaneously claim objectivity. In other words, children and their activities are shaped by the way adults are taught to impose particular beliefs, attitudes, and self-disciplinary governances on them. These impositions are claimed to be right and necessary and are "located deeply in the soul of the child at the level of problem solving and dispositions toward action" (p. 27). This "system of reason" operates throughout the systems of adult education and the effects of its power are largely unquestioned. These authors keenly make us aware of the necessity of rethinking the way we do research with children and/or teach children—if justice and respect for individuals is to be more than a narrow form of "seeing."

How might such rethinking shape staff development for teachers or the agenda of teacher researchers? Lubeck and Post offer the reader one Head Start project—the Labardie Head Start Teaching/Learning Community—that suggests new ways to think about research and staff development. They describe the Labardie project as one that is "dynamic and in process" and one that doesn't function from a system of logic that privileges the indulgence of objective

"seeing." The project is largely based instead on "the *subjective* experiences of teachers and researchers"— giving privilege to their belief that "research is always a human construction, presenting a particular point of view" (p. 34). One of the unusual aspects of this project was that the university researchers became the assistant teachers, making room for the assistant teachers to become the "teachers," while the teachers went to visit each other's classrooms. At all levels, power and its effects were turned upside down. The learning for all the stakeholders is best described as "nonlinear, emergent, [and] dynamic" (p. 54).

Play holds a central position in the early childhood curriculum. Kessler and Houser, as researchers with feminist perspectives on power and oppression, question the politics of play. They seek to keep their work "grounded in the possibility of social transformation that benefits children" (p. 63). Taking their agenda to their observations of children's social play gave them new insights into the ways play in the early childhood curriculum restricts children's "opportunities to challenge received identities," but on the other hand, offers children "numerous opportunities to exercise agency, construct and play out interactions related to power and authority in the classroom, as well as resist directives from the teacher and other children" (p. 70). Their observations suggest that autonomy isn't always "liberating" and in some situations teacher authority "could actually promote a more just and fair community" (p. 71). This essay asks the reader to engage in re/thinking many taken-for-granted aspects of social play. And the reader finds herself surprised in the ways she is implicated in that which is taken for granted.

The reader will recognize a number of the authors in this volume as names they have seen often in early childhood literature. Others like Henry Giroux surprised me. But his essay in Part Two: Young Children's Daily Realities, "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" opened my eyes to the depth of Disney's part in perpetuating harmful stereotypes and shook up my complacency. In this same section, Kincheloe's essay, "Certifying the Damage: Mainstream Educational Psychology and the Oppression of Children" and MacNaughton and Hughes' essay, "Take the Money and Run? Toys, Consumerism and Capitalism in Early Childhood Conferences" also of-

fered me another dose of shock therapy. I intend to use all three of these essays next semester in my Introduction to Early Childhood Education course as springboards for discussion.

Part Three: Critical Multiculturalism in the Early Childhood Education Curriculum offer three essays that serve to jar us into re/thinking like Lisa Delpit's (1996) book, *Other People's Children* did. Like Delpit, the authors of the three essays in this section ask the reader to re/think issues that have been taken for granted. For example, labeling particular children "at risk" has been thought of as a way of helping these children, but Swadener turns this upside down as she suggests the backhanded way it harms children and their families. Her invitation for reconceptualizing all children as "at promise" (p. 118) jolts the reader into an understanding of just how the label "at risk" works to deny there is any "promise" in children so labeled. And I'll be looking at these essays again as I teach a new course, "Literacy and Literature in Diverse Classrooms" next semester.

Jipson and Hatch rock academia in Part Four: Early Childhood Education in the Ivory Tower. Jipson uses a comment by her son, "you're always stealing my ideas," to examine the ways we use the research process for our own purposes. She asks: Can the research process ever "equitably serve the interests of those involved, particularly the interests of young children" (p. 167)? Her journey is worthwhile, for it leads the reader into thoughtful suggestions for reconfiguring research in early childhood education so that children's interests are more often honored. Hatch gives us an eyewitness look into his process of bringing postmodernism to a conservative department in higher education. He makes the possibility real and the invitation less scary.

Soto concludes this volume with her essay entitled, "An Early Childhood Dreamspace of Social Justice and Equity." She asks the reader to consider a "third space" (p. 202) for the field of early childhood education. This is a space that is suspicious of the "sanctity" of Western way of seeing childhood. It is a space beyond existing paradigms. She welcomes the evolving, reconceptualized new spaces that critical and feminist ways of knowing are creating. At the same time she cautions those involved not to make the mistake of becoming so exclusive that other's

views are shut out. Soto ends her essay with the same Chinese proverb that began the volume:

> Ants can move a mighty mountain.
> Water can drip through stone.
> If you do not climb the mountain, you will not see the plain. (p. 208)

And climbing the mountain means attention to love—the understanding of the whole process of life—technique with understanding—the dreamspace of social justice and equity—and I will teach/live differently beginning now.

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Schooling Children With Down Syndrome: Toward an Understanding Of Possibility

by Chris Kliewer

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Reviewed by Celia Oyler

It continues to startle me how backward most progressive people are when it comes to understandings related to our fellow citizens with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. In contrast, well-meaning white folks know these days to be cautious in their assessments and judgments about African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. Straight folks are learned enough to take their cues about gay/lesbian/transgendered issues from the insiders. Holistic educators heartily reject standardized test scores as valid measures of children's learning or progress. Advocates for social justice unilaterally defend the rights of the marginalized and the oppressed.

How is it then that in the year 2000 we find that people who are labeled as "mentally retarded" are reduced to their IQ scores and other reductionist fallacies of human error? What is the history of our society's response to disability that has so isolated individuals whom we have labeled retarded? How did it come to pass that we have conflated presumed cognitive incapacity with limited morality? Why is it that so few of us have contact with persons labeled mentally retarded? Where are such people as we express our commitments to social justice and diversity?

Schooling Children with Down Syndrome is a powerful call to begin to ask questions about citizenship, democracy, capacity, and community values, not only for people with Down Syndrome, but for all of us. In this elegantly written and persuasively argued volume, Christopher Kliewer fully articulates an alternative version of schooling and community citizenship and offers a scathing indictment of our dual system of education. As a professor of education and a former special education teacher, Kliewer steps quite bravely forward to render a careful, but pointed, argument against the very existence of special education. Further, and even more provocatively, the author forces us to reconsider our notions of human capacity.

Ostensibly, this book is an ethnographic account of "the cultural meanings of Down Syndrome in the school lives of children" (p. xv). In actuality, the volume is much more than that; the book is a call to build educational communities in which human diversities are viewed as strengths, where teachers see themselves not as technocrats transferring knowledge but as creative problem solvers and community builders, and where every student is an active learner of democracy, literacy, and human valuing.

Although much rhetoric surrounds the calls for viewing human diversity as a strength, there is usually little attention paid to people who are seen as cognitively impaired. Kliewer shows how students with Down Syndrome are often viewed and indeed act as non-conformists who present challenges to school systems designed to reward compliance. In the social institution known as school, students' worth is typically measured "by the degree of their conformity to established patterns of behavior" (p. xv). Those who follow the rules, answer the

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teacher's questions, do well on the tests, and keep their hands and feet to themselves are promoted, if not praised. Special education is the place for the rest.

By drawing sustained attention to the ways that schools act not only as sorting machines, but also as a mechanisms of self-surveillance and social control, Kliewer joins past scholars, activists, and educators who use critical theory to critique the institution of public schooling in the United States. By focusing specifically on students with Down Syndrome, he offers a unique perspective, bringing to bear a rich literature base on democratic schooling and integrated curricula as a counterpoint to the reductionist skills orientation that has been central to special education.

For readers not familiar with the history of special education, Kliewer analyzes our current dual system from both historical and philosophical contexts. In this way, *Schooling Children with Down Syndrome* would be an excellent choice for an introductory education course as it compels the reader to ask fundamental questions about the purpose of schooling, the hidden curriculum of compliance and conformity, and the essential values that are reflected in school as a sorting machine. Kliewer does not soft pedal issues, and names Chapter two, "Down Syndrome and the History of Community Banishment." Here he traces the idea of moral inadequacy that has been conflated with mental retardation to the rise of scientificism and eugenics. It is also in this chapter that he clearly names the racism that was inherent in Dr. Down's race-based categories of human development, that led eventually to the name "Mongoloid" for the phenotype associated with trisomy of the 21st chromosome. By citing primary research, Kliewer succinctly illustrates how this classification system remained an integral part of understanding Down Syndrome well into the 1980s. Even as late as the 1970s, he demonstrates, schools did not try to educate students with Down Syndrome.

This excavation Kliewer does recalled for me my own preparation in special education during the 1970s. Public Law 94-142 had just been passed, mandating free education for all students, regardless of disability. We were told that students with Down's Syndrome (as it was then called) were always found in classes for the Trainable Mentally Retarded. This was, "of course," because they would not be able to

be successful with the more academic curriculum found in classes for the Educable Mentally Retarded. I was disturbed by the images of animal training that were conjured up for me with the label "trainable" and I did everything I could to avoid being placed in such a room for student teaching.

The true extent of our society's misreading of people with trisomy 21 comes near the end of the book as Kliewer presents current research on literacy acquisition for students with Down Syndrome. He foreshadows what were for me startling findings with older investigations from research of the 1950s. Almost 40 year ago, researchers were speculating that people with Down Syndrome were not necessarily mentally retarded. Kliewer, quite brilliantly, I believe, places these findings in the historical context he calls, "The Birth of Advocacy," and thus signals his book's membership in the rapidly expanding field of disability studies. In this way, Kliewer's volume is one of the very first to take disability studies/disability rights directly into the classroom.

My admiration for this author (whom I never met, although we both were at Syracuse University during some of the same years) simply skyrocketed as he dropped his main bombshell: Mental retardation exists only as a metaphor. Mental retardation is not some material reality that exists within individuals, but is built by doctors and scientists (with the collusion of educators) to explain incompetence. Quoting from the book:

> When one consistently performs as if he or she is incompetent, whether it be on tests or on the playground, the result is a scientific label of cognitive deficiency referred to as mental retardation…. The label symbolizes a *chasm between a student's manner of performance and that which is valued by schools.* (p. 63; emphasis added)

However, research from the last two decades, Kliewer shows us, indicates that people with Down Syndrome have significant difficulties with motor planning, including the motor planning involved with speech production, and with impulse control. When taken together, it is easy to see how difficult it would be for a typical person with Down Syndrome to be able to even *signal* their capacities and intentions.

There is a poignant moment Kliewer relates about a second grader in one of his observations that vividly illustrates the research on motor planning that the author reviews.

> Lee ... was completing a workbook page for a language arts lesson. He squeezed his glue bottle but applied too much pressure, resulting in a glob of glue spread across this desk. He looked surprised, then apprehensive, as he glanced toward an assistant teacher helping a classmate nearby. Lee attempted to scoop the puddle of glue back toward the middle of the desk, drenching his finders as he did. He promptly stuck his hand into his mouth, resulting in an audible expression of distaste that caught the assistant teacher's attention. Looking over she cried out, "That is not to eat!" Several classmates laughed. One wrinkled her nose and said, "Oh, gross!" Lee, who did not speak was unable to explain the situation. Though he had been working diligently on the assignment, his effort resulted only in a drenched worksheet, an angry adult, a bunch of disgusted classmates, and glue dribbling down his chin. (p. 67)

Kliewer intersperses such powerful classroom vignettes throughout the book, helping give particularity to the rich bodies of research he weaves together to tell the story of how people with Down Syndrome have been systematically excluded from much of community life. Indeed, the exclusion of these students into segregated education is one of Kliewer's main axes of critique. He minces no words here and tells us, "Segregation ... diverts tremendous amounts of resources toward structuring an existential location of hopelessness entrapping people whose very humanness is in question" (p. 4). He illustrates such hopelessness with curricular examples, such as the student whose "functional" curriculum consisted of putting together plumbing fixtures that were kept in a bucket in the corner of the room. Once the student had put the pieces together, the teacher took them apart and the student was to start over.

What gets highlighted in such stories is not just the limits of special education, but also the serious flaws of so-called regular education. How much of students' time do we waste with such make-work tasks that are mere imitations of productive labor? How often do we ask children to comply with tasks we have created seemingly designed to keep them busy or to teach isolated skills designed by someone, somewhere as stepping stones to the real learning that will supposedly come later? In this way, Kliewer's indictment of special education shows us a caricature of schooling itself: an elaborate machine built upon utilitarian assumptions of human worth and capacity.

Regarding the central findings of *Schooling Children with Down Syndrome*, Kliewer found three broad school representations that he termed the squatter, the alien, and the citizen. Students who were treated as aliens were denied community membership, banished to segregated environments and presumed to be intellectually and developmentally defective. Such marginalization is one of the organizing principles of special education, which is of course, predicated on diagnosing individuals' defects and prescribing treatments to remediate the deficiency. To this way of thinking, certain human differences are seen as abnormalities that can be objectively identified, scientifically measured, and educationally treated. Indeed, many of the general educators with whom I have worked over the years believe special education is a place where the abnormal can be housed together with particularly "special" teachers fully prepared to either fix them and send them back, or at least work with them to reach their "fullest potential."

Such marginalization, Kliewer demonstrates over and over, works against the very preparation for democratic living and full participation in civic life that is the right of all citizens. Rather than learning literacy skills in the contexts of print rich environments, too many segregated classrooms for students with moderate and severe disabilities do not even teach reading, focusing instead on "life skills," and condemning students to illiteracy. When my own preservice students express doubt about putting students with severe disabilities into general education classrooms, asking, "What does a child who doesn't speak and can't move get out of the regular classroom?" I always counterpose, "As a teacher of six such students all in a room together all day long, what would you do for curriculum and instruction?"

They, of course, have no viable answer. Kliewer sums up this issue succinctly. He says: "Students with disabilities thrived in the midst of the energy of these *regular* classrooms. Period" (p. 14).

The second location for students with Down Syndrome in Kliewer's study was that of squatter. The squatter is given space on the periphery of the community but is viewed as a community burden: "the squatter represents the struggle for citizenship stalled at the margins" (p. 12). Kliewer does not say this, but this is a position created in large part by our liberal humanist orientation toward those with disabilities: It is unfortunate that some people are disabled, and so we must be benevolent, kind and protective toward them. This sort of orientation toward disability produces a charity discourse (Oliver 1990) that circulates through such vehicles as the Jerry Lewis Telethon and the Special Olympics. Children who grow up seeing *disabled squatters* kept within sight, but just out of reach of real friendship and community membership, learn early that certain human differences are, as Kliewer puts it, "differences that matter." Such differences, in the case of people with Down Syndrome, are believed to convey limits of mental capacity and human worth.

The third location for students with Down Syndrome that Kliewer found was that of the citizen. In vividly drawn vignettes, the author portrays classrooms in which curriculum is designed around *all* of the community members. Literacy is assumed as a centerpiece of such citizenship, and even non-speaking class members are taught to read. Participation structures are created to build upon the students' capacities, thus helping students reveal all that they know, can do, and believe. In such classrooms, "One's human development does not set the conditions for community acceptance; rather, acceptance is the terrain on which development occurs" (p. 12). Rather than attempting to "shape disabled children to look more normal" (p. 13), such community spaces are built on the premise that the web of community life is enriched by all members because of their differences. From this perspective, then, disability is a point of identity, not of shame. The school's mission, from this vantage point, is to bring all young citizens into full community participation. In Kliewer's vision of participatory democracy, schools serve as central organizing sites for collective agency and creative, community-based problem solving.

As I sat down to read *Schooling Children with Down Syndrome* for the second time in order to collect my thoughts and write this review, Johnny-Paul Penry was scheduled to be executed. Mr. Penry is on death row, sentenced to be killed by the state of Texas for his dual crimes of rape and murder. After eating his final meal, Mr. Penry was granted a last minute reprieve, due to his label of mental retardation. This case, unlike most of hundreds of other executions in Texas, has received much publicity. Journalists are fairly univocal in their portrait of this particular inmate on death row: "He has no sense of morals and no sense of propriety; although he is approaching his mid-40s, Penry still believes in Santa Claus" (Selinger 2000).

I remain haunted by this case, as the appeal for justice for Mr. Penry is predicated upon an assumption of his basic lack of humanness. Indeed, it is against international law to execute a person with mental retardation as people with this label are presumed to have "no sense of morals" and "no sense of propriety." Christopher Kliewer, in his deeply moving book forces us to reconsider such taken-for-granted ideas of mental retardation. Indeed, this book demands that we abandon all attachment to science's claim to measure human capacity. Instead, we are called to assume capacity and ask, "What do we wish our community to look like" (p. 139)?

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