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ENCOUNTER

Education for Meaning and Social Justice



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EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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In Memoriam

Dr. Kate McReynolds

(1956 – 2008)

With deep sorrow, we must tell you that Kate McReynolds, our Associate Editor, died on September 5, 2008, after a year-long battle against lung cancer.

Kate contributed numerous articles to *Encounter*, writing on such topics as homeschooling, free schools, attitudes toward nature, and children's happiness. She was sharply critical of the standards movement and test-driven education because they stifle children's full development. She truly shaped the direction of this journal.

Kate received a PhD in clinical psychology from the City College of New York in 2004, where she became especially interested in the emotional lives of children, adolescents, and their families. Over the years she taught a variety of undergraduate psychology classes, and she was an inspired teacher. She had a gift for helping students relate concepts to their personal experiences. She brought out the best in her students, and they loved her. Kate also found time to raise a family, and she is survived by her two children, Lilith and Asher, her husband Pinchas Ben-Or, her mother Helen, her brothers Steven and Andrew, and her sister Billie.

The last essay Kate wrote for *Encounter* was titled, "Children's Happiness" (Spring, 2008). Kate believed that the pursuit of happiness is fundamental to full and healthy growth. The essay received considerable praise for its wisdom. Many readers were very moved by it. This is the concluding paragraph:

If we were to look squarely at the ordinary unhappiness of just one child — that is, if we pondered it until we had achieved the deepest understanding of his or her experience — what would happen? I believe that, like my son's middle school teacher, we might be brought to tears. We might recognize the forces behind our own unhappiness, how we ourselves have suffered from unremitting pressure to make the grade and the subsequent narrowing of all that was meaningful to us. If we then let compassion overtake us, we might do something remarkable. We might, for example, take a leave of absence to give ourselves more time in the present. We might adopt a more modest lifestyle that balances work with devotion to our deepest values. We might, in other words, decide that the happiness children naturally seek is the most important thing in life — for them and for ourselves as well.

— William Crain, Editor
— Charles Jakiela, Publisher

Controlling Childhood

I recently gave a talk to parents of 4- and 5-year-olds attending a prestigious New York City private school. I spoke about children's need for free play and opportunities to explore nature. The parents listened politely, but when I ended my lecture and began an informal discussion, things heated up. The controversy was about scheduling children's afterschool activities.

Several parents insisted that their children needed lessons in tennis, baseball, music, swimming, and many other areas. As one parent put it, "The lessons provide social capital. They make sure my son will be able to do well in any situation that comes up." I said that with so many structured lessons children become too dependent on adult direction. They don't learn to take initiative and think for themselves. But most of the parents were unconvinced. "I remember getting chosen last by the other kids in pick-up sports," a mother said. "I don't want my son to ever experience that humiliation. I'll give him all the lessons it takes to make sure that never happens." Several heads nodded in agreement.

Recent books have addressed the question of overscheduling children's free time. In *The Over-Scheduled Child* (2000), Alvin Rosenfeld and Nicole Wise suggest the central issue is control. Parents are responding to a cultural message that they "can control it all," (p. 108) and "craft for children the perfect childhood" (p. 111). The parents are well-intentioned, the authors say, but they fail to realize that they cannot prevent disappointments, failures, and mistakes. Children need to learn from these experiences to grow.

The Inner Spark

In his book, *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (2007), Chris Mercogliano addresses the topic of adult control in more dramatic terms. Mercogliano sees contemporary adults as determined to domesticate and tame children, snuffing out that "luminescent spark that animates the young

[and] serves as a source of their uniqueness and creativity" (p. ix). He refers to this spark as the child's "inner wildness," a force that prompts the child to seek independence, novelty, and adventure, whether through physical action, fantasy, or art. Mercogliano recognizes that he is hardly the first to talk about "that which animates life" (p. 85). Religious scholars referred to this inner spark as the soul or the spirit; Henri Bergson called it *élan vital*; Freud the *id*; Montessori *horme*. As Zeke Finkelstein and I note in this issue of *Encounter*, the radical social critic Paul Goodman believed that the human organism, "as an animate, self-moving being, must freely exercise its capacities to express its true nature. People must be free to make choices, even wrong choices, to learn from their mistakes, and find out what they are best cut out to do."

Free Play

Children express much of their creative energy through play. In this respect, they are like the young of many other species, who seem driven to play and adventure (Balcombe 2006). Through their self-initiated activities, young animals try out new capacities.

I recently saw this behavior first hand when a goat on our new animal farm sanctuary gave birth to a baby boy, named Boomer. Right after birth, Boomer stood up without his mother's urging and tried to walk. Within a few days, he was sprinting back and forth in the barn, just for the fun of it. When he was ten days old, he was running around in the pasture, exuberantly kicking out his legs sideways. He then climbed up a rock that was about 1½ feet high, slipped down with a thud, climbed up again, and jumped down backwards, landing perfectly. He climbed up several more times, each time jumping down backwards, and each time adding a new spin while he was in the air. He looked like a platform diver experimenting with new stunts. When I decided to sit on the rock, Boomer climbed up and rested beside me, but he quickly left in order

to run about. As he sprinted away he leapt into the air, tucking all four legs under his body in a picture-perfect pose.

During his play, which involved some risks, Boomer's mother looked on from a distance, but she didn't intervene. In contrast, contemporary human parents frequently hover over their young children at play, constantly telling them to be careful (see Mercogliano 2007, 5). Parents also are reluctant to allow older children to play freely outdoors. Two recent nationwide surveys indicate that free outdoor play among 6- to 12-year-olds averages less than one hour per week. When children do play outdoors, it is usually to participate in adult-directed sports (Hofferth & Sandberg 2001; Juster, Ono & Stafford 2004). Children do still play indoors, but usually with electronic games programmed by adults.

Parents limit free outdoor play for many reasons, including media-generated fears of kidnappers and the prevalence of automobiles. Another factor is the decline of cohesive neighborhoods, in which adults looked out for one another's children.

But tight adult supervision isn't just about kids' safety. Parents meticulously plan out activities that they hope will lead to successful college admissions and adult lives. Many afterschool activities are designed to create an appealing college résumé. Parents also want their children to get a fast start on academic skills, which can mean special tutoring. If all these activities leave little time for unstructured play, so be it. "What good will it do my child," parents think, "if she is just outside playing when other children are working hard on their homework, receiving first-rate music lessons, and getting extra tutoring? I want my child to have just as good a chance to get into Harvard."

Although research on the topic is sparse, I believe the intense anxiety about children's future success started to grow in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At that time, the United States' economic superiority was threatened by Japan and West Germany, a threat that our political leaders blamed on our country's relaxed attitudes toward academic achievement. Schools and families, our leaders said, must raise academic expectations to prepare children for the competitive global economy. Otherwise, when the chil-

dren become adults, they — and the nation itself — will be left behind (Crain 2005, 382-383).

A panic set in. Parents started to carefully organize their children's lives for future success. In education the upshot was the standards movement, which emphasizes high goals and rigorous standardized testing.

The Standards Movement

The standards movement has made play rare at school, too. In order to raise academic achievement, schools have largely eliminated unstructured play in kindergarten. Many schools have cut out or sharply reduced recess as well. The arts, which include a strong degree of imaginative playfulness, have been pushed aside. Even preschools are becoming less play-oriented and more academic. From the earliest ages, children are forced into an academic straightjacket, with few opportunities for the free and adventurous play that feels so natural to them. American children have always experienced school as stifling, of course, but the extent of these restrictions is unprecedented.

Underlying these restrictions is a clear mindset. Standards advocates believe that if education officials can specify academic goals, measure student progress, and reward success and punish failure, they will achieve the desired outcomes. The mindset is rational and technological; it assumes that high-level experts can accomplish educational objectives through measurement and control. The framework makes no room for the playful, curious, adventurous child (Crain 2005, 382-383; Kane 1995).

Although there is little evidence that the standards movement has produced positive results, it makes sense to many Americans. What about a more free-wheeling childhood? Can it lead to adult success? I believe the answer is yes. As an example, consider the case of J. Craig Venter.

Craig Venter

Venter has been a leading figure in one of the most significant accomplishments in modern science — the mapping of the human genome, our entire DNA. When the idea was proposed in 1985, it was met with widespread skepticism (Smith 2005, 53). To decipher the genome of even a simple organ-

ism, let alone *Homo sapiens*, seemed like it would take forever. But the United States government and scientists from other countries committed themselves to the project, as did Venter. Raising his own funds and creating his own private research firm, Venter invented a "shotgun sequencing" approach that sped up the process. In 1995, Venter floored the scientific world by publishing a draft of the genome of a bacterium. In 2001, Venter and the government-led effort independently published drafts of the human genome.

Venter and the government project have been bitter rivals. The government project claims that Venter relied on its data, which it made public. Venter counters that the government project needed his shotgun sequencing innovation. Both claims are probably correct. Since 2001, the task of mapping the human genome has been largely completed, and the genomes of many other species have been decoded as well.

In his autobiography (2007), Venter traces the origins of his scientific accomplishments to the freedom he had as a child:

Every day of my childhood was a day of play and exploration that had a bigger impact on my development than anything I was taught in school. I think that one reason I was able to become a successful scientist was that my natural curiosity wasn't driven out of me by the educational system. (pp 6-7)

Venter was born in 1946 and grew up outside San Francisco. He was always a great risk-taker. He played with his friends on railroad tracks and at the airport, where the kids got on their bikes and raced departing airplanes as they began to roll down the runways. The police tried to catch the kids, but they easily escaped across a nearby creek. Then one day Venter and his friends saw the runways had been fenced off, so their racing days were over.

Venter hated school and devoted little energy to it. Instead, he loved to build things. Between the ages of 7 and 10, he built forts and tunnels in his backyard. These became elaborate as he and friends searched the neighborhood for scrap lumber. "We would spend hours pulling and then straightening old scavenger nails so we could use them again," he says

(2007, 12). He also built wagons and soapbox racers to ride downhill. He once disassembled a boat's outboard engine and put it back together. In high school he built a complicated hydroplane.

In his freshman year of high school, Venter became rebellious and disobedient. He smoked and drank alcohol behind the school, and he barely escaped the police when he joined friends for a joy ride in a stolen car. This narrow escape shook him up. "However adventurous I might be, I was not a criminal" (1970, 15). So Venter began his second year in high school with a new attitude, and took up

Tight adult supervision isn't just about kids' safety. Parents meticulously plan out activities that they hope will lead to successful college admissions and adult lives. Many afterschool activities are designed to create an appealing college résumé.

competitive swimming. Still, he continued to dislike school, which, he says, "bashes the creativity out of kids" (p. 11). He only graduated from high school on time because a teacher gave him a D- instead of an F.

After high school, Venter moved to Southern California and dedicated himself to surfing. "To make money, I worked nights at a Sears Roebuck warehouse, where I put price tags on toys. I also tried night clerk, airport fuel truck driver, and baggage handler. Although I had few dollars, my days were free, and there was endless surf to enjoy" (1970, 19).

Realizing that he eventually would have to do something more with his life, he enrolled in Orange Coast Junior College, "which was only a few minutes away from some beautiful beaches" (1970, 19). But as the Vietnam war intensified, he saw no way avoiding service and joined the Navy medical corps. His experiences were so depressing that he once planned to

commit suicide by swimming far off shore and drowning. But as he swam out he was bumped by a shark, became frightened, and realized he wanted to live. Service in Vietnam was followed by classes at the College of San Mateo and the University of Cali-

Trailblazing biologist Craig Venter says, “Every day of my childhood was a day of play and exploration.... I was able to become a successful scientist [because] my natural curiosity wasn’t driven out of me by the educational system.”

fornia, San Diego, with the help of the GI Bill. Teachers at both institutions inspired his interest in science.

Venter illustrates the way freedom in youth can lead to adult creativity, even if it takes a while to develop. While I don’t recommend the more dangerous activities of Venter’s childhood, some allowance for risk-taking seems necessary if we want children to develop courage and initiative. In this issue of *Encounter*, Susan Solomon takes up the issue of risk on playgrounds, arguing that children need opportunities to take “acceptable risks.”

Controlling Nature

Mercogliano (2007, ix) briefly notes that there is a similarity between the suppression of childhood freedom and the subjugation of nature. In fact, philosophers such as Paul Shepard (1982) and Lewis Mumford (1991, 18) suggest that it was the human ability to domesticate animals and cultivate plants, beginning in the Neolithic Revolution, that inspired the possibilities of controlling and dominating other people.

Prior to the Neolithic Revolution, Shepard and others say, humans lived as hunter-gatherers, finding what they needed in the natural world. They carefully observed nature’s subtleties, appreciated its beauty, and feared its powers. But with the begin-

ning of farming, this orientation shifted to clearing the wilderness and gaining dominion over it. Nature was no longer a marvelously detailed world to be studied just as it exists; it became something to be transformed to fit human plans and designs. As farms grew in size and societies became more complex, people increasingly looked for new and better ways of changing and controlling people too, including themselves.

Whether or not this historical sketch is entirely accurate, it does strike me that our attitudes toward children and nature are intimately related. In both cases, we suppress spontaneous growth and flowering. Just as we stifle children’s free play, we pave over the life-sustaining earth. Just as we expand adult control over children’s sports, for example, we increasingly rip up soil and grass and install artificial turf.

Researchers have found that creative fantasy play occurs more in natural than built environments (Crain 2006). I suspect, moreover, that investigators will find that the most intense sparks of inner wildness — of imagination, discovery, and wonder — are stimulated by relatively wild nature. Real enthusiasm is kindled by what Robin Moore (1986, 242-244) calls “rough ground”: weedy lots, wooded fields, ponds, tall grass. Because these settings are often inhabited by uncommon and unexpected life forms, they possess a degree of mystery and permit children to make exciting discoveries. Unfortunately, our society’s aesthetic preferences run in the opposite direction. We insist on clean concrete paths, neatly pruned vegetation, and manicured flower beds.

Adults who would like children to explore a bit of wild nature run into strong resistance. I recently heard a recreation supervisor describe such experiences at the large, upscale residential complex where she works. The complex has lovely gardens and several play areas. It is committed to environmentally friendly living. But the recreation leader has been forced to battle officials to conserve any relatively wild vegetation, or even to give children access to the gardens. When I visited the complex, I asked a groundskeeper what would happen if a child went into a garden. Would the child be kicked out? Without hesitation the groundskeeper replied, “Yes, sir!”

Nevertheless, the recreation leader has persisted, and she has managed to preserve an out-of-the-way

section of overgrown vegetation, which forms a canopy over a small brook. Beneath this natural canopy, it is almost dark and feels mysterious. So far, children have been permitted to venture in, and those who have done so have created intricate rock patterns and model castles. They also have left drawings of mythical figures. This free-growing environment excites children's imaginations.

Concluding Comment

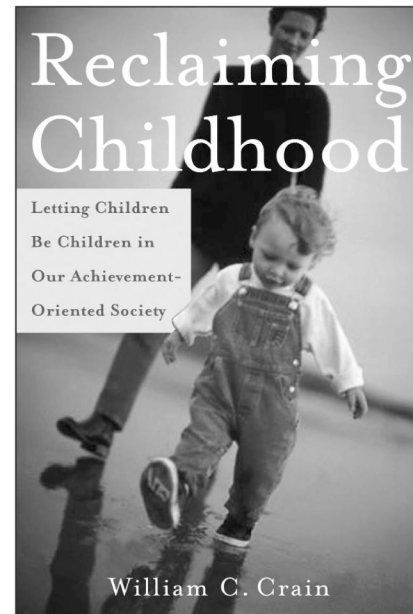
America claims to be the land of the free. Of course, we haven't always lived up to our own rhetoric. We have denied freedom to many groups of people. We have never given animals, trees, and nature the right to live freely. Now we have, to an incredible degree, suppressed the freedom of our children. It's time to take the concept of freedom seriously.

— William Crain, Editor

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Strengthening the Imagination Through Theater

The Contributions of Michael Chekhov

Diane Caracciolo

The thoughts and practical exercises of Michael Chekhov can enhance the confidence, creativity, and learning of teachers and their students.

At the end of the spring term, I wrote a letter to my Educational Theater students thanking them for a memorable semester. They were a group of young women and men studying to become K-12 teachers. Educational Theater is one in a series of electives called “Exploring the Arts,” courses founded on the idealistic belief that personal experience in the arts is central to teacher preparation. This view is fairly unique in teacher education programs, where courses in curriculum design and theoretical orientations — not artistic experiences — hold pride of place. Teaching a theater arts course for future educators was particularly challenging for me, since prior to this year I had only presented courses in assessment and curriculum design.

Most of the students who enrolled in Educational Theater had no prior experience in the performing arts. On the first day survey, many of them described in painful detail the physical and emotional discomfort they felt when speaking before a group. Despite this, they had overcome their ingrained fears and enrolled with the goal of becoming more comfortable in their future teaching skins. No longer in our customary university classroom, we met in an empty dance studio. The fact that shoes were not allowed in the studio seems now like a metaphor for the entire process of losing the familiar ground under our feet as we embarked upon, what was for all of us, a new experience in teacher education.

Although overcoming performance anxiety was an important concern for my students, I entered the process with one overarching question in mind: What kinds of experiences will strengthen their creative imaginations, integrate their bodies and emo-



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tions, and deepen their sensitivity toward group work? I trusted that if I could find the answers to this question, my students' major concern — growing comfortable while performing before a group — would be resolved along the way. With these goals in mind, I turned to the life and work of Michael Chekhov, whose theories and methods have inspired me throughout my teaching career.

Michael Chekhov

Michael Chekhov was born in St. Petersburg in 1891. His uncle was the writer Anton Chekhov, whose plays, in conjunction with Stanislavsky's famous Moscow Arts Theatre, helped to revolutionize the art of acting in the twentieth century. The characters who inhabit the worlds of *The Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya* called for a new, more realistic style of acting. Stanislavsky, with his burning desire for truth, provided such a style. His unique contribution, the technique of affective memory, where an actor draws on personal memories to revive an emotion, transformed the art of acting, which had become mired in artifice. This technique, however, caused a philosophical break with Michael Chekhov, whom Stanislavsky had called, his "most brilliant pupil" (Gordon 1991, x).

Chekhov diverged from his great teacher on the relationship of imagination to truth. Stanislavsky saw truth as wed to raw emotional realism grounded in the personal. Chekhov, in contrast, believed the actor's body and voice served as doorways leading into the realm of pure imagination and the coming into being of new creations. Like the poet Goethe, to whom he often referred in his lessons, Chekhov believed that the creative imagination is a capacity that lies beyond both personal memory and idle fantasy. Access to this "unfamiliar terrain" can be achieved by the artist through exercises in concentration, imagination, and creative movement (Chekhov 1991, 5). By diligently practicing such exercises, the objects of perception would begin to "speak" to the artist.

What branded Chekhov as an idealist by the Stalin regime, leading to his exile, was to Chekhov an essential aspect of all creative work. His exile eventually led him to the progressive educational experiment that was Dartington Hall, England, where he was given the resources to work through his ideas

with a company of like-minded artists and educators. His life, therefore, was deeply connected to the early progressive education movement and the holistic visions of Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. The Elmhirsts' generous and pioneering spirits gave Chekhov a studio and students with whom to develop his ideas. Rudolf Steiner's spiritual teachings also influenced Chekhov's pedagogy, which is taught not only in acting classes throughout the world, but within Waldorf educational and artistic circles as well.

Strengthening the Creative Imagination

At the center of his teaching, Chekhov points to the distinction between the activity of the fiery imaginative will and a more passive dreaming or fantasy. The active shaping and molding activity of the creative imagination is often compared by Chekhov (1991, 5) to the work of the sculptor:

Michelangelo, when creating his "Moses," must have been overwhelmed by the inner power of his image to force the medium of stone to such an effortless pitch. Not only did he "see" the muscles and sinews, the folds of cloth, the waves of hair and beard of his "Moses," but he "saw" before his mind's eye the inner might that molded all the muscles, folds, and waves in their rhythmical interplay.

In Chekhov's system, the imagination is related to the cognitive perception found in Goethe's scientific method. For Goethe, mindful perception does not arise from passive observation, but is rather an intense attending to the phenomenon, a muscular grasping of an image (Caracciolo 2000). Chekhov (1991, 6) relates this activity to thinking when he states:

The more the artist develops his ability to imagine, the more he comes to the conclusion that there is something in the process that somehow resembles the process of logical thinking. He sees more and more that his images follow with a certain inner regularity, although they remain entirely free and flexible. They become, in Goethe's words, "exact fantasy."

To develop the patience and strength necessary to grasp the fiery image, Chekhov's students engaged in systematic exercises in concentration and visualization. In excerpts from a lesson dated January 25, 1949, Chekhov states (du Prey 1978),

Real creative imagination is impossible without the ability to concentrate.... You must do these exercises every day or your work will be lost. We know that rhythmical repetition in exercise does more good than violent effort today, which is followed by days of doing nothing. That is more destructive than constructive. Five minutes each day will give you more than spasmodic efforts of longer time. If you will develop your ability to concentrate, your imagination will grow as if of itself.... The strength of the real concentrated attention is very similar to the feeling of strength in the healthy muscles of one's hand. It is something like a gigantic grip.

Basic Exercises in My Class

Although I was not able to replicate the intense daily work of Chekhov's original Devonshire studio (our course met only once a week for a single semester), I felt it would be fruitful to introduce some of Chekhov's basic exercises in concentration and imagination to my students.

The first level of Chekhov's concentration exercises deals with the sense-perceptible world. The student is asked to look closely at an object in the room, to memorize its sensory details by imagining she is reaching out an invisible hand and touching it. Next the student is directed to close her eyes and strive to "see" the object in all of its original details in the mind's eye. Moving back and forth from visual perception to inner visualization, the student's powers of concentration are strengthened. At the next stage the student practices visualizing a real image from memory, for instance, objects in his bedroom. In this way, we begin to move gradually from simple concentration of an immediate object to a remembered object or place. These exercises can also be performed with other senses, and serve to strengthen sensory awareness as well as concentration.

As a next step, *transforming* remembered objects in unusual ways leads to flexibility in the visualization process. For instance, during one session I asked stu-

dents to imagine tea being poured out of a teapot into a cup. They were then asked to reverse this motion, and "see" the tea pouring back into the pot. Such simple transformation exercises can later lead to sessions on story theater, where, for instance, students are asked to imagine a tiny hovel being transformed into a stately castle, or a mouse changing into a horse. Such work begins to move the exercises from the realm of simple concentration to creative imagination.

A basic exercise in creative imagination involves asking students to visualize a landscape in all its details. They are then directed through simple questioning to imagine all of the details of a building that appears within this landscape. How large is it? Does it have windows? What is its style, its age? Next they are asked to focus on the door of the building. Eventually they are guided to enter through this door and told they will "see" a character walk across the room and exit through another door. They are directed to "see" as much detail about this character as they can. How does he walk across the room? What is he wearing? Is he conveying any particular emotion? Does he speak to you? This exercise is built up over several sessions, so that by the time the students "see" their character they are able to describe him or her, and even act out what they have first seen in their mind's eye.

Benefits of the Exercises

By experiencing these exercises and then writing about them in their journals, my students were able to explore their own personal growth and make connections with their future teaching practices. Some of them noticed that, compared to the beginning of the term, their individual powers of concentration and visualization had become strengthened as a result of our work. Having initially rated themselves as strong in both areas, some were surprised to find the degree to which they were easily distracted and unfocused at the beginning of the course. Self-monitoring of inner work is a key component of this method and supports the development of strong mental imaging.

When asked to relate this work to their future teaching practices, students described the enlivening aspect of bringing imagination exercises to bear on different content areas. English teachers suggested

that visualization of a character or setting could engage reluctant readers and inspire creative writing exercises. In biology, plant development and other forms of environmental metamorphoses were suggested as subjects to be explored through visualization. For example, one student recommended leading an environmental studies lesson through an imagination exercise that transforms a pristine rain forest into a modern, mechanized landscape.

Social studies majors saw how historic events and characters can be brought to life through visualization and story telling. Math teachers suggested visualization as one way to grasp abstract concepts, such as geometric relationships. (The mathematician Hofstadter [2007] has spoken of successfully teaching math students in pitch darkness, forcing them to construct mental images of the geometrical ideas being studied.) After personally experiencing the imagination exercises, these future teachers were discovering the cognitive power of mental imagery and its potential for teaching and learning.

A particularly strong benefit of the exercises might be in the area of reading. Reading researchers have discovered the positive connection between producing mental imagery and proficient reading comprehension (Gambrell & Jawitz 1993; Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson 2003). When readers can clearly visualize characters and scenes, they understand more.

Using the Body

Chekhov encouraged his students to overcome the limitations of their physical bodies, so that they would become instruments for their creative wills. In her Preface to *Lessons for the Professional Actor* (1985, 9), du Prey describes Chekhov as follows:

In person, Michael Chekhov was slight, and moved with a lightness and ease, the personification of the "feeling of ease" and "weightlessness" which he encouraged in his students. These qualities were quickly transferred to them so that in a very short time their often cumbersome bodies began to respond and to become transformed, thus releasing the actor's feeling nature which had been blocked by his inarticulate physical form.

Molding the "inarticulate physical form" into a pliant vehicle for the creative imagination and emotional expression was the goal of the numerous psycho-physical exercises Chekhov developed in his years at Dartington Hall. These exercises were later organized under the chapter entitled "The Actor's

Chekhov diverged from his great teacher on the relationship of imagination to truth. Stanislavsky saw truth as wed to raw emotional realism grounded in the personal. Chekhov, in contrast, believed the actor's body and voice served as doorways leading into the realm of pure imagination and the coming into being of new creations.

Body and Psychology" in *To the Actor* (2006). In addition to his own exercises, Chekhov's students were trained in Rudolf Steiner's vocal and movement art forms: speech formation and eurhythm. Work with movement and speech exercises was established to awaken the feeling life and make it accessible to the actor's will or "creative intentions" (Chekhov 1991, 74-75).

Taken as a whole, Chekhov's system directs our attention to enlivening the inner life. Through his exercises we are asked to move and speak with a growing awareness of the feelings and imaginings that awaken within us as a result of these activities. Although relatively simple, such activities can have a profound effect. At their deepest level, they work to heal the artificial divide between body and soul.

In my class, most of the students expressed surprise that movement was going to be a part of the class. They were uncomfortable and self-conscious with the large and broad movements required by Chekhov's exercises. At the start of the semester they

performed the movement exercises together as a group, while being directed to work "in their own time" (rhythm) and space in the room. Most could only tolerate such movements with their eyes closed, which made them feel as though they were alone in

Taken as a whole, Chekhov's system directs our attention to enlivening the inner life. Through his exercises we are asked to move and speak with a growing awareness of the feelings and imaginings that awaken within us as a result of these activities.

the room. Week by week, however, their movements grew freer and their eyes began to open. Long before they began to write about their emerging comfort and confidence, I could observe their limbs and spirits loosen. Eventually they were able to perform the exercises individually with the group watching and commenting on their work. The very first exercise they learned was "expansion-contraction."

This exercise begins in a neutral standing position. Students are directed to gradually begin stretching and expanding their limbs until they feel they can expand no further. At this point, they are directed to continue expanding their limbs *in their imaginings*. They are encouraged to experience their arms moving beyond the ceiling of the room, out into the night air and reaching higher and higher until they can touch the stars with their fingertips. Such directions not only exercise their imaginative powers, but integrate them with movement and emotion. Inevitably feelings such as comfort, joy, relaxation, and ease begin to awaken. When they feel they can expand no further, they are directed to gradually feel themselves growing smaller, contracting inward, feeling the pull of gravity urging their limbs downward. They are asked to become physically as small as they can, and when they can contract no further, to continue growing smaller *in their imaginings*. They are

encouraged to experience the very center of their being receding into a tiny point, like a still, small seed within the earth. In the contracted position feelings vary from loneliness and isolation to a sense of security and peace. They are directed to repeat this process until they are comfortable that they have explored it as fully as possible. It is essential to remind them that they must never fall into automatic movements divorced from their feelings and imaginations, but to continually reanimate their work when they become disconnected. A basic rule of the Chekhov approach, which I emphasized repeatedly, is "No physical movement without inner movement."

Students reported that our movement exercises helped them gain a feeling of comfort and security within their bodies and an increased sensitivity to their emotional states. Some were skeptical, however, that movement could have a role in their future classrooms. This is a sign of how rigid the contemporary schooling experience has become, where students sit for hours at a time engaged with their heads alone. As a result of this imbalance, some prospective teachers cannot imagine a classroom situation where movement might be appropriate. Some of my students, however, were convinced that this work could be connected to their classroom practice and proceeded to act upon this conviction.

One student, who was working as a substitute teacher in an elementary school, reported that she had been assigned a first grade class where the children were expected to sit still for most of the day taking math tests, filling out worksheets, and listening to scripted lessons. Observing their lifelessness at one point, she asked them to stand for a moment and "stretch." To their delight, she then proceeded to guide them through our expansion-contraction exercise. This work inspired lively drawings and discussions about how they felt while moving. That week she shared these lively pictures with our class. One memorable drawing showed a figure with long arms stretching to the top of the page where stars shone brightly at his fingertips. Listening to her tell this story, we marveled at how readily the children were able to engage in activities that we, as adults, find daunting. It is unfortunate that adults impose our sedentary habits on children, thinking that only a narrow focus on test-driven academics will bring success.

In a clinical report for the *American Academy of Pediatrics*, Ginsburg (2007) warned of the risks to healthy child development associated with the reduction of free play, creative arts and physical activity resulting from the external pressures of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Adolescents also risk harm from the imbalances and pressures wrought by this federal law and the mistaken educational thinking at its core.

Although acknowledging the importance of active learning, I have found many prospective secondary school teachers unable to imagine situations where movement is appropriate for their students. Some, however, were able to make the connection to their own teaching.

One future high school social studies teacher, for instance, was inspired by our movement work to bring active learning into her student teaching class. She based her lesson on the exercise called "harmonious groupings." Here students are asked in small groups to take simple, yet powerful positions, one by one, to depict a certain concept or emotion, such as "oppression" or "love." This teacher, who was also an amateur photographer, was so inspired by the powerful visual pictures created as a result of this exercise, that she developed an entire series of lesson plans for her students around the theme of civil rights and African American history. She called this technique "silent theater," and invited her adolescent students, often reticent to speak in class, to express their feelings about the topic using their bodies to create silent pictures. She also modeled for them her own expressive oral interpretation of civil rights writing and songs. The students told her that compared to reading a dry textbook, they were excited about history for the first time because it was presented as an engaging personal experience.

Leading future teachers to an experience of the healthy interplay of physical movement and emotional expression helps them recapture the natural freedom that current schooling threatens to deny a generation of children.

Group Work

Chekhov's method emphasized ensemble work. On the importance of ensemble, Chekhov (2006, 41) states,

The actor must develop within himself a sensitivity to the creative impulses of others. An improvising ensemble lives in a constant process of giving and taking. A small hint from a partner — a glance, a pause, a new or unexpected intonation, a movement, a sigh, or even a barely perceptible change of tempo — can become a creative impulse, an invitation to the other to improvise.

Building upon simple group exercises such as tossing an imaginary golden hoop into the air to more complex improvised ensemble scenes, Chekhov's method looks to awaken a feeling for group connectedness, what he called "contact." This is an unsentimental opening of the whole heart to the inner life and impulses of others. Deep listening is necessary for genuine contact with others to emerge. We must become awake to the subtle perceptions of giving and receiving in our actions and have the courage and patience to enliven the space that weaves between human beings.

Receiving

Our very first exercise in contact was simple, yet revealing. I asked the students to stand in two rows facing each other, and one by one, throw an imaginary ball to the person across the way. The person throwing the ball was directed to say, "Here it is." The receiver responds, "Thank you." After the first time through, it was clear from our observations that the greater energy and focus lay in the gesture of *giving* or throwing the ball. Without exception, the *receiver's* energy was passive, rushed, and unfocused. We discussed how, as teachers, we are compelled to be perpetual givers — of our time, energy, and knowledge. Where does receiving come into play in the classroom equation? The energy of receiving is often neglected in teaching and in teacher preparation. To fully receive is a powerful and focused act of mindful attention, of slowing down and listening. Without active receiving, we run the risk of missing important cues, allowing certain students to become invisible to us, rushing through one task to get to the next.

I asked them to repeat the exercise and put as much energy and focus into receiving as they had into giving. One way to do this, I suggested, was to slow down and consciously make eye contact with

their partner. After the second round there was still very little visible difference. We repeated this exercise several times with different lines. Although one or two students were able to make the shift, it was clear that there was still much work to be done in

Leading future teachers to an experience of the healthy interplay of physical movement and emotional expression helps them recapture the natural freedom that current schooling threatens to deny a generation of children.

balancing these two relational archetypes. One way to approach this task is through improvisational work.

In improvisation there is no script. A simple scenario is presented and students are asked to create on their feet.

There are two people in a room. It is evening. They are waiting for a third person to return. The opening atmosphere is expectant. As it grows later and later, the atmosphere becomes tense, then angry. The third person arrives in a happy mood. What happens next? How does the scene end?

Through this exercise, students got a sharper sense of what it is like to receive from another. The goal of our improvisational work was to express emotions strongly through movement and voice. I encouraged them to keep dialogue to a minimum so that they would be forced to take the time to “read” each other’s physical and emotional cues. With each week of improvisation, their freedom and inventiveness improved. Thrown into a situation in which they were utterly dependent upon each other, the concept of ensemble became clearer. Through analyzing what worked and what didn’t work in each scene, they began to see the need for both giving and receiving and the power of taking one’s time to ex-

press an emotion through strong movements, and sometimes, absolute silence.

Improvisation in Teaching

In their journals, some students reported an increased feeling of freedom while student teaching. They were beginning to sense the improvisational nature of teaching, which allowed them to feel less concerned with the *what if’s*, which had previously frightened them: *What if I can’t answer a question? What if I forget the lesson sequence? What if they don’t like me?* I was happy to learn that by practicing improvisation in a safe and supportive environment, they were able to transfer these skills to the pressure cooker of student teaching. Improvisation was teaching them to think on their feet and be present in the moment.

By the end of the semester we were ready to bring together all the elements of our work and present an evening of story and readers theater for a small audience. I watched a group of once shy future teachers move across the dance studio with ease and gusto, improvising dialogue and expressing powerful emotions freely through their bodies and voices, transforming an empty room into the whimsical landscapes of fairy tale and myth. As the semester ends, I am left with the hope that they will continue to explore the “undiscovered terrain” of their own human spirits and model this enthusiasm for their future students.

Summary

Michael Chekhov had a powerful vision of a theater of the future, with actors creating out of an awakened inner life. His work was nurtured within the progressive educational atmosphere of Dartington Hall, so it is not surprising that his lessons for professional actors translate so well to the field of education. Since first encountering his methods almost thirty years ago, I have experienced many generative ideas that can enliven teaching and learning and combat the mind- and heart-numbing forces of standardization so prevalent today. Simple exercises enliven our thinking through the creative imagination, strengthen our connections to emotion through movement, and awaken our feelings for others through the improvisational interplay of giving

and receiving. I believe that future teachers need such experiences. As I witnessed my students' unfolding insights as they dared to open themselves to this creative work, I was reminded that the path toward deepening our humanity runs through a world enlivened by artistic experiences. To disregard this world neglects the profound needs of growing human beings and those who would teach them.

Endnote

A wide selection of Chekhov's psycho-physical exercises can be found in Chapter 1 of his book, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting* (2006). Readers interested in learning more about Chekhov's views on eurythmy and speech formation are referred to his book, *On the Technique of Acting* (1991, 74-78).

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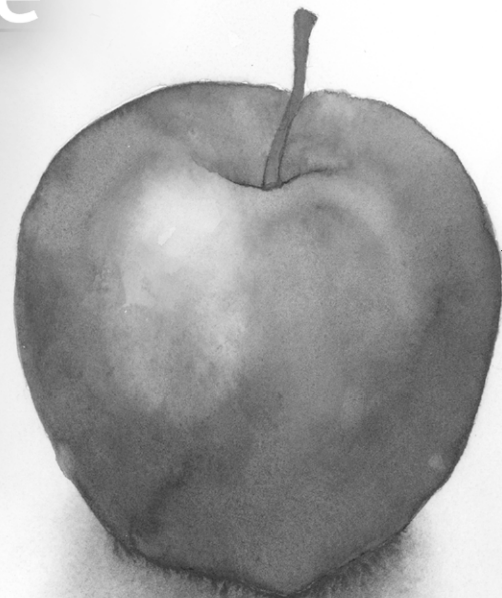
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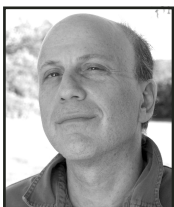
Zeke N. Finkelstein and William Crain

It's time to take a new look at the work of Paul Goodman, the maverick mid-20th century scholar who described how social conditions unnecessarily suppress the growth of human powers.

Poet, essayist, novelist, radical social critic, education critic, gestalt therapist, anarchist humanist, urban planner — the list could go on — Paul Goodman wrote about just about everything, in virtually every genre. He raised, always provocatively, and in many cases years before anyone else, a host of critical issues with which we still are struggling. His diverse oeuvre and unorthodox life are not easy to place, but this fact doesn't explain the near-total eclipse of his fame and reputation since his death in 1972. Nothing else does, either, however, except perhaps that his kind of ragged but uncompromising integrity has been even more out-of-fashion in recent decades than it was when he was alive. He is worth reading and due a renaissance.

Goodman (1911-1972) was a mid-century, native New York City artist, intellectual, and Socratic gadfly — or “Man of Letters,” as he preferred to call himself (1962a, xiii). Although always productive, and already the author of scores of articles, essays, poems, stories, and at least half a dozen major books, Goodman did not win widespread fame until the 1960 publication of *Growing Up Absurd*, his study of youth disaffected from the “organized system” (i.e., cold war America).

Considered by some the philosopher of the New Left, for much of the sixties Goodman was, in his words, a sort of “Dutch uncle” to the student movements, counseling students on tactics and tirelessly representing their cause in books and to faculty and administrators in panels and conferences (Stoehr 1994a; Goodman, 1964; 1967b). But later in the decade there was considerable disaffection on both sides as Goodman, grief-struck by the death of his



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son Matty in a mountain-climbing accident in 1967, was alienated by what he perceived to be the growing authoritarian direction of some parts of the movement, and the drug-addled fuzziness of others. His late book, *The New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative*, reflected on the youth of the sixties (1970, 48): "Suddenly I realized that they did not believe there was a nature of things.... There was no knowledge but only the sociology of knowledge!" This book is his last major statement of his "conservative" anarchism. What he wanted to conserve was fresh air, clean water, green grass, "children with bright eyes and good color whatever the color, people safe from being pushed around so they can be themselves" (1970, 191).

Goodman had been writing of the fundamental absurdities and paradoxes of our society since the thirties and forties. In his numerous works, he celebrated life's possibilities and critiqued what we do to thwart them. One way of placing Goodman in his time is to see him as a New York City version of Sartre, Beckett, Breton, Camus, or Genet: His appreciation of the absurd and surreal was no less refined. But Goodman isn't so easily pigeonholed. He didn't want or cultivate a theory that was heroically tragic or absurd; he strove for a theory that one could actually *live* by. This made for less "sexy" and glamorous writing than that of the French, but Goodman's work was deep and true.

In some ways, Goodman's writing was distinctly American. Although he sometimes wrote abstractly, and certainly was a thoroughgoing scholar, in much of his work he was unassuming and down-to-earth. He was right there with you on the page, Whitman-like, loafing and inviting your ease. His relaxed but scholarly voice was remarkably that of a real person — someone talking to you.

Goodman was a kind of literary-intellectual *enfant terrible* in his youth. Learned and intellectually precocious, he also was bisexual, a fact and attitude which he flaunted and advocated with ideologized élan. In the forties, after the war had broken out, his stance against the war and his open pan-sexuality injured his reception among the New York literati and their journals of influence (Goodman 1977, 218; Stoehr 1994a, viii).

A Paul Goodman Sampler

"The aim is to unblock and animate, so that school becomes a place of excitement and growth." (1977, 231)

"All you have to do is go to an elementary school the way I have done as a school board member who sat there hour after hour every week, and see these kids with glazed eyes being tormented or their youth wasted, and you cannot deny that this is evil." (1967b, 56)

"I am not impressed that those who are better socialized to our present society are wise and brave or indeed, altogether sane." (1977, 232)

"You can teach a dog to walk on its hind legs and balance a ball, and it does it with certain behavioral characteristics. And you can take, for instance, a teaching machine and teach a child to perform in the same way. But a dog's action in the field when it's chasing a rabbit has, let us say, a grace and a force and a kind of discrimination and power of movement and a Gestalt, which is quite different from a dog's walking on his hind legs and balancing a ball." (1967b, 56)

"It is thought that if you don't have imposed order you have chaos, as if spontaneous working out of impulse and coping with the environment did not have its own kind of order." (1967b, 32-33)

"The harmony that administrators impose is generally the 'harmony of the graveyard'." (1967b, 34)

"[Freud] was a naturalist. And as we are told of Darwin that he sat for three hours with staring eyes while the bee visited the flower, so we may easily think of Freud, the attention crowding into his ears, listening to the voices of the wounds. Not a father, not a teacher, but a pupil and a child." (1977, 4)

In the fifties, Goodman's major non-literary work was the theoretical section of *Gestalt Therapy* (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman 1951). He also practiced gestalt therapy. He had worked closely with Fritz Perls and others on the development and formulation of the new therapy and is recognized in Gestalt circles today as one of the founders of this new school (See Stoehr 1994b; Miller 1996; Rosenfeld

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1996). But as a writer and public intellectual, the fifties represented Goodman's nadir: His literary production had ground to a relative halt (compared to the thirties and forties), and his wider reputation dimmed.

This "down" decade of Goodman's came to an abrupt end with the publication of *Growing Up Absurd* in 1960. The book became almost a sacred text on many college campuses in the early sixties, and was also read and respected by a gamut of established intellectuals and academics. The book gave voice and legitimacy to the difficulties and complaints of the young. As Goodman (1960, xvi) said, "I assume that the young *really* need a more worth-while world in order to grow up at all, and I confront this real need with the world that they have been getting. This is the source of their problems." During the 1960s, he was much sought after as a campus speaker, panelist, "think-tank" invitee, and "expert" on numerous subjects including juvenile delinquency, education, urban planning, literature, and politics.

Despite the extraordinary diversity of his work, and in the face of the accusation that he spread himself thin, Goodman wrote (1962a, xiii), characteristically, that in fact, "I have only one [subject], the human beings I know in their man-made scene." This is fair enough, but one could say, more specifically, that his overriding concern was with how modern

society had succumbed to wasteful absurdity: People have been taught to value procedure over purpose, motion over purposeful activity, profit over satisfaction, mechanism over intrinsic motivation, and technology over human value. In short, in our upside-down society, means had become ends, and useful, beautiful, and courageous ends had become the stuff of movies or propaganda, not for real people in their real lives. Goodman found this outrageous and absurd.

Goodman is important — not just or even primarily for his courageous, outspoken life or his charismatic populism, as some have more or less argued (see Pachter 1973), but for his fierce, generous, beautifully integrated intellect and the work he left behind. It is true that Goodman refused — or was unable — to cleanly cordon off the personal from the theoretical, the lived self from the self on the page. This made him a great and/or outrageous character, but this refusal also contributed to his authenticity as a writer. Goodman's writings brought insights of lasting value to many aspects of life. Through his works, he helped us keep society in perspective, insisting that it serve human function and that we avoid the acceptance of conditions that limit human freedom and human powers. In this essay, we will focus on his ideas on Gestalt Therapy, human nature, and education.

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt Therapy is known for its techniques — primarily advanced by Fritz Perls — to free up human functioning. It is beyond our scope to discuss these techniques, many of which are described in Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman's classic book, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (1951). Goodman's contribution to this book was to provide its underlying theoretical groundwork.

At the center of his contribution, Goodman spells out a series of "basic neurotic dichotomies" (p. 240) that Gestalt Therapy theory will dissolve. These include artificial dichotomies between body and mind, self and world, the emotional and objective, infantile and mature, and personal and social. Most fundamentally, Gestalt Therapy deals with the false dichotomy of self and world by substituting the *experi-*

ence of the organism contacting the environment. All organismic functions, at least in normal health, complete themselves with objects and an environment: We breathe *air*, we eat *food*, we get upset by an *obstacle*, we walk on *the earth*. Even reasoning has its origins with actual problems in the world. The organism/environment field, not the isolated animal, is primary; "every human function is an interacting in an organism/environment field" that is simultaneously physical, biological, psychological and socio-cultural (Perls et al. 1951, 229).

Goodman then goes on to assert that psychology is the study of the creative and dynamic adjustment of the organism in the environmental field. "Correspondingly, abnormal psychology is the study of the interruption, inhibition, or other accidents in the course of creative adjustment" (Perls et al. 1951, 230-231).

These statements are very abstract, as is his theoretical work in the Gestalt volume in general. But Goodman did have a precise definition of creative, as opposed to unhealthy, adjustment:

Contact, the work that results in assimilation and growth, is the forming of a figure of interest against a ground or context of the organism/environment field. The figure (gestalt) in awareness is a clear, vivid perception, image, or insight; in motor behavior, it is the graceful energetic movement that has rhythm, follows through. (Perls et al. 1951, 231)

This fact, that the gestalt has observable psychological properties, provides an autonomous criterion of creative behavior, apart from adjustment or conformity to the conventional society. Instead, Goodman looked to the qualities of a "good gestalt." In perception, this is when the figure is clear and bright. When observing action, one looks for behavior that has energy, grace, rhythm, and intelligence. These are the indicators of people's healthy development and functioning, and the standards by which we may measure whether societies and educational institutions are working as they should.

Human Nature and Education

Goodman often framed the question of growing up as how to take on culture without losing nature.

By "nature," he primarily meant capacities, powers, potentialities, or drives — all of which can only be realized in specific ways and actual situations. It is the function of healthy child-rearing, environment, and education to support and nourish the free development of natural powers. The growing individual needs culture — its forms and con-

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tents — to develop these powers, but it is vital that he or she bring innate passion and natural powers to the process. Beautiful action, whether in art, sport, love, thought, or conversation, has passion and energy as well as grace and form. For this, there can be no denial of natural force. There must be a seamless coupling of force and skill. Beethoven's symphonies, for example, did not sacrifice force, vivacity, or "nature" to achieve their culturally complex harmonies, rhythms, and instrumentations; neither must we.

Unfortunately, modern societies perceive natural impulses as threatening. They must be corralled and repressed. This repression is a violence to nature that "prevents power ... from becoming a living act" (Goodman 1962b, 13). When this happens, we see resistance and sporadic aggression, or simply a weakening of powers. In Goodman's Gestalt Therapy terms, we observe a "weak gestalt": "dull, confused, graceless, lacking in energy" (Perls et al. 1951, 232) — the person "is not ... all there."

In *Growing Up Absurd*, Goodman (1960, 4) observed that some scholars maintain that there is no such actual entity as human nature, or that it is infinitely malleable. This view conveniently fits the pur-

pose of economists and government policymakers whose real aim is to produce “people

who can be fit wherever they are needed in the productive system.... There is a man for every job and not many are left over, and the shelves are almost always cleared. Social scientists observe that these are the facts, and they also devise theories and techniques to produce more facts like them, for the social scientists too are part of the highly organized system.

Although the view that people are like lumps of clay that can be molded to fit the needs of the economic machine might make sense to many social scientists, this effort ultimately produces people who are angry, despairing, and unfulfilled. In contrast to the social scientists, those who are more directly involved in people’s actual lives — teachers, parents, police officers, shop stewards, and psychotherapists — know that human nature is not infinitely malleable. They have found that

[y]ou can’t teach people some things or change them in some ways, and if you persist, you’re in for trouble. Contrariwise, if you *don’t* provide them with certain things, they’ll fill the gaps with eccentric substitutes.... [Above all, if one does so persist,] there will be a diminishing of force, grace, discrimination, intellect, feeling, in specific behaviors or even in [the child’s] total behavior. He may become too obedient and lacking in initiative, or impractically careful and squeamish; he may develop “psychosomatic” ailments like constipation. (Goodman 1960, 5)

In such cases, Goodman (1960, 6) continued,

the loss of force, grace, and feeling seems to be evidence that somehow the acquired cultural habits do not draw on unimpeded outgoing energy, they are against the grain, they do not fit the child’s needs or appetites; *therefore*, they have been ill adapted and not assimilated.

Goodman argued that

[w]e do not need to be able to say what “human nature” *is* in order to be able to say that some training is “against human nature” and you persist in it at peril. Teachers and psychologists

who deal practically with growing up and the blocks to growing up may never mention the word[s] “human nature” (indeed, they are better off without too many a priori ideas), but they cling stubbornly to the presumption that at every stage there is a developing potentiality *not* yet cultured, and yet not blank.... We must draw it out, offer it opportunities, not violate it except for unavoidable reasons. What “it” is, is not definite. It is what, when appealed to in the right circumstances, gives behavior that has force, grace discrimination, intellect, feeling. This vagueness is of course quite sufficient for education, for education is an art. A good teacher feels his way, looking for response. (Goodman 1960, 6.)

This is a moving and instructive depiction of the teacher as an attentive artist, moving in close dance-step with the student, the aim being to draw out the student’s interest and, again, forceful, graceful behavior. But we know also that to draw the student’s powers out, it is necessary to have an actual object of interest. The theory in *Growing Up Absurd* is no different from that in *Gestalt Therapy*; only the rhetoric, audience, and purpose are somewhat different: “Growth, like any ongoing function, requires adequate objects in the environment to meet the needs and capacities of the growing child” (1960, 12). Objects have to be adequate, not faked: Just as food need be nutritious, not plastic, so do objects of interest and attention. The environment must give the opportunity for honest work, honest speech, good sex, real satisfaction. This isn’t the case in our society.

Goodman asked us to consider a youth who is attracted to the job of automobile mechanic (1960, 19). Suppose the young man dropped out of school in the eleventh grade. Although he has had trouble in school, he is alert and willing. He watched mechanics as a kid. The job is dirty and careful at the same time. One can help people in trouble by fixing their cars, and socialize with the customers (girls). But once at the job, he finds that it is largely a sham. Cars have built-in obsolescence, and there’s a law that forbids the use of spare parts after five years. The repairs themselves are pointlessly expensive. On the job, he starts getting into the practice of using spare

parts instead of new ones customers think they're getting, overcharging them, and charging them for repairs that are not even made.

Or, a verbally bright and successful student might enter the world of business or advertising, where there is no question of doing work that produces something useful in some honorable way. The job is about status, prestige, and money, not the inherent value of the work (1960, 26). It's largely a hustle.

Goodman also considered the vocation of teaching. It seems intrinsically worthwhile, and attracts dedicated young people. But there they typically encounter class sizes that are too large and bureaucratic demands that don't allow them to really teach, at least not in the sense of drawing out the child's passions and energies (Goodman 1960, 24-25).

In short, the man-made social environment does not provide young people with jobs that require "human energy and capacity, and that can be done with honor and dignity" (Goodman 1960, 26). Vocational guidance doesn't try to find opportunities for the young that will draw upon their personal interests and powers. Instead, it consists of "finding some place in the economy where he can be fitted; chopping him down to make him fit; or neglecting him if they can't find his slot" (Goodman 1960, 29). For the society isn't interested in cultivating the young; it is "geared to a profitable expansion of production" (Goodman 1960, 30). In this economy, many make a living. But for Goodman, the critical question is, What does it mean to grow up into such a world, facing the prospect that during one's productive years one will spend eight hours a day at a job what has no real value? What the young really want is to look forward to a career that is useful, creative, and even noble, but this isn't offered in our society (Goodman 1960, 29).

Goodman saw the "Beat" behavior of his day, as well as juvenile delinquency, as responses to this situation. He was sympathetic to both. In fact, he saw delinquency as a sign of the *relative* health of the kids; they can still act out and invent their own ways, however pathetic and deviant. They are not totally resigned; they still have energy. To most adults, however, juvenile delinquency is merely as an unruly symptom that they wish would disappear; they are

not interested in changing any of the circumstances that caused it.

Throughout Goodman's work, the themes of vitality, energy, and initiative are central. He advocated small-scale communities so people could express themselves and make a difference without being lost or squashed. From his writings in the 1940s through the early 1970s, Goodman tried to rally peo-

In our upside-down society, means had become ends, and useful, beautiful, and courageous ends had become the stuff of movies or propaganda, not for real people in their real lives. Goodman found this outrageous and absurd.

ple against the crushing learned helplessness, early resignation (1960, 170-190), and feeling of powerlessness (1967a, 101-119) that our over-organized society causes, intentionally and not.

Educational Propositions and Proposals

Goodman didn't merely criticize contemporary society. He also offered alternatives, forming a positive vision of what society could be. And he took a lifelong interest in education. Before listing some of Goodman's educational proposals, which may in some cases seem unrealistic or utopian, it is worthwhile to note that Goodman had great admiration for John Dewey's philosophy, and that Goodman valued the essence of progressive education. Goodman, like Dewey, believed that learning is a process that involves spontaneous intelligence, interest, and energies; a process that takes place in a social and cooperative context rather than in a competitive environment; and a process that is truly experimental and personally meaningful. Goodman, like Dewey, opposed purely formal academic instruction for the young, for the young want to exercise their powers in the real world and do productive things. In the conventional classroom, Goodman (1969, 79) ob-

served, the child doesn't exercise her powers or pursue her deepest interests; she adjusts to "the constricted seats, the schedule, the teacher's expectation, the inherently not very interesting subject matter to which [s]he must pay attention anyway." In this environment, cognitive development means "learning the school ropes and becoming life-stupider."

Here, then, are some of Goodman's more specific propositions and proposals.

Learning is a Natural Process

Children naturally grow and learn. We don't have to make them grow and learn. Goodman asked what in the environment attracts growth and what stops it. What attracts growth is usually the ordinary world. What prevents it is usually school itself, with its "alien style, banning of spontaneous interest, extrinsic rewards and punishments" (Goodman 1964, 26). Genuine learning occurs when the child is intrinsically motivated and free to pursue his or her own interests.

Reading Happens Spontaneously

Just as children naturally learn to speak, "a formidable intellectual achievement" (Goodman 1970, 69), without formal schooling, they will spontaneously learn to read. They will pick it up on their own, through "library books, newspapers, comic books, or street signs" (1960, 95). This self-learning is important; in subsequent years, self-taught readers continue to read for interest, pleasure, and wisdom. In contrast, those who have been taught mechanically through dull readers, read little (1970, 96).

Goodman did endorse some methods of teaching reading. A teacher can point out words of interest to a child, such as the destination of a bus or the label on a soup can. Goodman specifically liked how Sylvia Ashton-Warner taught Maori children to read. She gave individual children cards with the key words of passionate concern to them, such as "fear," "hunger," "loneliness," and "sexual desire." Soon the children had a reading list, not like that of Dick and Jane, but a list of words that demonstrated that reading can be "gut-meaningful" (Goodman 1970, 99-100).

The Child's Freedom Needs Special Protection

Goodman thought that children in the elementary grades are particularly vulnerable to adult pressures that restrict their free growth. The purpose of elemen-

tary education, therefore, should be to delay socialization as much as possible (1970, 86). For this age range, Summerhill, A. S. Neil's freedom-based school (which was sexually permissive as well), is an adequate model (1970, 90). The goal of elementary education "[s]hould be a very modest one: it is for a small child, under his own steam, not on a leash, to be able to poke interestedly into whatever goes on and to be able, by observation, questions, and practical imitation, to get something out of it on his own terms."

Learning is Incidental

Most learning occurs in an unplanned way through the course of real-world activities. In earlier times, it often took place through apprenticeships, in which the novice learned alongside a master, picking up the tricks of a trade without formal academic instruction. Similarly the young learn games, child-care, cooking, fixing things, and many other tasks through interactions with peers and family. When children are put in schools, the setting is more scholastic and abstract, and it is more anxiety-ridden. The youngster doesn't pick up skills on his own terms, in his own way, but is put on the spot, tested, and threatened with humiliation (1970, 68-81).

Accordingly, Goodman advocated apprenticeships. A society such as ours has many real tasks that need to be done, and the young can learn by helping with them. These tasks include urban renewal, rural reconstruction, ecology, and the arts; all could make use of young people. Other activities in which young people can learn on the job include local newspapers, radio stations, theaters, and research centers (Goodman 1970, 87). Young people also can learn through social service activities, such as work in hospitals and community action projects (Goodman 1970, 88). All kinds of real-world learning should be options for the young — chosen freely and not mandated.

Sometimes secondary schools make such activities supplements to their curriculums. But Goodman wanted them to be pivotal. He argued that most high schools should be abolished in favor of real social learning. Were this done, learning would have life, motivation, and reality.

Work Experience Should Come Before College

College training should typically follow, rather than precede, entry into the professions. Then, stu-

dents could relate their coursework to real knowledge and experience. Otherwise, college education is nothing but verbalisms (Goodman 1970, 86, 90).

Leaving and Re-Entering

In high school, apprenticeships, and college education it should be easy for students to leave and re-enter. Then they would pursue education out of interest and need — not as something forced upon them (Goodman 1964; 1967b, 39).

Concluding Comments

There have been many criticisms of Goodman. He has been called impractical. But this criticism is misguided. Confronting a society with debilitating problems, he didn't just recommend small adjustments. His contribution was to provide a deep analysis and point out new directions. Nothing is more useful than that. When people know what directions to take, and are serious about trying them, practical problems can be solved.

Goodman did have one glaring weakness. Although certainly much of what he said about education and vocation applied as well to girls as to boys, he chose to focus on boys. Exactly why he did this could be a topic of psychoanalytic speculation, but his justification — that girls aren't focused on the world of work — was certainly a blind error.

At the heart of Goodman's pleas was the need to bring energy, passion, and excitement back into our lives. This can only happen when people are free to exercise their powers. In this sense, Goodman's thought was Aristotelian. Goodman believed that the organism, as an animate, self-moving being, must freely exercise its capacities to express its true nature. People must be free to make choices, even wrong choices, to learn from their mistakes and find out what they are best cut out to do (Goodman 1970, 88; 1967b).

When young people are required to learn what adults say they ought to know, young people must conform to external authority and are robbed of the chance to learn from their own deepest interests. In a discussion of university education, Goodman (1967b, 32) said,

I put a lot of emphasis on the early years, even though we are going to be discussing university

administration, because the effect of the kind of mis-education that all of our children have gotten by the time they get up to the university is such that they in fact no longer know what they want; they have been too discouraged and too interrupted in their spontaneous learning. They

It is the function of healthy child-rearing, environment, and education to support and nourish the free development of natural powers. The growing individual needs culture — its forms and contents — to develop these powers, but it is vital that he or she bring innate passion and natural powers to the process.

don't trust their own best powers and instead they begin to introject, as we say in psychology; they begin to internalize and identify with external commands rather than with their inner motions and they think that that is how things must be.

In the late 1960s, Goodman (1970, 75) saw that education was coming under tighter and tighter social control. But could he have guessed how authoritarian it would become today? Today, many school districts insist on scripted teaching, in which teachers' every lesson is dictated by the central office. They are not free to innovate or respond to students' special temperaments and interests. For their part, children are drilled to do well on tests. To meet the all-consuming, federally mandated improvements in test scores, school districts throughout the country have cut back on children's free time and spontaneous behavior. Kindergartens no longer include play; many schools no longer even permit recess. Activities such as the arts and projects that foster individuality and creativity are shoved aside. Outside of school, too,

children are oversupervised and overcontrolled (Crain 2006).

In this climate, Goodman's call for a free childhood is more urgent than ever. Otherwise, children will never develop naturally and engage the world with force, grace, discrimination, and skill.

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Let's Rethink Risk

Susan G. Solomon

To enjoy an invigorating childhood, kids need playgrounds that allow them to make discoveries, stretch their skills, and take minor risks.

Americans have difficulty assessing risk. They shun raw milk cheese — a product from which there is no chance of infection — but spend millions of dollars on unregulated, possibly harmful dietary supplements. They purchase tons of anti-bacterial cleansers and creams without considering how those products destroy necessary (and healthful) microorganisms (Steingarten 2003; Specter 2004). Analogous concerns, echoed on playgrounds in the United States, are additional indicators of misplaced fears that have altered our daily lives and shaped our physical environment. Today's playground — an enclosed space dominated by a single piece of manufactured equipment — has become a risk-free zone. It is so safe that it is doing a disservice to kids.

Psychologists, biologists, social workers, educators, and designers argue that overly safe playgrounds cheat kids. There is presently a gap between what constitutes worthwhile activity and where kids play. Playgrounds should supply opportunities for individual exploration, socialization, negotiation, fantasy, and gentle unexpected consequences (Perry 2001; Greenman 1988). Psychologists Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff (2003, 214) have underscored the significance of uninhibited play, concluding that it

is the very fuel of every intellectual activity that our children engage in. Researchers are in universal agreement that play provides a strong foundation for intellectual growth, creativity, and problem solving ... emotional development, and for the development of essential social skills.

A glance at contemporary playgrounds yields a different picture. Children can climb up, run across, and slide down standardized equipment; sometimes they can scamper on a low wall or put their fingers into sand on an elevated, antiseptic table. There are

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few opportunities to do much else. Kids encounter a directional, isolating, unchallenging environment. There is no room for experimentation. Children rarely interact with each other, thereby limiting their chances for fantasy and social maturation. A *New York Times* feature piece investigated kids' recreation in 2000 and titled the report: "When Child's Play is Too Simple: Experts Criticize Safety-Conscious Recreation as Boring." Citing landscape architect Paul Friedberg's notion of "safety fundamentalism," author Janny Scott (2000) referred to the frequent demise of movable parts, swings, or sand. Scott observed that safety and easy maintenance had become the major determinants of playground design, resulting in a "deadening sameness" (p. 9). The situation has not improved in the intervening six years since Scott's assessment. Kids are smart enough to recognize the dullness of what they are offered; they either find new (often extreme) ways in which to use playgrounds or they don't show up at all.

We, as a culture, need to rethink this sad condition. The playground should be transformed into a place for real education, a venue that is not predictable. It should be a location for ongoing discovery, and perhaps, a site for the thrill of doing something a bit dangerous. We have to develop settings where kids can try something new, NOT succeed, then keep plugging away until they overcome obstacles. Kids with that type of playground experience will gain a sense of achievement; they will learn that taking a chance has its own rewards. Jennie Lindon, a child psychologist, has noted (1999, 11) that children "need opportunities to take acceptable risks in an environment that encourages them to push against the boundaries of their current abilities, to stretch their skills and confidence." Hara Marano (2004, 61), an editor at *Psychology Today* warns that if we eliminate "error and experimentation" and the opportunity to fail, then "kids are unable to forge their creative adaptations to the normal vicissitudes of life" (p. 61). Marano concludes that "we're on our way to creating a "Nation of Wimps," filled with citizens who are indecisive, anxious, and unprepared for adulthood.

Kids who engage in freer play become risk takers. That doesn't mean that they become the irresponsible folks who jump off of roofs for the fun of it or set fire to homes to see what happens. They embrace a different

sort of risk, the kind that professor Gregory Stock (2003) of the UCLA School of Public Health advocates as necessary for technological and societal change. Stock believes that children who take risks grow up to become scientists who reach startling conclusions by employing unproven techniques or quirky hypotheses; they become business entrepreneurs who acquire

We, as a culture, need to rethink this sad condition. The playground should be transformed into a place for real education, a venue that is not predictable. It should be a location for ongoing discovery, and perhaps, a site for the thrill of doing something a bit dangerous.

underperforming companies because they are willing to invest in the potential for positive outcomes; they become artists who know that composing or painting in unorthodox manners will allow them to have creative breakthroughs.

The American playground needs an overhaul in spite of exterior forces that stall its transformation. A safety industry argues that we can never be secure enough. Evaluators, including the Consumer Protection Safety Commission and American Society for Testing and Materials, set safety standards that are excessive. Well meaning but misguided organizations, such as Public Interest Research Group, make surveys of playgrounds and then announce that most do not meet their stringent requirements. Parents are understandably seduced by the rhetoric of fear. In this atmosphere, what self-respecting parent would be willing to abandon the presumably safest playgrounds for their own offspring? Only those who see a bigger picture: parents who want children to acquire life skills through experiential learning. The medical community endorses such parental de-

cisions because they have not seen the dire circumstances that the "safety lobby" proclaims. Emergency room physicians and orthopedic surgeons recurrently note that playground injuries rarely occur because of equipment or its inherent design (Needham 2002; Barron 2004; Suecoff et al. 1999).

Americans need to recognize what British play proponents have long advocated: distinguish between minor and major threats. Tim Gill, past director of the Children's Play Council in Britain, has argued for making a differentiation between the possibility of slight injury, which is acceptable, and the threat of serious injury, which is not (Young 1996). Psychologist Lindon (1999) has asked if kids are "Too Safe for Their Own Good?" For Americans, even very limited risk can be a hard sell. Architect Mark Horton learned that when he designed a Montessori School in San Francisco. Horton drew a roof "slope that would send rainwater spilling down into a cistern; children would then use a hand pump to retrieve the water for gardening or play" (King 2005). Parents nixed that innovative proposal by citing safety fears that included the breeding of mosquitoes!

Adults — recalling times when their own play focused on crawling through sand, climbing trees, digging into mounds, and building forts — need to take a look around. Kids no longer get dirty (detergent sales appear to be slowing!) and that should be a warning that something is wrong. In the past, children scrapped their knees and sometimes broke an arm or leg. It just happened. A simplistic view of responsibility has now supplanted earlier acceptance of injuries. The prevailing consensus is that even the most trivial accident has three components: a cause, someone to blame, and a financial payout. Lack of universal health care does make the situation a complex one.

It is up to parents to know what type of facilities local schools and parks are providing for outdoor recreation. They must demand that their kids be given a chance for real play that is messy, interactive, and unpredictable. Architects can also lend a hand. The Rockwell Group, a multi-discipline design firm, has been working with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, to create a new model that could be adapted throughout America.

It might just provide inspiration for other municipalities, all of whom are free to adapt this "open source" plan. In addition to an abstract space that will allow climbing as well as hiding, Rockwell has reinstated sand and water to the primary roles they should occupy in children's play. They are also bringing back "loose parts," which kids can use to manipulate their surroundings, and play workers who will allow kids to experiment but prevent any truly dangerous interactions.

Playgrounds will change when parents, educators, administrators, and designers accept the fact that risk (in small and tolerable doses) is essential if we are to have generations of competent adults. Adults who insist on risk care deeply and passionately about young people; they want kids to thrive now and have a rewarding, fulfilling future that will be packed with memories of an invigorating past.

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Teaching

An Affair of the Heart

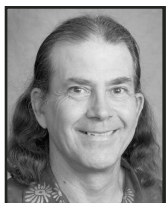
Chris Mercogliano

Lately I've been thinking a lot about the relationship between teacher and student. Or I should also say between student and teacher because, as with all relationships, the connection is entirely reciprocal. The reason for my focus is that, especially from a child's point of view, this relationship is the single most important dimension of the educational process. All other factors — school philosophy, structure, methods, curriculum, standards — pale in comparison. Certainly when I look back over my childhood school experience, what I recall most vividly are the teachers I had, not what I learned in a given year or how well I did or didn't perform. And of course the ones I remember best are those precious few who truly cared about me.

As sweet synchronicity would have it, two recently released books just found their way to me, written by long-time teachers who both recognize, quoting educational historian and writer Ron Miller, that "teaching is a human encounter, not a management exercise."

The Vexing Middle School

In *If Holden Caulfield Were in My Classroom* (2008), Bernie Schein invites us warmly into his seventh and eighth grade classroom at Paideia, an independent progressive school for 900 pre-k–12 students that he helped found in Atlanta in 1971. He has taught there ever since.



CHRIS MERCOGLIANO writes a regular column for ENCOUNTER. He was a teacher and administrator for the Albany Free School for 35 years and now devotes his time exclusively to writing and lecturing. Chris's most recent book is *In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness* (Beacon Press 2007).

Schein confesses early in the book that what goaded him into education was how much he hated school as a child. His complaints, however, weren't the usual ones. It wasn't because it was too difficult, because the teachers were mean, or because the other kids picked on or ostracized him. No, Schein's problem was the flatness of the experience, the exclusion of emotion from the teaching/learning process. His teachers were one-dimensional figures who saw it as their role only to spoon out daily doses of information. As human beings they were mostly absent.

So Schein was determined to provide his students with everything he felt *he* had missed. From day one he insisted on a structure that allows him ample contact with them. He teaches two, rather than one, subjects — English and social studies — and he limits the total number of kids to around thirty. He has one class for three periods a week, and the other for four, so there are plenty of opportunities for teacher and students to get to know each other. Then he meets with the whole class an additional five periods a week, and he has the flexibility to work with students individually, too. He is free to design his own curriculum and to use his time in the classroom as he and the rest of the class see fit.

Here I will insert parenthetically that Schein anticipated by nearly two decades the directives of the classic, but now forgotten Carnegie Commission report on education, *Turning Points* (1989), which urgently called for a restructuring of the nation's middle schools because early adolescence is a period of such powerful physiological, emotional, and social transition. Young people need special attention during these tumultuous years. Among the report's recommendations was downsizing middle schools to a

more human scale so that students feel they are part of a community of common purpose, and so that every student has at least one thoughtful, sensitive adult to talk with regularly about matters of importance in his or her life, both in and out of school. The commission also argued for reducing academic pressure so teenagers can have a chance to understand the profound changes their bodies, psyches, and relationships are undergoing, as well as for teachers to serve as mentors and role models instead of taskmasters and critics. "Schools," the report said, "should be places where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for personal growth and intellectual development."

Parentetical note number two: The irony should not escape us that the special Carnegie Commission was appointed by President George H. W. Bush, whose son, aka the "Education Governor," would later institute a sweeping new set of federal policies that undercut every one of the commission's suggested reforms.

Bernie Schein recognized that what seventh and eighth graders need most is an intimate, relational space where it is safe for students and teachers alike to be themselves. Above all, classrooms have to be feeling places because, he writes,

Contrary to traditional educational theory and practice the true liberators of love, creativity, and intelligence are emotion, not rationality; the heart and soul, not the brain; feelings rather than thought; personality and character rather than IQ tests and standardized test scores.

"Furthermore," Schein adds, "love, creativity, and intelligence are naturally inseparable, indivisible, and intertwined. Talents and intelligence are not traits to be absorbed, but rather inherent parts of the personality to be discovered."

Making It Personal

Schein says that in any kind of school, literature, creative writing, and social studies can act as effective mediums for helping kids discover the important themes of their own lives. On that score, a large measure of the writing he has his students do is autobiographical, which they then read aloud to the class. Schein implores the kids to be painfully honest, and

he leads the way by readily revealing his own warts and pimples. "Just be yourself and don't be afraid to take risks" is his daily mantra because he deeply believes that young people need to be able to discuss openly the issues of life, death, friendship, love, sex, romance, guilt, shame, and oppression that otherwise remain hidden and festering in the dark inside most American adolescents.

It's all about the heart, according to Schein, because the more kids' hearts are open, the more their minds will be too. By making sure each and every

Schein's problem was the flatness of the experience, the exclusion of emotion from the teaching/learning process.

student knows implicitly that Schein loves, respects, and trusts them, Schein is able to create an atmosphere in which his students can dare to expose the pain and identity confusion that are so much a part of early teenagehood without the fear of being teased or put down.

The centerpiece of the book is the story of Betsy, one of Schein's seventh graders. An only child distraught over her parents' recent divorce, she attempts suicide with her mother's sleeping pills. When that act of desperation fails to bring her father home again, Betsy tries to cope with the loss of his attention with sarcasm, flightiness, and promiscuity. She continually tries to draw attention to herself, by her own admission, by "making a fool of myself," and at one point she becomes so jealous of Maury, the most popular girl in the class, that she spreads the catty rumor that Maury pads her bra. Infuriated when she finds out, Maury brings Betsy up on a charge of slander, which Maury is able to do because Schein's classrooms are governed by an elected congress that is empowered to make and enforce class rules.

A trial is then held by strict evidentiary and parliamentary procedures, with the final — and conclusive — testimony coming from Maury's boyfriend. Maury's breasts are 100% real, he swears in response to direct questioning by the prosecution. The jury

quickly returns a guilty verdict and the judge sentences Betsy to 25 days of toilet cleaning.

The episode culminates in a discussion during class the following day. Betsy shares with the group that she has learned she doesn't have to make a fool out of herself anymore in order to win the attention of others, and she offers Maury a genuine apology, which Maury gratefully receives. Then Betsy writes her dad a letter telling him why she took the pills, that she was angry with him for leaving her mother for another woman and that she wanted to hurt him because she was afraid of losing him permanently. She ends with a statement of how much she loves and needs him.

The outcome, Betsy reports a week later: "Now he won't leave me alone."

Concludes Bernie, as he is known to his students,

To know a child is to understand her heart and soul. Listening carefully, you may use many of the same pedagogical skills to bring her out emotionally, morally, socially, and artistically as you do to bring her out intellectually: cajole, whine, get on your knees and beg, confront, challenge, shame (if you have to), probe, probe, and probe, dig deeper and deeper and deeper until the truth — the revelation — begins to stretch, yawn, awaken, and tiptoe about her face like a smile. Follow her, until her feelings match her thoughts, until all questions are answered and she makes sense. You will know, because you will see in her face and body language relief and satisfaction. She will be, at that point, happy.

Schein's parting advice to teachers is to always make it personal. Don't be afraid to care deeply about your students, and beyond that to love them. "Hell..." he reasons, "how can you not once you truly get to know them?"

A Different Experience

Grace Feuerverger's reason for becoming a teacher was the opposite of Bernie Schein's. Growing up in Montreal in the 1950s, she loved school because her teachers were nurturing and kind, and took a genuine interest in her as a young person. The classroom for her was "a magical place where miracles hap-

pened," and so she decided her life's work, first as an elementary school teacher and later as a college professor, would be to make it possible for the students of today to have an equally positive experience.

In *Teaching, Learning and Other Miracles* (2007), Feuerverger articulates a vision of education remarkably similar to Schein's. She too sees the transmission of information and technique as only the outer skin of teaching and learning; it is imperative that teachers remain attuned to the emotional dia-

From a child's point of view, the relationship between teacher and student is the single most important dimension of the educational process. All other factors — school philosophy, structure, methods, curriculum, standards — pale in comparison.

logue that is constantly occurring beneath the surface. The ultimate goal, she says, is to help young people make contact with their deepest inner passions and sense of self. She passionately believes that the essence of the process is embedded in the relationships, and therefore schools should view themselves as meeting places, as safe spaces for the forging of friendships and unveiling of dreams.

Unlike Schein, however, Feuerverger did not enjoy the luxury of starting her career in a school of privilege that she helped to design. Her first job was in a fifth-grade classroom in a large inner-city Toronto public school in which the mostly immigrant and poor student population spoke no fewer than ten different languages. Having been forewarned by a battle-hardened older colleague that her kids were a bunch of hellions and she would never last 'til Christmas, Feuerverger waited anxiously for her students to arrive on the first day and declared herself ready for anything.

In short order, anything — and everything — indeed began to happen. As Feuerverger tried to introduce the reading lesson she had carefully pre-

pared the previous night, which was dutifully based on the standard-issue basal readers the school administration had provided her, the room was fast dissolving into chaos. Glancing over at the shelf full of dreaded, white-bread books, and then fully taking in the multi-colored faces of the children, she was suddenly divinely inspired. She silently gathered up as many of the readers as she could carry, strode confidently over to the window, and gave them the heave-ho.

Realizing that she had the full attention of her students for the first time, she seized the moment. "I don't blame you for not being interested in these books," she calmly announced to her kids, who at this point were all back in their seats and in a state of utter disbelief. "They look pretty dull to me too." Then she pledged: "In this class we will only read interesting stories, and they will have meaning for all of us."

The following day she brought in a set of children's versions of the Greek myths that she had found in a bookstore the year before and began to read them aloud to the kids, all of whom had below-average reading skills, and some none at all. But not before she invited them to become co-conspirators in her unplanned subversion. She explained that the stories weren't part of the mandated curriculum and that sooner or later the principal or some other administrator would show up to observe their class. When that happened, she warned, they would all need to shift gears immediately and surreptitiously slip into one of the activities that they were supposed to be doing.

All went well until one mid-October day when Feuerverger was so immersed in the story of Demeter and Persephone, which is filled with the same themes that dominated her students' lives — loss, violence, abuse, displacement — that she hadn't noticed the district superintendent come into the room. By the time she registered the meaning of the kids' flailing arms and panicked expressions, it was too late. Their observer could plainly see that they were way, way off task. When he asked the red-faced Feuerverger exactly what it was she was doing, she gave it to him straight. It wasn't fair to foist reading texts filled with characters and situations such vul-

nerable children couldn't relate to. They needed stories that excited their imaginations and spoke to them on their own terms. *And it was working*, she added.

Then she waited for the ax to fall. But it never did. The superintendent smiled warmly and told Feuerverger he was well aware of the reputation of this group, and that this was the first time he had ever seen them positively engaged. "Carry on," he said, "and I will speak to your principal on your behalf." As he extended his hand to congratulate her on her fine work, the class broke out in a chorus of applause.

Adding to the poignancy of Feuerverger's account is the fact that she too was once a refugee child, the daughter of Polish Jews who had met as young adults in a Nazi concentration camp and somehow managed to survive and later find their way to a new life together in Canada. Her own experience growing up had made her keenly aware of the special needs of minority children, who must struggle to find their place in the public education system of a dominant culture. It also led her to move up to the university level in order to gain the leverage to affect system-wide change, which is her current mission at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Ontario, where she continues to be an outspoken proponent of multiculturalism in education.

Feuerverger's conviction that teaching is a calling and a sacred opportunity to make a difference in children's lives has only grown stronger. Throughout her book, one senses how deeply she cares about children. And even though her path and her past differ in so many ways from Bernie Schein's, she concludes with almost identical words: "At the end, it will always be about love."

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Nurturing Inner Calm in Children

Linda Lantieri

A noted peace educator describes activities that help children find serenity and better cope with the stresses and difficulties of life.

As adults, we often feel the pressures of today's fast-paced world and think back longingly to a time when our daily lives were a lot less stressful. Today one-third of Americans report that they are living with "extreme stress" and almost half feel that the stress in their lives has increased over the past five years (American Psychological Association 2007). Unfortunately, today's children are not immune to the stress of everyday life, either. Our society has changed in many ways that increase pressure on children and compromise their childhoods.

A poll conducted by the national Kids Poll surveyed 875 children, ages nine through thirteen, about what caused them stress and what coping strategies they used the most to deal with the stress in their lives. The top three sources of stress that they reported were grades, school, and homework (36%); family (32%); and friends, peers, gossip, and teasing (21%). The top three coping strategies were to play or do something active (52%), to listen to music (44%), and to watch TV or play a video game (42%). Of the ten coping strategies that were chosen the most, not one involved going within and being able to calm oneself (Lyness 2005).

While we, as adults, must work to reduce the sources of excessive childhood stress, it also would be helpful to provide children with a wider range of skills for coping with it. Fortunately, many teachers in New York City are doing just that. They are teaching young people practical contemplative practices for managing the stress that comes their way.

A few months ago I witnessed this firsthand in a first grade classroom in a public school in East Harlem. This particular classroom had lots of Special Education students who were very hyperactive. Their teacher, Tom Roepke, was getting them ready to listen to a specific CD — something they were very used to doing. The students quieted down and became still and the CD started. The man's voice told



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them to listen to some sounds. The voice reminded them not to name out loud the sound they heard, but just say to themselves what they thought the sound was. As they listened to the instructions, they began to listen with their whole bodies; for example, when they heard the sound of a bird, they moved their arms like a bird. They managed to not speak and stayed calm and focused for a full six minutes. The voice on the CD was that of Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). The words, however, were mine from my newly published book *Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children* (Lantieri 2008) which accompanies the CD that was being used. Tom is one of many teachers who are part of The Inner Resilience Program, a nonprofit organization which I founded soon after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Since then, we have been training teachers who, in turn, are teaching thousands of students how to strengthen the neural pathways that help children pay attention and manage impulsivity.

In fact, a growing body of research suggests that helping children develop good social and emotional skills early in life makes a big difference in their long-term health and well-being. In his groundbreaking book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), Goleman identified EQ — emotional intelligence — as being as important as IQ in terms of children's healthy development and future life success. He writes (1998, 19):

Given how much emphasis schools and admissions tests put on it, IQ alone explains surprisingly little of achievement in work or life. When IQ test scores are correlated with how well people perform in their careers, the highest estimate of how much difference IQ accounts for is about 25 percent (Hunter & Schmidt 1984; Schmidt & Hunter 1981). A careful analysis, though, suggests a more accurate figure may be no higher than 10 percent, and perhaps as low as 4 percent (Sternberg 1996).

Goleman's work has helped us understand the importance of emotional intelligence as a basic requirement for the effective use of one's IQ; that is, one's cognitive skills and knowledge. He made the connection between our feelings and our thinking

more explicit by pointing out how the brain's emotional and executive areas are interconnected physiologically, especially as these areas relate to teaching and learning.

Brain science tells us that a child's brain goes through major growth that does not end until the mid-twenties. Neuroplasticity, as scientists call it, means that the sculpting of the brain's circuitry during this period of growth depends to a great degree on a child's daily experiences. Environmental influences on brain development are particularly powerful in shaping a child's social and emotional neural circuits. Young people who learn how to calm down when they are upset, for instance, seem to develop greater strength in the brain's circuits for managing distress (Goleman 2008).

In New York City classrooms and elsewhere, teachers are beginning to equip young people with the skills to more effectively be both aware of and regulate their emotions. And we are finding out that the regular practice of these skills strengthens the brain circuits that underlie emotional regulation. Given the busy, sometimes frenzied nature of our lives, reflective moments are often missing. The more children can begin to experience quiet and stillness, the more they can feel an inner balance and sense of purpose which can offset the overstimulation that is so abundant in most of our lives. The benefits of such a regular practice can include (Lantieri 2008, 10):

- Increased self-awareness and self-understanding
- Greater ability to relax the body and release physical tension
- Improved concentration
- The ability to deal with stressful situations more effectively by creating a more relaxed way of responding to stressors
- Greater control over one's thoughts, with less domination by unwelcome thoughts
- Greater opportunity for deeper communication and understanding between adults and children, because thoughts and feelings are being shared on a regular basis

We, as the adults in children's lives, can't keep telling our children countless times to "calm down" or "pay attention" without providing them with some practical guidelines for how to do so. By offering children systematic lessons in contemplative techniques, we can help them cultivate their budding capacities and facilitate the development of their neural pathways. Through our work and current research, we are finding out that teaching these practices to students is increasing not only their social and emotional skills, but their resilience: the capacity to not only cope, but thrive in the face of adversity.

General Guidelines for Ourselves

The following are some guiding principles for how we can begin to create the fertile ground upon which we can cultivate children's inner lives in our classrooms.

Begin with Ourselves

Before we begin to teach young people to calm down and relax, we have to set aside at least a couple of weeks to regularly engage in a contemplative practice ourselves. Daniel Goleman's audio book, *The Art of Meditation* (2001) is an excellent resource for beginners and more experienced practitioners alike. It provides four different reflective exercises to choose from.

See Children as Co-Learners

When young people have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge, they need a guide to help them, not an all-knowing authority. The best guides are genuine learners themselves. When we help children nurture *their* inner lives, at the same time we expand *our own* inner pathways of knowing. It is a reciprocal relationship. Our role, then, is simply to be willing to learn alongside young people and to help create a fertile ground for that learning. Sometimes young people may be the ones teaching and leading us inward, if we allow that to happen.

Allow Time for the Learning to Unfold

Learning to be more mindful and appreciative of silence is not likely to unfold in a straight line for either children or ourselves. There will be days when it might seem that nothing we're doing is working. Then suddenly, things will gel: when we lose our

cool, one of our students might prompt us to take a breath and we'll realize just how deeply they have been integrating these ideas. Gradually, practicing to be still and reflective will feel less forced or artificial and will become more automatic and authentic. The ideal scenario is to have a daily quiet time in our classrooms. However, we might build up to this gradually.

Selected Techniques for Children

Create a Peace Corner

A peace or calming corner is a special place that is set aside in the classroom. Young people can go there whenever they need calm and stillness, in order to regain their inner balance and flow. It could also be used when a classroom member is feeling overwhelmed, stressed, angry, or otherwise out of control emotionally — times when being alone would be helpful. The whole class designs the space. Some peace corners include pictures or photos of some of students' favorite peaceful places, elements from nature, calming pictures, journals, chimes, and mandala coloring books, etc. Mandalas are harmonious patterns, which usually include a circle. Coloring these circles fosters the focused attention of mindfulness. The space should be large enough for at least one student to lie down in, with comfortable pillows and a CD player and earphones with soothing music or recordings of sounds from nature.

Teach the "Keep Calm" Activity

This simple, four-step breathing activity comes from the book *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting* by Maurice Elias, Steven Tobias, and Brian Friedlander (2000). It can be used whenever young people are upset and self-control is needed. Students can practice these four simple steps. Perhaps these steps can even be posted in the peace corner as a reminder:

- Stop and take a look around.
- Tell yourself to "keep calm."
- Take a deep breath through your nose while you count to five, hold it while you count to two, and then breathe out through your mouth while you count to five.
- Repeat these steps until you feel calm.

Use Calming Music

Transitions and other stressful times during the day (such as when you're getting ready for lunch or trying to meet other pressures of time) offer great opportunities to stop for a moment and honor the shift from one activity to another. The sound of soft, slow classical music can really help change the way we feel at such moments. Music could be used as background, but it's even more effective when there is a "music break." A "music break" involves stopping for as little as three minutes to listen quietly to a piece of music. Such breaks happen during times of transition when young people are focusing on something intently and need to stop, or when they start to feel the symptoms of heightened stress. It is a well-documented fact that listening to calming music has a direct correlation with a lowered respiration and heart rate, and can change our emotional moods.

Make Room for Silence and Stillness

One gift we can give ourselves and our children is that of silence and stillness; it is simple to give, but rarely given. We can find times in the school day to take a quick break to pause and be still and quiet, and take a few deep breaths together. For example, if we have a habit of teaching right up until the end of the day, we might make it a classroom practice to have a few minutes of silence at the end of the day and ask young people to notice what they see, hear, feel, etc., during that time. We can also choose to bring moments of silence into other engaging activities, such as drawing, writing, or walking.

Address Violent or Disturbing Events

If young people are unexpectedly exposed to something disturbing during the day — perhaps there is a discussion about a violent or frightening news story in current events, or there might be the sound of an ambulance rushing by with sirens blaring — it can be helpful to make it a practice to pause for a moment and send positive thoughts to those in need (Dermond 2007). Rather than integrating only the fear and stress reaction, the positive outlet will enable children to release much of the stress of the moment. When young people have the time and space to talk about their concerns to fully present and supportive adults, they may remember and inte-

grate a particular scary event very differently than they might have otherwise.

Honor Nature and Provide Opportunities to Be Outdoors

Being in nature calls upon us to be present in our bodies and reconnects the mind/body dichotomy (Lantieri 2001). At the most basic level, the outdoors provides room for young people to run, shout, and play, releasing pent-up energy from their bodies accumulated through various stressors. We can breathe more deeply outdoors, simply because there is often more oxygen than indoors. And looking at a faraway horizon or sky can help us gain a much needed perspective. Sometimes that's all it takes to shift us out of the bad habits that keep us from being our best selves. In addition to providing opportunities for young people to be in nature, we can help them to be present by engaging their senses. Young people come to know their surroundings through their bodies, not just their minds. Focusing on one of the senses at a time or simply noticing changes in the seasons can be a very useful way to do this. The goal is for young people to develop a mindful presence outside; that is, to be aware of their surroundings at a profound level of detail that transcends the relatively detached way we often experience our environments.

Help Young People Check Bodily Cues

When children are younger, they often have the ability to tune in to their bodies' signals. As they grow older, they get messages from the outer world to turn off their natural sensitivity. However, before they can release stress, they need first to be aware that they *are* stressed. We can model this awareness ourselves by making a note of times when our hearts are beating fast, our breathing has become shallow, or noticing other signs of stress. This helps students to notice their own stress triggers as well. When children have this kind of inner awareness, they start to be able to reduce the body's stress reaction itself.

Use Literature

Reading a book out loud together with young people can be a wonderful way to experience a contemplative moment — especially if it is done with intentionality. When reading a book, the pace is im-

mediately slower, providing opportunities to pause along the way. Young people also experience one another's voices and can notice the various emotions that are stirring within each of them. There can be lots of unplanned moments where the story can take us to a deeper place.

The Opportunity We Have

Until a short time ago, most of the research into the effects of these kinds of practices had been conducted on adults. Today several studies are under way throughout the United States and Canada. Our program, The Inner Resilience Program, is conducting one such research effort, and we hope to have statistical findings available fairly soon. Meanwhile, the teachers who are part of the research group in New York City have shared many impressions with us. Michael Loeb, a third grade teacher, described his experience this way:

I have been listening to the progressive relaxation exercise for "Ages 12 and Up" on the subway each morning. In class we tried the "Getting Relaxed: Ages 8-10." Today, after two days of having gone through the whole lesson, several students noticed that it wasn't in the schedule and exclaimed, "Hey, when are we doing the relaxation exercise today?" Another student in fact requested to listen to it by himself when he was upset and went into the "peace corner" and put on the headphones.

The children in Vera Slywynsky's fourth grade classroom realized the importance of not only directly learning emotional and social skills but also creating the conditions in the classroom that would support the use of those skills. She describes the experience she and her children had with setting up a peace corner:

The most astounding development of introducing these techniques into my classroom has been the children's interest in the peace corner. They have brought beautiful photos, postcards of warm and exotic places, and stuffed animals to decorate our corner. And they have not been at all hesitant to utilize it. Within the first week of its creation, I had a student whose uncle died after a long battle with cancer in Ecuador. Un-

fortunately the family couldn't afford to attend the funeral. She was grateful for the peace corner. Another child was evicted from her home. The peace corner brought much comfort to her. Her family is now back in their space and okay but this student was able to find a way to deal with those unpleasant feelings at school so she could in fact be more ready to learn.

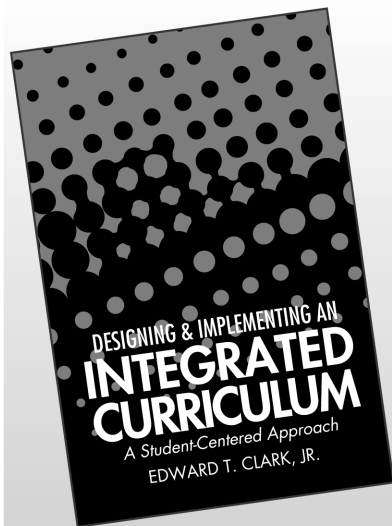
This simple addition in our classroom has allowed my students to seek peace amidst the turmoil they face in their lives daily. How foolish for those who think children can learn without acknowledging, and making space for processing the incredible challenges and painful obstacles they face. I am so happy that my children have collectively forged a safe place to begin to heal, survive, and appreciate the joy we have in supporting each other!

When I think about the children who are an integral part of my life, I ask myself: What is it I really want for them? What are some of the hopes I have for each of these children? A variety of answers arise, depending on the particular needs, strengths, and challenges of the child I am thinking of. However, I know that whether or not a child will successfully realize any of their hopes is dependent on whether or not we have equipped them with the inner strength they will need to meet the challenges of daily life. Are they capable of being resilient in the face of obstacles, as well as opportunities? Can they bounce back and even surpass their level of coping when the tests of life come their way? We've got to give our children this kind of lifeline. The world is too uncertain for them not to build an inner reservoir of strength from which they can draw. The benefits are far reaching — from better health and increased ability to learn, to more fulfilled and happier lives.

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Dr. Ed Clark is an international educational consultant specializing in integrated curriculum design and site-based educational change. He has been involved in teacher education for over thirty years.

Self Matters, But Not That Way

Humanism and Selfishness in America

Eugene M. DeRobertis

Humanistic conceptions of the self cut deeper than consumer-oriented self-images.

The close relationship between humanism and the notion of self is revealed in terms like self-esteem, self-realization, and self-actualization. This relationship is found in both theoretical works and pedagogy; humanistic educators take self-actualization and the like to be major goals (Patterson 1973; Timmerman 1975; Valett 1974; Aloni 2002; DeCarvalho 1991; Richards & Combs 1992).

But there also is a new form of criticism being leveled at humanism, particularly at its emphasis on the self. Humanism is being accused of having contributed to selfishness in American culture (e.g., Myers 2004, 588-589). Leaders of the new "positive" psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000) have asserted that there is a current within humanistic psychology that has encouraged self-centeredness. If these allegations are valid, they constitute a serious criticism of humanistic pedagogy. Moreover, if an emphasis on the self tends to foster selfishness and self-centeredness, then a major facet of contemporary parenting and education may require rethinking. This article examines what humanistically minded psychologists from different backgrounds and time periods have asserted about the nature of the self.

The Self Concept

In discussions of the self, there tends to be an over-emphasis on the conscious self-concept at the expense of the notion of self as such. "Self-concept" can be defined as "the attributes that people believe characterizes themselves" (Patterson 2008, 241) or "the ideas an individual has of him- or herself" (Lefrancois 2001, 425). In other words, self-concept refers to mental representations of the self in thoughts, beliefs, memories, images, and so on.



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However, the self-concept should never be confused with the self as such. Selfhood "runs deeper," so to speak, than any symbolic representation. It is the source or wellspring from which self-conceptualizations flow. Selfhood does not exist inside the mind as a concept; it is always in a body, in the world with other people and things. Hence, the self as such has been given many names, such as "sense of self," and "agent self." Stated differently, genuine selfhood refers primarily to *who one is in the world* rather than to concepts one has in mind. These are the sentiments that have long guided humanistic discussions of selfhood.

Humanistic Psychology and the Self

From a humanistic perspective, the self is the fountainhead of personality integration, though it is not a homunculus (Allport 1955). As interest in the self began to increase in the middle of the Twentieth Century (Murray 2001, 47) the notion of selfhood was given explicit developmental consideration by humanists such as Karen Horney, Carl Rogers, and Charlotte Bühler (DeRobertis 2008). In the 1930s and 1940s, Karen Horney began discussing the need for a "real self" in psychology.

According to Horney, the self is "that central inner force common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth" (1950, 17). Being one's "real self" means realizing one's particular talents and living in accord with one's uniqueness within a context of interpersonal relatedness (p. 18). For Horney, this real self is to be distinguished from the more traditional understanding of selfhood within psychoanalysis. Comparing her work to Freud's, Horney (1950, 376-377) noted:

In his concept of the "ego" he depicts the "self" of a neurotic person who is alienated from his spontaneous energies, from his authentic wishes, who does not make any decisions of his own and assume responsibility for them, who merely sees to it that he does not collide too badly with his environment. If this neurotic self is mistaken for its healthy alive counterpart, the whole complex problem of the real self as seen by Kierkegaard or William James cannot arise.

Nascent within this passage are some clues as to the nature of the self that are central to Horney's clinical observations and theoretical formulations. The real self has the potential to be spontaneous, to be in touch with one's own wishes and desires, to be responsible, to exist in some way other than in the mode of conflict resolution and adaptation, and to feel alive. Moreover, Horney (1945, 18-19) saw healthy self development as characterized by a sense of "we-ness" with others. A healthy developing child can relate to others in a genuine, peaceful manner. In cases of unhealthy self development, Horney (1950, 22) observed that the child must take measures to gain a sense of superiority over others. Hence, she noted that narcissism is not genuine self love, but rather an identification with an idealized self constructed for the purposes of counteracting feelings of basic anxiety (1950, 194).

Following on the heels of Karen Horney, various other psychologists introduced notions of selfhood that placed stronger emphasis on the unifying role of the self throughout child development. As the humanistic movement of the 1950s progressed, Carl Rogers (1951, 1959) generated basic humanistic understandings of child development to ground his person-centered model of therapy. Similar to Horney, Rogers held that the self is but "one expression of the general tendency of the organism to behave in those ways which maintain and enhance itself" (1959, 196). More specifically, Rogers (1951, 499) noted that as infancy progresses and children begin to experience more and more of a sense of autonomy and control over their surroundings, they start to develop "a dawning awareness of 'I experience'." This awareness is inextricably related to the increasing psychophysical organization of the growing child (p. 498). For Rogers, healthy self development is best characterized by a self-actualizing tendency, which is part of a general inclination toward "lessening external forces of control" (1959, 196). At the same time, while his notion of self-actualization placed high value on the development of autonomy, he nonetheless noted that the self-actualizing tendency orients child development in the direction of "socialization, broadly defined" (e.g., Rogers 1951, 488).

Somewhat later, the existential-humanistic developmentalist Charlotte Bühler maintained that the

self is the always unique organizer of a child's diverse and evolving motivational tendencies. In stark contrast to the highly conflicted neurotic person, an individual with a strong sense of self is able to "pull himself together and to function in a unified manner" (Bühler 1968, 334). Bühler called the self the

From a humanistic perspective, the self is the fountainhead of personality integration.

"central core" of the individual, the seat of personal creativity and the originator of one's goal setting (Bühler & Allen 1972, 44, 50). Like Horney and Rogers, Charlotte Bühler maintained that *authentic selfhood is social throughout development*. During humanistic psychology's rise in popularity, she admonished that "the goal of self-realization, which has been favored recently, can only then be identified with fulfillment if self-realization includes living for others, doing right, etc." (Bühler 1968, 344).

Integration

This said, we may ask what exactly is indicated when we invoke the word "self" from a humanistic standpoint. What, according to humanists, "lies behind" or "founds" discussions of a growing child's self-concept, self-esteem, and self-image? The answer is that "the self" is the creative, experiential hub of the personality, most intimately associated with personal goals and our vibrant and unique pattern of perceptions, feelings, thought processes, values, and relationships in-the-world-with-others (DeRobertis 2008, 192). Experientially, when we feel most ourselves, we sense that we are unified wholes, although this is may be merely a dim sense. We feel that we are spontaneously acting in ways that are truest to what we value.

Fostering self development involves nurturing the child's unique developmental progress toward integrating and actualizing his or her genuine desires in and through meaningful, valued relations with other people. If there are two themes in these descriptions of selfhood, they are the themes of personal unity or

personality integration and interpersonal relatedness. The humanistic pedagogical viewpoint considers genuine self development to be a process of meaningful personal integration that can only take place in and through prosocial relations with others. Self development does not occur primarily "inside" the child's mind *qua* self-concept, it occurs in-the-world-with-others.

For all of the self theorists discussed above, interpersonal relatedness was considered inextricably integral to healthy self development. Moreover, none of these thinkers would have viewed selfishness or self-centeredness as "normal," still less as healthy. A preoccupation with self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence would always be viewed as evidence of truncated or aberrant self development. From a humanistic perspective, selfishness or self-centeredness are legitimate concepts because a healthy self is oriented toward others in a peaceful, productive manner. When social relatedness is compromised, self development is compromised. Thus, the synonyms that we use for selfishness and self-centeredness are egotism, egocentrism, narcissism, arrogance, conceit, and vanity. When these phenomena are dominant aspects of a child's personality, they are all evidence of compromised or strained self-development.

This analysis suggests that critiques of a humanistic emphasis on selfhood are dealing with superficial, incomplete understandings of the self at best. While it is entirely possible that many psychologists, educators, and parents have misunderstood the humanistic notion of selfhood, humanistic pedagogical thought does not advocate any sort of rugged individualism. This is not to say that humanistic thinkers could not have played a role in the confusion surrounding their works. Perhaps their strong emphasis on autonomy and personality integration has led some to believe that personal unity is opposed to social relatedness. Still, it ought to be stressed that this would be a misreading of pedagogical humanism. A true humanist would maintain that parents and teachers are justified in emphasizing the self in child development, so long as their understanding of the self does not neglect the centrality of the inherently social nature of selfhood.

Pop Psychology and Consumerism

Putting the blame on humanism for selfishness in American culture distracts parents, teachers, and other professionals from a closer consideration of more compelling social forces related to self-centeredness. For example, popular psychology reaches a far larger audience than humanistic psychology in America. The term *self* is a regular part of "pop" psychology literature. Popular psychology books are now categorized as *self*-empowerment and *self*-help books in stores around the nation. Self-help and self-empowerment by their very definitions denote self-centeredness. The term *self* is used quite freely in popular psychology, with less theoretical rigor and consistency than what one finds in college textbooks. Authors such as Dr. Phil are reaching large audiences much more efficiently and effectively than the psychologists noted above. His extremely successful title exemplifies the self-centered trend of popular psychology: *Self Matters: Creating Your Life from the Inside Out* (McGraw 2001). This kind of psychology is becoming increasingly trendy as major celebrities like Oprah Winfrey promote these titles. Would not popular psychology be a more viable source of selfishness in American culture than humanistic psychology? After all, theoretical and empirical rigor are not top priorities in pop psychology literature.

Consumerism is another force to consider in the search for causes of selfishness in America. In the United States marketing machines are able to communicate to our youth that they need to have a certain kind of phone, a certain kind of jeans, a certain kind of body size, if they are to be considered cool, desirable, good looking, and so forth. Moreover, the implicit message in these advertisements is that being cool and desirable is of prime importance. To be sure, external referencing is unquestionably vital for moral and ethical development. However, is it not reasonable to consider the possibility that the constant pressure to adhere to external standards of adequacy and desirability stands in the way of healthy personality integration.

The humanistic psychoanalyst Eric Fromm discussed the potentially damaging effect of a consumer culture on social relations at quite some length during his career. According to Fromm, there is a "nonproductive character orientation" that results

from an increasingly corporate society called the "marketing character." The marketing character rests upon the need to "sell oneself." A person with a marketing character style forms his or her personality according to the dominant trends of the marketplace. As he put it, such an individual lives by the motto, "I am as you desire me" (1947, 73). Fromm (1956, 86) observed that consumer culture also has a deteriorating effect on interpersonal relations. He wrote:

Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow man, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not being different in thought, feeling or action.

The individual is competitive; he or she wants more than others — and above all to appear better. Hence, the self becomes superficial, that of a greedy purchaser who might shine a little more brightly in appearance and prestige than his or her fellows. Selfhood becomes nothing but personal image, and the person cannot relate deeply to others.

When looking for sources of increased selfishness in American culture, I would venture to say that consumerism is already having an impact on education. My fiancé has been a preschool teacher for the better part of two decades. Recently, a child exclaimed to her that she cannot deny him things he wants because, "I'm already rich and I'm just a kid."

I have been a college instructor over a decade. In college, I am faced every day with students who are more and more considering themselves customers or clients. In the United States we have a saying, "The customer is always right." I wonder the degree to which this situation accounts for the recent observations of Saldarini (2008):

Research suggests that self-centered behavior among college students continues to increase. San Diego State University psychologist Jean Twenge's longitudinal study of 16,475 students, using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) (Lawrence, 2007), shows nearly 66-per-

cent of today's students boast narcissism scores above the average 1982 score (Zaslow, 2007, 1)... Some students ... use [student opinion] evaluations to punish faculty.

The student has become an entitled consumer.

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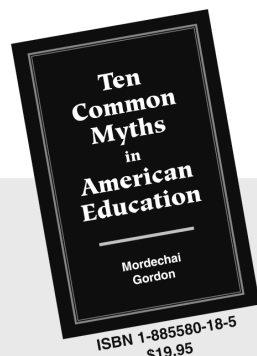


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Mordechai Gordon

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— Joe L. Kincheloe

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Listening

Suzanne S. Hudd

A sociology professor describes how she learned that her task was not only to profess, but to listen to her students' full range of concerns — and to help them listen to themselves as well.

Recently, I had a personal experience that provided pause for reflection in my professional life. My youngest daughter spent the better part of a year off and on the soccer field with a nagging ankle injury. Working with an orthopedist, we tried a variety of “fixes,” none of which was successful. In desperation, we sought a second opinion. This second opinion and the treatment process that ensued have provided me with an important lesson that I have carried over into my classroom. Our new orthopedist took a novel approach: He listened openly, consistently, and perhaps most importantly, his listening incorporated the broader elements of our life that were relevant to our medical treatment.

The simple act of being listened to by our new doctor had an immense effect; it was personally empowering. After months of ignoring persistent doubts in the back of my mind about the course of our treatment, the act of being listened to enabled me to once again listen to myself, to hear, and act upon my doubts. This “gift of the foot,” as my daughter and I have come to refer to it, has been the source of deep reflection in my professional life. It has left me considering a number of important questions: How often do I listen, *really* listen, to my students? Do I work to understand the subtleties and nuances of their lives that will affect the way they will learn in my classroom? Our experience with the foot has been quite a powerful metaphor that has guided me in answering these questions.

Because it sits at the base of the body, the foot serves as a foundation. Without a healthy foot, my daughter had been unable to participate in many of her favorite activities. Similarly, listening is an essential prerequisite, the foundation of any successful relationship. Real listening requires one to walk in the steps of another for a bit of time, rather than trying to stay a step ahead. In order to genuinely listen, we must shift our focus from how we want to respond,



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to what is being said. Unlike when we hear — where our ears are open but our mind is closed — real listening engages all of the senses and opens our thinking to new possibilities.

Since most of my training as a faculty member has been focused on how I *provide* information rather than on how I *receive* it, the transition to becoming a real listener has required that I exert substantial effort. In part, my difficulties with listening stem from the fact that I have always worked to structure my classes in ways that, on the surface, appear to be quite sensitive to the students' perspective; I really *thought* I was listening. The reality I was forced to face, however, is that while I generally taught my classes in a student-centered way, I had not attended to my students' concerns with the openness that full listening requires.

A First Attempt at Listening: A Collaborative Classroom

My first attempt to be more open to student input was through the creation of a collaborative classroom. In collaborative classrooms, the learning is active; lecture is balanced with group experiences (Matthews et al. 1995). The teacher in the collaborative classroom is charged with facilitating a social environment that enables students to create meaning and even to play a role in setting a direction for the course (Smith & Waller 1997). Collaborative learning tends to build trust between students and faculty (Brookfield 1999).

A collaborative classroom can be set up in a variety of ways. My most notable attempt to adopt this approach was the "syllabus under construction" exercise I used when I taught introductory courses in sociology. In this activity, my students were provided with a skeletal syllabus that included assigned readings and a list of course topics for the semester. During the first few class sessions, the students were given the task of developing a set of graded assignments that I later used to assess their performance. In reporting on the effectiveness of this exercise (Hudd 2003), I observed that students in these classes interacted with me more frequently and tended to perform better. I attributed these outcomes to the sense of empowerment they felt from being more fully engaged in their learning from the first day of class.

Changing the classroom structure to facilitate collaboration with students, however, does not require the instructor to use the skills that active listening demands (Rogers & Farson 1979). Faculty who employ active listening techniques change the tone of their interactions with students: They offer encouragement by supporting and urging others to speak, especially when they are uncertain; and by offering silent attention and patience. They remain attuned to the speaker and listen for the total meaning of the experience, respond to feelings or concerns, and treat the content of the communication and the speaker with respect.

Examined in this context, I can now see that although the syllabus construction exercise fundamentally altered the framework through which I interacted with students, it did not necessarily affect the quality of our conversations. The students were speaking more frequently, but although my ears were open, my mind was not wholly engaged. I had altered the classroom structure, but not my way of being within it.

In fact, after several days of encouraging students to generate grading criteria for themselves, I ended this interactive exercise and told the students that "they [would] not again be allowed to reconstruct, add to or otherwise alter the [syllabus] (Hudd 2003, 199)." At the time, I rationalized that this approach provided closure: it gave the students a sense of comfort that the expectations for their performance would not evolve throughout the semester. In hindsight, however, it seems I was equally motivated by the desire to once again take control of the classroom, essentially to return things to "normal." Open listening demands that one be responsive rather than proactive. When employed in a classroom setting, open listening can conflict with more traditional instructional methods, like the development of lesson plans and class goals, both of which essentially put the teacher in charge.

My tendency to gravitate toward one-way communication was evident in other ways as well. While the students were encouraged to create their assignments, I routinely denied requests for extra credit work despite the fact that the many of the students clearly perceived "the course syllabus as a document that [could be] negotiated throughout the entire se-

mester" (Hudd 2003, 199). In essence, the message I sent was: I am open to what you have to say, but I will only respond when it suits me.

Listening to the Whole Person

In order to listen more fully, I have had to engage myself more deeply with students both inside and outside of the classroom. I have learned to communicate with my students as individuals, not merely through group, classroom-based activities. I have taken part in conversations that encompass both academic and personal concerns, and I have frequently encouraged students to see the important relationship that exists between living and learning.

By listening more fully, I have observed that a simple, empathetic exchange during office hours about the various stressors one of my students was experiencing could be turned into an email support group in which she, two classmates, and I shared one thing that we had done each day to "de-stress." Because these emails taught us a good deal about each other as people, they humanized the education process.

Listening more fully has taught me that the nature of my interaction with students is much more valuable than the setting or structure in which it occurs. Sometimes, I have found, that students gain the most when conversations are rather inconvenient to me. Comments on my class evaluations such as "[she] gave students a chance to express their opinions about matters discussed in class," and "amazing, intelligent professor with a good heart," suggest that my willingness to listen has made me a better teacher. Because my students can participate in the classroom dialogue more comfortably, they have come to see me as a person as well as an instructor.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the synergy between life and learning that can emerge from real listening came in an email from Lisa, which she wrote as a "sidenote" to a question concerning her paper. Prior to writing this email, Lisa and I had talked about a service trip to Nicaragua she had recently completed outside of class, as well as her various community service experiences during college and her career aspirations.

I want you to know that I have really enjoyed writing this paper. It has pushed me to get back into Teach for America. I was very unsure about applying and decided to withdraw from the application process about a month ago. Lately I have been questioning my decision. I tend to do it in your class more than ever and today in class I decided that if I do not go for my interview I will never know what could have been and who I may be able to help.... I let go of TFA because I lost sight of the true reason I was applying. Soon after I withdrew from the application process I decided I was going to move to Australia with my boyfriend and work and live there for about 8 months. I was so set on it — or so it seemed — but a part of me was empty inside and I couldn't live with that. I noticed it more and more every Tuesday and Thursday, around 11:30 or so [the time of our class]. I am beginning to see that in this life no man, relationship, money, a nice car or house or designer clothes or especially what you look like on the outside — that is not what will determine your happiness — not mine at least.

In the collaborative classroom, students are seen as co-creators of knowledge (Brufee 1999). By taking another step — by truly listening to our students — we acknowledge and embrace their lives beyond the academy. And so, we become partners as we strive for the successful integration of learning and living.

Students Listen to Themselves

The art of listening to students isn't something an instructor perfects quickly. It requires work. But teaching students to listen to themselves (Hudd and Bronson 2007, 264) is even more difficult. In my classes, I have found that the use of structured journal entries can foster the development of this skill.

The process of listening to oneself in writing and thought improves clarity of thinking as students assume the multiple roles of writer and reader (Roberts 1993). When they examine and then react to their earlier thoughts, students are offered the opportunity to reevaluate both the class content and their responses to it. They can witness their own growth, the changes in their thinking. Comments

such as the following indicate that students can in fact be their own best teachers.

I cannot help but be embarrassed by my own naïve view of American social structure [expressed earlier in the semester in a reflective paper]. The “work hard” motto that I professed is a conditional concept at best.

This class’ writing focused a lot more on my personal experiences and helped me to reflect and realize aspects of my own life that were invisible to me.

[Through the] writing in this class I have come to terms with many thoughts that I have always unconsciously had.

[I have been able] to look at my life in a different perspective, to reflect on real-life situations, thoughts, ideas and readings in a unique way. The writing truly made you think not only about societal issues, but about your own place and role in society.

When students reflect on their learning, the instructor benefits as well. The instructor is given a window into a part of the learning process that we otherwise would not see.

A Pedagogical Shift

The importance of listening is largely absent from our discussions of pedagogy. Instead, we spend a good deal of energy trying to teach our *students* how to listen. My efforts to become a better listener have provided me with the opportunity to rethink my role. I have come to realize that while my primary function is to profess, I must also be attentive and receptive. By allowing students the opportunity to express their full range of thoughts, both personal and academic, I am contributing to their learning in tangible, although sometimes invisible ways.

Listening offers a vital counterbalance to an educational system that often represses individual expression and encourages an adherence to guidelines and rubrics rather than creative thinking (Crain 2006; Hudd 2007). When we listen, we shift the balance away from a focus on content and outcomes, and instead we privilege the learning process. Real listening enables our students to develop a deeper under-

standing of themselves, and because this self-knowledge can be energizing, it can instill a passion for life-long learning.

As I continue to polish my skills as a listener, I have called upon my experience as a mother, which has taught me that the most effective way to get my children’s attention is to whisper. So it is with my students — vital information often comes in small and quiet ways. An important concern is often buried in a brief journal entry, or it is shared as we walk out of class together. Real listening has required me to consider my student’s daily lives and to attend to more subtle and indirect opportunities to facilitate their education. Through such listening, the phrase “meeting of the minds” is brought to life.

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No Child Left Behind

The New Naked Emperor

Douglas C. Sloan

Government accountability requirements ignore the fact that students learn in their own ways. Teachers can guide and inspire, but they shouldn't be put in the role of trying to force learning to occur.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is the new emperor of American education. In its vain attempt to clothe itself in the fashionable rhetoric of improving academic achievement, it reveals the naked grab for power by the U. S. Department of Education for control over local school systems. It also reveals an ignorance of realistic and humane education theory, research, and practice. NCLB demonstrates no regard or even understanding of education as an integrated, positive, and enjoyable experience.

Education is not for the betterment of the local economy, the national GNP, or the global society. Education is not about providing competent workers for the future. Education is not about preparing students for college. Education is not about transforming society. Nor is it about passing a specific test or receiving narrowly focused training (Houston 2007). Such purposes and goals are wrong and abusive.

The Purposes and Obligations Of an Educational System

First, the most important obligation of any educational system is to recognize that each child is a unique individual; there is no such thing as a standard child. Children are not indistinguishable widgets on an educational assembly line (Johnson 2006). Whereas training is about making people the same, education is about enriching the uniqueness of each person (Houston 2007). The sole focus of an educational system should be the individual child — not colleges, corporations, government, society, or the economy.

Second, an education should provide each child with the widest exposure to the best of human knowledge in all disciplines.



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Third, an educational system has a responsibility to promote within each child the development of an independent personality and intellect.

Fourth, an educational system has a responsibility to discover the talents and strengths of each child and then nurture each child's confidence in and mastery of those talents and strengths.

***E*ducation is not for the
betterment of the local
economy, the national GNP,
or the global society.**

Fifth, a successful education assists each child in acquiring the intellectual and social tools to traverse the world, retaining an enthusiastic curiosity and desire for lifelong learning.

Under NCLB Title VI, Sec. 6111(2), each State is to use "assessments and standards" to ensure "...that the State's schools and local educational agencies are held accountable for results...". The rationale for such accountability makes the fatal assumption that a teacher can force knowledge into the mind of a student who is not present, willing, and engaged. There is no research that demonstrates a humane teaching method that is so universally efficient, effective, and successful that the teacher using the method can be held accountable for the results regardless of the participation and attitude of the student. In reality, there is only learning, an internal individual process unique to each student. Regardless of a teacher's education or years of experience, the hours spent in lesson preparation, the quality and creativity of the lesson presentation itself, nothing is learned until the student "gets it" — a process that the teacher cannot control and for which no teacher and no school can be held accountable.

The teacher can inspire, offer opportunities, and guide students, but the learner moves forward at her own pace, in her own way. The assumption that teachers and schools should be accountable for yearly test results is misguided at best.

Well-documented are the many "subjects" children, starting at birth, learn on their own (Crain 2005): object permanence (for example, even though

mother is out of sight, mother still exists), eye-hand coordination, vocabulary and grammar, walking — to name only a few. There is no evidence that this internal ability to learn independently is ever replaced or largely supplanted by an external process. A normal, healthy person never loses the ability to learn, and learning is always within the internal cognitive domain of the individual student. It is the *student* who must acquire and integrate new knowledge. It is the *student* who either assimilates the new knowledge within her existing knowledge-set or accommodates to the new knowledge by reorganizing her existing knowledge-set (Crain 2005, 115). Regardless of how the new knowledge is integrated, all of it happens *only* within the mind of the student and only if the student is capable and only if the student makes it happen.

Well-qualified, dedicated teachers are absolutely necessary. Teachers are knowledge experts, instructional presenters, trainers, facilitators, guides, mentors, and motivators (Bartholomew 2007). A teacher is the catalyst that makes learning easier (Merkle 2008) and "more intense and lasting" (Smyth 2005). But the traditional concept that a teacher can shove knowledge into the mind of a student is simply false.

Teachers carry out many vital functions. They astutely observe each student's mastery of previous knowledge and assess the student's preparedness and receptiveness for new knowledge (Crain 2005, 239-240). Many good teachers act like responsive coaches, enthusiastic cheerleaders for student efforts and achievements. Other fine teachers are efficient and effective classroom managers and are accessible, affirming, and supportive as they guide the first learning step and each transition to the next (Crain 2005, 239-240). Many helpful teachers provide age-appropriate, richly stimulating learning environments and an atmosphere of joy (McReynolds 2008). But the inspired and effective teacher does not act like an authority who can force learning.

Though teachers cannot be held accountable for what students learn, they can be held accountable for professional behavior and best practices — like any other licensed professional. Professional accountability sets high standards for personal conduct and for the quality of the service. As long as

those standards are met, it is the personal expertise of the individual professional that determines which methods are to be used to achieve those standards. Implicit within professional accountability is trust, not blame. "While you can beat people into submission, you can't beat them into greatness" (Houston 2007).

Successful Schools

If there is any doubt about the onerous, ominous, and oppressive nature of NCLB, here are four examples from Jehlen & Flannery (2008).

The Frank M. Tejada Academy

The Tejada Academy in San Antonio gives unlimited second chances to the district's students. It offers individual attention and the opportunity to graduate from high school even if it takes longer than 4 years. What should be a celebrated success story is seen by NCLB as a failure because the students are not meeting the 4-year graduation standard and — because of the purpose and design of the school — never will.

Fairview Elementary

At Fairview Elementary School in Bloomington, Indiana, the percentage of students passing language arts has risen from 39% in 2003 to 60% in 2007. In math, the percentage of passing students has risen from 35% in 2003 to 59% in 2007. A cause for celebration? Not according to NCLB. The school missed the Annual Yearly Progress Requirements because special education attendance missed the NCLB standard by 8/100ths of a point.

Napa High School

This Napa Valley high school is a 2005 "California Distinguished School" with award-winning programs in music, dance, and journalism. The school passes in every NCLB category, except English Language Learners (ELLs). It has not passed for three years. The reason? Katy Howard, an ELL teacher explains, "They're tested too early. They're tested the minute they arrive." Many new immigrants come from parts of Mexico with an incomplete education. "Probably 60 percent of my students are not even proficient in Spanish" (Jehlen & Flannery 2008, 26).

Compounding the problem is that the NCLB standards increase every year and once the students become sufficiently proficient in English, they are no longer considered part of the ELL group (Rossell 2006).

Three more years of this kind of "failure" and this truly distinguished high school will be "reconstituted," which means staff replacement or school closure.

Public School 48

PS 48 is an elementary school in the South Bronx with 100% low-income minority students. Its outstanding test results have received praise from the *New York Times* and the *PBS NewsHour*. Yet, despite having some the best scores in the Bronx, the school is a NCLB failure because, for four years, its large contingent of special education students has not passed the test. In New York, if a school has 30 or more special education students, their scores must be included in the school's results. One solution would be to divide PS 48 into five mini-schools so that each of the new schools has less than 30 special education students. This provides no additional benefit for the students and forces a huge capital and administrative cost onto the school district.

These are not insignificant unintended consequences. These are unacceptable, cruel fatalities. They are clear signs of the real and conceptual failure of the school accountability measures imposed by NCLB. With "costs" like these, we cannot afford NCLB.

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Book Reviews

Life as a Novice

by Jeffrey Kane

Brookville, NY: Long Island University, Confrontation Press, 2006

Reviewed by William Crain

On June 2, 2003, Jeffrey Kane's older son, Gabriel, died in an accident. Gabriel was just entering adulthood. The loss threw Kane into a world "where sorrow fills my chest with every breath" (2006, xi).

At the time, Kane had achieved significant academic success. He was a highly regarded scholar (whose work had included 10 years as the editor of *Encounter*) and he had just been named Vice President for Academic Affairs at Long Island University. But when Gabriel died, Kane was suddenly cast into a world of sorrow and pain of which he knew nothing. He was now a novice trying to find his way. *Life as a Novice* is a book of short poems that convey some of the knowledge and rays of hope Kane has gained during his prolonged grief.

In the introduction, Kane tells us that his son Gabriel, "with great love, has made himself known to those of us left behind" (p. xiii). Kane provides one vivid example. In a dream, Gabriel, appearing strong and serene, drops beautiful apples without regard to where they land. At first Kane is puzzled, but he instantly understands that what matters is not where the seeds are placed, but people's ability to receive them. Gabriel did his part — the fate of the seeds is now in our hands.

Several poems express Kane's suffering, but always in a minimum of words. For instance, "no air/ left in my lungs/swallowed/I struggle" (p. 7). Kane's difficulty with breathing is significant. In several poems it's air — or more specifically, wind and breezes — that promises to bring relief. Kane also senses that the

wind is a source of mysterious messages. But during most of his grieving, the wind's help is unavailable to him. The window "where I could/see and breathe/and feel the touch/of the breeze/ is now shut" (p. 24).

On a back cover, Roger Rosenblatt likens Kane's poems to those of Emily Dickenson. He says they have a similar "brevity and power," although Kane's poems "come from a different sorrow and a different

On June 2, 2003, Jeffrey Kane's older son, Gabriel, died in an accident. The loss threw Kane into a world "where sorrow fills my chest with every breath."

endurance." I agree, but I believe Kane's poems are more closely related to those of Rainer Maria Rilke in his *Book of Hours* (1996). Like Rilke crying out to an invisible God, Kane creates prayers in the "vague hope/someone is listening/and cares" (p. 6). Most of all, he yearns for Gabriel to let him know that he has heard his voice:

not a syllable
nor your voice
your silent breath through
my hair
will declare
there is dialogue (p. 11).

Like Rilke, Kane calls attention to the emptiness of modern life, where "crucifixes glitter/in the marketplace" (p. 26) and people carry on their feet "the dead weight/of their own bodies" (p. 26). To really live, Kane suggests, we need to be aware of spiritual possibilities. Gabriel has taught him that there is a finer, spiritual world all around us. Unfortunately, we seem unable to open ourselves to it. As Kane says, there are ghosts riding the ocean's waves who laugh "that I see them/and remain so blind" (p. 33).

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In some poems Kane suggests that self-chosen blindness is the human condition. To grow, we need to think more deeply about death and our purpose in life. We need to love others and open up to new understandings.

In the book's longest poem, Kane tells Gabriel that

with you the world ended
and all that remained
was darkness

But Gabriel tells his father,

You walk in darkness
where many wander
lost for a lifetime
but there is a path through
to the world that
you barely remember
even with my death

darkness means nothing
your task is to listen
and you will find
your way (pp. 22-23)

This is a beautiful book. I strongly recommend it to you.

Reference

Rilke, R.M. 1996. *The book of hours: Love poems to God*. Translated and introduced by A. Barrows and J. Macy. New York: Berkeley Publishing Group. (Originally published in 1905.)

The Human Odyssey

by Thomas Armstrong

New York: Sterling Publishing, 2007

Reviewed by David Marshak

In 1985 Thomas Armstrong published the *The Radiant Child*, a brilliant and novel exploration of children's consciousness and their experience of spiritual and/or transpersonal qualities and realms. In retrospect it's evident that Armstrong was even then applying a well-developed integral perspective as he explored the spectrum of childhood consciousness

through psychological, mythological, and metaphysical lenses.

At the time the only other contemporary author publishing in this same territory was Joseph Chilton Pearce. While Pearce's *Magical Child* (1977) and subsequent books deserved the wide readership they found and were enormously significant in opening the door to dozens of other writers on these same topics, Armstrong's book unfortunately never reached the same large audience. (Of course, if you've never read *The Radiant Child*, run right out and read it tomorrow, because it is as invaluable now as it was then.)

Thomas Armstrong went on to publish a number of more commercially successful books, including *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child: 50 Ways to Improve Your Child's Behavior and Attention Span without Drugs, Labels, or Coercion* (1997), and books about Gardner's multiple intelligences framework for parents and teens, such as *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Multiple Intelligences* (2000); and *Awakening Genius in the Classroom* (1998).

In these books Armstrong has certainly contributed greatly over the years by using more mainstream concepts and perspectives to convey insights about human development, variation, learning, and growth. Nonetheless, as an admirer of his pioneering work in *The Radiant Child*, I am heartened to see him return in *The Human Odyssey* to his original role of offering novel and profoundly integral insights into his topic. He explores the life cycle in a way that includes and connects the physical, mythical, energetic, and spiritual elements of human life. *The Radiant Child* focused only on childhood; *The Human Odyssey* explores the entire human life cycle, from pre-birth to post-death, employing the lenses of psychology, biology, anthropology, sociology, mythology, spirituality, literature, biography, and autobiography.

For example, a chapter on late childhood presents a recitation of a fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm and a reflection on the mythic and spiritual insight it reveals about this stage. The chapter also includes a discussion of *adrenarche* — a critical development in the maturation of the adrenal glands at this stage — and of the biological and psychosocial impacts of this adrenal maturation on the child; a description of

DAVID MARSHAK is the author of *The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997). He is an emeritus professor at Seattle University and a lecturer at Western Washington University.

various brain development phenomena and other biochemical changes at this age and their apparent effects on identity; pertinent stories from the lives of Annie Dillard, Benjamin Franklin, and Carl Jung about this age; the implications of various developments in late childhood for schooling and for peer relations; and the notion that *ingenuity*, the gift of this particular stage, is available for development at any age. Armstrong integrates all of these various modes of knowing and relates them with engaging and enlightening prose.

Armstrong examines each life stage with similar complexity and innovation. He also identifies two developmental lines that govern human development: *adaptation*, the process of coming up from the body; and *remembering*, the process of coming down from the spirit. All stage theories in developmental psychology, including those of Piaget, Freud, and Erikson, are “mainly stories about adaptation.” Remembering is about “our essence as

nonmaterial beings” and includes experiences from mythology and folklore, transpersonal psychology, consciousness studies, spirituality, and the arts. Armstrong points out that “everyone has some combination of the *adapter* and the *rememberer* in them.”

This is the first book I have seen that brings a truly integral perspective to the entire human life journey. It’s eminently readable, often entertaining, and always interesting, edifying, and provocative.

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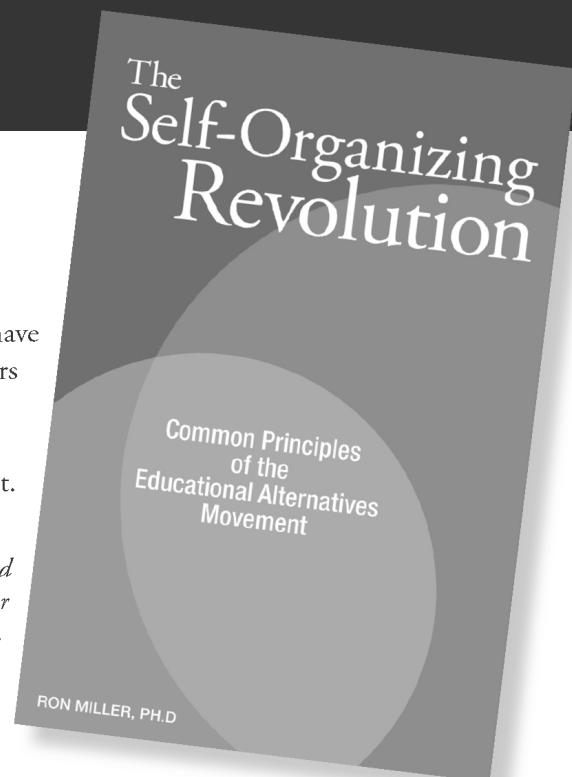
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