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ARTICLES

SPECIAL REPORT: The 1990 Chicago Conference on Holistic Education

DEPARTMENTS

Cover drawing by Norma Montaigne, Pittsford, Vermont

Holistic Education Review aims to stimulate discussion and application of all person-centered educational ideas and methods. Articles explore how education can encourage the fullest possible development of human potentials and planetary consciousness. We believe that human fulfillment, global cooperation, and ecological responsibility should be the primary goals of education, and we will inquire into the historical, social, and philosophical issues that have prevented them from so becoming.

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EDITORIAL

The Heart of Holistic Education

This journal is a forum for serious, critical thinking about educational and cultural issues. As editor, I encourage dialogue and even disagreement so that together we will forge a strong critique of conventional education, and a coherent theory of holistic education. My own work, expressed in editorials and book reviews (and often through unpublished correspondence) is an attempt to define the core principles of holistic educational theory. In recent issues of *Holistic Education Review*, I have debated with Ray Corsini (Spring 1990) and conferred with Ed Clark (Summer 1990) over some of these principles. Unlike many holistic educators, I believe that there are serious ideological issues at stake here — in other words, holistic theory raises important social and political questions about education, which we need to discuss and clarify. My "Commentary on 'The Chicago Statement' " addresses some of these questions.

But here I want to recognize what lies *beyond* all of this intellectual effort and ideological conflict. I would like to move from the "left brain" directly to the *heart* of holistic education. To be sure, if we ignore the ideological questions, then our ideas will be legitimately dismissed as romantic fantasy, out of touch with the realities of the world. Yet, if we become mired in intellectual analysis, then holistic theory will be as dry and lifeless as all of the other ideologies and "isms" and ivory tower panaceas that have come and gone over the past few centuries. I propose that holistic education is *not* just another ideology; it is not a set of beliefs or opinions that we happen to prefer and would like to see imposed on everyone else; it is not a system of values that benefit only a particular group, class, or elite. Holistic education is something more, something deeper than all of that.

We might start by asking ourselves why we are holistic educators. Why do we identify with this vision? For me, the answer is much deeper than intellectual or ideological — it is existential and spiritual. In the summer of 1977 I was a counselor at a residential camp, and I looked forward to eight weeks of canoeing, softball, and fun with the kids. But I was in for a shock: Although the camp was not intended for any special population, it soon became clear that I was living in the midst of a hundred severely damaged children. They were young people — ages eight through fourteen — who were angry, alienated, cynical, mean spirited, and thoroughly negative. One of the older boys casually remarked to me that he "didn't believe in morality" or much of anything else. This complete nihilism was foreign to me, and I struggled to understand it.

In talking with some of the kids, the explanation began to reveal itself; and on visitors' day, when many of the campers' parents arrived, my suspicions were confirmed. Most of these children, it turned out, were from callously wealthy families who valued their possessions and status symbols, but had little sense of their children as human beings. Many of the kids had been dumped at camp so that their carefree parents could sail for the summer, or fly to Europe. On one occasion, one girl's divorced parents, who had come up separately for the day, argued loudly with each other, in front of everyone, over who would take her out for lunch. As I observed these interactions between parents and their children, my heart sank. "These are kids who are not loved," I thought. And then I was struck by the realization of my life's mission: *"I must work to bring more love into the world."* It was this conviction, this calling, that led me (by a circuitous and often obscure route) into holistic education.

This, I believe, is the very heart of holistic education. Our work is not about a curriculum or a teaching method — it is about nurturing the human spirit with love. We recognize that, from the earliest days of life, healthy human development requires emotional security and the experience of feeling valued, wanted, and worthy. Next to basic physical sustenance, the most vital need of the growing human being is love. So nurtured, the human being is an astounding learning organism who spontaneously explores and questions the world; and the art of education is not so much about teaching, as about providing the right kind of energy for the living light or flame of human intelligence.[1]

How can educators love their students? In its simplest, most ordinary expression, love means kindness and respect. We love children by treating them with gentleness, playing and laughing with them, hugging them, listening to them, acknowledging their concerns and hurts — and by honestly and simply being ourselves. In day-to-day life, this is love in action; this is where children experience it directly. Many educators practice this ordinary aspect of love to a remarkable extent. In many schools I have visited, the relationships between adults and children are warm and loving, involving kindness and respect. This quality permeates those schools I would call holistic, and often it can be found (usually in the presence of individual teachers) in many conventional schools as well.

The holistic worldview is truly radical, though, because it goes beyond this ordinary expression of love as kindness and respect, to explore the sources of love and its obstacles. In a holistic (as opposed to a reductionistic) worldview, love is not merely a specific behavior, not merely a personal skill or trait or style. Rather, *love is the cosmic force that connects everything in the universe.* According to a holistic, spiritual worldview, love is the divine essence, awaiting development within each human heart. As *A Course in Miracles* puts it, "Teach only love, for that is what you are." Love, then, is the recognition that our lives are delicately intertwined with all other life. To love truly is to experience *reverence* for all of Creation. To love is to respect the uniqueness and the mystery of the inner life of a person. It is to call forth the goodness and love that are latent in the soul of every human being. This is indeed the heart of holistic education: In treating young people with love, we *call forth* (the true meaning of *education*) the love they hold inside.

When we hold reverence for life we do not aim to control it according to an authoritative cultural or pedagogical plan; we nurture it so that it may unfold naturally. When we hold reverence for life we do not impose a stunted conception of "discipline" upon it; we allow it to express its own inherent discipline, which is far more subtle, mysterious, and meaningful than we can ever imagine. And most certainly of all, when we hold reverence for life we do not inflict violence against it!

But in our culture, adults do not often treat children with kindness and respect, let alone reverence. As the noted psychologist Thomas Gordon has found, most adults in modern American culture attempt to control children's

behavior through manipulation and physical force.[2] In a number of states and school districts still living in the Dark Ages, violence ("corporal punishment") is used against children as a matter of public policy. This obsession with discipline and proper behavior may be founded on a genuine concern for children — but it is not love. Love is neither an excuse for the forcible control of behavior, nor an excuse for physical or emotional violence; indeed, such violence is a denial of love. Educators can prattle on all they want about "excellence" and "discipline" and "cultural literacy" and all of the other constricted goals of modern education — but if we do not provide young people with the experience of love, then we can only create a society of addicted, alienated, cynical people, which is exactly what our culture has done. The tremendous problems of drug abuse, youth gangs, urban violence, and the like are the inevitable result of our culture's impersonal discipline and competition, and it is ludicrous to assert that they will be solved by more of the same.

Photo © Joel Brown, Tucson, AZ

Modern culture has lost its reverence for life. As Robert Sidwell explains in this issue ("'Tis All in Peeces, All Cohaerence Gone"), our scientific/technological worldview is built on the desire to conquer and exploit nature. All major ideologies of the modern age — capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism — seek power, domination, and control over nature, and hence over human nature. But since all life is interconnected, it is not possible to dominate nature while holding reverence for humanity. This is the underlying fallacy of all anthropocentric philosophies; we think we can love each other, and love our children, while ruthlessly exploiting the rest of Creation. A holistic understanding (such as that offered by the approaches of creation spirituality and deep ecology[3]) shows that this cannot work. Either we hold a reverence for life, or we do not.

If we are to nurture our children with love, then we must move beyond the ideologies that prevent us from truly loving. We must replace the wholly economic and technological values of this culture with a genuine reverence for life. Our materialistic, callously competitive economic system denies the intrinsic connectedness between human beings, and our kinship with all of life. Capitalism (with great fanfare since the recent events in eastern Europe) offers a heady dose of freedom, but it is freedom without love. It offers material prosperity, but it is wealth without love, as I witnessed so vividly at that camp. But — and this is precisely where we must go beyond left-wing, "left-brain" analysis — there is no *ideology* better than capitalism: What we must have is a greater willingness to *love.* The non-ideological heart of holistic education is the recognition that education must cease fulfilling the requirements of the economic system and must become firmly rooted in a reverence for the mystery of life.

If there were no deeply entrenched worldview blocking the path to love, then the holistic critique would not need to be an intellectual, ideologically charged endeavor; it would be a spiritual discipline, a gentle confrontation with the shadow side of our nature. The path toward love is fraught with existential obstacles; even premodern, pre-ideological cultures have experienced enormous violence and cruelty, rooted in human fear and ignorance. But all of humankind's great teachers have said that these obstacles can be overcome only through inner discipline — through willingness to surrender control and power and to cultivate reverence and love. Whenever I become engaged in intellectual controversy in my work, I wonder whether I am losing sight of this teaching and moving away from love rather than closer to it.

But the fact remains that our growth toward love *is* inhibited by the materialistic, exploitative worldview of the modern age. So at the same time that we are heeding the inner needs of the spirit, we must also address the cultural, political, and institutional barriers to our unfolding. The angst that prevents us from truly loving — the fears and addictions and ego trips and petty rivalries (which are evident even within the holistic education movement) — *are not merely personal*! They are in large part the direct result of a fragmented, hierarchical culture obsessed with competition and "excellence" and standardized measures of human worth. We must dissolve the ideological fictions underlying this culture — not to set up yet another ideology, but so that we may become truly free to teach only love. For that is who we are — as holistic educators, and as human beings.

— Ron Miller

Notes

1. This metaphor has been used by at least two holistic educators: Maria Montessori in *Spontaneous Activity in Education* (New York: Schocken, 1965; originally published 1917), p. 240; and Caroline Pratt, in *I Learn from Children: An Adventure in Progressive Education* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948), p. 10.

2. Thomas Gordon, *Teaching Children Self-Discipline at Home and at School* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1989).

3. *Creation spirituality* refers to the work of Matthew Fox, a Dominican scholar who is integrating Christian mysticism with modern liberation theology, feminism, and ecological science. *Deep ecology* challenges the anthropocentric bias of modern thought. It is advocated by Arne Naess, George Sessions and William Duvall, Thomas Berry, Charlene Spretnak, Joanna Macy, and others. Its educational implications are explored in the work of Steve van Matre (earth education) and Damian Randle (green teaching).

Intimacy, Connectedness, and Education

by Emanuel Pariser

Emanuel Pariser is the cofounder and Director of the Community School, Maine's oldest alternative high school. He is spending this year writing about the program, giving workshops, and working with a national advisory board to inform people of what has been learned in the seventeen years since the school's inception. The father of two boys, he is also the senior member of Maine's Commission on Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education.

At a small residential high school for dropouts, a family-like atmosphere of care, trust, and concern has enabled young people to transform their lives from self-doubt and perpetual failure to self-esteem and achievement.

This article is based on seventeen years of teaching, learning, and living with high school students who have left school before graduating. Our experience at the Community School, a small, residential alternative school in Maine, has suggested that these students' successful education is the result of a learning environment that provides an experience of intimacy and connectedness. By *intimacy* I mean a sense of emotional closeness between two or more people.

In his foreword to John Holt's seminal work *How Children Fail*, Allan Fromme writes:

> What does the child hear when he is called on? What does he feel? What does he think?... What does the teacher think and feel and do as he awaits the answer?... Does his relationship with the child have the intimacy ideally necessary for intellectual growth or is it a dull contractual one which fosters non-learning as much as it does learning?...
>
> Teachers can be no more successful in their classrooms than they can be in their marriages without this quality of sensitivity. The reason for this is that there is as much *intellectual intimacy* in the teaching-learning relationship as there is *emotional intimacy* in the husband-wife relationship.[1]

Taking Fromme's point a little further I would add that *both* emotional and intellectual intimacy have been prerequisite learning conditions for our students, many of whom have experienced long histories of social and academic failure. The presence of these forms of intimacy in the Community School has led them to a sense of connectedness: with themselves, with other people, and with the larger community.

In this article I will examine how a school can foster the necessary sense of intimacy and connectedness in its educational process, and the ramifications of making these elements primary ingredients of an educational approach. The students, programs, and situations described below are all taken from experiences at the Community School; it is my hope that their explication will be useful to others in all forms of education.

The need for intimacy

Many students need to experience closeness because there

has not been enough of it in their lives. As they move from personal failure to academic and social failure, their intellectual abilities become neutralized or redirected toward finding a "way out" of their intolerable lives.

A social worker refers Tracy to the Community School six months after her second suicide attempt. She is eighteen years old, is a heavy drinker, has left school as a junior, and has lived through a long series of depressingly self-destructive and abusive relationships.

She is disconnected from her family and out of touch with her own feelings. Her life is chaotic. She knows that finishing school and getting a high school diploma are "important." She is accepted to the school as a "long shot," since in the past two years she has never lived in one place for more than a couple of months.

These adolescents ... are constantly wounded by the uncaring atmosphere that greets them in school and other social institutions designed to "help" or "educate" them.

Students such as Tracy are products of failed human relationships and failed institutional remedies. Their families did not provide them with the love they needed to develop as children; as teenagers these students find it terrifying to accept love when it is offered. Their lives alternate between seeking the intimacy that never materialized in their childhood, and fleeing from the pain of intimate relationships in the present.

These adolescents are vulnerable to addictions or depressions that shield them from the pain of this failed intimacy; they are constantly wounded by the uncaring atmosphere that greets them in school and other social institutions designed to "help" or "educate" them.

Our students' inability to trust adults is a mirror image of their distrust in themselves. Their rejection of "the system" and social norms, and their sense of themselves as helpless, are the other side of the system's rejection of them as lazy, unmotivated, desocialized, hopeless students. This mutual rejection leads them further into isolation or into groups of other similarly wounded kids where they feel accepted and are left alone.

A high percentage of our applicants feel that "no one cared" about them in their high school; that they were "just a number"; that the authorities were glad to seem them go. The song "We Don't Need No Education" by the Pink Floyd rock group expresses both sides of the equation; delivered in a menacing chant, the song portrays an educational system that treats the singer as "just another brick in the wall."[2] While the threatened violence of the singer's voice corroborates the system's perception of him as the archetypal "bad" student, the lyrics of the song convey the singer's view of education as an archetypally malevolent system.

Just as the social outcomes of failed intimacy are withdrawal, alienation, mutual rejection, and stereotyping, the intellectual ramifications are fear of learning and inability to think.

In *How Children Fail*, John Holt describes how children must sustain a certain amount of intellectual insecurity to think about a problem:

> Schools give every encouragement to *producers*, the kids whose idea is to get "right answers" by any and all means. In a system that runs on "right answers," they can hardly help it. And these schools are often very discouraging places for *thinkers*. Until recently it had not occurred to me that poor students thought differently about their work than good students: I assumed they thought the same way, only less skillfully. Now it begins to look as if the *expectation of fear and failure* may lead children to act and think in a special way, to adopt strategies different from those of more confident children.
>
> Emily is a good example. She is emotionally as well as intellectually incapable of checking her work, of comparing her ideas against reality.... She makes me think of an animal fleeing danger —go like the wind, don't look back, remember where the danger was, and stay away from it as far as you can.[3]

For people who have been traumatized by unpredictable, uncaring, disrupted home and school environments, the ability or desire to sit with intellectual uncertainty becomes infinitesimal. Too much in their lives is already insecure; they retreat from thinking because it is too painful.

The questions then become: How does one structure an educational environment so that it becomes "safe" to think, to feel, to be? How does one differentiate the learning environment significantly enough from past situations that students feel they have a chance; that learning need not be painful, oppressive, or boring?

Structuring intimacy in education: Structural and programmatic elements

Program size. Small size is the most obvious environmental condition necessary to produce the felt sense of intimacy. The school community must be small enough to allow for *formal* and *informal* personal encounters between students and staff. One of the secrets of the Community School's longevity is that we've stayed small. The program works with a maximum of eight students per term; there are six faculty members, one of whom is present at all times. According to *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered* by Gregory and Smith, schools of up to 250 students can also achieve a strong sense of interpersonal intimacy.[4]

Space. Students need to have *their own* defined physical space, which should be comfortable, inviting, and personal. When students enter the Community School, they come in through the kitchen; they are interviewed in the living room. The furniture is worn but serviceable; the bookshelves, wall decorations, and plants make the environment much more reminiscent of home than school.

Staff structure. In most conventional schools little effort is spent on creating a sense of *collegiality* among faculty, which Gary Whelage defines

as "the key characteristic of a successful teacher culture."[5] He describes the importance of teamwork and participation in group activities, some of which are not work focused. Developing a sense of collegiality will lead to a feeling of intimacy among faculty and hopefully will allow staff to "model" productive, respectful relationships for the students.

Educators of high school students, especially troubled ones, must come to grips with their own interpersonal issues that are often mirrored by the students with whom they have chosen to work. If self-reflection, insight, and openness are encouraged among staff, then the roles of teacher and student as educators of each other take on a much more reciprocal nature. The possibility for meaningful educational encounters have been maximized.

To create and support a sense of intimacy among staff, the school devotes five hours per week to a full faculty meeting. An outside consultant facilitates the meeting. Staff all "check in" on how they're feeling at the moment, and bring up compliments and resentments they wish to discuss with their colleagues. Program decisions are made by consensus, whenever possible, and the faculty formally evaluates itself four times a year.

The connections between staff culture and student culture are subtle and powerful. When there is significant turnover of staff during one term, more students than usual are apt to drop out the next term. As in a family, the level of trust and intimacy experienced among the faculty has a direct impact on the development of trust between students and school.

To be successful in the long run, programs need to structure ways for staff to become close, to support and teach one another. Programs must pay as much attention to the needs of the faculty as they do to the needs of the students. If schools do not build in mechanisms for taking care of the caregivers, then faculty will burn out quickly, substantially reducing the program's effectiveness.

Attention: The interview, the one to one, the group

To teach successfully, one must have the opportunity to pay attention to one's students. One must learn what they are experiencing, and how it feels to be who they are. "Ninety percent of learning," to quote Garrison Keillor "is paying attention." But both teacher and student must be paying attention.[6]

In 1962 Paul Goodman, in his book *Compulsory Miseducation*, pointed out that "adolescents [in America] are spiritually abandoned. They are insulated *by not being taken seriously*.... Disregarded by the adults, they have in turn excluded adult guidance."[7] Have we managed to change this pattern of disregard in the past 30 years?

If self-reflection, insight, and openness are encouraged among staff, then the roles of teacher and student as educators of each other take on a much more reciprocal nature.

The following descriptions illustrate the three primary modalities through which the Community School focuses attention on its students.

The interview. An interview is a student's first contact with the school. The interviewer asks the applicant serious and challenging personal questions, listening carefully and supportively to the answers. The process can take from 1½ to 2½ hours and includes time for the student or parents to ask questions and air concerns about the program. Often the important bond formed between applicant and interviewer lasts the entire term. The encounter depicted below is a cross between an interview and a counseling session.

Frank enters the room gingerly as if any false step would disturb something. His mother follows self-consciously, finding a place to sit as quickly as possible. They sit at opposite sides of the room.

When Frank explains how he heard about the school from a former student, his mother adds, "I'm just not sure what I'll do without him at home, but I'm so proud that he's trying to finish school." Her reddened eyes water over imperceptibly.

Frank deftly sidesteps the emotion-laden moment by asking the interviewer whether one is allowed to play the game Dungeons and Dragons at the school. His mother leaves the room to allow the actual interview to begin.

Bob, the staff interviewer, has a brusque style. He gruffly asks Frank the 90 questions, which cover family, school, work, and legal history. Frank is impressed by Bob's casual appearance; he wears a t-shirt, jeans, and has a long white beard. Bob seems attentive and interested in Frank's responses, particularly those about substance-abuse issues. Frank is not sure if Bob is suspicious, or if he really cares.

Questions about his family are hardest to answer. Despite his loyalty, there is not much to be proud of. When asked to name one good personal quality, Frank replies: "I wouldn't take up much space."

The faculty interviewer later discusses the interview with another staff member, then "presents" it to the full staff. Conditions for acceptance are based on the full staff's recommendations. The interviewer works with an applicant until the applicant is finally in the program, on a waiting list, or not accepted. This process may take as much as six hours of individual and group staff time.

Student acceptance is determined by staff consensus. The interview is the beginning of a student's integration into the school community; it is a process of careful listening and attention. For the process to work, staff must listen and attend to *one another* as well as they do to the applicant.

The one to one. The advisory relationship known as the "one to one" is the most powerful method of focusing attention and care on a student at the Community School. Each student meets regularly with one teacher who acts as adviser, coach, advocate, and friend for the entire term. In many instances it is the strength of this rela-

tionship that sustains the student in meeting the demands of the program.

The character of a one-to-one meeting depends on the relationship forged between staff and student. A typical meeting will include reviewing the student's preceding week; problem solving; planning for a group meeting if the student has issues he/she wishes (or will be required) to address; and discussing future goals and current concerns.

One to ones may be held while teacher and student sit in a quiet room, walk around the block, drive to work, climb a tree. They may be accomplished in an hour or in three ten-minute sessions.

Regardless of the form these meetings take, their two primary purposes are to establish a trusting relationship between student and teacher, and to facilitate the student's progress through the program.

Although students who take advantage of the one-to-one process tell us how important it is to them, some students cannot use the one-to-one. Getting close to anyone is too painful and frightening. One of our first students once said, "I'd rather have someone hit me over the head with a bat than care about me."[8] In these cases the teacher becomes more of a manager to facilitate the student's practical success in the program. Whether fully utilized or not, the one-to-one offers all students the possibility of carrying on a sustained relationship with one supportive and trustworthy adult.

The group. The conscious use of group process is a third modality for structuring intimacy in education. Because adolescents have a tremendous drive to belong to groups of peers that accept them, their initial impetus to join a community of peers is naturally strong.

But for students who have never felt that they fit or belonged anywhere, the prospect of joining a group — especially one that includes adults — raises ambivalent feelings. For these students, groups must be accessible, accepting, and respectful.

The Community School offers an array of differently structured groups for participation by all students: Cooperative learning experiences in which all students and tutors take part precede evening tutorials. Physical education requirements are met by weekend camping trips that are a combination of family outings and challenging physical experiences. Every Thursday evening the entire school community meets in the living room to vote on issues of school governance and to discuss conflicts and interpersonal upheavals. Seminars focus on special issues such as sexuality and self-esteem, substance abuse, and nonviolent conflict resolution. Finally, since the school is residential, many *unplanned* interactions take place in a group.

In a paper written for a community college class, Steve Hayden, a former student, expressed the impact that his Community School experience had on him:

> I am a very lucky person to have a need for group support. When I first found out I had a necessity for this type of thing, I thought my life had come to a miserable slump.... Today I think back to the first group I attended. This was at an alternative high school. On Thursday nights we had group rap.
>
> This may well have been my first structured family. Now I have five or six families I can put a face on, and thousands I haven't yet.[9]

The group format not only teaches content skills but also helps students learn how to be contributing members of a community. It establishes a sense of comfortable connectedness.

Drawbacks of providing intimate learning environments

To stress intimacy in an educational approach raises major issues for staff and student alike. Overwhelming feelings may be conjured up by living and learning in home-like environments, by trusting again, by being trusted and enfranchised. The following descriptions detail a few key problems that can arise under an intimacy-centered method.

Often the most "successful" student experiences the greatest pain in an educational setting like the Community School. She comes to the school as Tracy did and allows herself to trust a bit more and feel safe. This process unleashes several dragons: First, she begins to get in touch with some of her previously suppressed and denied experiences. Second, she notices all that has been missing in her previous relationships, both emotional and intellectual. Third, she must deal with the undeniable fact that her term at the school is time-limited — she must leave at the end regardless of how well she has done.

In a recent meeting of graduates, Jory, now a 28-year-old truck driver who had no family support when he was at the school, likened his experience of graduating to a plane ride: "When I came to the end, there was no one there to meet me. I felt lost again."[10] Several years after she graduated, Tracy commented to me, "I worked so hard just to stay in the program; to complete something for the first time in my life. Then after all these struggles, I was successful and you [the school] said I had to go!"[11] Tracy's feelings of anger and loss are common among graduating students.

The school has begun to address this issue by creating a postgraduate program, "Project Graduation and Beyond," which will support students once they leave by providing ongoing tutoring, referral, and group work.

In the context of postgraduate work, a focus on close relationships can be problematic because of the importance that specific staff-student relationships attain. Students who had strong attachments to a specific staff member who is no longer teaching at the school have to come to grips with "change," and do not feel as trusting of unknown new staff.

There are enormous consequences if students and staff are unable to address the myriad of personality and behavioral issues that arise in a residential group. It is not infrequent that a student will threaten to drop out of the program if "something isn't done" about a fellow student. The feeling is expressed as "either they go or I do."

If in a larger, more impersonal setting the force of one personality is diminished, in an intimate setting it is potentiated. How to put up with people one does not like is one of the most difficult lessons to learn at the Community School.

A problem arises as well for faculty. Interpersonal relations among staff form the hub of the school's relational community. These relationships can become convoluted and complicated as the work stirs up innumerable personal issues. Hours of self-reflective work are needed to restore a sense of clarity and common purpose. But this time is usually not available because

of the pressing programmatic issues that take priority.

The faculty must walk a tightrope, balancing the need to take care of students with the need to attend to itself. Furthermore the staff must find a way to both support and supervise itself, so that feedback can be clearly distinguished as interpersonal or task related.

Positive effects of an intimacy-based methodology

The personal encounter. One of the most powerful consequences of generating a sense of closeness within a learning community is that staff and students can experience genuine personal encounters with each other. Such encounters are the unplanned but vital curriculum of programs like the Community School. They involve two or more people within the community in discussions or activities that are important to each, without either party feeling that their participation is compulsory.

In his book *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich points out:

> Reliance on institutional process has replaced dependence on personal good will. The world has lost its humane dimension.... The relational structures we need are those which will enable each person to define oneself by learning and contributing to the learning of others.[12]

Moments of unplanned learning form an aspect of the core "curriculum" at the Community School. In fact, Albert Einstein's favorite definition of *education* was, "what we remember after we forget everything we learned in school."[13] For our students, who have defended themselves rigidly against formal education, these unselfconscious learning encounters can be a re-entry into the realm of thinking and learning.

In ten days Sam will graduate from the Community School. He and I go out for coffee to talk about his plans for the future and to have a final meeting before he leaves. He is proud that he has been accepted at a technical school; he had never considered going beyond high school.

The subject of his father's death comes up. It happened almost a year ago. Sam says that he would have gone crazy if it hadn't been for his girlfriend being there with him. He thinks she may be away at college when the anniversary of the death comes this year. He hopes he can "handle it" alone.

I ask him if he has thought about coming back to the school for a day or two near the anniversary; perhaps he could spend time with his one to one. Sam is pleased at the suggestion. He will talk about it with Buck, his one to one, when he gets back to school.

This momentary discussion taught us both several things: that emotions can be tied to events which are tied to specific times of year; that one needn't tough it out alone even if one is an American Male; that a sense of community can extend over a geographic distance; and that taking care of ourselves properly involves feeling, thinking, and communicating.

Academic contagion. A learning environment that promotes closeness also increases the chances that one person's enthusiasm will rub off on someone else. One of the primary results of an intimacy-centered learning environment is that students have direct contact with adults — faculty, volunteers, community members — who have found joy and mastery in a specific field of knowledge.

The hoped-for effect is that the adult's joyful and knowledgeable interest will stimulate a resonance of similar interest in the student, or perhaps tap into a reserve of interest as yet unknown to the student.

Reg is a Passamaquoddy Indian from Zebayig, a reservation in Perry, Maine. In addition to having a variety of behavioral issues, he has never managed to sustain an interest in school. His big frame and muscular body, his constant angry awareness that he is from an oppressed culture, at first make him an intimidating person with whom to work.

In the course of his stay at the Community School, Reg loosens up a bit. He has a reservoir of humor. Bob, a staff member who is an avid poetry enthusiast and is committed to working with Native Americans, introduces him to Native American poetry as part of his literature curriculum. Reg likes what he reads. The rest of the staff joins in suggesting their favorite poems to Reg. He reads them. He begins to write his own.

Reg continues to write poems through his most difficult moments at the school. I call him three months after he has completed his term — he still has several requirements to finish before he graduates. Is he still writing poetry, I ask. Every day, he answers. I ask him to send me some; I'd like to read them and perhaps put them in the school's newsletter. No, he says, I can read them when I come to visit.

Removal of blocks. An educational environment that creates a sense of safety and caring allows students to begin to trust others. They let down emotional and mental guards, which so effectively protected them from their past educational abuse and neglect. Their "learning disabilities," diagnosed or not, have functioned as armor to minimalize their self-expectations and the expectations that others place on them. Their conception of themselves as "stupid" blocks learning and results in "brittle" minds that are afraid to risk thinking.

Joe arrives at the school from Houlton. He is nineteen and designated a "slow learner." He has failed ninth grade three times and is firmly convinced that he is basically dumb. A few weeks into the term he chooses math as his first subject to tackle. Sitting down to work with his tutors, he struggles for the "right" answers and fails. He is embarrassed by his inability to grasp the material.

In the middle of a particularly difficult lesson he asks Dora, the codirector, to talk with him. They go into the office and shut the door, then Joe explains that he just can't do it, he'll have to leave. He likes the school, but he just can't do the work. He has never liked math.

At this point Joe is shaking. Tears roll down his cheeks. He is nineteen years old, a man capable of a good, hard day's work in the potato houses, and the prospect of continuing on in the pain and confusion that math inspires in him seems unbearable.

Dora listens to him carefully. She tells him that it's normal for him to feel the way he does after having tried so hard for so long and failed. She adds that the school will work with him as long as he needs to on academics, that there is no rush. A year later Joe gets his diploma. It has taken an extra six months, but in the process he has relearned to trust his own thinking abilities.

Perseverance. Students who begin to experience a connection to others in their learning environment become more persistent learners. They become less afraid of failure and more willing to take intellectual risks, to sit with unanswered questions, to work toward long-term goals. In a beautiful passage, John Holt describes how we are all persistent learners at the beginning of our lives:

> A baby does not react to failure as an adult does or even a five year old because she has not yet been made to feel that failure is shame, disgrace, a crime. Unlike her elders she is not concerned with protecting herself against everything that is not easy and familiar; she reaches out to experience, she embraces life.[14]

Holt ascribes less importance than I would to the fact that the baby is carrying out her "experiments" within the context of a loving, attentive family that protects her from the "natural" disasters which could befall her in the course of her explorations. When students feel that their acceptance as people is not contingent upon a particular academic success, then they can relax; the energy they have used to defend themselves can be used to learn; they learn to persist despite their mistakes and setbacks.

In light of the many little successes students experience regularly at the school, failure takes on a different complexion. It is not an annihilating experience. Students are honored more for their efforts than for their ability to take tests. Students understand that the school will work with them for as long as they need in order to graduate. Ultimately learning becomes a cooperative experience rather than a combative one, more like the explorations of Holt's baby than the standardized mechanical experiences that make up the worst of conventional education.

Long-term results in one setting. What have been the educational and social outcomes for students at the Community School over the past seventeen years? Approximately 70% graduate with a high school diploma from the Community School; another 5 to 7% complete their education by means of the service, G.E.D., or adult education. Roughly 20% continue on to some other form of education.

Perhaps the most unexpected result is that over 60% of our former students remain in contact with the school. During the past year the program received more than 450 contacts from former students, ranging from letters to phone calls to visits. It often feels as though our work has only commenced at matriculation.

An educational environment that creates a sense of safety and caring allows students to begin to trust others.

It is my belief that any program that places the same high value on interpersonal and intellectual closeness could achieve similar or better short- and long-term results. Larger programs could make effective use of older students, parents, and volunteers to bring down the staff-student ratio. Wherever faculties make long-term commitments to these educational goals, students will take the risk of connecting and learning.

Conclusion

I have tried to make a case for what most of us in the world of education should find obvious: The opportunity for students and teachers to be close with each other intellectually and emotionally is a crucial aspect of any truly effective educational process. Why does this need to be reiterated? Because we get so wrapped up in our drive to find and use educational technologies that "work" and labels which help us sort out and define different student populations, we forget that one of the fundamental preconditions for learning is the experience of intimacy.

Neither computers nor interactive videos nor programmed textbooks can save us from this fact: If we don't provide the space and time for our children to meet, think, and learn together with their teachers as complete human beings, then they will never connect to form the educational communities necessary for authentic learning to occur.

The system will continue to spew out disaffected, alienated, and disenfranchised people, people who have given up, people who are afraid to think and terrified to learn.

Notes

1. Allan Fromme, quoted in John Holt, *How Children Fail* (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 12.

2. Roger Waters, "Another Brick in the Wall," in *The Wall* (New York: Pink Floyd Music Publishers, 1979).

3. Holt, *How Children Fail*, p. 48.

4. Thomas B. Gregory and Gerald R. Smith, *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1987), pp. 59, 60, 74.

5. Gary Whelage, "Effective Programs for the Marginal High School Student," *Fastback*, no. 297. (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983), p. 45.

6. Bob Dickens, *Community School Newsletter*, no. 52 (Camden, ME: Community School Press, 1989), p. 1.

7. Paul Goodman, *Compulsory Miseducation* (New York: Vintage, 1962), p. 74.

8. Community School student to Emanuel in 1974 during a one-to-one session.

9. Steve Hayden, Community School graduate, in *Community School Newsletter*, no. 52 (Camden, ME: Community School Press, 1989), p. 2.

10. Community School student at former student group, 1990.

11. Community School student to Emanuel two years after graduation, 1987.

12. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 111.

13. Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 71.

14. John Holt, *How Children Fail*, p. 89.

The Mysteries Program

Educating Adolescents for Today's World

by Shelley Kessler

Shelley Kessler has been Chair of the Human Development Department at Crossroads School since 1985. Supervising faculty and curriculum development in ethics, community service, and Mysteries, Shelley seeks to integrate mind, body, spirit, and heart in the development of personal and social responsibility in adolescents. She is the former executive director of Service to Youth, a community agency in Concord, Massachusetts. She and her husband, author Mark Gerzon, have three sons.

Throughout our culture adults worry about our teenagers. Parents, teachers, politicians, journalists, psychologists, and sociologists all view adolescents today as a "generation at risk." Police, schools, and religious groups are reacting to the grisly statistics about teen suicide, pregnancy, substance abuse, and school failure by desperately creating programs to prevent such tragedies. Certainly our youth are calling for a response. But it is not enough to react to the bad news; reactive programs do not offer a foundation for raising an ethical, creative generation capable of resolving the challenges of personal and public life in these critical times. We must look more broadly at the needs of adolescents today and create programs to address those needs with a positive spirit.

Adolescence is a passionate time when the mind begins to grasp the full extent of the existing reality but lacks the perspective of time to temper the news. Among our teenagers we find our greatest idealists and our greatest cynics. To understand the needs of this age, and to design programs to serve them, we must understand and attend to both the roots of their despair and the foundation of their hope and joy.

Adolescence is a time of searching for an identity: clarifying and identifying a self that can be separate and independent from one's immediate family, and strong enough to find a place in a larger world. In times past, social and religious traditions could help teenagers to make this transition by providing a larger social and spiritual framework and sense of meaning in which to embed this new, separate identity. But in this period of global uncertainty and change, this supportive context and sense of meaning is often absent.

The Mysteries Program is a human development curriculum for students aged twelve through eighteen. It was developed by the staff of the Crossroads School, an alternative school with 650 students, in grades seven through twelve, in Santa Monica, California. Crossroads School is committed to social diversity, community service, and academic excellence balanced by the arts, physical education, and human development.

Mysteries is a required course, which meets once per week for 1½ hours and is led by teachers trained in adolescent development, active listening, group building, visualization, self-esteem methods, and the use of a variety of art, movement, and play modalities for personal expression and growth. Through conferences, workshops, and a new sourcebook (from which this article is adapted), the Crossroads School staff is sharing the Mysteries Program with other educators who are concerned about teens' healthy development, and it invites discourse and collaboration. Contact the author at Crossroads School, 1714 21st Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404. Crossroads School will offer a training workshop on the Mysteries Program in June, 1991; all educators are invited to attend.

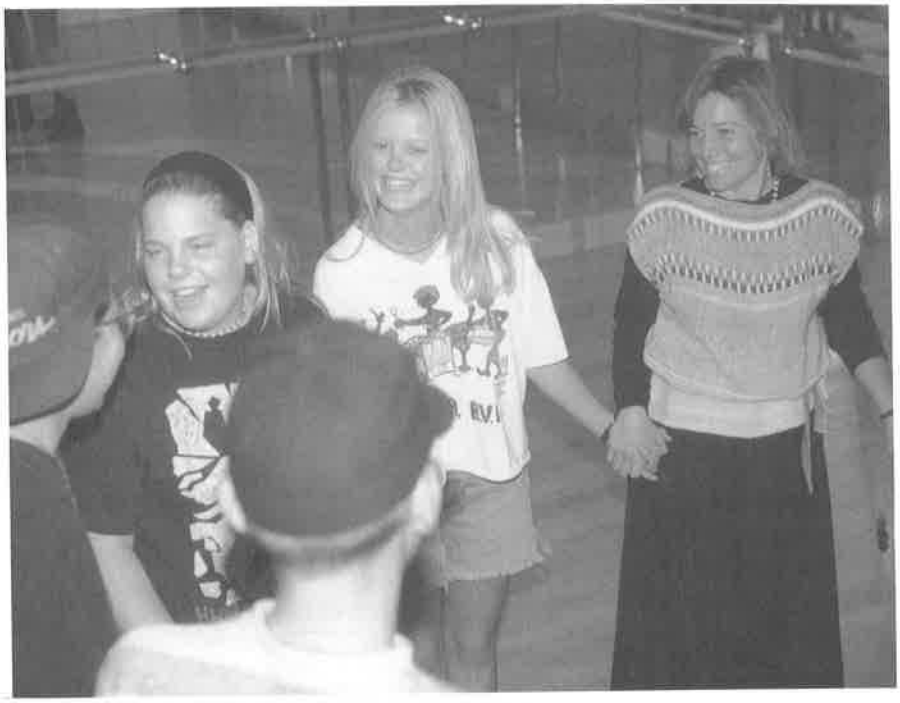
A 1989 report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development observed that "the conditions of early adolescence have changed dramatically from previous generations."[1] The report cites the contradictory attitudes toward promiscuous sex and illicit drugs; the erosion of the neighborhood sense of community; the loss of decent jobs for low-skilled workers; the rising numbers of divorced couples, single-parent homes, and families in which both parents work; and other economic and social trends.

Yet I believe we have to go further than this mainstream view of the erosion of family and community, further than concerns over a changing economy and a mass media that is wildly at odds with traditional values. We have to look at how teenagers are affected by *living at a turning point in human and global destiny* — how they are affected by their awareness of the dangers and by their participation in an evolution of consciousness that is emerging to make possible their personal health and the survival of the planet.

Uncertainty, fear, and despair

The loss of certainty that there will be a world to grow up in has become a pivotal psychological issue of our time. At an early age, children are now aware that we live in a time of global emergency: the ongoing destruction of our biosphere, the untenable imbalance of resources in our nation and in the world, and the more immediate threat of destruction still posed by nuclear weapons. Our children are confused and hurt by the silence often imposed by parents and teachers on these painful issues. They wonder, why don't my parents and teachers care? Is there something wrong with me when I am frightened or depressed?

I often have heard educators and parents say, "But our kids aren't afraid of these things. They never talk about global fears. They just seem to want to have a good time." To appreciate the hidden nature of fear at this age, it's important to look at "psychic numbing." The psychic numbing that protects most of us as adults begins to set in after the age of fourteen. According to scholars such as Robert J. Lifton and Joanna Macy, the peak of expressed concern about these dangers is about age thirteen or fourteen. When the numbing sets in, it is accompanied by feelings of hopelessness. Psychic numbing is so effective that we are truly unaware of our fear and our despair. Young people often deny feeling concern or hopelessness — what is expressed is the "do it all now" escapist and self-destructive behavior that reflects this hidden pain.[2]



Author Shelley Kessler with students at Crossroads School.

A spiritual vacuum

These troubled teenagers are hiding not only from fear and despair, but also from a sense of emptiness inside, a sense of meaninglessness that comes when social and religious traditions no longer provide a sense of meaning, continuity, and participation in a larger whole. To understand this emptiness and its role in causing the self-destructive behavior discussed above, we must understand the long unrecognized role of spiritual development in the adolescent. Just as the child develops emotionally, intellectually, and physically, he or she develops spiritually as well. There is a notable absence of literature about this aspect of child development, but in working with teenagers for over ten years, I see a longing for spiritual experience and development that manifests itself as longing for (a) connection to oneself and to those beyond oneself, (b) a sense of meaning or purpose in life, (c) the mysterious dimension of nonordinary experience, and (d) an experience of the wholeness of oneself and of life.

The void of spiritual guidance and opportunity in our culture and in the lives of teenagers at this time is one more factor contributing to their self-destructive behavior. Drugs and sex are, for teens, both a search for connection, mystery, and meaning and an escape from the pain of not having a genuine source of spiritual fulfillment.

Rites of passage. Traditional cultures taught us that adolescence is a particularly important point in the spiritual life cycle. In an article documenting early investigations on his study of the spirituality of childhood, Edward Hoffman tells us, "Virtually all tribal cultures possess rites of initiation, demarking childhood's passage into another realm of earthly existence.... The age-old initiatory traditions endured for many centuries in the West. But the rise of the Industrial Age began to shatter longstanding cultural rituals and patterns of spirituality."[3]

The consequences of this loss are clearly stated by Steven Foster and

Meredith Little, who have responded by developing a wilderness rite of passage now used by over a thousand high school graduates.

> The health of our culture depends on our ability to provide growth-events, contexts within which our young can mature and find meaning and purpose. But current cultural means are inadequate. Our children are not growing up. They neither formally sever from childhood nor incorporate as adults. There are no socially sanctioned rites which require them to demonstrate their full readiness to assume the rights and privileges of maturity. There is no culmination to childhood. It stretches into the adult years, encountering the crises, decisions, and dreams of adult life. Needless to say, the perpetual child is hardly able to make meaning of his/her experience. The tools of childhood hardly equip one to negotiate the inner oceans of the self, to climb the perilous mountains of parenthood, profession, divorce, or death or to harness the wild genius of imagination.[4]

Manifestations of the problem in "successful" youth

Until now we have defined the problem primarily in terms of the "losers" — high school drop-outs, drug abusers, suicide victims, and pregnant teens. But the emptiness and fear are not only the afflictions of the apathetic or despairing. What happens to these feelings in those youth defined as "successful" or "motivated" in the eyes of the culture? Is there any reason to concern ourselves with this pain in our "best schools"?

What we hear, see, smell, and taste in the atmosphere of our best schools is *stress*. Too little time and too much to do. We're all "dancing as fast as we can." Twelve-year-olds are talking about being "stressed out." They talk of being pressured and confused about whether they'll get into the right colleges. From the beginning of junior high until the climax and dissolution of "senioritis," students are moaning about the pressure, about fitting everything in, about not having any time for themselves. There is no time left for play. No time for daydreaming. No time for solitude or stillness or the emptiness that can be the most fertile ground for creativity and growth.

Why are they driving themselves so hard? "Workaholism" in adults is understood to be an addictive escape from a deeper sense of emptiness, worthlessness, meaninglessness, and fear. We are afraid to slow down because feelings may surface with which we don't know how to deal. Similarly, young people can avoid their larger fears and confusion by throwing themselves into frenetic activity and overcommitment, and immersing themselves, panic-stricken, in the short-term goals of grades, SATs, and college dreams and nightmares. This stress also results from an old model of education and perception. Much of education today still operates from a belief that society requires a continuous struggle for existence in which survival and success can be achieved solely through fierce individualism and competition.

Stress is not the symptom of a neurotic few. It is not confined to those from "dysfunctional families" who need therapy or go to self-help groups. (Although indeed therapy and self-help groups may be important resources for individuals who choose to heal or grow in this way.) Stress is a disease of our times. Stress is a fact of life, particularly in schools that breed "winners," "achievers" — students who are motivated and goal-oriented and responsible — not losers who drop out, take drugs, get pregnant, or kill themselves.

These troubled teenagers are hiding not only from fear and despair, but also from a sense of emptiness inside, a sense of meaninglessness....

Managing stress is not just a matter of teaching a few quick-fix techniques, or exercising more, or learning effective time management — although all of these approaches can be very useful. Managing stress means looking at what is making the stress necessary and functional. What is causing us to create a culture of stress in our "best schools" and in the communities that support them? If we discover that our young people have unspeakable fears about their future, that they yearn for a sense of meaning or purpose that they don't know how to find, and that they long to connect to something larger than themselves and find their place in creating and participating in a new and more hopeful paradigm, then we must dare to create in our schools a place to begin to meet these needs.

The new paradigm

The Mysteries Program did not emerge in reaction to adolescent fear, isolation, and despair. The Crossroads School community has a rather small share of the self-destructive patterns of today's youth. Mysteries arose and thrives primarily from a bold revisioning of the meaning of education, health, and citizenship for the 21st century. This new vision is part of a movement — a shift in perception and values — that is occurring worldwide. As educators, we feel a responsibility to share this vision with our children to prepare them for a sustainable future. Many adolescents today are not only remarkably receptive to learning about this new vision, but are actually on the cutting edge in their ability to perceive and eloquently articulate this vision from within. For me, the most joyful experience in Mysteries has been the discovery of what some adolescents today can teach us.

I did not understand, nor did I care to explore the term *evolution of consciousness* until I began teaching Mysteries and discovered fourteen-year-old students, who despite traditional parenting and traditional education, understood intuitively the values and perceptions that I had come to in my late 30s. I walk away often from senior Mysteries' councils stunned by the eloquence and maturity of character in the realm of personal and social responsibility. Educators and parents must make room and create opportunities for these adolescents to articulate their views, express their wisdom,

and provide their natural leadership in moving their peers as well as their elders toward new solutions, new approaches, and new ways of seeing the world and our place in it.

All around us we hear talk of a new paradigm — a new model for understanding the way the world works and for healing its ills. We hear it from scientists, from ecologists, from "New Age" spiritual theorists, from political theorists such as the Greens, and now from educators with a vision of holistic education. The current global crises — ecological, political, and spiritual — have given rise to these new movements to heal the globe and create a sustainable future. It is crucial to understand this major upheaval in consciousness and values in order to grasp both the confusion and the hope of today's youth and to prepare them for responsible citizenship and personal health for the future they inherit.

First, we are experiencing a crisis of *perception* — a shift in the way we perceive reality, which then leads to a very different way of understanding problems and leads to very different solutions.

Under the old paradigm, we believed in:

- the universe as a mechanical system, made up of isolated building blocks;
- the body as a machine;
- life in society as a continuous struggle for existence through competition;
- unlimited progress through technology;
- a natural law of male domination; and
- an anthropocentric set of priorities and values.

The new paradigm is:

- holistic, emphasizing the whole rather than the parts;
- systemic, seeing living systems (both social and ecological) as an integrated whole whose functioning can't be understood by reducing it to its parts;
- spiritual, rooted in a sense of connection to or communion with the cosmos; and
- biocentric, placing a priority on all life.

The shift in paradigm is not only a shift of perception but also a shift of values. We are moving from a dominant emphasis on rational, analytical, and linear ways of knowing, and from the values of competition, quantity, self-assertion, domination, and expansion, toward greater appreciation and acceptance of intuitive, systemic, nonlinear ways of knowing, and the values of cooperation, quality, integration, partnership, and conservation.[5] This new way of viewing the world, and this new sense of priorities about the skills and values we teach our youth is not confined to "New Age" theorists. Even the mainstream analysis of the Carnegie Commission emphasized that to prepare youth for the social and economic conditions of the 21st century, our schools must devise ways to build community and foster flexibility and creativity in all students. And when they describe human development from adolescence to adulthood, the Carnegie Commission very subtly but clearly demonstrates the shift in perception discussed above: "The young adolescent is moving from dependency to interdependency with parents, as well as with friends, relatives and other persons outside the home."[6]

Developmental theorists used to speak of adulthood as a time of independence and autonomy, not *interdependence.* Matter-of-factly referring to the need for interdependency in the adults of today's world, the Carnegie Commission paves the way for their recommendations on community building as a core responsibility of schools today.

Education for human needs

A growing number of educators are recognizing that the pursuit of an exclusively academic education leaves students ill-prepared for future challenges both as individuals and as members of society. Academic performance itself, as well as self-esteem, character, and human relationships, suffer when the education of the whole person is neglected. In his program description for the Gaia Education Outreach Institute, Bruce Kantner observed:

> The past 300 years of cultivating empirical, analytical, and mechanical ways of perception have left our senses atrophied, our imaginative powers dulled, and our inner modes of knowing and connecting with the natural and spiritual worlds diminished.[7]

The personal "mysteries" of teenagers today — feelings, fears, musings, wonder, and wisdom — have had little place in our schools. The traditional curricula begin with the voices of the elders and the words from the past. The Mysteries Program begins with the students; it listens and responds to the voices from the "other side of the report card."

What we hear, see, smell, and taste in the atmosphere of our best schools is* stress. *Too little time and too much to do.

> I'm scared of growing up too fast. One night I cried about it and I was uncertain about the seventh grade. My parents love me a lot and I am happy, but I'm scared. What can I do?
>
> — a seventh grader
>
> How far with self-confidence and contentment can I go before I reach selfishness? I always want to be better than everyone else, and I know that's wrong. I never want to be average and I like to believe everyone else is. That's bad. Can I be a special person and be happy and still not think I'm above everyone else?
>
> — a sophomore
>
> Why do people want to destroy each other? What is it about human nature that prohibits us from trusting each other? Why is it such a sin to be vulnerable?[8]
>
> — a senior

In an era of pervasive alienation among adolescents, the Mysteries Program gives students the tools and the experience to overcome root causes of self-destructive behavior: low self-esteem, stress, isolation, and poor decision-making skills. Through the Mysteries Program, students learn to tolerate and enjoy human diversity; develop compassion, responsibility, and empowerment; and recapture

their ability to play, to express joy and love, and to feel connected to community at many levels. In Mysteries, the questions are at least as important as answers. Mysteries returns to the original meaning of *education* — "to draw forth" by creating a safe container for the wonder, worries, joys, and wisdom within each child to emerge and engage.

In the Mysteries Program, the young adolescent is eased and supported through the transition from childhood into adolescence, and is provided with the information, ethical framework, and decision-making skills to face the many risks of the teenage years. Older adolescents are provided a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood — a safe but challenging opportunity to seek a new perspective, to learn to say goodbye, and to experience from their community acknowledgment for their accomplishments.

A growing number of educators are recognizing that the pursuit of an exclusively academic education leaves students ill-prepared for future challenges both as individuals and as members of society.

Breaking new ground in the field of junior- and senior-high-school human development programs, the Crossroads School recognizes spiritual development in the adolescent. "Health education" is returned to the original meaning of *health* — "to make whole." Health is defined as the integration of mind, body, spirit, and heart. The Mysteries Program provides an opportunity to explore meaning or purpose in life, to discover the mystery of nonordinary experience, and to feel a deep connection to the wholeness of life.

An expanded view of health

That schools must provide more than academic, physical, and arts education to prepare teenagers for life is not a new idea. For decades, American education has offered classes in health in order to provide certain basic life skills and information to foster healthy development in adolescents. To respond to the increasing self-destructive behaviors in this generation of teenagers, in recent years some schools have also added classes in human development. Using traditional academic methods — reading, writing, lecture, discussion, testing, and grades (and occasionally, psychological techniques such as role playing and self-esteem games) — these classes usually take an exclusively direct approach to learning about drugs, sexuality, teen suicide, and perhaps life-cycle issues in order to prevent problems in these areas.

Under the old paradigm, health was viewed mechanistically as the absence of disease, and the human organism was seen as dissociated from the environment. Disease was seen as the malfunctioning of a mechanism to be resolved by technological intervention. But the new paradigm (the systems view) views health as a state of dynamic balance that includes psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions and is connected to the social and natural environment. In the new paradigm, the state of health also involves a balance between two human tendencies — the urge toward self-assertion (individuality) and the urge for integration into a larger whole. This view also presumes a self-healing, self-regulating function within each being that is a resource for healing.

At Crossroads School we realized that the direct and cognitive approach is not enough and by itself may have little impact on shifting undesirable behaviors or feelings. We acknowledge that the cognitive realm is only one of many forms of intelligence and that *health* must be again viewed according to its original meaning — "to make whole." *Health* in the Mysteries Program is defined as the integration of and caring for all sides of our human nature — mind, body, emotions, and spirit. In its original statement of purpose in 1972, Crossroads School committed itself to a broad view of intelligence and education:

> There are many kinds of intelligence and the traditional academic cognitive area is one. Other important areas of intelligence are intuition, imagination, artistic creativity, physical expression and performance, sensitivity to others, and self-understanding.... It is the School's responsibility to foster the [student's] innate sense of the mystery and joy of life.

Elements of the Mysteries Program

Over the past three years, Crossroads School has developed a unique approach to the "other side of the report card." Designed to complement and balance a strong academic curriculum, the Mysteries Program works in the following twelve areas that help to ease the transition through the adolescent passage and encourage students to develop a sense of personal responsibility and efficacy in managing their lives.

1. Identity-definition and self-esteem. Defining and strengthening identity is a central task of adolescence and is the crucial building block that permits effective communication, stress management, and decision making. Through writing, group sharing, and focusing exercises, the Mysteries Program encourages students to clarify and express their values, goals, and needs. *Needs* are defined broadly to include physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs, as well as intellectual needs. Students learn techniques for sharpening awareness and acceptance of this range of human needs.

2. Communication skills. The Mysteries Program uses a variety of exercises to teach listening skills and increase students' ability to express themselves more effectively, fully, and authentically. Pairing and small-group exercises are used, discussion and dialogue may occur, but the main

emphasis is on speaking one by one in a circle. At the core of the Mysteries Program is a process called *Council*, a unique format that fosters effective communication.

Derived and adapted from Native American traditions, Council is a ceremony that requires strict use of the circle discussion with three basic rules: (a) speak in turn only, (b) speak briefly, and (c) speak and listen from the heart. This simple format has a very powerful effect. Giving each student an opportunity to speak with a guarantee of no interruptions or immediately expressed reactions creates both safety and disciplined listening. Safety is further insured by a commitment to confidentiality and by respecting the choice of the individual either to speak or be silent when it is his or her turn. The use of candlelight and a talking stick, stone, wand, or rattle adds a special dimension of intimacy and respect that inspires many students to greater self-expression.

Deep listening, a skill fostered by Council, is a central teaching of the Mysteries Program. Deep listening means listening to the other person with complete attention, unimpeded by quick judgments and reactions. It means listening between the lines — hearing the feelings and the intentions as well as the words. It requires tremendous discipline and provides students with a crucial skill that helps them in school as well as in relationships. Deep listening breaks the habit of reactiveness, the tendency to interrupt with defensiveness, judgment, and hostility before one has taken the time to listen to and process completely what the speaker is saying. When the deep listener finally gets the opportunity to speak, he or she can give a response, not a reaction — a more constructive and self-generated communication.

Deep listening to oneself is another skill fostered by Council. Students learn to listen to their intuition, imagination, and body as well as to their rational thoughts. This skill is further developed by a variety of techniques discussed under stress management. Council is a setting in which these new discoveries can be expressed communally and validated by the group.

Disciplined to speak briefly and from the heart, students learn the power of speaking clearly and to the point. The storytelling technique used in Council also gives students practice in speaking with poise and color.

Council and other techniques that enhance communication skills help students to develop respect for human differences, and they facilitate a greater sense of human connection at the deepest level.

Techniques such as psychodrama or role playing teach assertiveness skills. While identity definition helps students to discover what they want and need, assertiveness skills help them to satisfy those needs, which further enhances self-esteem and is an essential ingredient in stress management.

*3. **Stress management.*** Managing stress is highly related to a sense of personal responsibility — to believing that one has some control over one's life and to possessing the tools for exercising this control. An adolescent's failure to manage stress results in illness, both physical and emotional, and in a variety of self-destructive behaviors including substance abuse, premature sexual activity, social isolation, and breakdown of school performance.

Stress management involves learning how to both manage one's life to minimize stress and relieve the negative impact of stress that can't be avoided. Prevention is based on the skills discussed above: clarifying and accepting one's identity and making decisions and communications to express and accommodate one's identity.

The following set of questions simplifies the learning sequence in stress management that forms another core dimension of the Mysteries Program:

1. Who am I?
2. What are my needs, values, and goals?
3. Given the limitations of time, energy, and space, which of my priorities reflect the above?
4. Can I accept my needs, limitations, and priorities?
5. How do I make decisions according to my priorities in order to minimize pressure in my life?
6. How do I read the signals of stress, overload, and misdirection in my life?
7. How can I cope with the inevitable and often unwanted change in my life in a way that promotes my growth and healing?
8. What are the techniques for relieving the tension and confusion that accompany the stress I do have?

The skills required to answer questions 6 though 8 lead us into the area of affective education.

*4. **Affective education: Intuition, imagination, centering, focusing, crea-***

tivity, and sensory learning. To help students attune to the more subtle messages of their bodies and minds and to find relief from tension, confusion, and blockage, the Mysteries Program teaches deep relaxation, centering techniques, and guided imagery. These techniques help students gain knowledge of and greater control over their bodies, emotions, minds, and spirits. They facilitate stress reduction and foster personal integration, which lead to greater self-knowledge and self-esteem. They provide access to the realm of intuition, imagination, and sensory learning, which some scientists have termed *right-brain functions*. Learning how to access and strengthen these functions fosters not only stress management, but creativity as well. This heightened creativity helps students to manage their personal lives and be more productive in their work. Centering and focusing skills teach students a level of discipline and concentration that provides not only serenity and calmness, but also performance excellence in athletics, academics, and artistic expression. Affective education is crucial to academic success and stamina as well as to providing our students with an opportunity to become more satisfied and humane in their personal lives.

5. Preventive health education. In addition to the indirect approach to prevention described above and below, which works with the commonly recognized root causes of self-destructive behavior in adolescents (low self-esteem, stress, isolation, and poor decision-making skills), Mysteries also takes a direct approach at certain key periods by providing *information* in the areas of substance abuse and sexuality. It is a challenge to integrate this didactic function with the other styles of our program. To do so, we use peer education (both from students within the class and from older students invited to be guest speakers), role playing, group problem-solving methods, and Council.

Substance abuse. Seventh grade has been identified by many research groups[9] as a crucial time for prevention programs in the area of substance abuse. Consequently, our most extensive program is concentrated during six to eight weeks in seventh grade. We inform students about the impact of addiction at the individual, family, and social levels; the cultural messages about "using," physiological and experiential effects of each substance; the detoxification and rehabilitation process; ongoing recovery programs; peer pressure; and refusal skills.

Abbreviated versions of this program, using about three sessions, are provided in grades eight through ten. In the upper school, we also explore the importance of alternative highs. If we look at the underlying reasons why young people choose to get "high" with chemical substances, we find a desire for (a) relaxation and the capacity to let go of pressure and worry, (b) easing of social tensions to allow freer connection to others, and (c) experience of the richness of fantasy and imagination inherent in the human mind through "altered states of consciousness."

We acknowledge these as genuine and healthy human needs that can be attained through a variety of non-chemical methods which promote growth and healing *instead of* substances that injure the body. Techniques such as guided imagery both soothe tensions and unleash the imagination, and many of our games and communication activities facilitate easy connection with others.

Sexuality. Although information on sexuality is introduced briefly in grades 7 and 8 (with a strong unit on birth control in grade 8), it is in grades 9 and 10 that this subject is treated in depth. Until this past year, we did not have a ninth grade program, so the tenth grade curriculum still reflects this heavy emphasis on sex education. With the introduction of a ninth grade program, we are now in the process of sorting out which aspects of sexuality are best treated at which grade level and what needs to be repeated during both years. Areas covered include: defining sexuality, anatomy and physiology of sexual response, birth control, pregnancy and abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, intimacy, decision making, infatuation and love, beginning and ending relationships, gender, homosexuality, heterosexuality and masturbation, and rape prevention.

Our program is designed to carefully lift the veil of adolescent denial that often prevents the assimilation and practical use of information on sexuality. Mysteries fosters a sense of personal responsibility and choice, grounded in an understanding of intimacy and Eros as human needs that can be explored and satisfied through a variety of approaches both sexual and nonsexual. Students examine the array of choices and their different consequences. We stress the vulnerability and creative power inherent in sexual expression, and the dangers and opportunities that these imply for personal growth. Mysteries fosters acceptance and appreciation of the wisdom of the body and of love in the search for personal wholeness, as well as an understanding of the ways that relationships and sexual expression can be used to avoid individual growth and intimacy with others. Through process and content, the Mysteries approach teaches respect and self-respect for personal boundaries and limits in both discussion and behavior.

6. Playfulness and joy. The Mysteries Program recognizes the importance of these qualities to the development and maintenance of healthy, resilient,

The personal "mysteries" of teenagers today — feelings, fears, musings, wonder, and wisdom — have had little place in our schools. The traditional curricula begin with the voices of the elders and the words from the past.

and creative individuals and communities and to the process of effective learning. Playfulness is certainly central to childhood, but not confined to it, and current cultural trends have eroded the spirit of playfulness for many children and youths. Mysteries fosters playfulness specifically through the use of games, such as theater games and new games, and more generally through creating an atmosphere that welcomes spontaneity, laughter, and even silliness and outrageousness. Students learn to distinguish laughter and playfulness from disrespect or rudeness. They learn how to balance and integrate seriousness with playfulness, rather than regarding them as contradictory. And they appreciate that serious lessons can be learned in a manner that is playful and fun.[10]

Except for the moments of victory on the playing field, our culture in and out of our schools today tends more toward complaint, criticism, and suffering than toward celebration and joy. Students have been raised to feel far more at risk — more vulnerable and reluctant — in sharing their successes and strengths than in admitting their flaws. Also it seems that intimacy is associated with sharing deep, dark secrets. Coming from this culture, students tend to see the intimacy of the Mysteries Program, and particularly of Council, as a place to share problems. As teachers, we find ways to remind them continually that we are here to share our highs as well as our lows and to create opportunities for students to express and experience joy. Sometimes this comes from sharing and bearing witness to joyful events and experiences outside the classroom. The deepest joy in Mysteries comes in the moments of heartfelt connection with the group or someone in it, or with the personal exhilaration and pride that comes to the individual who takes a new risk or breaks through a perceived limitation or barrier within.

7. Celebrating human diversity. I believe that the greatest contribution of our program is in fostering in each student a sense of safety, tolerance, respect, and eventually love for the *diversity* of human experience and expression. Students come to understand the dangers of cliques, stereotyping, and prejudice of all kinds. They learn approaches to (and actually experience) overcoming the sense of separation or hostility while celebrating the differences.

Humans seem to be threatened profoundly by diversity and by change. Before they can be genuinely respectful, they must feel safe in knowing that they are accepted and can maintain themselves when they open to change and diversity. Our programs foster the self-acceptance and self-esteem that are preconditions for accepting others. They teach students how to create a climate in which people feel safe to express their unique individuality. In this climate where people "speak from the heart" (i.e., express themselves spontaneously with full sincerity, integrity, and vulnerability), students experience themselves accepting, respecting, and often even loving someone whom they were convinced was fundamentally alien to them. This startling experience is, I believe, the core of a capacity for the openness and tolerance needed for community, full individual expression, and peace.

8. Accommodating and validating different learning styles. Mysteries teachers demonstrate remarkable flexibility and creativity in using a variety of techniques to reach different students and to enable each student to use the several avenues of learning available to them. Teachers use visualization, a variety of visual art forms, writing, drama, relaxation, movement and physical awareness, touch, storytelling, play, video, lecture, open discussion, and highly structured verbal sharing. There is a deep understanding and appreciation of right- and left-brain styles of learning, and an attempt to teach students how and when to access each. Beyond technique, the atmosphere created in Mysteries facilitates respect and appreciation of our differences as individuals, and supports the uniqueness of what each student brings to the group. Students are allowed to move at their own pace. In the process of self-exploration, students may learn that they have personal strengths and weaknesses, and they may learn to accept these in both themselves and others.

9. Fostering divergent thinking. One way our program does this is by *presenting* a variety of viewpoints and introducing students to new ideas, new experiences, and new approaches to life.

Even more important to nurturing divergent thinking is knowing how to create an atmosphere among a group of students that fosters safety and respect. One Mysteries Program teacher wrote:

> I am able to think in varied ways, to experiment and make mistakes, to explore *all* angles, when, and only when I feel loved, respected, safe, appreciated, seen for my strengths and understood in my weaknesses.... Not being judged or coldly examined, being allowed to believe there is more than *one* path to any given destination ... being unafraid to argue, to disagree with an authority figure, also encourages me to think divergently.

Another teacher emphasized the risk taking and stretching that is possible in this climate of safety:

> We respect the different voice of each student. We challenge [students] with unusual exercises that may push them in a direction that is not their normal path, encouraging risk taking while also encouraging and validating boundaries. Students are given space to explore all aspects of themselves.

Crucial to this climate of safety is the absence of *judgment.* The absence of a letter grade in the Mysteries Program makes it easier to create and sustain a feeling of safety and acceptance for risk taking and diverse expression. From this atmosphere of extreme safety and acceptance, we have seen students blossom in an expansiveness, creativity, and boldness of mind.

Divergent thinking is also fostered in Mysteries by the encouragement to express and resolve conflict. A community can really tolerate diversity, let alone encourage it, only if it has the tools to handle the inevitable conflict that comes from divergent thinking.

Mysteries, by its very name, is a program that values the questioning and searching inherent in divergent thinking. When asked why the course is called Mysteries, we often reply that the questions in education are just as important as the answers, and that we need a place to explore the questions that have no answers.

In Mysteries, we foster true diversity of thought in the way we respond to students who are opposed to the nontraditional, nonacademic goals and methods of the program itself. Students are apt to become hostile in pressuring a "resistant" student to conform, and believe they are supporting the teacher and the program as well as themselves. It takes real skill, understanding, patience, and integrity for a teacher to accept, respect, and even welcome the student who is critical of the program in a way that supports and models diversity, allows responsive students to feel safe, and ultimately broadens the climate of safety.

10. Group problem solving. This is an important skill in an era that emphasizes teamwork in the work place, in community building, and in international relations. Components include trust and communication, the capacity to generate a variety of appropriate leaders and followers for different tasks, planning and decision-making methods, and the capacity to accept responsibility for the whole group with its diversity of needs and abilities. The Mysteries Program teaches this skill through a variety of methods. In class, exercises may include group problem-solving games that foster some or all of the above components. Our retreats in middle school and in the tenth grade use outdoor experiential education techniques to teach group problem solving in an intensive format. And the very process of teaching and learning in the Mysteries Program fosters these skills because students (a) participate in choosing or designing activities at times, (b) teach their peers through small group research and teaching teams, and (c) are called upon to brainstorm solutions when problems arise in the functioning of the group.

11. Personal and social responsibility. This primary goal of the human development department at Crossroads School, where the Mysteries Program is combined with courses in ethics and community service, can be achieved only by the integration of these three divisions. By fostering a sense of deep connection to others and to the Earth in all its manifestations, human development encourages a sense of *responsibility* to oneself, to others, and to the planet. We are teaching responsibility not as a burden, but as a sense of connection and empowerment by (a) fostering the compassion that makes humans want to alleviate the suffering of others, (b) instilling the conviction that change is possible, and (c) offering the tools to make those changes.

Skills for effecting change include the social, political, and moral understanding that come through community service and ethics and sensitivity to oneself and others; leadership and cooperative problem-solving skills; and techniques for enhancing intuition, imagination, and creativity that come through Mysteries. In the very style of teaching we are trying to develop in the Mysteries Program is a new model for leadership that reflects our commitment to education as a joint venture among students and teachers. The teacher is a guide for empowering individuals to contribute freely and fluidly to a cooperative style of making decisions, including the direction of the course itself.

12. Spiritual development. I have defined spiritual needs in adolescents as including connection, meaning, mystery, and wholeness. The Mysteries Program is designed to address each of these needs. First, the very atmosphere of the class — the emphasis on stillness, ritual, ceremony, and noncognitive modalities — gives students a sense of "retreat" from ordinary experience into the realm of the open heart, deep connection, nonordinary experience, and renewal. Guided imagery and other exercises that foster a shift into an alpha state provide opportunities for deep connection to oneself and for the mystery of altered states of consciousness. Council builds a deep connection to others in the group and an awareness of the larger human capacity to connect deeply to people fundamentally different from ourselves.

Our class trips provide an even more intensive and exalted experience of connection and compassion with others, of connection to the Earth and all life forms, and of the remarkable capacity for personal transformation. A sense of meaning and purpose may be gained in the experience of storytelling about one's own life, which evokes a sense of personal myth, in the rite-of-passage ceremony for seniors,[11] and in the cumulative process of self-definition that occurs in the class both internally and as witnessed by others. Finally, wholeness is a recurring theme in our emphasized need to nurture and integrate our four natures — mind, body, spirit, and heart — and to accept the presence of light and shadow within ourselves, in one another, and in nature.

I believe that the greatest contribution of our program is in fostering in each student a sense of safety, tolerance, respect, and eventually love for the* diversity *of human experience and expression.

For the student

Students experience the Mysteries Program as a place to "be themselves," in a way they don't find possible in many of their academic classes. It is a place to have fun and be together with fellow students in a new way. It is a time of much laughter and some tears. Over time, students notice that the Mysteries Program helps to break the tyranny of the cliques, which are the source of so much adolescent pain. They learn more about friendships, parents, conflict resolution, sexuality, drugs, the fate of the Earth — all the pressing concerns that they need some place to talk about. They learn "alternative highs," which make it easier to say no to peers and to their own inner drive for escapism, and instead, find moments of peace during these turbulent years.

For the teacher

Teaching Mysteries is exciting, invigorating, and rewarding. It requires risks and skills that are often new for the classroom teacher. It requires admitting that we don't have all the answers. It requires teachers to be open and vulnerable themselves as they participate in and guide the group. Teachers must be willing to be intuitive and responsive at the same time that they are clear and firm in holding to the purpose of the class. Most of all it requires tremendous patience, because unlike most teaching or counseling, it is based on a great trust in the self-healing, growth-oriented thrust inherent in each student. Much of the time, the teacher must learn to withhold interventions, interpretations, lectures and simply wait. True to the original meaning of the word *education*, the Mysteries Program is a process of drawing out, leading forth — trusting that the seeds are already there. As educators, we must provide the ideal conditions for them to grow and flourish.

Notes

1. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Turning Points: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century* (June, 1989).

2. I am indebted to a lecture by Joanna Macy, author of *Despair and Empowerment in a Nuclear Age* and the more recent *Thinking Like a Mountain*, for this analysis about despair and psychic numbing in today's teenagers.

3. Edward Hoffman, "The Wonder Years," *Yoga Journal* (Jan./Feb. 1990), p. 61.

4. Steven Foster and Meredith Little, *The Trail Ahead: A Wilderness Rite of Passage for High School Graduates* (Big Pine, CA: Rites of Passage Press, 1988).

5. I am indebted to Fritjof Capra, scientist, philosopher, and Green Movement theorist, for his articulation of the crisis of paradigm in a lecture presented in Santa Monica in Spring 1989. Much of this analysis is derived from that lecture.

6. Carnegie Council, *Turning Points*.

7. Bruce Kantner, "Gaia Education Outreach Institute" (Unpublished paper for the GEO Institute, Temple, NH).

8. These quotations come from lists of hundreds of questions written by Crossroads students over the years when asked to anonymously describe their personal Mysteries — the things they are curious, worried, wondering, or fearful about themselves, others, and the universe.

9. Phyllis L. Ellickson and Robert M. Bell, *Prospects for Preventing Drug Use Among Young Adolescents* (Rand Corporation R-3896-CHF, April 1990).

10. See Robert A. Johnson, *Ecstasy: Understanding the Psychology of Joy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) for a discussion of the return of the Dionysian principle to modern life.

11. We also have discussed the need to develop a rite-of-passage process and ceremony for the young adolescent — the seventh or eighth grader leaving childhood and beginning adolescence. We welcome input from anyone who has developed such a program for this age group.

Great Round Desert Vision Quests

An Interview with Sedonia Cahill

by Sharon R. Bard

A strong blizzard greeted me during my first vision quest night alone in a high desert in California. Snow was piled around my sleeping bag, and my hands were frozen. I was very frightened. I prayed for Spirit to send me a vision. I then heard a voice say, "Love your hands." So I began to chant softly to them, "I love you, hands." Breath warmed the joints of my fingers, and I was gradually able to move them again. I began to secure the ties of the tarp and collect scraps of creosote wood for my all-night vigil. My fear abated.

That evening I stared into the small, smoky fire and prepared to toss in the prayer arrow, which symbolized the addictions I intended to give up. I felt unready to release these addictions, hesitant to begin a life filled with healthier manifestations taking their place. I began to feel trapped by my seeming inability to let go of pain and limitation, and contemplated avoiding the task, when a strong wind rose, picked up my prayer stick, and flung it into the fire pit. I was stricken with profound awe of the Spirit who had again interceded on my behalf.

Back at base camp I told the story of my vision. I was given the name of Loving Winds in memory of the strong force that not only had assisted the release of my addictions, but also, through Spirit, had become breath to warm my hands, my body, and bring aliveness back into my Being.

— *Sharon Bard*

Sharon R. Bard, Ph.D., is a college professor, educational consultant, group facilitator, and writer in Sonoma County, California. She blends her background in educational psychology and holistic health sciences to facilitate self-awareness and empowerment in others. She has designed courses and also teaches courses on creative process throughout northern California. She can be reached at 5481 Wilshire Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Sedonia Cahill, founder of the Great Round Desert Vision Quests and author of *The Ceremonial Circle*,[1] has been presenting concepts of self-generated ritual in growth centers throughout the United States and Canada. She and her partner, Bird Brother, a sculptor and Earth activist, conduct ceremonies and rituals as a way to restore a sense of personal meaning and connection to the Earth. Their eclectic and holistic teachings are borrowed from the Cherokee medicine wheel with its reverence for Earth and all life upon it, from Eastern traditions, and from Western psychology. They work as a man and woman creating together, honoring the very real human need for intense engagement. They have created numerous group rituals including drumming, singing, movement, and guided imagery — all designed to empower and authenticate each unique participant as he or she identifies and embodies personal myths.

These teachings provide valuable tools in a time when modern life has become technologically isolating and connections to our source have become murky. With ceremony, one is able to connect the divine with everyday life and act it out, dramatizing the relationship between matter and spirit, with self as the conduit. This brings concrete and tangible meaning from the ephemeral as well as acknowledgment to changes in our lives and around us. With ceremony, there is the witness to the event, the witness of Spirit, and the witness of anyone who has attended the ceremony.

Accessing deeper meaning in work and daily life has been the quest and discovery of growing numbers of statesmen, doctors, scientists, and business people.[2] This movement has tremendous implications for the educator, for the student, and for institutions housing them.

Teachers who have vision-quested return to their classrooms with a deeper sense of themselves and consequently a more profound commitment to themselves, their work, and their students. They are better able to teach material more fully relevant to students and society, and better able to engage students in appropriate and healthy interactions. Superfluous authoritative roles are broken down. Most questers return with a much richer sense of what is authentic and true about life, and this information is conveyed to the students experientially. These teachers become role models for new ways of thinking, behaving, and making decisions.

Vision quest is a rite of passage, a ceremony marking a transition, a kind of initiation into a new phase of life. Revived from ancient times, the quest process is able to fill the universal thirst for deeper meaning that our modern society has made difficult to attain. Questers not only receive a renewed sense of meaning about their own life, but also begin to bond as a group and develop a sense of community and a commitment to a larger whole.

Recent passages in Cahill's personal journey have included a group- and self-initiation on her 50th birthday, which involved reclaiming and honoring her power as an older woman. Brother has become self-ordained as an Earth minister by his community, and as such performs many of the functions of a clergyman, but with an orientation to the sacredness of nature rather than to a conventional religion. Although both leaders have created many aspects of their ceremonies, certain components of ceremony are universal and ageless. Lighting candles, burning incense, cleansing, purifying, cutting, burying, releasing, dancing, singing, gift giving, changing of clothes, putting on of masks, painting faces — people have been doing these and other similar things forever, in all cultures, in various combinations. "It's probably impossible not to borrow from the past, and very empowering to take what you will of it and create what you need to now that's appropriate to this time and space," claims Cahill. "That's what interests me."

Cahill suggests that the sacred quality of our lives was taken in a certain way by the priests and elite as earliest temples of rocks, caves, and oak groves became temples with columns, roofs, walls, and eventually rooms holier than others where only a few entered. "It was very different to look outside and see everything as holy rather than have the holy thing be very tiny, buried with only the most elevated priest ever getting to see it. In this way the sacred was made less and less accessible and more and more exclusive."

Our medical, judicial, and educational systems have made access to information the property of an elite ruling the uneducated, and have prevented self-knowledge and self-expression from developing. As we become more able to teach others in a holistic, non-authoritative manner, students will be better able to access and manifest an authentic, intuitive knowledge that more closely approximates truth than reiterates dogma.

Somehow, unfortunately, it was decided that some things were sacred and others were not. What has not been sacred was subject to any kind of use and abuse that we wanted to inflict on it. That has happened to the Earth. It has happened to the flowers. We have forgotten that everything is sacred. For Cahill and Brother, the important part of ceremony is to get back into the remembrance that everything is sacred and therefore worth respecting and defending.

Cahill encourages people to see their whole life as a ceremony, beginning with birth and ending with the crossing over into the next cycle of experience. All of the parts of our lives are smaller rituals that make up the fabric of this life-long ceremony. "I think this is a way to begin to see life in a mythic content, so you can get the larger picture instead of getting lost in the daily humdrum that's so deadening in a way. When we can move back from it a little, we see this mythic content and see that our life is one very big, very special, and unique ceremony that will never happen again; it won't ever happen again, it is absolutely unique. This gives us a perspective on our lives. The ceremony of this lifetime is one which is just part of a much larger ceremony, and in this way, all our ceremonies weave together to make a very large, a very big ceremony. It's changed the quality of my life to begin to see it that way." Sedonia Cahill and Bird Brother can be reached at Box 201, Bodega, CA 94922; phone (707) 874-2736.

SB: Sedonia, tell me about vision quest...

SC: Goodness ... well, vision quest is a very ancient practice of people all over the world. Most people had their own form of vision questing. On this continent, young adolescents were prepared for several years by an elder, and then when the time was right, they were sent out to spend some amount of time alone, in the wilderness, fasting from food, sometimes ... from water. They put themselves through a lot of ordeals until they received some vision that would explain to them who they were and what their life was to be, always with the emphasis that the individual be empowered but with the empowerment to serve the whole tribe, all the people.

The form of vision questing that we practice is modified, yet it's based on that model. Our people go out for three days and nights alone, they fast from food and on the last night from sleep. Basically they're looking for the same thing that our ancestors were, although in our culture questers generally do not undertake this experience until adulthood.

SB: What makes the vision quest experience unique?

SC: Well, I can answer that several ways. It's a very potent experience because participants are thrown back on themselves in a powerful way. They are alone, there's nothing else to distract them. There are very few diversions in the desert, there is an extraordinary silence, and there people are truly with themselves. It's an opportunity for many individuals to find out what their real resources are, and what their real strengths are. It's also a special time for people to discover that they really aren't alone, that the whole universe is alive and responsive. Usually this comes after people go through all the fears of being alone. They awaken to the fact that there's no such thing as being alone, that they're always with Spirit and part of a very, very alive universe.

We are gone for ten days. I've chosen to work with ten days because I think it's minimal. Native people spent two years in preparation, and certainly their whole lives in preparation in a sense, in that they were made familiar with medicine wheel teachings from the time they were little children. And they learned how to survive very well in the natural world. So, they were very prepared when they went out. Ten days is not a great length of time for us to prepare, but many people experience it as an enormous amount of time to set aside. In a way it's brief and in another way it's quite a bit of time, considering how intense the whole experience is. It seems to be enough to allow people to go through a very powerful spiritual and healing process.

Sedonia Cahill and Bird Brother at the Chicago Waldorf School. Photo by Elizabeth Jezier.

I also believe that the potency and power of an experience directly correlates with what you've sacrificed to have the experience — such as time, comfort, security, safety, addictions, fellowship, like that.

SB: So you feel that the sacrifice is necessary? Do you feel that the greater the sacrifice the more intense the vision?

SC: Ooh...[laughter] Certainly native people on the continent, when they went vision questing, made big sacrifices. Sometimes they would even cut off fingers, wound themselves in some

way. I think that we are a different people, that our life is different and our edges are in different places than theirs, so I don't believe we have to do things as radical to get what we need. But I still think that there must be something that we offer up, something that we leave behind, if only for the duration of the quest, in order to make ourselves more clear and our intentions more firmly set.

SB: Often with intense experiential opportunities, many people (myself included) go back to "regular life" after a couple of months. Would you say that there are lasting effects from participating on a vision quest, and if so, why?

SC: Well, I'm going to start by saying that we don't have a culture that understands these great transformations, these rites of passage, or particularly supports them, so people go back to the world just like they left it, without people there who really know what they've been through and who will honor and respect the new person that's returned home. So there are a lot of difficulties in returning home ... it's really true. It's almost like that's where the vision quest starts. But I do believe that the changes that occur on the mountain are lasting. Generally speaking, though, the quest experience itself takes a year to complete. Often people come off the mountain very high, absolutely understanding their relationship to the entire universe. They go back in to the world and there's a big letdown. Sometimes they become depressed. Sometimes they're more depressed than they were before they went out. But this is all part of the process. At the end of the year I believe everyone is in a radically different place than they were before they quested. But that doesn't mean that it's instant enlightenment. There's still work to do. There's work to do until you end this Earthwalk.

SB: What would be the purpose of someone going with your group, or any group, as opposed to going alone for their vision?

SC: Well, there's the obvious issue of safety. We spend a lot of time preparing them so that they're safer in the desert, but also there are preparations for the psychological or spiritual dimension of the journey. We do some work to help people get in touch with their real issues, to bring things up close to the surface so that they have something potent to take on the mountain. We also help them when they return, to process the experience. Some people return feeling that nothing has happened to them. When we hear their story we see that the mountain has moved, that a lot has happened. And without someone to give objective response and feedback, these people would not know that anything had happened ... they would feel that they had failed.

Cahill encourages people to see their whole life as a ceremony, beginning with birth and ending with the crossing over into the next cycle of experience.

SB: Was it your own personal experience as a participant on a vision or several visions that led you to begin doing this kind of work?

SC: Yes, that's right. I had been on a spiritual quest for most of my life, though nothing had really taken hold for me. I went on my first vision quest nine years ago, and really and truly it was the first time I ever felt that I belonged on this Earth, that there hadn't been some big mistake made, and I felt at home. And that changed my life. So I went again a couple more times, and studied some with my teachers, and one day realized that this is the work I wanted to do, and so I've done it ever since.

SB: Can you say a little bit about what you mean by, "It changed my life"?

SC: Well, it's a very different experience to feel that you belong on this planet as opposed to feeling totally rootless. I'm perhaps overstating that a little bit, but it's the first time that I really understood how responsive the universe is. It's alive and available to me, and that was very life-changing as well.

SB: Let's see, you've said that you had been on a spiritual quest and that your experience from the vision quest was one of belonging on the planet and noticing that the universe was alive. It makes me wonder, do you think that the experience is more appropriate for some people and not for others? And do you feel that it would be a prerequisite to be on a spiritual path before going on a vision quest?

SC: Well, I'm sure the quest must be more appropriate for some than others. The people that come out with us seem to be self-elected and right for this experience. They come from all lifestyles, all economic brackets, and all over the country — even some from Europe. I think the youngest one's been 20 and the oldest one's been in her 60s. So the unifying factor seems to be a lot of courage.

I have a questionnaire that I've asked people to fill out, and one of the questions is, "Have you ever had a profound spiritual experience?" Maybe a quarter of the people answer "No" to that, that they haven't. And, in some ways those people have some of the most splendid experiences. It's not necessary to have had any experience in the wilderness, in the outdoors either. We have people who come out who have never camped and they of course are extremely empowered by finding that they can spend three days and nights alone out in this environment that seems so foreign and alien when they get there and so utterly like home by the time they leave.

SB: Why the desert?

SC: The desert. Well, several reasons. The desert is incredibly beautiful. It's incredibly majestic. And it's also an incredible metaphor. I think that when we go out vision questing, in many ways we're going into our own internal desert, the place where there's nothing and nobody, the place where we are utterly, utterly alone. And it's often very frightening in that aloneness. It's a place that we sooner or later have to face. So being in the desert and its starkness brings people

to this state very quickly and very strongly. Another reason is that it's basically one of the few untouched places ... it's wilderness that's pretty pristine.

SB: When you first started doing vision quests you were taking out women only, and I believe that now you're doing mixed groups as well. Can you speak a little bit about the special significance that you find the vision holds for women, and why?

SC: Well, I began to work with women because I had already been working with them for some years in workshops having to do with the creative process. I felt that I understood women better. And I also was very, very interested in women's empowerment, self-empowerment ... so working with women in this way was very obvious. But at some point I also became interested in men having this experience. There's something about the desert for me that reminds me of ancient grandmother, and there's something special for men to return to that, I think, that wise grandmother space.

It's a very different experience to feel that you belong on this planet as opposed to feeling totally rootless.

SB: So can you say how being alone in the desert would empower a woman when she comes back to be with her family or in a work situation that has nothing to do with the natural elements in which she's just placed herself?

SC: Well, many women have never been alone in the wilderness. Because of various cultural circumstances they've been afraid to do that. So it's a very empowering experience for women to come out and find that they can be there alone, be self-sufficient, take care of themselves, deal with difficulties. The weather often gives us extraordinary difficulties to deal with and they have to do that. They have to face their fears. They have to be alone at night. Perhaps they'll see some wild animals that they've been frightened of previously and are able to deal with that fear. So that's a kind of empowerment which once you've received you take with you everywhere. The last night on the mountain the vision questers build a medicine wheel, and the wheel is made of rocks that they have selected to represent everything in their lives that has been significant. One rock might represent their mother whom they were close to and another might represent their father whom they were very alienated from. Perhaps they'll put in ex-husbands, ex-wives, children whom they love dearly, put in any part of the culture that they feel at odds with or alienated from, put in teachers who have loved and supported them ... everything that has been significant. And they do this to integrate these into their lives, to really claim the experience and not feel a victim any longer by doing this. So, on the last night they enter the wheel and they sit there all night no matter what happens. No matter how cold it gets, no matter if it rains, if it snows ... if a mountain lion comes, no matter. They stay in the circle all night. And by morning, something very magical has happened. These experiences that they've placed in this circle become fully integrated into their being and they walk down the circle empowered by this wheel. I feel that they carry the medicine wheel with them in their lives wherever they go after that experience.

SB: Do you usually have a sense of what's going to unfold for the questers as they come down off the mountain, or are you frequently surprised?

SC: Well, one thing that I have begun to see is that people get exactly what they go out for. I always have the people write a letter of intention before they come and when I go back and read the intention letter I see that they've gotten what they asked for ... sometimes a little disguised, but always that seems to be the case. I've sometimes seen people who have seemed perhaps a bit frail or fragile when they've left come back striding and strong. Occasionally I'm surprised at how much obvious transformation has occurred, but more and more I trust the process and have fewer surprises.

SB: I can see you're suggesting that there are some very dramatic changes that can happen for the individual, and I would guess, for the group that goes out. Can you see more far-reaching results that take place, let's say planetary?

SC: Well, one thing I would say is that many of the vision questers return with a love for the Earth they had not experienced previously, and they come down very committed to do battle for the Earth. Another thing is that people learn about giving away medicine, really giving away from their strength rather than their poverty. Giving away with a true sense of generosity, understanding the interrelatedness of things and that everyone's welfare is as important as theirs.... I think we're a people who have tried to live without a real vision, and I think one reason why people are becoming very interested in vision quest is because they're understanding the poverty of living life without a vision. And so people are trying to find vision, trying to find something to make life meaningful and inspired. So my hope is that with each person who does this, we will weave together a collective vision that can create beauty and harmony in the world ... a vision that is generous enough and large enough to include the welfare of all living things.

SB: Do you hear back from the Earth over the years that you've participated in and led these quests? Do you get messages from the Earth such as, "Thank you for introducing me to these people," or "You need to do more," or is there any kind of communication that's going on at that level?

SC: Well, that's an interesting question. We have some places that we return to seasonally, and I always feel like I've come home. I feel like the Earth is receiving us well and glad that we're there. I feel that there's a kind of psychic groove that gets set in these places that supports each subsequent

vision quester in his or her quest. I feel that all the spirits in these places tend to welcome us and support the vision questers. The more we go, the more that seems to happen.

SB: Sedonia, what are the specific components of a vision quest? Not yours in particular, but over the years and throughout different cultures.

SC: Well, vision quest can be broken down into three parts. There's the severance, the threshold, and the reincorporation, and it seems these are parts of significant ceremonies anywhere in the world. The severance is the time when we say goodbye to our life as we know it: to friends, to family, to comforts, and to security. We then go through the threshold into the liminal state, which is the period of being intensely in sacred time and space, in a sense without any identity. It has a quality of timelessness, and this of course encompasses the three days and nights, most specifically the last night on the mountain. And then there's the reincorporation, which is the process of re-entering what we call the "little round of life," coming back, saying the first word to people, eating a meal after three days, telling their story to the other people in base camp ... getting in their cars and going back onto the highways, and finally entering their home, their job, seeing their family. These three stages are really part of any significant spiritual experience.

SB: When a person returns to home and job and family, is he or she different, and if so, how?

SC: Most definitely they're different. They have probably been in closer contact with Spirit and with themselves than they ever have in their entire lives, and there's no way they couldn't be moved by such an experience. Each person comes back knowing self in a different way, as someone who can meet fears, hardships — endure a lot of difficulties. These individuals have a new story to tell, one of courage and strength reflected in the eyes of all of us, all of us who have been witness to it. There is validation, extreme validation for their courage. So of course they come back knowing themselves to be very different.

SB: What do you mean by sacred time?

SC: About sacred time and space ... I'm going to start by saying that's all there is ... that we human beings have somehow forgotten that and have decided that some places, some times are sacred; others aren't. But when I say sacred time and space in this context, what I'm meaning more than anything is an awareness of the aliveness of all things and interconnectedness of all things; the absolute equality of all things; and our deep, deep, deep relatedness to all things without judgment. So there is a quality of spirit time that doesn't seem to have boundaries. There's a boundlessness to it. And it's always available to us. We always have the choice. There is also the experience of being totally present in the here and now which is essential to sacred time and space.

SB: So you're saying that sacred time and space is all there is. Is it possible then to feel that interconnectedness and aliveness of all things in the middle of a traffic jam or at the grocery store?

SC: Yes. It's more challenging [laughter]. That's why I say the real vision quest is here, not on the mountain. Certainly the more distractions we have the more difficult it is to be connected with sacred time and space, but it's not impossible. Even among primal people, many of their ceremonies were to renew this connection. They were cyclical, seasonal, and I think they were to renew the people's connection with the sacred dimension. And they had far fewer distractions than we do.

SB: Can you mention a little bit about the facilitation that you do out in the desert and if you utilize any, say, Western psychological paradigms or techniques in concert with the ancient practice of vision?

SC: Sacred theater is something that we do the last night we're in the desert; it has elements of the shamanic

Photo by Kay Like

journey and of going into spirit realms. The questers have returned from their three days and nights alone, fasting, sitting up all night in the medicine wheel the last night; they've returned to base camp and each one told their story in the third person as the hero or heroine of the journey so that they can see what's happened to them mythically and see the power in it.

Then that next night we provide a very magical theater in the desert for them to come forward with faces painted and still very much in the realm of spirit and show us the dance and the song that they've brought back from the mountaintop that will transform their lives, that will help them bring the gifts that they've gotten from their journey, which is often an underworld journey back out into the world to walk in a way that is powerful. So something happens out there. We watch the people as they come forward to do their part become very much transformed into the magical beings that they have been filled with. We all feel very, very privileged to witness it. It's very definitely a gift or a visitation from the spirit realm, there's no doubt about it.

Before we actually go out into the desert we have work that we do with the participants using rocks. The people are asked to take four rocks that we give them and place them in the four directions. Each rock represents a part of their inner family, their inner woman, their inner man, inner little boy and inner little girl. We begin a process where they pick up the rocks and begin to speak from the position of that inner family member. And then we begin to get a better understanding of how these parts relate to one another and how any particular dynamic that's special to them interferes with their walking in the most balanced way. Of course the object is that all these parts should be in balance and harmony and working as one unified whole. This is not true for most people, however.

SB: What do you mean about putting the rocks in the medicine wheel? What is a medicine wheel and how do you use it?

SC: Well the medicine wheel is a spiritual metaphor that the native people all over this land have used. It's a way of talking about a human being's relationship to every other aspect of life, the relationship of the human to the plant world, the animal world, the world of spirit, the world of the universe — as well as the relationship to themselves. It's a way of finding human perspective. It absolutely acknowledges that all things in the universe are sacred and equal in value. The teaching is that a person is born at one of the points on the medicine wheel, each of the cardinal directions having specific qualities or characteristics of human personality, and that the life then is spent collecting the values and experiences of every other part of the wheel. So the person moves around the wheel many times, and if life is lived in a conscious way and processed well, the movement is a spiral, so that each time around, the lessons are more refined and deeper, until finally one has become a master of all of the possibilities. And at that point they say you move into the center and become an elder.

SB: When the questers return and reincorporate back into society, what, if any, types of support do you provide to help them connect to the tribal or group experience they had out in the desert?

SC: Well, first of all, I make myself available, so they can always call me or come and see me and talk. And I've started a newsletter, which I encourage past vision questers to contribute to as a way of supporting one another in the reincorporation. I also let them know of other vision questers who live in the area where they live, so that they can join with them in a kind of support system if they want. There are always some people who come out with us as apprentices and spend one or two years going out with us helping in base camp, going through their own learning processes about vision quest, and being in the desert learning in that way. So that's another way that we work with some people who choose to do that.

My women's lodge meets regularly and offers to help other lodges form anyplace, anyway we can, and I see that as also a way of making a support system. There are also the monthly drumming and chanting and ceremonial circles that Bird and I lead locally. Often there are vision questers who come there to renew their connection to that ceremonial time.

I think we're a people who have tried to live without a real vision, and I think one reason people are becoming very interested in vision quest is because they're understanding the poverty of living life without a vision.

SB: What is the importance of ceremony?

SC: I think that ceremony is a way to connect the individual with the mythic and divine aspects of reality. More specifically, when the vision questers come back from their experience, they tell their story in the third person which becomes a myth, a new myth, a new story. A lot of psychological work I believe has to do with giving up your story and finding a new one. And this particular form of storytelling, or myth-making out in vision quest is an excellent way to do that.

SB: It sounds as though if people relinquish their old story, get a new story, and then continue to do work with the medicine wheel, where they see themselves at different points and places on the wheel, then there's a potential for ongoing expansion of someone's personal awareness.

SC: Oh, of course that's right. They get a lot of tools out there. And they can take them home and go anywhere

they need to with them. Certainly the medicine wheel is an incredible metaphor that one could use every day for the rest of her life. When women come out who have never experienced any self-generated ritual and they get a lot of experience out there in creating their own ceremonies that have particular meaning and significance for them, that's a tool they can take home. Some of them drum and rattle out there for the first time. That's another experience they can take to keep the spirit of the vision quest alive for themselves.

SB: So it's out of a wilderness that seemingly contains little that one can discover a huge array of richness.

SC: It's like moving into the void, and the void is the source of all manifestations. It's all there.

SB: How can a vision quest be valuable to a teacher?

SC: We are in the process of defining a new paradigm for ourselves that is both holistic and inclusive; in fact we must do this if we are to survive. The quest provides a way for this paradigm to become real rather than just an idea, which makes the teacher better able to pass this on to his or her students from a deep soul level. For someone in a profession that is as demanding as teaching, it can be an excellent tool for renewal and reconnection to Spirit.

SB: Can vision questing, or ceremonies in general, be taught as a subject in schools?

SC: Yes. Among many peoples the quest was undertaken by adolescents as a rite of passage into adulthood. We are sadly lacking in rites of passage for our youth. The quest is especially appropriate for students who are experiencing difficulties due to stress in their home life, or are having problems in school. For most, adolescence is a trying time, and the quest can help a young person develop a sense of self-esteem and accomplishment. It provides an excellent opportunity for them to define themselves apart from parents' expectations and demands, and to find the courage and determination they need for these trying times.

We often go into elementary schools and create small ceremonial circles for the students. We drum and sing, and as they sit in a circle, we discuss how we are all related and suggest to them that all life forms are our brothers and sisters ... the other kids, the animals, the insects and trees. We talk about the Earth as our mother, asking them what a mother means to them, and how the Earth provides food, clothing, a place to stand, and beauty. We discuss what we can do for her such as not wasting precious resources and not littering her landscape. We speak of gratitude and of remembering to thank her.

These children are very connected to nature at an early age. They have not yet become enculturated and filled with scientific data and language abstractions. They are very responsive to this type of instruction and look forward to our return each year.

SB: How do the teachers respond?

SC: Most teachers have welcomed us year after year. One of the things we present is a talking staff ceremony, in which the person who holds the staff is invited to say anything they wish, as long as they come from their heart. The kids know what we mean by this, and they are able to share very deep concerns in a safe environment, where no one may interrupt them. We have been amazed at the level of sharing which results from this ceremony. It works especially well when the adults also participate by sharing from their heart. Teachers have said that they want to continue to use this format in their classrooms on a regular basis, and report that classroom behavior becomes easier to manage.

SB: What changes have you seen in these children over the years?

SC: Each year we see more and more enthusiasm among the younger students. They are eager to share what they are doing to help save the planet. There appears to be an increased consciousness. For some children, especially those from urban areas, the sense of relatedness to nature has been missing. These kids think that milk comes from a bottle and meat from a package. It is very rewarding to help them reconnect with their sources, and begin to understand the gifts which nature provides for all of us.

We have done tree-planting ceremonies with high school students as well. These ceremonies are optional, and there is usually a small turnout. Of those who do attend, however, all participants show a great concern for their environment and are grateful for a place to be heard. These children are our future leaders. They are eager to assume responsibilities toward things which have vital meaning for them, such as caring for the Earth and her inhabitants.

Each year we see more and more enthusiasm among the younger students. They are eager to share what they are doing to help save the planet. There appears to be an increased consciousness.

Notes

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2. Bernie Siegel, *Love, Medicine and Miracles* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); and Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1980).

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"'Tis All in Peeces, All Cohaerence Gone"

Educing an Ecological Consciousness

by Robert Sidwell

Robert Sidwell received his doctorate from Rutgers and has taught a variety of courses in educational foundations at the State University of New York, College at Oswego over the past twenty-odd ("some were very odd") years. He is currently teaching a graduate-level course on "Mind/Body Work for Teachers," in which students learn T'ai Chi as well as Chi Kung exercises, walking meditation, and relaxation. He would like to work more with children and their teachers in implementing mind/body activities.

John Donne's lament will serve as both title and leitmotif for this exploration of means for educing an ecological consciousness through the reformation of education.[1] Donne's 1611 work was, as it turned out, an accurate forecast of some of the non-scientific consequences of the heliocentric Copernican hypothesis, which Donne saw "creeping into every man's mind."[2]

Copernicanism, having in its rejection of geocentrism abruptly dislodged humanity from its long-accustomed position of center stage in the universe, clearly necessitated a major reevaluation of human self-perception. As Thomas S. Kuhn observed, one's place in the cosmic scheme of things will be calculated quite differently depending on whether one believes one's terrestrial home is the unique focal center of God's Creation or merely one of many planets circulating one of many suns.[3] Donne, who clearly worried about this recalculation, was rightly concerned. The Copernican revolution was only a preview of psychic disruptions to come: an overture to that great spiritual disjunction of the seventeenth century that we call the scientific revolution. A century after Copernicus had dislodged humanity from the center of the universe, the Galilean-Newtonian revolution effectively removed us from the universe altogether![4]

The scientific worldview that emerged in the seventeenth century left a cultural legacy of objectivist and reductionist thinking which has led to widespread alienation from the cosmos. Holistic thinking seeks to restore an organic sense of relatedness and connection.

The Galilean-Newtonian revolution performed this scientific conjuring by reducing reality to objective mechanism. Only the *primary* qualities (number, figure, magnitude, position, and motion) were considered substantially real; these qualities adhere to the object "out there" and have nothing to do with a perceiving subject. All other qualities perceived by the senses or assembled by the mind of the human subject were *secondary* and, in effect, unreal. In other words, the world of color, smell, sound — which was filled with love and beauty, and speaking everywhere of purposive harmony and creative ideals — was, according to E.A. Burtt, "now crowded into minute corners in the brains of scattered organic beings. The really important world outside was a world hard, cold, colorless, silent, and dead." The old "enchanted" world of the sensed relatedness of living humanity and living universe lay in lifeless, disconnected "peeces" at the feet of Newtonian science. The human participant

in the world became merely an irrelevant spectator *of* that mathematical system, "whose regular motions according to mechanical principles constituted the world of nature."[5]

The organic concept of a living, connected chain of being, each member a link sharing some feature with links above and below it, yet excelling in some unique characteristic, was replaced by mathematical laws and identities. Humankind — once linked and related to the animal world below with shared sensation, and with the angelic world above with shared rationality — became, in the new order of science, a "puny and irrelevant spectator." The sensed relatedness and purposive harmony, now subjective and hence unreal, disappeared as humankind emerged from this psychic surgery as a separate, unrelated "peece" — a social atom adrift in a dead universe of similar "peeces." All intrinsic relationships severed, humans now had to rely on external, contractual relationships: the social contract was born.

The ultimate human disjunction was effected when human minds and human bodies were separated as unique "peeces," thus creating the schizoid situation (which we have learned to regard as perfectly "normal") wherein "I" can objectively perceive "my" body and its functioning and at the same time believe that the "I" that perceives is not the body being perceived. Mental activity, from the perspective of this fragmenting paradigm, separates humans from their own bodies as well as the physical world that they confront.[6] With nature as merely dead "peeces" of passive matter to be confronted, the new (mechanistic) science of Newton and others functioned as a psychic sanction for the manipulation and exploitation of nature and its resources.

The method of exploitation was to be ruthless, macho, and aggressive; Nature's secrets were to be wrung from her by active conquest, not by cooperation. In the influential words of one of the secular priests of this "brave new world" of science (Francis Bacon), nature must be "bound into service" and "made a slave"; put "in constraint" and "molded" by science.[7] No More Mr. Nice Guy! After several centuries of this approach, the Earth, tortured and exploited, teeters precariously on the brink of systemic collapse. Physicist David Bohm suggests that, beyond the sheer physical damage the "peeces" approach has caused, the very thought that treats things as inherently divided, disconnected, and essentially independent may also by a key factor in the widespread and pervasive distinctions made between people (e.g., race, nation, family, profession) which are preventing humans from working together for the common good.[8]

Restoring our culture to health

There is a clear difference between using the "peeces" paradigm as a convenient way of *thinking about* things (which it often is), and taking the content of thought as a true description of the way the world really *is*. This sort of reified thought, as a blueprint of reality and a guide for human activity, has proved to be distinctly detrimental to the health of our planet and its inhabitants. How might we proceed to restore our fragmented selves and fragmented world back to health?

The phrase is not idly chosen. As Bohm points out, *health* is based on an Anglo-Saxon word, *hale*, which meant "whole." We seem to have a deep-rooted intuition that wholeness is an essential ingredient to health. Modern physical science (quantum and relativity theory) tends to support and confirm this human intuition, often expressed mythologically, of the integral wholeness of the cosmos.[9] The myths of many cultures speak of a lost primordial wholeness, which somehow (often through human hubris) gets altered into painful fragmentation/separation. Eliade called this class of myths variations of the "myth of the Eternal Return" (to a condition of wholeness). The Eden of the Old Testament is such a wholeness; expulsion from the garden is the separation. In one derivation, the word *religion* means literally to "tie up" (*ligare*) "again" (*re*). Religion, from this perspective, is a method for tying up again that which has become untied: restoring wholeness (and health).

Ironically, the same science that initially provided the intellectual sanction for the exploitation of nature by its "peeces" paradigm of reality has, in a sense, called it into question. It might appear at first blush that the path to restoring a sense of the unity of nature — an ecological consciousness — would simply be to educate everyone in the implications drawn from quantum and relativity theories about the unitary nature of reality. After all, if Newtonian science got us into this mess, then it is surely poetic justice that post-Newtonian science should bail us out. Yet, such a prescription, a classical "peeces" approach, is actually a better description of the problem than it is a solution to it, and thus it is a good example of confusing categories of thought with reality. The success of the prescription depends on an *actual* separation of mind (rationality) from the total human organism, treating mind as a separate "peece" able to exist and act independently of the other "peeces" (i.e., body, emotions). As this is not the actual situation of humanness, such purely "rational" prescriptions are doomed to failure.

All intrinsic relationships severed, humans now had to rely on external, contractual relationships: the social contract was born.

The restoration of a sense of organic relatedness that is the *sine qua non* of an ecological consciousness, however, is an educational problem. An education predicated on the "peeces" paradigm, as is the educational foundation of today, can only educate people to live fragmented lives in a fragmented world. We must take the present clarion calls for educational reform both seriously and literally; what is needed

for the restoration of planetary and individual health is precisely a reformation of the educational enterprise that replaces the "peeces" form with a form of wholeness and relationship. As George Leonard wrote in an article pointedly ignored by the education profession, even if all of the proposed changes in most of the educational reports of the 1980s were effected, "the resulting school would be fundamentally no different from the school of today."[10]

"Sin," wrote St. Augustine, "is the breakdown of all relationships." If this is true, then Western education is in dire need of redemption from a life of sin; in its present ("peeces") incarnation, it is surely the epitome of relational breakdown. Our educational structures, as Matthew Fox observes, "are built on a parts mentality. Each area of learning ... is seen simply as a part. No attempt at integration or the understanding of the whole that is wisdom is made."[11] The "peeces" paradigm is the foundation of the "factory model" school, which utilizes the mechanistic principle of the division of labor to deliver classified and isolated "peeces" of data (the presumed "building blocks" into which the world of knowledge has been fragmented) to passively receptive students who are also perceived in a "peeces" manner as ambulatory intellects.

The applied principle of mechanization (fragmenting the whole into unrelated parts and dealing with the parts in isolation from the whole) has had the same educational results with students as the young Karl Marx observed it having on industrial workers: alienation from the process. Thus, work (or learning) becomes an alien thing apart from the worker or student who can relate to it only in terms of extrinsic rewards (salaries or grades). Intrinsically, like the isolated "peeces" of the Newtonian universe, there is no meaning. The acceleration of the "peeces" modality in education recommended by much contemporary educational "reform" will simply expand the educational factory into a super factory. We have seen, with frightening regularity, the results of teaching the usually recommended math and science as unrelated to human and planetary needs: our technologically polluted environment.

In the influential words of Francis Bacon, nature must be "bound into service" and "made a slave"; put "in constraint" and "molded" by science. After several centuries of this approach, the Earth, tortured and exploited, teeters precariously on the brink of systemic collapse.

Education, in one derivation, comes from *educare,* "to educe or draw forth." What is to be educed in this instance is a conscious sense of primal unity. Without a *personal* (microcosmic) experience of living connectedness, it seems unrealistic to expect any universal (macrocosmic) sense of relatedness and connectedness. The former is prerequisite to the latter, and the personally experienced (microcosmic) connectedness is the restoration of the human body to the continuity of consciousness of mind/body unity in the individual. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step; the attainment of the sense of universal connectedness necessary for an ecological consciousness begins with the sense of individual connectedness.

In a word (though not a very popular word in educational circles), what is required is a *spiritual* dimension to the educative process. Spirituality is defined in this context as a state of connectedness or, more simply, the awareness that there is "more than you." A spiritual dimension to education might well hinge on a restored mind/body consciousness that joins awareness to perception and moves individuals from a detached (isolated "peece") nonrelational status vis-à-vis the universe to a participatory relationship with it. The Navajo chant succinctly expresses this relationship.[12] "The Earth, Its Life Am I."

Paths to connectedness

The sense of ourselves as unconnected "peeces" of the universe provides the base for the illusion of individual uniqueness that allows us to feel free to exploit and manipulate other equally unique and independent "peeces." In 1611, John Donne aptly phrased this illusion of individual uniqueness/separateness:

> For every man alone thinks he hath got
> To be a Phoenix, and that there can be
> None of that kind, of which he is, but he.[13]

As already suggested, the core of the problem lies in the individual perception of a mind/body dualism; this provides the base for an expanded (universal) sense of unconnectedness that precludes ecological consciousness. For an educational methodology to assist the necessary restoration of individual mind/body unity, nondualistic cultures can provide us with practical and time-tested approaches. From the start of a reformed education (education, that is, in the connected form rather than the "peeces" form), we might teach and daily practice such exercises as the Chinese *T'ai Chi Ch'uan.* This moving meditation was designed precisely for the attainment of conscious mind/body integration. With mind focused on providing conscious and careful control of the precise body movements required by the exercise, and those movements executed in such slow motion that steady mind/body feedback is possible, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan*promotes personal integration and connectedness. Mind/body disciplines such as Yoga (the word literally means "yoke" or connect) and Chinese *Chi Kung,* which promote harmony and interactive awareness of mind and body as unity, could also become part of the "basics" to which we are always urged to return.

The arts, having a connective form rather than a divisive form, have always, not surprisingly, received short shrift from public education. Matthew Fox observed that art, intrinsically subversive of a "peeces" universe, "is the key to de-Newtonizing education and letting go of its parts mentality."[14] Adrienne Rich notes that art (and "common interchange") can teach that "kindest truth" of nonseparateness — the truth of connected relatedness.[15] Both authors here echo the ancient Chinese (Confucian) classics, which held that music and dance were the essence of the harmony between heaven, earth, and humans. Interestingly, the Chinese graph for music (*Yueh*) is the same as the graph for joy (*lo*), although pronounced differently. The harmony of relationship brings joy. True to form, the Chinese "peeces" thinkers, the narrowly utilitarian followers of Mo-Tzu, listed the "rejection of music" as one of their ten basic doctrines!

On the curricular level, it is the fatal disconnection of subjects that reflects the "peeces" orientation. Reconnecting the fields of knowledge could become a curricular goal (for some nuts and bolts of implementing such a reconnective curriculum, consult works on thematic teaching.[16] There is, as Alfred North Whitehead asserted, only one subject matter for education, and that is "Life in all its manifestations." Life, according to modern science, manifests itself as connectedness; therefore, a life-based education would eliminate (unconnected) "left-brain" hegemony in school and "peeces" oriented learning approaches such as behaviorism — and would involve an acceptance of the noncognitive aspects of human experience. As R. Buckminster Fuller used to remind us, we must honor the (human) design. The human design, which is unitary rather than fragmentary, would be an excellent guideline for reforming education toward ecological consciousness. In a reformed education, we would stress learning situations in which children would have to cooperate in order to learn. This too, Social Darwinists notwithstanding, honors the human design.

We can see, at the present time in education, some movement away from the deadly "peeces" approach to reading instruction (isolated "skills" taught in no context), in the popularity of the whole language approach. Hopefully, this will blossom into the whole education approach that can restore the "cohaerence," the lack of which so bothered John Donne, and support an ecological consciousness, the lack of which threatens our continued existence on this planet.

Wholeness: Honoring the feminine

The controlling imagery of Nature has always been feminine; After all, nature is matter (*materia*), a word in which *mater* (mother) is easy to find. As Carolyn Merchant demonstrates in fascinating detail, there has been a consistent historical relationship between the treatment of women and the treatment of Nature. For example, Copernicus used biological imagery when he wrote, "Meanwhile, the Earth conceives by the Sun and becomes pregnant with annual offspring."[17] Merchant observes that the concept of both Earth and female as passive receptors could easily become sanction for exploitation.[18] On the other hand, the image of Earth as nurturing mother and living organism (the "enchanted world") served as a subtle but effective ethical control and restraint on human activities directed toward her. In 1877, Toohoolhoolzote of the Nez Perce tribe stated, "The Earth is part of my body ... I belong to the land of which I came. The Earth is my mother." A "disenchanted" Earth, on the hand, was fair game: General O.O. Howard of the U.S. Army responded to Toohoolhoolzote with the statement, "Twenty times over you repeat that the earth is your mother.... Let us hear no more, but come to business at once." The business, as General Howard was well aware, was exploitation.

The "disenchanted" Earth was a target of opportunity for the new science of "peeces." It would "torture" nature's secrets from her, an image that Francis Bacon seemed to have derived from the courtrooms of the witchcraft trials of seventeenth century England and Scotland. It is surely no coincidence that, as Attorney General of England, this founding father of the new science of "peeces" presided simultaneously over the domination of *materia* and the parallel domination of *maters* (witches). Both campaigns shared an aggressive methodology vigorously described by a common vocabulary of control by conquest.

The educational dimension of this nature/female domination is suggested by Riane Eisler.[19] Using the research of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, Eisler compellingly uncovers and presents the long-suppressed/ignored portion of human history (wherein most of the material and social technologies necessary for civilization seem to have been developed) when the feminine principle of generation, nurture, and relationship was revered and, indeed, worshipped. Eisler demonstrates the existence of a cooperative partnership model of human social structure that such a reverence engendered — a social structure that was totally reversed by invading Indo-European tribes bearing war-loving masculine sky gods and a firm belief that "might makes right." This produced the (all-too-familiar) social structure that Eisler dubs the "dominator" model. While

As R. Buckminster Fuller used to remind us, we must honor the (human) design. The human design, which is unitary rather than fragmentary, would be an excellent guideline for reforming education toward ecological consciousness.

the earlier partnership model is clearly an ecological perspective, the dominator model is equally clearly the archetype of the "peeces" paradigm of reality.

A re-formed education, recognizing the inherent symbolic connection between nature and female, would aim at a reformed perception of the feminine that would be based on the *full* story of the human experience; "his-tory," in other words, would assuredly be *in* other words — words inclusive of "her-story." Such reformation would provide evidence that ecological consciousness is neither alien to our human potential, nor beyond the conceptual stretch of it. On the contrary, such a consciousness would be a return to our long-neglected roots. The ecological partnership model of our past shows us that there is, as some have long suspected, more to us than our dominator myths and one-sided "his-stories" have led us to believe. The male/female "peeces" (which permit one to dominate the other) form an essential human unity that education beyond the "peeces" paradigm can help to restore. As one rather well-known teacher of the ancient world observed (at least according to a Gnostic Gospel):

> When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and when you make the male and the female one and the same ... then will you enter [the kingdom].[20]

The assertion herein has been that a reformed education is the key to the radical shift in perspective upon which an ecological consciousness must rest. The new form must not be simply a recrudescence of the "peeces" paradigm of reality, not a super factory of increased instructional days and hours and tests, but a form predicated upon unity and connectedness.

I have suggested that the start of such an education must be at the level of a conscious *personal experience* of reunified mind and body for each individual. An education reformed on the principle of unity, one that honors and validates the human design, would provide the means for achieving such a personal experience — drawing from methods developed by "non-peeces" cultures. A reformed education that honors the human design must validate the fact that we are not, in spite of our mental constructs, composed of independent "peeces" of mind, body, and emotion. A purely "rational" education simply perpetuates the "peeces" paradigm.

Carl Jung observed in one of his lectures on the spiritual exercises of Loyola, "Consciousness and ideas, valuable as they are in themselves, cut us away from the essential roots of our being."[21] We are, to be sure, rational animals, but as J.H. Randall insists, our animality is more deeply rooted than our rationality; we cannot live by "truth" alone.[22] Nor, as Marshall McLuhan somewhere noted, can we afford to continue to allow "Spaceship Earth" to be operated by railway conductors.

Notes

1. John Donne, "The Anatomy of the World," quoted in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, (New York: Vintage, 1959), p. 194.

2. Ibid.

3. Kuhn, *Copernican Revolution*, p. 2.

4. Floyd W. Matson, *The Broken Image* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1966), p. 4.

5. E.A. Burtt, quoted in Matson, *Broken Image*, pp. 4-5.

6. Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (New York: Bantam, 1984), p. 2.

7. Francis Bacon, quoted in Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 169.

8. David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. xi.

9. Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

10. George Leonard, "The Great School Hoax," *Esquire* (April 1984), p. 48.

11. Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 22.

12. Quoted in Fox, *The Coming*, p. 12.

13. Kuhn, *Copernican Revolution*, p. 194.

14. Fox, *The Coming*, pp. 209-210.

15. Adrienne Rich, quoted in Fox, *The Coming*.

16. For example, R. Gamburg et al., *Learning and Loving It* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Education Books, 1986).

17. Copernicus, quoted in Merchant, *Death of Nature*, p. 16.

18. Merchant, *Death of Nature*, pp. 1-41.

19. Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

20. Jesus Christ, quoted in "The Gospel of Thomas," in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, edited by James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 121.

21. C.G. Jung, "Lecture #10, 30 Jun 1939 on Exercitia Spiritualia of St. Ignatius of Loyola," *Spring* (1977), p. 200.

22. John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 397.

Skills Talk

by William Crain

Dr. William Crain is professor and chair of psychology at the City College of the City University of New York. He is the author of **Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications** *(2nd ed., Prentice-Hall, 1985), a textbook that gives special attention to theorists such as Rousseau, Gesell, Montessori, and Piaget, who view development as arising from our inner promptings and spontaneous interests. Dr. Crain also has published numerous articles on child and adolescent development and is a member of the Teaneck, New Jersey, Board of Education.*

If you want to sound up-to-date, then phrase everything in terms of skills. Don't say, "Susan is intelligent." Say, "Susan has excellent thinking skills."

Don't say, "Joe works well with others." Compliment him on his "people skills."

Skills talk is everywhere. Business administrators, lawyers, educators, and other professionals talk endlessly about "communication skills," "decision-making skills," and "social skills." In psychology, both academic and popular books use these terms. In fact, many contemporary psychologists routinely refer to nearly every aspect of human behavior in terms of one skill or another.

What does it all mean?

Skill is a term of action. It doesn't refer to a wish or an idea, but to an ability to do things, and to do them accurately and efficiently. Traditionally, the term has referred to physical abilities, such as the skill required to hurl a discus. Most fundamentally, though, skill has always been the chief virtue of mechanics and technology. Societies have admired and depended on those who could skillfully handle a knife, operate a lathe, shoot a gun — or control the operations of a nuclear cyclotron.

The United States, of course, has prided itself on its technological know-how. Never a nation to put much stock in idle contemplation, we have valued the people (or teams of people) who could combine knowledge with the technical skills to get things done. And our achievements have been spectacular. We have created the technology to harness Earth's major sources of energy, to accelerate agricultural production, and generally to modify and control the environment to serve our needs.

Our current obsession with skills reflects our deep commitment to technology and our fervent hope that technological approaches can solve our most perplexing problems. If students are having difficulty with academic subjects, or if people are having difficulty with their relationships, then let's give them the "tools" and "skills" they need to cope with these tasks.

The skills approach works well so long as we view life from a technological perspective — in terms of the tools and techniques we need to influence, control, and change things. Ultimately, however, this perspective proves narrow.

Consider the area of social skills. A growing number of self-help books and psychological training programs tell us how to become more skilled in matters such as making eye contact, smiling, reading body language, and employing flexible persuasion strategies.[1] By mastering such skills, we can become more influential and effective in social interactions. We can, as leading social skills researcher Michael Argyle says, "produce the

desired effects on other people."[2]

Nevertheless, social skills alone will not produce full interpersonal relationships. The world is full of charming but manipulative people who possess highly polished social skills — who are adept at having the effect they want on others — but who do not genuinely care about others. They merely use people for their own purposes.

Skills advocates counter that social skills, tools, and techniques need not be restricted to selfish purposes, but also can be used for helpful ones.[3] For example, we might use "persuasion skills" and other techniques to convince others to do things that we believe are in their best interests.

Nevertheless, there comes a point at which the entire technological metaphor breaks down. We skillfully use tools and techniques to influence and change things: We use saws to turn trees into lumber; we use persuasion techniques to change people's minds; and so forth. But the most valuable aspects of our social lives, including love, frequently require a different orientation — one that respects and cherishes people just as they are.

This point has been made by a number of humanistic writers, including the psychologist Abraham Maslow, who said that when we behold those we love, they at times strike us as so special or beautiful that we are filled with wonder and gratitude.[4] For example, a mother may at moments be overcome by her infant daughter's tender beauty, and she feels fortunate just to be connected to her child. The mother does not, at such moments, consider ways of influencing, changing, or improving her child, much less the skills, tools, or techniques that would enable her to do so. She cherishes her daughter just as she is.

Among today's parents, such attitudes of unconditional love and appreciation seem rare. Today's parents feel enormous pressure to improve their children — to boost their children's intelligence and to increase their children's social competence. As a result, parents are eager consumers of child care books that promote the latest skills and techniques for creating better children.

When children feel this pressure to improve, they do not feel loved for who they are. Their self-esteem suffers. It is therefore important that parents heed the child-rearing advice of Arnold Gesell, Benjamin Spock, and others who, in the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, have encouraged parents to relax and enjoy their children as they find them. Parents do need skills and techniques for guiding their children, but they also need to let themselves experience the spontaneous wonder, love, and delight which their children, just by being themselves, evoke in them.[5]

Our current obsession with skills reflects our deep commitment to technology and our fervent hope that technological approaches can solve our most perplexing problems.

Thinking skills

As in the area of social behavior, the skills metaphor also dominates contemporary discussions of intellectual behavior. This is particularly true in education, where the experts are constantly proclaiming the need to teach children "thinking skills," especially "higher order thinking skills." Today's children, the experts say, must acquire the conceptual tools that will enable them to solve problems in our increasingly complex, technological world.[6]

To meet this need, numerous educational consultants have created thinking-skills programs, which they are selling to schools at a rapid rate. These programs typically purport to teach a large number of specific, clearly identifiable skills, such as observing, classifying, hypothesizing, and evaluating. Some programs include 100 or more of such skills.

Most programs advise students to work in a systematic, organized manner when applying these skills. This ability to organize one's thinking requires another overarching set of skills, called "metacognition skills," which include the ability to keep one's goal clearly in mind, to stick to information relevant to one's goal, and to monitor one's progress each step of the way.

Whether these thinking skills programs work is still an open question, but even if they do, they focus only on a particular kind of thinking. They concentrate on what is sometimes called instrumental reason[7]: active, goal-directed thinking that produces change in the world. It is the kind of thinking prized by engineers, project planners, and other technological specialists who have built our power plants, superhighways, and telecommunications systems. But it is not the only kind of thinking, and it certainly is not the more contemplative, aesthetic thinking that is fascinated, enchanted, and enriched by the world as it is.

Imagine, for example, a team of engineers and surveyors building a section of an interstate highway through the countryside. These experts might be dimly aware of the beauty around them — the play of light on a hillside, the delicateness of a plant, the graceful flight of a bird gliding toward its nest — but they cannot become too distracted by such sights. They must keep their minds focused and employ their goal-directed thinking skills. They have not been hired to become captivated and enchanted by the natural beauty of the countryside. Their job is to redesign the environment to serve the nation's transportation needs.

When most of us use terms such as "thinking skills," we are not referring to specific training programs or even to specifically technological modes of thought. We are merely using a popular phrase in a casual manner. But a people's language, however casual, does influence its outlook, and when we refer to every possible kind of thought and behavior as a skill, we are

unwittingly legitimating the technological worldview. We are reinforcing a view that emphasizes the skillful use of tools and techniques to influence, control, and change the world. This is, to be sure, an important orientation. But if we want to relate to the world fully, then we also need another humbler orientation — one that accepts, cherishes, and takes delight in people and things just as they are.

Notes

1. Self-help books on social skills are too numerous to list. Typical are Adele Scheele, *Skills for Success* (New York: Ballantine, 1981); Buck Rogers, *Getting the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); and John F. Clabby and Maurice J. Elias, *Teach Your Child Decision Making* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987). A good collection of research-oriented essays on social skills is found in *Teaching Psychological Skills: Models for Giving Psychology Away*, edited by Dale Larson (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1984).

2. Michael Argyle, "Interaction Skills and Social Competence," in *Psychological Problems: The Social Context*, edited by P. Feldman and J. Orford (Chichester, England: Wiley, 1980), p. 123.

3. This point is made, for example, by Allen E. Ivey in "Microcounseling and Media Therapy: State of the Art," *Counselor Education and Supervision 13*, 1974, pp. 172-183.

4. See Abraham Maslow, *The Psychology of Science* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966, especially chapters 10, 11, and 14).

5. Several psychologists believe that certain social skills, especially empathic listening skills, can lead to increased acceptance of others (for example, Thomas Gordon, Allen Ivey, and Robert Cash suggest this in Larson's *Teaching Psychological Skills*). By mastering listening skills, we learn to tune in to others' feelings and to demonstrate our acceptance of them. Such listening skills, which derive from Carl Rogers' client-centered psychotherapy, can be helpful. However, it is doubtful whether our most basic attitudes and feelings can be reduced to skills. Neither our deepest prizing of others, nor our feelings of wonder, delight, and enchantment over others' special qualities, seem to be merely matters of skill or technique.

6. A collection of writings by leading educators in the thinking skills movement is contained in *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, edited by Arthur L. Costa (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1985).

7. The term *instrumental reason* was popularized in recent years by Joseph Weizenbaum in his book *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1976).

Revitalizing Teacher Planning

Grade Eggs, Not Learners

by Tina Juārez

Dr. Tina Juārez is the Supervisor of the Teenage Parent Program in the Austin, Texas, Independent School District. She began her career as a teacher of children of migrant farm workers. For many years, Dr. Juārez has been concerned with individualizing instruction, and after her doctoral research at the University of Texas on teacher planning, she believes that "norm-referenced" grading subverts any efforts at educational reform, particularly for minority students. Dr. Juārez was recently elected President of an organization of Hispanic public school administrators, which is seeking ways to reverse the appalling rise in the drop-out rate of Hispanic students.

In rural school districts it is not unusual to find course offerings related to various agricultural trades. Students are afforded the opportunity to become familiar with the day-to-day work done on farms and ranches. One skill frequently taught is the technique of classifying and labeling chicken eggs. Holding an egg before a candling light, students learn how to gauge specifications such as yolk definition and air cell depth. After inspection, each egg is placed in a container marked either *AA*, *A*, or *B*. Inevitably, some are tossed in the "rotten egg" bin. In short, the eggs are *graded*.

Ironically, in a typical school setting, many students who are learning to grade eggs will themselves be graded in a manner that is remarkably similar to egg-grading. For example, the grade given an egg is a *permanent* label. A grade B egg will never achieve grade A or grade AA status. Likewise, a grade entered on a student's school transcript becomes, with few exceptions, part of a record that will remain forever unchanged. An *F* grade, for instance, is seldom converted to a *D*, nor a *C* to a *B*, and so on. Historically, once students are evaluated and classified relative to other students, the grade assigned is considered permanent.

To assign grades is to attach permanent labels to students' learning abilities. In the normative grading system commonly used in public education, it is expected that a certain percentage of students will fail. Grading serves to identify those students; indeed, it often *creates* them.

Planning is an important part of egg-grading. Before eggs can be graded, the criteria for egg quality must have been established, along with an evaluation procedure that will serve to separate the "good eggs" from the "bad." Planning is also generally considered to be an important part of effective teaching. In teacher education programs, prospective teachers are often introduced to a model of teacher planning that calls for: (a) the specification of learning objectives in terms that can be measured; (b) learning activities that will help the student demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives; and (c) normative grading, an approach to evaluation premised on the assumption that a percentage of learners will be successful and will receive passing grades, while another percentage will be unsuccessful and will receive failing grades.

It should not be necessary to state the obvious, but there is a fundamental difference between eggs and people. An egg is inert; it cannot of itself do anything to improve. It serves the

consumers' interest to classify an egg with a label that is unchanging. A rotten egg remains a rotten egg, and it is good that someone locates it and discards it. A person, however, is capable of growth. Though it may require repeated effort, a person can learn what he or she did not learn on the first attempt. Therefore, does it serve a useful purpose, an *educational* purpose, to locate the unsuccessful learner and assign him or her a permanent grade that (as in the case of the *F* grade) may close the door of opportunity to further education or gainful employment? Should we be about counseling prospective teachers to *plan* for failure, or has the time come to develop a model of teacher planning predicated on the conviction that all learners can succeed?

Planning for failure

Normative grading is the term commonly used to describe the practice of awarding grades to students on the basis of their performance relative to other students. It is a practice that virtually has been institutionalized in our school systems.[1] Since grading is pervasive, many educators must believe it is a good thing to grade students much as we do eggs.

The research evidence would indicate otherwise. Concluding a survey of research on the impact of classroom evaluation practices on students, Terence Crooks notes that the effects of normative grading on student achievement include

> reduction of intrinsic motivation, debilitating evaluation anxiety, ability attributions for success and failure that undermine student effort, lowered self-efficiency for learning in the weaker students, reduced use and effectiveness of feedback to improve learning, and poorer social relationships among students.... [Normative grading] has also led to overuse of features normally associated with standardized testing, such as very formal testing conditions, speeded tests with strict time limits, a restricted range of item types, and emphasis on the overall score rather than on what can be learned about strengths and weaknesses.[2]

The classroom teacher interested in individualizing instruction is thwarted from the beginning, because the system of normative grading requires "a distribution of grades in every classroom and a significant portion of those grades to be in the failing range."[3] Normative grading forces the teacher into the absurd, "Catch-22" position of not being viewed as successful unless a percentage of his or her students are unsuccessful!

If there is substantial evidence to believe that grading students as we would eggs is detrimental to the interests of some learners, then why has the practice continued over the years? Why do we counsel our prospective teachers to plan for failure? An answer to these questions may be linked to the fact that classroom evaluation practices serve purposes other than instruction. One of these other functions is *selection*, which "entails the identification of students or groups of students to be recommended or permitted to enter or continue along certain educational or occupational paths."[4] Over the years, normative grading has played a central role in the selection process.

Ralph Tyler traces the origins of the selection function of student evaluation to what he calls the "old paradigm" of early test theory:

> The old paradigm assumed that educational opportunities had to be rationed because of the limited resources available for schooling. It was also assumed that many children were relatively *uneducable* and they should be identified early and guided into work at an early age while the more educable should be encouraged to continue their schooling on through high school and college.[5] [emphasis added]

One wonders if the early test theorists borrowed their ideas on selection from the egg industry. Which came first with regard to using evaluation for the purpose of selection: the learner or the egg? Tyler recommends that we reject old paradigm test theory in favor of what he calls a "new paradigm," one that issues from the assumption that "all persons who are not seriously damaged by brain injuries can learn what the schools are responsible for teaching."[6] If we were to follow Tyler's advice and effect a shift from old paradigm to new paradigm test theory, then how would this influence the way we plan for instruction?

Measurable learning objectives and evaluation

In his principal work, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), Tyler urged the teacher to plan for instruction by specifying learning objectives in terms that can be measured. Indeed, much that has been written over the past 40 years on the topic of teacher planning has centered on what Tyler had to say about the relation of measurable learning objectives to effective teaching.[7] Two generations of teachers were drilled on how to write measurable learning objectives. Teacher planning became virtually synonymous with framing learning objectives in measurable terms. Tyler also had much to say about evaluation in his book, but teacher planning theorists have paid scant attention to Tyler's evaluation theory when formulating models of teacher planning supposedly based on his educational perspective. This is unfortunate because Tyler's views on measurable learning objectives, understood within the context of his evaluation theory, signal an approach to teacher planning quite different

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from the "egg-grading" model advocated in many teacher education programs.

One of Tyler's students, Benjamin Bloom, writes that the fundamental reason his mentor was so concerned with measurable learning objectives as contrasted with, for example, the informational content of a course of study, was his desire to move beyond the approach to measurement that "was largely destined to classify students with regard to intelligence or aptitude or achievement. Tyler was not interested in using evaluation to classify learners. Rather, he expected evaluation to yield information about which objectives had been achieved and which had not, so that there would be a basis to "revise the learning experiences provided the students until there was a satisfactory fit between the educational objectives and the evaluation results."[8] Measurable learning objectives assist the teacher to determine if a student is having a learning problem so that the teacher can devise ways to help that student; in short, they help teachers meet the individual needs and differences of their students.

Forty years after the publication of *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, the written expression of measurable learning objectives has become part of the teacher planning "ritual," but the practice has had little influence on instruction or testing procedures in the manner Tyler intended.[9] Although teachers may state their objectives in a way that allows student mastery of the objectives to be measured, seldom in their planning do teachers provide for reteaching and retesting if the student is unsuccessful in mastering the objectives.[10] Furthermore, few teachers formally plan to change a failing grade to a passing grade, even if the student demonstrates mastery of learning objectives that he or she previously failed to master. In other words, the fact that more teachers frame their objectives in measurable terms has not led to more individualized instruction or evaluation.

The continued link between measurable learning objectives and the relic of "old paradigm" test theory (i.e., normative grading) has caused our failure to use learning objectives to meet the individual learner's needs and differences. In his work with teachers, Tyler should have specifically addressed the incompatibility of normative grading with measurable learning objectives. In view of Tyler's powerful influence on teacher planning (and therefore, teaching), it is unfortunate that he did not. To rectify that oversight, there is today an urgent need for teachers to realize that Tyler urged the use of measurable learning objectives *in order that* we could "revise the learning experiences provided the student until there is a satisfactory fit between the educational objectives and the evaluation results."[11] This largely ignored fact cannot be stressed enough. Teachers must be helped to understand that evaluation practices aimed at helping the learner *do not* include normative grading.

Normative grading forces the teacher into the absurd, "Catch-22" position of not being viewed as successful unless a percentage of his or her students are unsuccessful!

Beyond grading

It is instructive to observe that in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, Tyler never advocated the reduction of the student assessment to a single, norm-referenced letter-grade or numerical score. Quite the contrary, he made it clear that "any valid evidence about behaviors that are desired as educational objectives provides an appropriate method of evaluation."[12] He listed many ways to gather evidence about student progress, including observations, interviews, questionnaires, and sampling.[13] That Tyler is very far from viewing student evaluation as being synonymous with grading is evident from his explanation of sampling techniques:

> It is not always necessary to find out the reaction of every individual [learner] in order to see the effect that the curriculum is producing. It is possible to take a sample of students, and if this sample is properly chosen the results with this sample of students may within small limits of error properly represent the kind of results which would have been obtained had all the students been involved in the appraisal.[14]

Are we not far enough advanced in our methods of sampling to judge the effects of instruction through such techniques as Tyler describes? Specialists in sampling techniques might free teachers from much of the time-consuming grading so that they could devote their full energy to instruction. An approach to evaluation through a technique such as sampling would shift the locus of evaluation from the individual student to the educational program. No longer would the assessment of student progress make adversaries of teacher and student. Rather, the teacher-student relationship in matters of evaluation would be one of collaboration and trust, because the unsuccessful learner would always be helped and never graded a failure.

Teacher planning that encompasses the kind of evaluation practices that Tyler advocated could have a profound effect in reducing the number of students who drop out of school before graduation. As stated previously, normative grading is predicated on the expectation that a percentage of learners will receive "good" grades and, conversely, a percentage will receive "failing" grades. Should we be surprised when the student who receives failing grades, year after year after year, elects to drop out of an institution that officially labels him or her a failure? These students are the "uneducables" who, according to old paradigm test theory, should be encouraged to leave school. New paradigm test theory views evaluation

not as a way to locate the "uneducables," but as a means to determine how we can help the learner. Students are not likely to drop out of a school where teachers plan only for success, never failure.

Planning for success

In our teacher education courses and in-service training sessions, we are frequently advised to follow a step-by-step formula for teacher planning: (a) Define learning objectives in terms that are measurable, (b) select and organize learning activities, and (c) specify evaluation procedures.[15] Often the model is associated with the name of Ralph Tyler because of his advocacy of measurable learning objectives. If we no longer intend to equate step (c) with a normative grading system that is virtually designed to seek out and label the "uneducable" (i.e., the drop-out), then we should elaborate its meaning so that evaluation is not automatically assumed to be the "egg-grading" approach to student assessment. Moreover, we should make clear to both the prospective and veteran teachers that Tyler never intended measurable learning objectives to provide a way of locating the *F* student, but as a way of helping to identify the learner who is in need of more attention.

The time may be overdue to abandon the commonly taught step-by-step ritual of teacher planning in favor of an approach which recognizes that day-to-day teaching objectives are inseparable from instructional activities and student evaluation. A planning approach that views objectives-instruction-evaluation as one process will naturally eschew normative grading, which has nothing to do with helping students to master learning objectives, or teachers to improve instruction. Finally, teacher planning should reflect that many learning objectives (perhaps the most important learning objectives) cannot be measured, and it is futile, even harmful, to try to attach a grade to everything children do in school.

Let us begin developing a new, holistic approach to teacher planning, one that might be termed a "success-only" model of teacher planning. By so doing, we will hasten the demise of old paradigm test theory, based on the assumption that some students are "uneducable," in favor of the new paradigm test theory that all students can learn. An appropriate slogan for our effort to revitalize teacher planning might be, *Grade eggs, not learners!*

Notes

1. Terence J. Crooks, "The Impact of Classroom Evaluation Practices on Students," *Review of Educational Research* 58, no. 4, (1988); and Charles H. Hargis and Marge Terhaar-Yonkers, Do Grades Cause Learning Disabilities?" *Holistic Education Review* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1989).

2. Crooks, *Impact of Classroom Evaluation*, p. 468.

3. Hargis and Terhaar-Yonkers, "Do Grades Cause Learning Disabilities?," p. 16.

4. Gary Natriello, "The Impact of Evaluation Processes on Students," *Educational Psychologist* 22, no. 2 (1987), p. 157.

5. Ralph W. Tyler, "Changing Concepts of Educational Evaluation," *International Journal of Educational Research* 10 (1986), p. 33.

6. Ibid.

7. See Ernestina Juârez, *Teacher Planning: Conflicting Perspectives on Objectives*. Doctoral dissertation. (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1988).

8. Benjamin Bloom, "Ralph Tyler's Impact on Evaluation Theory and Practice," *Journal of Thought* 21, no. 1 (1986), p. 38.

9. Ibid., p. 44.

10. Juârez, *Teacher Planning*, pp. 201-205.

11. Bloom, "Ralph Tyler's Impact," p. 38.

12. Ralph W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 107.

13. Ibid., pp. 107-110.

14. Ibid., p. 109.

15. Ann M. Neely, "Teacher Planning: Where Has It Been? Where Is It Now? Where Is It Going?" *Action in Teacher Education* 5, no. 3 (1985), p. 25.

Parallel Paths

A Conversation among Montessori and Waldorf Educators

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) were two of the most important pioneers in holistic education. Both were brilliant observers of human development who devised original educational approaches according to their unusual insights. Montessori was a medical doctor and researcher who opened her first "Children's House" in a housing project in the poor San Lorenzo quarter of Rome in 1907. Steiner was a philosopher and mystic, the founder of a spiritual movement known as anthroposophy, who organized a school for the children of workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart in 1919. Today, both the Montessori approach and the Waldorf school movement (as it came to be called) are well established as proven alternatives to conventional schooling, and are in use in schools around the world.

Both Montessori and Steiner viewed their educational work as part of a larger transformation of modern Western culture — from materialistic to more humane and spiritual values, from competition and conflict to personal and global peace. They both asserted that this shift of values must involve a new way of raising and educating children, so that the deep, inherent potentials of humankind could at least be freed from social, economic, and nationalistic prejudices and be fully cherished and nurtured. In short, neither of these great educators sought to establish an isolated, alternative pedagogical "method" for its own sake; rather, they called upon us to rethink all of education — and all of Western culture — in ways that would honor the inherent principles of human development.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons both groups have remained isolated from other educational and social movements. In fact, over the years they have had surprisingly little contact with each other. For the most part, whenever representatives of either group have tried to compare their approaches, they have emphasized their differences and sought to establish the superiority of their own methods. I am not aware of any productive, sustained, mutually enlightening dialogue between these two important movements. But I believe that such a dialogue is now absolutely necessary if the holistic education movement is to fulfill the mission that both Montessori and Steiner envisioned for it.

There *are* significant differences between these approaches — just as there are many differences between all of the methods we can consider truly holistic. Holism recognizes and values diversity: holistic thinking realizes that the full truth is larger than any single perspective or ideology can encompass. It is by exploring our differences, and learning from one another, that we gain a wider, more inclusive understanding. The central question for all of us is this: What *are* the inherent principles of human development and how may these best be nurtured? Once we agree to ask this question together, we will need to discover whether our different methods reflect different aspects of human development or our own different perspectives and temperaments. Either way, we can learn from our differences. And if holistic education is to become a powerful transformative force, we *need* to learn from them. Soon.

The following conversation represents the first step toward a genuine dialogue between Montessori and Waldorf educators to explore these questions. It took place at the office of the American Montessori Society in New York City on August 1, 1990. I am grateful to all of the participants — Ruth Gans and Ruth Selman, Bob Miller and Diana Cohn — who came together with a genuine desire for dialogue and understanding, and spent three hours in a windowless conference room on a beautiful summer day. I also want especially to thank Bretta Weiss, National Director of the American Montessori Society, for helping to arrange the meeting and for offering to host it.

— Ron Miller

Ron Miller: I'd like to start by discussing the essential aims and purposes of Montessori and Waldorf education. What are the major goals or the central concerns of these approaches as you understand them? Let's see if we can determine some common themes as well as some divergent ones. Anyone can start.

Ruth Gans: I think the goal of Montessori is the development of the whole child — his physical development, his emotional and intellectual development, and his social development. Montessori always spoke of the child who is the constructor of Man, the father of Man. She saw the child in a holistic world, not only pertaining to one country or one society, but the child in the world community.

Ruth Selman: Also, one of the basic tenets of Montessori is observation: to observe the child as an individual and as a person, and to take the cue from the child, rather than to impose any kind of preconceived program or material or didactic approach upon the child. With that in mind, what Montessori did, and what we try to do in every Montessori classroom, is to create [what we call] the "prepared environment." The individual child is seen within a structure, so we have freedom within a structure. It is not what many parents and many outsiders assume is a free-for-all; it is not so-called "progressive education." What it is, is a structure based on the culture and based on the Montessori philosophy and materials. Within that structure the child is free to develop fully. The prepared environment has within it almost everything that the child will need at each stage of development to grow into the next stage of development. Observing the child is really crucial. That's where Montessori is really coming from — to know where the child is, both culturally and within the prepared environment.

Bob Miller: In terms of development, I couldn't agree more: the focus on the whole child. One could define that, and maybe there would be differences or similarities. You went on to elaborate the intellectual, the physical. And then, the quote here [on the cover of the summer 1990 issue of *Holistic Education Review*], which is so beautiful: "The child is the spiritual builder of humankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of humanity has become imprisoned (Maria Montessori)."

One of the key essences, which sometimes gets lost in dialogue, and in practice in Waldorf education, is that in Waldorf one is aware of the spiritual origin of the child. I would add one other category to the whole development of the child, and that's the education of the child as a spiritual being.

Diana Cohn: Steiner talked about the "threefoldness" of the human being, and he talked about the physical body, the emotional or the heart, and thinking. It's a very delicate process, that at each stage of the child's growth, one of those aspects is more available to be worked with. So in the very early years, the physical body is doing so much — the child is learning how to walk and talk, and using their hands is most important. In the middle years it's more the emotional, and later, in puberty, it's the intellectual. And so there are these different aspects at different times that need to be attended to. And that's what you were talking about

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***Ruth Gans** received Montessori training in the Netherlands and taught in Montessori schools in both Holland and France. After coming to the United States, she studied with Nancy McCormick Rambusch (founder of the American Montessori Society) at Fairleigh Dickinson University. Ruth worked with a group of parents to set up a Montessori Head Start program in New York City, and became its educational director. She has worked with children in hospitals and with handicapped children, as well as with senior citizens, using Montessori principles. She coordinates school accreditation and consultation services for the American Montessori Society.*

***Bob Miller** grew up in a family where Steiner's anthroposophy was studied. He attended the University of Michigan, where he joined an anthroposophy study group, and spent a year at the university in Tubingen, Germany. He then taught in public schools, incorporating Waldorf principles, for twelve years, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as well as in Maryland and England (at an Air Force school). He taught at the Waldorf School of Garden City, New York, and studied for two years at Emerson College, a center for anthroposophic studies in England. Bob helped start a Waldorf School in Charlottesville, Virginia, and for the past two years has taught fourth grade in New York City public schools, again working to incorporate Waldorf principles into his teaching.*

***Ruth Selman** was involved in the theater, including children's programs, and became interested in education. While at Goddard College in Vermont (a pioneering experiment in learner-centered higher education), she discovered the work of Montessori. Ruth took a Montessori training program in New Jersey and helped start a Montessori school on Staten Island. She then traveled west, to the University of California at Berkeley, and studied the music education work of Carl Orff. She holds a doctorate in early childhood education. Back East, Ruth ran a Montessori daycare center in Bayonne, New Jersey, and taught about Montessori education at the New School for Social Research. She started the Village Infant Center in 1977 and is still its co-director. Ruth is presently the chairperson of the Peace Network of the American Montessori Society, and represents the membership of that non-governmental organization at the United Nations.*

***Ron Miller**, the interviewer, is the founder and editor of* **Holistic Education Review.** *He holds a Master of Arts in psychology from Duquesne University and spent four years doing graduate work in American Studies at Boston University before receiving a doctorate from the more holistically inclined Columbia Pacific University. Ron was trained as a Montessori teacher and taught preschoolers through eight-year-olds at two Montessori schools. He studied Rudolf Steiner's work and Waldorf education as part of his doctoral research — which was recently published by Holistic Education Press under the title,* **What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture.**

in terms of observation; you can't impose, let's say, intellectual concepts when that's not really where the child is.

Bob: I guess I know very little about Montessori other than the little I've read. I would like to know more about *how* it goes about a holistic process of educating the child, because if there are basic differences — which I assume there are, since we're two different movements — that might be where they lie, in our approach to understanding the different elements of the child and then how one goes about developing these elements.

Ruth G.: I believe that Montessori had a very practical approach to teaching and educating the child, while Rudolf Steiner's very spiritual approach used a lot of fairy tales for the early education. Montessori in the classroom has a section called "practical life," which is really the basis of all her curricular sections. You first of all begin to show the child to take care of himself — his needs to dress and undress, to wash, to clean — and you extend that into taking care of the environment, the materials that he's

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working with. And then you have exercises, such as pouring exercises, which are basically for hand-eye coordination, a step you will use later for reading and writing. You have preparation for how to use utensils at the table, how to serve. These are all the very basic teaching tools in the practical life area.

Diana: That's very similar.

Bob: It's very similar. Do you implement this practical aspect in this way: "Now children, this is the way you lay a fork, now let's practice laying a fork"? Or do you do it in the course of an activity, for example: "It is now snack time; Johnny, will you please lay the forks, and Ruth, will you please pour the juice"?

Ruth G.: That's right, that's how we do it.

Bob: That's exactly the way we do it in Waldorf, too, because the practical aspect is very much there, in the whole course of the day, in the rhythm of the day.

Diana: It's also what the child really wants. The child wants to imitate meaningful adult activity. If they see a parent or teacher baking cookies, that's what they want to do. If they see an adult setting a table, that's an activity they want to share in. In a Waldorf kindergarten you see the same activities coming out of the day-to-day rhythm of the classroom. So snack time would be a time when the kids would prepare the snack and set the table.

Ruth S.: However, there is one difference. When Montessori observed the children back in San Lorenzo [Rome], where she started, and noted how interested they were in precisely these kinds of activities, what she did was excerpt the germ of each activity into separate practical exercises which were just fun for the children to do, which in themselves had no relation to the total activity. For example, she has on the shelf a bowl and soap and sponge, and perhaps some sort of a mat. The children take this little activity as a game, just as they would play with blocks, or play with any sort of manipulative material. They take this from the shelf, and they work with it. They wash their hands, or scrub the table. It has no relation to the practical. However, we see it carried forth; when they do start setting the table, all of that has already been practiced in the little activities. So when they start setting the table, you don't have to say "The fork goes here...." They have been doing that in practical life activities all along, and you see it coming out.

The same thing happens, for example, with academics. They have activities which are not directly related to the actual academic work, but then, when they get into the academics, they've already practiced these wonderful little games, which have to do with measuring, comparing, categorizing, matching, and so on. And lo and behold, they "explode" into reading, without even knowing how they got there, because they've been unconsciously, and indirectly, preparing themselves for the thing itself.

Ruth G.: Maria Montessori always spoke about the "sensitive periods" that arise in all areas of development. When the sensitive period occurs, when the child is ready for it, then these "explosions," as Ruth just mentioned, will occur. She unexpectedly found that it happened first with writing, and then with reading, when most people believe you have to introduce reading first, before you can write.

Diana: I wasn't quite sure what you meant by "reading explosion." What are the concrete activities that happen as preparation for that?

Ruth S.: Manipulative, multisensorial activities. For example, there are letters made of sandpaper. The child will feel the letter with her fingers while hearing the sound of the letter, and seeing it. The letters are also introduced through the movable alphabet. This is a set of little plastic or cardboard letters, with which children can actually write even before they have the strength or feeling in their fingers for holding a pencil. They write by creating words with the letters. That helps their reading; they really are creating words first — they're writing before they're reading.

Diana: The difference in Waldorf is that the education is trying to connect each experience with something that's alive. For instance, in introducing the letters of the alphabet, writing really came out of drawing — it came out of pictures historically — and this is reflected in how the alphabet is introduced in the Waldorf schools. What a teacher might do is tell a fairy tale about a mountain, for instance. The form of the letter *m* comes out of the picture of the mountain. So they'll draw a mountain and they'll see the *m* in it. It's not this abstract symbol that came out of a box, but it came from a story, and some kind of picture.

Bob: You mentioned the sensory feel of the sandpaper letters, but how do they know about the sound of the letter, to be able to put it into words?

Ruth S.: At first they're merely given the letters to touch, and they enjoy doing that; it's a sensorial experience for them. The children have no other reason than to enjoy the

sense of the letter. Before that, they're introduced to bars that have various levels of sandpaper, various levels of smoothness and roughness, so that their fingers become accustomed to that and they move on to the letters. Something very important to remember: Children are not doing all this in a vacuum. The culture surrounds them with letters and numbers, and they're talking.

Ruth G.: It's a phonetic approach. The teacher goes over the letters with the child and says the sounds, and shows a lot of pictures of words with each letter/sound. Montessori had what she called the "three-period lesson." For instance, the teacher would introduce a letter by saying its sound, which the child would repeat. [In the second period, the teacher would determine the child's ability to recognize the letter]; the teacher would say "Please give me the letter *m*" — and the child picks up the letter.

Ruth S.: In the third part, the teacher does not mention the sound of the letter at all, but just asks, "What is this?" But the teacher never gets to that until she or he is sure that the child can give the correct answer. The theory is that the child must experience success before [she or he] can fail. The teacher knows by observation, by listening, by watching the child, when the child is ready for the third period of the lesson, which is really the test.

Bob: I think there is a real variation in the Waldorf approach. First, a great deal will depend on the individual teacher, and that teacher's relationship with the child and perception of the child, as to how he or she decides he's going to focus on the letters in the very beginning. Secondly, the letter evolves directly from an imaginative picture, usually coming first, as Diana said, from a story, which the teacher chooses to tell [with a great deal of feeling and emphasis on the appropriate sounds]. A child is getting this picture, and then the teacher will draw a picture of the story, so the child sees it. This goes on for a day or two. Then the teacher may ask the children, or one child, to retell the story. Ultimately, out of that oral tradition, and the sound, and the retelling and hearing, and the visual picture, he will draw the letter from the picture. Frequently he doesn't have to, because the child will draw it out for him. So the child then has this oral and visual picture of the letter, entirely from the imaginative field. There's been no "intellectual" training, so to speak. It has just come from this pictorial world and imaginative field of the child.

Diana: Although it's followed through with looking at the letter form: Is it made up of straight lines? Is it made up of curved lines? Is it a combination of straight and curved lines? Let's really look at this letter as an artistic form, and then let's run the letter in our bodies; let's make a big *m* and walk it, and then let's do it on a big chalkboard, and then let's do it in the air. They draw the *m*, and it's a beautiful form; they see it as an aesthetic form. Each letter is done with that sense of beauty and romance.

Ron: It seems to me that we could talk a lot about the different methods for teaching reading, for example, and that could be interesting. I'd like to suggest that we also look behind that: What might be the philosophical differences that are leading to these different approaches? Perhaps it is that the Waldorf view of human development, in talking about the three stages, places much more emphasis on the inner work, and connecting the child with more archetypal realms and fantasy. Montessori recognizes the "sensitive periods" as well as the "planes of development" — but they're a little bit different from the Waldorf planes of development, and I think that difference is what accounts for some of these methodological differences.

Ruth S.: The holistic approach that you were talking about is very much in line with how Montessori viewed the adult relationship to the child. For example, Montessori does not start with the letters and the numbers and so on — that's not really the way the Montessori approach originates, even in the classroom. The children are given the sense of their place in the universe. It's "cosmic education," really, that she talked about. The practical, everyday approach is the way she approached the child, to get to the child.

For example, I remember there were a number of articles written in the early days of the conflict between Montessori and progressive education [editor's note: ca. 1914-1915], when John Dewey was compared to Montessori. He also had the individual child in mind and also thought in terms of approaching the child as an individual rather than imposing from the outside. But the important thing about Montessori is that it is not random. She even had several passages in *The Montessori Method* [1912] where she talked about the difference between the teacher who introduces color with lemons: "Look at this lemon. See what color it is? This is yellow." [In contrast, Montessori] isolated the quality that she wanted to introduce to the child. In order to do that, she found very specific things that did not distract from the color. For example, she would have little blocks of color — we call them the color tablets. So the whole concept of *yellow* and *blue* was very clear in a child's mind.

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Diana: Where's the feeling element in that? Is there a mood to yellow? Is there a mood to blue? How is that brought across to a child? I'm trying to ask you to go a little bit deeper: Is it just to have the name of a certain color that is important, or to go deeper into the qualities of the colors?

Ruth S.: This would come later. When you're learning an instrument, you have to learn the specific notes and what to do with your fingers on the notes in a very specific way. If you have a teacher who starts giving you the history of music and tells you that there are many different ways that you can play this instrument, you are totally confused.

Bob: I think there's a major difference! What you're touching on with yellow, for example: We would not isolate the yellow out as *yellow*. It would be associated with "The

yellow comes from the warmth of the sun, and the beautiful sound of the yellow canary." The main emphasis would not be to convey "Now you understand that this is yellow," but to give yellow as a quality amongst many other things.

Ruth G.: The yellow lemon is in the classroom, together with other fruits. It is touched, it is given from one child to the other. So it is not that abstract and isolated. It has the feel, the touch — although not emotionally as you may want it.

Diana: I think one way of looking at that is that the Waldorf approach tries to get to the essence of whatever the subject is. For example, we talked a little about the letters; but looking at the way numbers are introduced, they'd be less concerned with the child knowing that this is one cup, but they'd look at the concept of oneness. What is oneness? What is twoness? Looking at the different kinds of opposites, and how that's a quality of twoness. They try to work into the essential nature of either the letter or the number or the color, and are less concerned with the basic concept. They're trying to go a little bit deeper.

Bob: Is it fair to say that you're trying to convey a *concept* — that you're trying to get the child to have a concept of yellow, for example? That's basically what you're trying to do? That's what we wouldn't be trying to do at that point.

Ruth S.: The extension [of the concept] is very natural. We have, for example, a whole series of colors that the children grade. First comparison between colors, then there's an extension of that into grading colors. I remember specifically, after the beginning of spring, children would go out on trips, and say, "Look, the green of the tree is different than the green of the grass." So the concept of grading has been internalized in such a way that they will be able to make the extension themselves. The teacher does not have to tell them, "Look at this and look at that." The children themselves, as a result of internalizing all of these various exercises in basic concepts, have then extrapolated.

Bob: I hear that. I think we're getting into very thin, difficult territory. I'm not sure I can even verbalize it. What you say is very good — and, I think from our approach there is something missing. If I hear you correctly, they are making all these connections in an intellectual fashion. This, too, we want, and we're not saying this is not important; but we're trying to, in some way, reach further in and deal with the spiritual element. I hate to use the word, because then you wonder, "What does he mean by spirituality?" — but something else in the child identifies and associates and uses that color green in the world, in terms of how he will think.

Diana: It's the *experience* of knowledge that we're talking about. I was just thinking about this: Do you have a child learn about the oak tree, the maple tree through pictures? In a Waldorf school I think they would say, "It doesn't matter what the names of the different trees are — go out and climb a tree, and you're going to physically feel that tree, and feel the bark, and look at the leaves." It's a much more physical orientation. Systematizing it, putting it into different categories and trying to break it down into names is not something that would be important at that age. That would come in later. The experience is not mental; it's in our body.

Bob: To simplify Waldorf education, we talk about thinking, feeling, willing. We take seven-year cycles in school. The first seven years of the child's life, he's very physical. He's feeling his own limbs, he's feeling everything around him. And so the emphasis in the program is to develop this physicality of the child, where the child is trying to understand what the hand feels like, and the five fingers. And then, when the child has gotten beyond that, he knows the body [to a certain extent]; then we go into the emotions, the feelings. The yellow elicits a feeling, as does a black or a blue or a green. It's not just a color which one might identify. Then, when the child passes through puberty, roughly — I'm really condensing here — suddenly he begins to awaken in a different way, and begins to ask why the green in one tree is different from the green in another tree or in the grass. He really begins to take all these things which he's experienced — the experience of knowledge —and to work his own way.

Ruth G.: It lacks some practicality, in my understanding. It's really beautified, and it is extremely sensitive, and you express this very often in your eurythmy and your movement [exercises]. But if we talk of today's life: there's crack outside and there is the inner city outside. How do you come together with all these beautiful feelings, and how do you deal with it when you leave the school?

Bob: That's the classic response! Let me speak about my personal experience these past two years with these ghetto children I've had. In two cases, I've come into classrooms where the children are hard as nails. They are tough, angry, belligerent; they're hateful and distrustful. What I have tried to do, within the limitations placed on me in the system, is, for example, to work with color with them. And these children are absolutely mesmerized by taking big wax crayons and just doing very simple patterns with color. They are so starved for something beautiful, because they don't get it in school, and they don't get it at home. Their whole world is filled with harshness and artificiality and plastics and fluorescent colors and artificial noise. They never hear a real instrument. Nobody ever sings to them. They're taught to sing, while the piano is playing. When I sing to them, just the natural voice is amazing to them.

I bring a lot of plants into the classroom. If ants would crawl out of them, the children would take their pencils and crush every one they could find. If they see a spider, it's, "There's a spider, kill it!" And I would say to them, "Why are you doing that? It's not doing you any harm." And these are tough kids. They would disobey me for a long time. They would ignore me. But for whatever the reason, by the end of the year, they would be saying, "Mr. Miller, here's a spider. Should I put it back onto the plant?" These kids are tough; they have to deal with crack and all these things. But how are they going to be able to be sensitive to deal with people and things if they don't have a certain sensitivity within themselves? And a respect for life, and for the things which come out of life and the world?

Ron: What's real interesting here is that Montessori also transformed children in that way at the original Children's

House. The question before us here is that we have two somewhat different approaches leading to the same end. Are we talking about different facets of human nature that are nurtured in different ways? Or does it all come down to the personality of the teacher and what method works best for an individual?

Ruth S.: I think what we're talking about here is two different aspects of the same thing. We're talking about the philosophy as it has come down to us from Steiner and Montessori — and we're talking about how it is implemented and practiced within the context of our schools. I think it's very important to make that differentiation. For example, in our nursery school, there is no way that we cannot introduce feelings and all of the sympathetic and affective and spiritual modes that you were talking about here. The Montessori approach doesn't prevent a teacher from introducing all of these wonderful spiritual approaches. In fact, it leads into it, by being very specific at first. What Montessori [the approach] says is that the child comes into a chaotic world. Every child experiences chaos,

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in the way [Bob's] children in the fourth grade are still experiencing chaos. So what [Montessori] has tried to do is isolate qualities and isolate concepts within that chaos to help the child make sense out of the world. I see no reason — especially in our culture, and with the kind of background that so many teachers come from — why we cannot have this wonderful eclectic mix, where you have the specific introduction and clarification for the child.

Bob: You said twice, Ruth, in two different contexts, "We like to *isolate*...." And I think that's a rather key thing, because in these early stages, we would not want to isolate — be it the classroom environment, or the story the teacher is telling — from the total picture. We would want it to be taken in the context of, not the chaotic world, but the ordered world, which is there, which basically only Man brings chaos into!

Ruth S.: How do you order the child's world? How do you do that? Montessori was concerned with specifically and practically how you do it. Do you do it by talking? Talk and spiritual language is very beautiful, but do you do it by zeroing into how the child learns? She learns with her body, with her hands. The hand feeds the brain. Do you start with that, with the child's mode of learning? The child's mode of learning is not with words.

Bob: Absolutely! Of course not.

Ruth S.: So what Montessori did was to give children physical things for self-teaching — the didactic materials.

Bob: You see, there's a difference, too. We wouldn't start with materials. Again, I think we're back at concepts. Up through seven years old, they're supposed to learn their world, and know their world, and experience their world. And that's not conceptual, because the concepts will come.

Diana: I think there's less intervention [in Waldorf]. What I'm hearing is a lot of the teacher bringing experiences to the kids, in terms of teaching them concepts, whether it's the letters or whatever. In a Waldorf classroom, what you would find more is the opportunity for the children to just discover. Not, "Oh, you discovered that's a triangle — that's called a triangle" — but the child who's playing with a three-sided shape would say it's a hat, or a tepee, or it's a house that the princess lives in. We wouldn't say, "Oh no, that's not what it is, it's a triangle." Moving toward a strict definition of anything is seen as placing too much rigidity on the child's imagination.

Ruth S.: Montessori has many fascinating examples of the kind of extended experiences that the children have as a result of the specific experiences in the classroom. One is of some children who [arrived home while their] parents were baking, and [the children] said, "Oh mother, you baked a triangle." This happened as a result of the specific experience they had in the classroom with the materials. Incidentally, Montessori did not develop these materials on her own, but derived them from the work of Seguin, a French doctor working with emotionally disturbed and retarded children. He developed a whole set of materials for these children with their limited capacities. Montessori extended them to normal children; she noted how much the children, who were institutionalized and given up on, could learn with them, and noted, "Think how much normal children could get out of them."

Ron: We've been talking about the first seven years of development, and I'm wondering if it would be fruitful at this point to talk about the elementary years. Maybe we can learn a little more by looking at the different approaches there.

Ruth S.: I've worked in an open classroom, which really is an extension of Montessori. Montessori [preschool] is really preparation for what we know about the open classroom. The children are prepared to work individually, to work with materials rather than depending on the teacher. There really is very little intervention in a Montessori classroom. The teacher works individually with children, once or twice, walking around. She's not the grand source of all information. There's very little [full] group work except for class meetings once a day.

Diana: And the rest of the day is [spent in] independent activities in sort of a workshop atmosphere? Different centers in the room where children explore different activities?

Ruth G.: They take material from the shelf and bring it to a table or place it on a mat on the floor, and they work individually or invite a friend to work with them.

Diana: Do you find that it's harmonious in the classroom, or are there conflicts over materials?

Ruth G.: When people want to work with the same material at the same time, this is the beginning of the problem solving. There are ground rules given to the class, so that basically each child should learn at one point that you have to wait until the material is brought back to its place. In general, I find the Montessori classroom is harmonious, and children are learning to live together.

Ruth S.: There's a lot of social interaction, a lot of helping one another, because the classes are all inter-aged. The younger ones learn from the older ones, and the older ones become almost surrogate teachers. At some point during the school year, certainly by the middle of the year, the children will be capable of walking in, hanging up their coats, and going to work on their own.

Diana: What is the age range here?

Ruth S.: Three to six. And there are four-year-olds who are working at a six-year-old level, there are six-year-olds who still want to play with the three-year-old materials.

Diana: So the social dynamic happens [according to] how the kids work together, on a project or exploring material. There are no group meetings that take place, led by the teacher, except once a day in the morning?

Ruth G.: There are more meetings on the elementary level, and children meet with the teacher. The children have the choice of a task they will perform, either individually or together. They will research it and write about it, often together. The older children are much more conscious of their social status, how they belong to the group. The children are asking many more questions, spreading out into the world and the universe. There's a great emphasis on geography and science.

Diana Cohn: It's unfortunate because we could really complement one another well. It's a hardening on either side. It's dangerous; things become habitual, and when things become habitual we stop seeing.

Diana: What about storytelling in the kindergarten years? Do you tell them stories? Do you read books out loud to them? I'm hearing that there a lot of individual activities, but I'm wondering about the shared experiences.

Ruth G.: There is a shared time where the teacher will read a story, even go further — will let the children dramatize the story, make it into an opera, sing and dance and perform. And there is a reading corner in all preschool classes, where the children would sit down and choose their own books and talk to each other about the books. It's a great language experience.

Ruth S.: If we're going to talk practically about what the look of a Montessori class is, when you walk in you really have a feeling of busy bees, everyone is busy doing something. In the reading corner, maybe an older child is reading to a younger child. You have the children inviting one another to work with them. In the elementary, you have more project work. The children choose projects, and extend the projects as far as they'll go. You'll see a child inviting two or three others to work on a car project — boys especially are mad about cars — and they'll have the history of the car, and pictures of cars, and they write stories, whole books, about cars. They'll measure, and weigh — every area related to cars. History, geography — everything within that project. The teacher encourages that. They learn how to look things up. Research is very important. The children know where to go to find out. The whole basis of open education, Montessori education, is not so much to know facts, but to know where to get them, how to acquire them on your own. Montessori called this a "help to life": all the teacher should be doing is helping the child move into the culture in a successful way.

Bob: I can't argue. I think what you say is wonderful. I'm just trying to pinpoint a succinct difference. We allow the children to do individual activities, too, but the teacher is the guide, up until about age twelve, thirteen, fourteen. The teacher is the focal point in the classroom.

Ruth S.: It seems that we're heading into something that is a visible difference. The teacher is at the center, and you have group work.

Bob: The teacher is the source of the information, or the guide in terms of how he's trying to pull it together. If they're doing a play, or writing a story, or having a discussion, the teacher is the focal point. He elicits responses and then from that [suggests] individual activities.

Ron: Can we get into the rationale, on both sides? Why does the Waldorf theory think it is important for the teacher to be the source, and why does the Montessori approach think it's important for kids to be buzzing around on their own? What's the rationale for both?

Ruth G.: I don't think the Montessori kids buzz around on their own; the teacher is always there as a resource person and as a helper. But through observation, she is aware of the level of their knowledge.

Ruth S.: The children are given the notion that the teacher is only one of the sources of knowledge, and that there are many other ways to get information and to learn about the world besides the teacher. From one another, for one thing. Certainly from the material on the shelves, and always from books.

Bob: What you say is very good; I wouldn't argue with it at all. Obviously there are many sources of information and many people with knowledge. I hope no teacher would claim to be the only source. But the child, as we see it, is still developing his individuality. He's still very much a group being, dependent on peers in many ways. The teacher

stands there as an example of an individual being, which the child will become some day, when he is mature. The teacher shows the child what he will be, in essence, when he's grown up. We don't want to force the child too soon to draw on resources which he does not yet have. Because in some ways he isn't really an individual being. He's very much part of his social world, he's not really ready to step out and say, "I'm going this way, I don't care what the rest of you do." And we think that's perfectly all right at this point. When they reach puberty and they start to rebel, everything's wrong; the parents are no good, the teacher's no good, the school's no good — that's a healthy thing, because they're starting to feel their own individuality then. And we wouldn't say it's wrong — it's good for them to be exploring that. We're not trying to encourage that individuality prematurely.

I don't mean to say that children are not individuals, or do not have guiding impulses. I mean that it is a developing part of their being. Their individuality is not fully there. You wouldn't want to put any weight on a cement pillar until it's fully solidified, fully complete, because it would damage it. In a sense, the child's individuality is developing — and we don't want to put demands on that until they're really ready to use it. It's a constant developmental process; it's a give and take. As it begins to develop, you want to encourage it to come out, and maybe it's just a question of degree, as to how much and how soon we versus you are trying to encourage it.

Diana: At age nine, there's a real turning point in the child. They become aware of their inner life and that there's a world in here and a world out there, and the question of "Who am I?" really comes up for them. Which is why biography is so important at that age, and [why] history is taught from that point of view in a Waldorf school. There are individuals who have really struggled in their lives and have made great accomplishments, and the kids really connect to that. Developmentally speaking, the curriculum in the Waldorf school addresses what's happening in the inner life of the child at that point.

Ruth S.: It sounds like it's putting a very heavy responsibility on the teacher. The teacher is really like the source of all love and godliness and knowledge.

Diana: My sense, though, Ruth, is that also in Montessori there is a great responsibility on the teacher. My sense about both movements is that all the teachers are deeply committed to what they're doing. The whole observation piece that Montessori talks about and Steiner talks about — you must be very deeply committed to ask yourself and to really observe. And I think that's really loving. That's where the love is, in the observation. Probably, that's why the kids do so well in both schools, because they have very loving adults working with them. The methods are very different, but the bottom line is that you have these very alive, interested adults working with the children, and they feel that. They feel enlivened by the fact that there are these caring adults in their lives. That's the place where we all meet.

Ruth S.: Unfortunately that's not always true. Some Montessorians practice the method more rigidly than it was originally intended.

Diana: The same is true with Waldorf.

Ruth S.: They feel threatened by different interpretations of "The Method."

Diana: Exactly. But if they were awake in their observations and not just working from the theory verbatim, without being somewhat reflective as teachers, I think you'd get a different quality. The teachers would reflect on what they're doing: "Who are the children in my class? How can I meet this child's need? Can I see this child in a different light?" It's an ongoing questioning process. Of course there are teachers who are going to be rigid.

Ruth S.: In my experience, I'm talking about 25 years in education, I remember so many instances where teachers who came strictly into Montessori from nothing — this was their first experience in teaching — were a lot more rigid than

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people who came from other [experiences] and had some comparison.

Bob: I would say that's true of Waldorf, too.

Ruth S.: Either some other form of teaching or something from the arts. Teachers who came from the arts already had what you're talking about; they have a creative base to build on. They used it in a more human fashion. I wanted to say one more thing about having the teacher as the center, the main authority. Montessori was working in Italy, and when Mussolini came, he closed her schools....

Diana: All of the Steiner schools were closed in Germany when Hitler came.

Ruth S.: The reason given was not only because she refused to have her children give the salute, but because through Montessori children were learning to challenge authority, and that was a threat to fascism. The way children do challenge authority is by not having that super-respect for the one person in the classroom, but by believing that they, too, can respect themselves and where they come from, and building their own individual self-esteem through self-teaching and self-direction. It just occurs to me that if the teacher is the center, and you do have that one authority, [it] might make the children feel that they themselves cannot necessarily ever be an authority.

Bob: But that's one side of the coin. The other side of the coin could be that by having an authority, they know how

to be an authority, whereas if they didn't have that authority, they would have no idea how to focus and center themselves if they didn't have an example. I just suggest that as the other side of the coin; obviously it could be disputed.

Ron: We don't have a lot of time left, and I did want to get into the big question of how both movements can not only start to work together, but also can contribute the insights that each has to the larger task of transforming education. In the next five years, how do you see the Waldorf and Montessori movements being able to reach out more and be more active in a larger education movement?

Ruth G.: [The Waldorf movement] needs a central organization [comparable to the American Montessori Society] in order to spread out to other people's educational philosophy.

Ruth S.: Otherwise, it's totally depending on individuals like you, who are working with the larger system.

Bob: That's basically how the schools have started throughout the world — individuals have taken on the task because they have decided they want to start a school.

Ron: In the absence of a structure or an organization to do the job, I am thinking more in terms of the ideals that Montessori and Waldorf educators hold. How can people who hold those ideals bring them into the world? How could they be manifested in public education or in the political dialogue on education? How can we get these ideas out there?

Diana Cohn: Probably, that's why the kids do so well in both schools, because they have very loving adults working with them. The methods are very different, but the bottom line is that you have these very alive, interested adults working with the children, and they feel that.

Ruth S.: Unfortunately, there is not any center, any forum. What we need is to develop forums, where education can be explored, and the possibilities can be explored with [leaders in public education]. Opportunities have to be found to develop forums for discussing these things on a platform larger than what we have here. We have to get into publications, we have to have an active core of people who are pushing in that direction. Right now it's very random.

Bob: I agree with you. But on the other hand, I've done this with two chancellors [of New York City public schools]. Somewhere, somebody has got to be interested in something different from the old method. They're constantly trying new programs along the same rut. And somebody comes along with a whole brand-new approach — Montessori or Waldorf, which are both pretty radically different from what is done in the schools, which is test-oriented, period — and it's "Well, that's too far off the track for us."

Ruth G.: There are many Montessori public schools, in Cincinnati, Texas, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Michigan, Buffalo....

Bob: Well, you've been able to do something which we haven't — although there is a plan to establish a public Waldorf school in Milwaukee in 1991.

Ruth S.: And the new buzzword in education is "cooperative learning." It seems to me that people are thinking about it. It's happening out there; people are thinking about it. It just needs people like us to....

Diana: I also think it would be helpful to address teacher training programs. I've worked with graduate students who have never been introduced to, and don't know anything about, Rudolf Steiner or Waldorf education. They get so involved in the methods that the theoretical piece is lost. That's one place to start: the training of teachers, and trying to bring in some of these ideas. I'm reflecting on my own process; for a number of years I was very narrowly focused on Waldorf, and very interested in methods, because I was teaching in a classroom. I wanted to be a good teacher, so my focus was very narrow, in terms of getting the work done in the best way possible. Maybe it's a process of development that teachers go through. Maybe they work for a period of six or seven years within one framework, and then their questions shift and they take in other ideas and other theories that might work — so it's sort of this constant experimenting, going back and forth.

Ron: You've touched on a point that has concerned me all along. I think you're a little bit unusual in having this development, of being open to new approaches. One problem, historically, with both Waldorf and Montessori, which we've mentioned already, is that people get rigidly locked into the *method*. We really need Waldorf and Montessori educators to open up to larger educational and social issues.

Ruth S.: We really need to revolutionize teacher education. There has to be some forum for exploding this whole idea, because it never gets there. It's been talked about for many years — why teachers get locked into just methods, when they should be exploring the cosmos.

Ron: Does that apply to the training of Montessori and Waldorf teachers, as well as colleges of education?

Diana and Ruth S.: Yes.

Ruth S.: I find that many Montessori teachers get locked into how to handle materials, and how to prepare the classroom — which is very, very important. But why? What is the reason behind it? What's the meaning behind all of this beautiful stuff?

Diana: All of the wonderful things that have happened in progressive education, especially a lot of the research from

New Zealand on the integration of reading and writing fits to the T right in with what Steiner said about the process —the road to reading is through writing. Except they're so specific about how you can work with children in a classroom, using these methods based on years of research with kids, but you don't see it in Waldorf schools because the method has already been sort of hardened into one approach. It's unfortunate because we could really complement one another well. It's a hardening on either side. It's dangerous; things become habitual, and when things become habitual we stop seeing.

Ruth S.: We keep hearing again and again that "we're losing an entire generation." It has to be on many levels, not just in education, but through corporate people who are getting involved with schools — getting to them.

Diana: Also, teacher salaries need to be raised. On a national level we have to validate our teachers. That's one key. The nurturing of children has to be one of the key important things that our society is doing.

Bob: I think, like every change in history, it's a slow chipping away.

Ruth S.: We don't have that much time, Bob.

Bob: But we don't have any alternative. How are we going to get people who don't see — as we think we do — a better approach to education? They just want to modify the same old way; just get new textbooks or new workbooks or a new reading program, and it'll be better. How do we get those people to step back and really look?

Ruth S.: Our concern as educators is not just in education anymore. We're talking about the end of the world. We're talking about everything — about the environment, about the ozone layer, about the fact that we have nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Children are growing up within all of this, and I don't think we have as much time now as we used to have. I really think that there's a sense of momentum. Most of us can get a little bit desperate thinking about it. But I think that what we're doing here, starting out by having this discussion, is very valuable.

Bob: How do you get people to want to hear something different? You can't go up to people and tell them, "I have a wonderful idea that I want you to hear."

Ruth G.: I think today we are all used to being entertained. We want to be entertained through television, through the movies. If you have a videotape of your own classroom, [that could be very effective].

Bob: I don't know the answer. We've posed a question which is unanswerable. Well, it's solvable, ultimately, but....

Diana: We're beginning to answer it.

Bob: Yes, we're beginning to answer it.

Postscript

I was deeply gratified to find that, by the end of this encounter, my four colleagues were seeing their work in terms of our common task of transforming education. When our conversation ended, they exchanged addresses and talked about working together in the near future. Ruth Gans suggested, for example, that the people involved in the new Waldorf magnet school in Milwaukee could work with the Montessorians who have already set up programs in that city's public schools. While recognizing — and respectfully discussing — the differences in their approaches, these educators had come to realize that their common goal of nurturing human development makes them allies, not rivals. The true barrier to a transformation of education is not the differences between Montessori, Waldorf, and other holistic approaches, but the indifference, inertia, and hostility of mainstream schooling toward the needs of human development.

As Bob and Diana expressed it at the end, we are just beginning to find answers to some very important questions. I believe that this conversation has opened up many significant avenues for constructive dialogue. I would like to suggest a few of these here; they would make fine topics for further conversations among holistic educators, for public forums, and for articles (hint, hint) as well as academic research and theses.

- What Bob called "very thin, difficult territory" is the *epistemological* difference between the Montessori and Waldorf approaches. That is, they hold different views about how the human being comes to know the world; this is a problem that has vexed the greatest philosophers for centuries, so it is certainly a difficult question to resolve! It seems to me that the Montessori approach leans toward *empiricism* — the view that reality is known primarily through the senses, and through the effort to impose a logical order on the overwhelming and "chaotic" rush of sense impressions. The Steiner approach, on the other hand, is more of a Platonic *idealism*, holding that true reality exists behind or beyond its fleeting appearances, and that some inner faculty of the soul (imagination) is capable of apprehending this deeper reality directly.

A holistic understanding, I would suggest, incorporates *both* aspects of knowing; they complement each other. Just as modern physics has determined that atomic reality is both particle (matter) and wave (energy), a holistic epistemology would hold that reality is fully known through both the senses and the imagination. And

continued

I think that both Montessori and Steiner recognized this: Neither was a pure empiricist or idealist, although they tended to emphasize one aspect over the other. Our challenge is to work out educational approaches that respect both ways of knowing.

- What is the relationship between freedom and structure? Between impulse and discipline? Ruth Selman emphasized that the Montessori-prepared environment is not "random" — and specifically distanced Montessori from Deweyan progressive education. Bob Miller and Diana Cohn felt that the Montessori teacher is too directive, too quick to give definitive answers and names to children's experience. Yet, the Montessori classroom is an "open" classroom, with children at work like "busy bees," while in the Waldorf classroom the teacher is admittedly the primary decision maker and director of activity.

What accounts for these different understandings of freedom and structure? Is Bob's analogy, comparing the child's individuality to a cement pillar that is not yet hard, a fair one? I would use a more organic metaphor and compare individuality to a muscle that needs to be exercised in order to be strengthened. In this light, perhaps progressive education is not really so "random." Indeed, this would be the rationale behind the free school movement, which draws on the libertarian tradition of Leo Tolstoy, Ferrer, Paul Goodman, and John Holt. This is a very complex subject that deserves a lot of thought and discussion.

- "In order to educate," said Montessori, "it is essential to know those who are to be educated." As Diana pointed out, this willingness to carefully observe the growing person is an act of love. Both Montessorians and Waldorf educators sincerely want to provide the educational sustenance that young people require for their healthy development. This is a given. But there may be key differences in how we *interpret* what we observe. From their own observations, both Montessori and Steiner noticed that human development unfolds in stages of roughly six or seven years duration. But they ascribed different meanings to these planes of development, and this is what accounts for their different methods. It is clear to both approaches, for example, that in the first six years, the child learns through movement, activity, manipulation; that is, through physical experience. But Montessori believed that out of this physical exploration young children naturally "explode" into writing and reading, while Steiner insisted that such abstract processes belong to the next level of development.

Is human nature flexible enough that *both* interpretations may be correct, depending on the temperament and environment of the child? Is there a genuine difference in the later development and adult lives of people according to which educational theory is applied to them in early childhood? If there is no clear difference, then on what basis do we choose an educational method? Perhaps our interpretations of our observations have more to do with our own biases than with the true needs of human development; are *we* flexible enough to acknowledge this?

- Finally, what about the cultural, social, political, and moral contexts of education? Montessori's and Steiner's first schools were set up for children of poverty and the working class, yet today both movements primarily serve affluent communities. Ruth Gans raised a very important question: What is the value of spiritual beauty in a society marked by economic and moral decay? And Ruth Selman reminded us that education today must face the crucial environmental problems of our age. I think Bob's experience in the public schools is very important; there is a power in spirituality that holds the key to rejuvenating our decaying culture. But how do we bring this awareness of the human spirit back into a culture that has lost it and which continues to deny it? My answer is the same point I have been making throughout this conversation and in every issue of *Holistic Education Review*: All of us who hold a higher vision of human possibilities need to transcend our differences and join together to transform this culture. It is a huge task, and none of us can do it alone.

— Ron Miller

SPECIAL REPORT

The 1990 Chicago Conference

Creating a Common Vision for Holistic Education

by Ron Miller

On June 1, 1990, 80 educators from around the United States and five other nations gathered at a retreat center near Chicago for a three-day conference on holistic education. This was an unprecedented meeting of educators from a wide variety of backgrounds and approaches — global and environmental educators, "whole-brain" and learning style specialists, art and movement teachers, whole language theorists, Montessori and Waldorf educators, and humanistic and other progressive educators. Participants included classroom teachers, scholars, parent activists, editors, public school administrators, human development and management consultants, and a senior researcher from the U.S. Department of Education.

The group had been invited by an eight-person planning committee that was organized in 1989. Phil Gang, a globetrotting holistic education networker who directs the Institute for Educational Studies in Atlanta, had called me early last year to propose a gathering of holistic educators, and we worked together to gather a planning team that would represent a cross-section of holistic education movements. The team included Linda Macrae Campbell of New Horizons for Learning in Seattle; Dave Lehman, principal of the public Alternative Community School in upstate New York; Joey Tanner, publisher of Zephyr Press in Tucson; Ed Clark, author and consultant from Illinois; Larry Hedges, a Green Movement activist who had organized a statewide conference in Kansas; and Nina Lynn, a public school special education administrator, summer camp director, and global visionary from Vermont — as well as Phil Gang and myself. We had our own retreat near Atlanta in August, 1989, at which we discussed our vision for the future of education and began to design the Chicago Conference. By November, the invitations had gone out.

We soon knew that we had tapped into a powerful grassroots movement for the transformation of education! The vision and enthusiasm that we had felt as a small group was apparently shared by most of those who received our call. It was clearly time for the many strands of progressive, humanistic, holistic education *to come together to join in a common cause.* Educators who had been working in isolation from one another, often unaware of one another's existence, jumped at the chance to find out about one another's ideas and projects. When June finally came, as each vanload of participants arrived at the retreat center from the airport, it was obvious that people had wasted no time in sharing their experiences and their thoughts about education. The conference had already begun.

The conference was deliberately structured to allow for open-ended conversations and small group discussions. It opened with brief introductory comments by Linda Macrae Campbell, Phil Gang, and myself, and an inspiring keynote address by Abelardo Brenes, a visionary Costa Rican psychologist who works with the United Nations University for Peace and who had helped organize a conference titled "Seeking the True Meaning of Peace" in Costa Rica in 1989. (See articles that follow.) But after this formal opening, the conference was designed to unfold according to the discussions and experiences that took place; there were no planned "workshops" or lectures. Participants took advantage of free time to show their own films, hold interest-group meetings, and conduct movement and "educational kinesiology" exercises.

From the 80 participants, one could probably obtain 80 (or more) different descriptions of what took place during those three days. My account is certainly only partial, and it is hardly objective. Nevertheless, what I saw was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of a very special group of educators.

Many of us had the strong feeling that we were present at the birth of a new era in education — a worldwide movement that would completely redefine the basic assumptions underlying modern schooling. As a group, we seemed to hold several key principles in common, which were expressed and published as "The Chicago Statement on Education." (See accompanying article.) Many people were determined to build an international educational coalition around these core principles, and three working committees were organized before the end of the conference.

First, an organization committee would look into the possible form that such a coalition might take, and would discuss possible future events, including regional conferences, publications, and a large international conference as early as 1991. A second committee formed around the vision of Abelardo Brenes and his mentor Robert Muller (retired assistant secretary general of the United Nations), to create a global curriculum for peace and sustainable development, and to make such a curriculum a central concern of the United Nations. A third committee began the long process of devising a new model of teacher training, according to holistic principles.

Most of the original planning committee committed themselves to remain in that group. Dave Lehman decided to return his energies to his school, and I stepped down in order to concentrate on the dissemination of holistic thinking through academic publications and other media. But then six additional conference participants joined the steering committee, and this impressive group met in Denver this past August to keep the momentum building. It is important to emphasize that the holistic education movement will remain decentralized and highly diverse; the role of this steering committee is not to force holistic education into any particular mold, but rather to orchestrate a coordinated effort to transform schools around the world. The members of the committee are all fully dedicated to the central holistic principle of unity through diversity.

To be sure, there are divisions and tensions within the movement. At some points, I personally was frustrated to see people talk (sometimes heatedly) completely past each other; during one group meeting I was right in the middle of a dispute I could not solve. We need to discuss these divisions, and we need to do so frankly, and we need to do so very soon. Diversity is healthy; it is a sign of ecological balance — but the diverse viewpoints need at least to understand and respect their intimate interrelationships.

The historic meaning of the Chicago conference is that a group of dedicated educators did come together to confront the challenge of the modern crisis. Where we proceed from there is up to all of us now.

Opening Remarks at the Chicago Conference

by Ron Miller

So here we are! I hope you all realize what an extraordinary event this is. This is not your usual professional gathering. We have not come here to read scholarly papers to each other, or to renew old acquaintances, or to vote on bylaws. *We are here to change the meaning of education in the modern world.* We are here to launch a global revolution in education. We are here to make the transformation, which we have all been dreaming about and working for, actually take place now, in this decade, in every place of learning on the planet.

It is my full-time job to keep track of this emerging revolution in education. And I want to tell you all, there's something big happening out there. The impulse that moved each of us to be doing the work we're doing, the impulse which led to the calling of this conference, is a global shift of consciousness with historic significance. It is larger than any of us can fully realize. Some of us consider it to be a spiritual impulse; some believe that Gaia, the Earth herself, is calling to us to save her — and ourselves — from the brink of destruction.

You don't need to think of our task in these terms, in order to appreciate the awesome responsibility that we — the 80 of us here — hold this weekend. We represent the hopes and dreams of thousands of men and women who have awakened to the same impulse that has awakened us. In recent weeks I have received many letters from teachers and parents who ache for a transformation of education, and who are pouring their hearts and souls into working for it, and who have wondered — sometimes for years — whether they are all alone. We are here this weekend to proclaim to the world that they are not alone, and it is our major task to find a way to integrate and synergize the transforming energies that are now scattered all across the globe.

We are here this weekend because the modern world has forgotten a few fundamental truths: It has forgotten that the Earth is sacred; it has forgotten that life is a miracle; it has forgotten that every new person born into the world — every child — is a being of magnificent, perhaps divine, potentials. It is our task to reaffirm these truths, because nothing less can save life on Earth.

In light of this cosmic mission, let us not dwell on small details. Let us not be divided over fine points of educational doctrine or practice. We have many differences of style, emphasis, and belief — but let us *celebrate* these differences as ways of learning from one another. The holistic approach seeks to incorporate the teachings of all of our perspectives; each one offers some vital part of the answer we are looking for, while none by itself is an exclusive path to the truth. We can be passionate, we can argue — but ultimately we all aim for a common goal: to liberate the magnificent potentials of the human being from the ideological, economic, and cultural chains that the modern age has forged and clamped upon us all.

In other words, we are not here merely to add new material to the curriculum or to tinker with teacher-training programs; such minor reforms are already being done by many people who do not fully realize the severity of the global crisis. What they call "restructuring" is often no better than rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*; their entire ship is sinking, my friends, and they don't realize it. We need to recognize that our educational problems are the result of a decaying culture. We must not settle for cosmetic improvements; we must seek fundamental changes in how our society treats human beings and how it treats the Earth.

We are approaching a crucial turning point in history; humankind must soon choose between total destruction of the ecosystem or a new worldview that strives for peace, cooperation, and justice based upon a reverence for life. So our purpose this weekend is not to talk about a new curriculum — our purpose is to begin an educational revolution. This is a tremendous task, and working by ourselves, we cannot succeed; but by joining together, we cannot fail. The worldview of materialism and imperialism has proved itself to be spiritually bankrupt. It's our turn now. We must seize this precious opportunity.

Ultimately we all aim for a common goal: to liberate the magnificent potentials of the human being from the ideological, economic, and cultural chains that the modern age has forged and clamped upon us all.

Our Challenge

by Phil Gang

It was April, 1988, and I was attending the Peace Through Education Conference sponsored by The Robert Muller School in Arlington, Texas. Robert Muller addressed the group with a call for action. "Send in your proposals for the expansion of this work," he said. "Do it now." So, there I sat, my mind buzzing with possibilities. I wrote:

> Whereas much progress has been made in conceptualizing the education transformation; and
>
> Whereas organizations all over the world are developing models for integrating new processes and methodologies;
>
> And whereas people on the planet need to work together on global issues:
>
> The Institute for Educational Studies proposes the following conference for April, 1990:
>
> HOLISTIC EDUCATION: EXPO 2000

I handed in this proposal and waited for something to happen. Nothing did. As I flew home to Atlanta, it dawned on me that if this idea were to gain momentum it would take more than writing a proposal. Soon after, I called my friend and colleague Ron Miller to ask for his support. He liked the idea and sent me a list of possible players/presenters. Eight months later, Ron called and asked if the idea was still percolating because he believed that the time was ripe. We decided there should be a group brainstorming and dialogue around the idea of a holistic education conference.

We invited six other colleagues to come together with us at The Center for New Beginnings, a retreat outside of Atlanta. I would now like to introduce you to that group. First, there is Ron Miller. Sitting up front on this side is Nina Lynn, Linda Macrae-Campbell, and Dave Lehman; and over here is Joey Tanner, Larry Hedges, and Ed Clark. Each of us has contributed in a dynamic way to make this event possible. Our meeting was a model for self-and group empowerment, working through differences by recognizing each other's values. It was a meeting "beyond consensus," where there was clearly a search to hear inner truth and a willingness to let go of preconceived ideas.

At one point we were "stuck" on the very nature of this conference. We were debating the value of a general gathering versus limited enrollment. Ron suggested that we take a moment of silence and wait for something new to arise. At the end of that time I proposed that we convene two events. The first one in 1990 would be limited to "invited" participants, but there would be open enrollment for the second one in 1992.

Note: This article is drawn from Dr. Phil Gang's opening remarks to the 1990 Chicago Conference.

So, here we are. As Nina so articulately says, our primary goal is to "extend the circle of trust" that we created last summer in Atlanta. Let us work together to achieve it.

These are historic times, and that makes our meeting extremely significant. From the viewpoint of paradigm shifts we are experiencing a cultural change as dynamic and profound as the shifts from gatherer/hunter to agrarian, and then from agrarian to industrial society. Today, industrial society is cracking and giving way to a new culture that we are all trying to define. Earlier paradigm shifts occurred over centuries and were barely recognizable by the masses. But nowadays time is compressed so that those who are attuned can observe the changes, and this compels participation. Let me suggest some signs indicating that the old paradigm is no longer working.

The environment

I recently was in Mexico City and then in Monterrey. In both places I was greeted with visual reminders of the degradation of the environment. Although shocked by the intensity of the discolored atmosphere, some of this was anticipated. A few weeks ago I was in Prince George, British Columbia, 500 miles north of Vancouver. I had an idealized image of this place, but what I found was polluted air and damaged water supplies from area pulp-processing mills.

Then I began to reflect on other places that I have traveled to during the past few years — Moscow, Leningrad, Stockholm, Göteborg, Helsinki, San Jose (Costa Rica), Vancouver, Athens, Milan; and in the USA, Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, Kansas City, Atlanta, New York, Honolulu, and many other cities. All are suffering from environmental disease. Is there really any place on our planet that has escaped? Humanity, in its industrial conquest of the world, has created holes in the ozone layer, air pollution, deforestation, desertification, species extinction, and water pollution. It is obvious that if we choose to survive as a species, we cannot continue to treat the Earth with our present behavior.

A conflict/war mentality

The idea that people's minds can be changed through physical force is still being preached. Weapons and military budgets worldwide — well, you know the rest. Contrary to popular belief, war is not an instinctual part of who we are. Richard Leakey affirms this in his analysis of prehistoric human remains.[1] But, some four to five thousand years ago in the central plains of Europe, humanity moved from a partnership, peaceful society to a male-dominated warring society.[2] Now is the time to heal the effects of that tragic mistake.

Rise in conservatism

At the end of each epoch in human history there has been a general tendency to resist the new! As society moved from the agricultural age to the industrial age, people refused to accept new forms of energy and new political schemes. Today, we are witnessing this all over the globe with a rise in fundamentalist religious movements and conservative politics. Issues such as flag burning and abortion rights dominate headlines, and there has been a growing tendency in the United States to quell civil rights advancements.

History shows us an overall pattern of developing higher and higher psychic order. I maintain that this rise in conservatism is an unconscious attempt to thwart that growth, and that over time, it will not succeed.

Chaos in education

Here we stand, not knowing how to cope with the failures of an industrial-based schooling model and too frozen to risk dynamic intervention that would attack the most dearly treasured values of the dying paradigm. Today's schools uphold the hierarchical values inherent in power-authority roles among students, teachers, and administrations. There is a residue of the industrial mindset which says that knowledge can be objectively measured like output in a factory.

Between 1940 and 1980 the number of school districts in the United States dropped from 100,000 to 16,000.[3] This follows the general scheme of the industrial pattern that bigger is better. No matter that the students lost their identity in that process. Some other holdovers from the industrial mindset include beliefs that learning and experience are separate issues, that competition among peers is healthy, and that the "whole equals the sum of its parts," when we know that the whole is greater, more meaningful, than any accounting of its parts.

While all of these are indications that the old is no longer working, there is mounting evidence of the new paradigm emerging. Here are some of the signs that I would like to draw to your attention.

1. There is a growing passion for transformation all around the world — a positive move toward higher consciousness. Everywhere I travel I see people who are searching for deeper meaning — an exploration that requires profound personal growth. Whatever the culture, East, West, North, and South, there is a quantum growth in both inner and outer awareness. Personally, each time I confront today's issues, on another level, I am confronting my own issues. So there is the pull within me to let go of more and more attachments by exploring my own value systems and ego blockages.

2. Aligned with this transformation is an evolving spirituality. Although born in spirit, most organized religions have lost that flame of birth to dogma. It is the native peoples of the world who really have the connection I am talking about. Take a close look at the ethics of Native Americans, Maoris, native Hawaiians, Fijians, and Aboriginals, and you will find the kind of spirit I am addressing.

In a manner of speaking, it is not the "work" that draws me to join with my Soviet colleagues to write our Global Thinking Curriculum. It is a special kinship that I feel toward these people — a deep sense of connecting to each other's spirit.

Look around today and you will see how the Eastern mystics have led the way for those of us in the West to participate in this spiritual evolution. In our culture there are the great contributions of Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry, Miriam McGillis, and Robert Muller. I would like to share these words from Robert Muller's acceptance speech for the 1989 UNESCO Peace Prize:

> I pray that all human beings of this Earth become instruments of peace, thus fulfilling the cosmic function

deeply engraved in each of us and for which we were born and allowed to live temporarily on this planet in the vast universe and eternal stream of time. The peace of the world is the sum total of the peace of all individuals. As the Chinese proverb says, *If the people lead, the leaders will follow.*

3. Advances in telecommunications have created the "infosphere." Planetary communications have advanced in the past decade, dramatically changing our view of reality. Telecommunications instantly links up people all over the Earth. We are, in reality, creating the "noosphere" as foretold by Pierre Tielhard de Chardin[4] and Vladimir Vernadsky.[5]

Everywhere I travel, people ask, "Are there really people out there who have the same vision? If there are, how can we connect with them." It is with this in mind that I share with you the formation of the Holistic Education Community Network (HECN), a collaborative effort between the Institute for Educational Studies and EarthNET Transnational Corp. HECN will facilitate our global connections and support us in an effort to reach the critical mass needed for dynamic educational change.

HECN is non-hierarchical. Through electronic mail we can stay in close contact with colleagues around the world. We can implement on-line conferencing, share research, and plan seminars; create on-line courses of study; and much more. The possibilities are limitless. We also have access to EarthVOICE, a voice-mail box system that does not require a computer to link up. When I shared all of this news with people in Kansas City, a woman said to me, "Why aren't you dancing?"

Let's dance together. Over the next few days I look forward to talking with you in more detail about HECN.[6]

4. The Cold War has ended! The greatest metaphor of the times is the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. For me this is the one gesture that has catalyzed my vision and produced a psychic charge for our future — a knowing that something new has been born.

I am reminded of the popular rock song recorded several years ago by Pink Floyd, "The Wall." It was a metaphor for the old: "We don't need no education; teacher leave those kids alone." What we are here to do this weekend is to tear down that wall in order to build a new culture.

So, here is the image I want to leave you with as we work together for the next few days. This photo of the tearing down of the wall suggests that each of us might begin to think about removing bricks in the wall of prejudice toward innovation in education. I suggest that we leave it up throughout the conference to keep the vision in front of us.

Futurists say that if you really want to get a glimpse of tomorrow, look at today's fringe. Well, here we are! What scares me a little is what it might be like when we become mainstream! Finally, I leave you with the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Notes

1. See R. Leakey and R. Lewin, *People of the Lake* (New York: Doubleday, 1978).

2. See Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

3. D. Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

4. See Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

5. See Tatyana Ilyina, *On the Road to the Noosphere* (Moscow: Novisti Press Agency Publishing House, 1989).

6. For more information about the Holistic Education Community Network, contact Dr. Phil Gang at the Institute for Educational Studies, 4202 Ashwoody Trail, Atlanta, GA 30319. (404) 458-5678.

Toward a Global Curriculum for Peace and Sustainable Development

An Interview with Abelardo Brenes by Phil Gang

Phil Gang: The 1990 Chicago conference has just concluded. I'd like to take a few moments and ask you to share your reflections on that experience.

Abelardo Brenes: I think the conference brought together a group of highly concerned, highly motivated individuals who work in educational fields, who share a common concern for the quality of education, in terms of how it fosters the full development of the potential of human beings. I was aware, of course, that most of the people there were from the United States. When I gave my opening address, I felt a very strong need to convey to the people what I saw as their special responsibility as educators from North America, particularly because the United States has been playing a very important role on the planet, in shaping the consciousness of people around the world, in terms of what is considered to be an ideal lifestyle and form of development.

It is clear that this highly industrialized mode of living, which has been key to the development of this country, is no longer viable as a model for other countries. Given the grave situations on the planet at the moment — particularly the threat to the survival of the biosphere through human actions — there is a radical need to question such models of development. So I was particularly interested in exploring the linkage between a framework for education which would have potential global relevance, [and] the holistic education model that has been developed amongst this group.

PG: One of the problems we have on the planet are the dichotomies we create. For a long time we felt there was an East/West dichotomy, and that was the major thing that needed to be healed. But as events in eastern Europe have unfolded, the tensions have dropped, and I'm wondering whether you could reflect on the dichotomy that's growing out of balance between North and South. It's not a conflict, but it has to do with economics and environment, and things that education needs to address.

AB: Yes, this was also one of the main points that I referred to in that opening speech. I quoted the peace message of His Holiness John Paul II, from January 1986, when he said that the challenge now is to develop one single message for peace for the planet that would be valid for North, South, East, and West. He put particular emphasis on the North/South polarity, and though there were great dangers in the East/West confrontation (the Cold War situation, the nuclear threat), he felt that the North/South situation was particularly painful and difficult, because of the amount of suffering, and the bleak future that awaited three-quarters of humanity.

I also shared my experience, having been quite deeply involved in grassroots work in Costa Rica during a period of time when the Central American war was going on in a much more intense way, and what it felt like to be in a country where these North/South, East/West polarities, tensions, seemed to come together — like being in the middle of a hurricane, where you feel the tension all around you, and it permeates your consciousness continuously. It was a very similar experience being in Costa Rica in the sense that a lot of what that war was about — it was an example of "low-intensity" warfare, essentially psychological warfare — was an East/West conflict. Costa Rica has a strong national heritage of being peace-oriented, democratic — and not wanting to be involved in the effort to create a southern front against Nicaragua. The official press was following a propaganda campaign to try to instill a sense of fear in the people of Costa Rica, particularly toward Nicaragua, which was to be seen as part of a very dangerous international Communist conspiracy. It was important that the people creating these messages did not fully estimate the depth of the Costa Rican orientation to peace and the real desire for noninvolvement in that situation, as well as a basic sense of empathy for the struggle that the people of Nicaragua were going through to build their society from one that has known war and strife and dictatorship for a good part of its history into one that is more democratic.

I see our human body as being our immediate inner ecology, from the point of view of consciousness; so whatever the relationship of our consciousness to the body, this will be our relationship to the outer environment.

Note: This conversation summarizes Dr. Abelardo Brenes's keynote address to the 1990 Chicago conference. The exact text of the address is unavailable, but its major points are all contained here. Dr. Brenes gives a vast global perspective to our work as holistic educators.

Part of our work involved creating a deeper analysis that would help us understand the historical roots of the conflict, as well as the context of present-day North/South relations, which involves the relationship between the primarily agricultural, more Earth-bound third world and the industrial nations of the North. The Americas is the only continent that extends from the North Pole to the South Pole; so we are, in Central America, at the heart of the North/South polarity. The way we resolve North/South relations on our continent will hold the keys for resolving these conflicts throughout the rest of the world.

I was also interested in trying to understand, on a much deeper level, what the North/South, East/West dimensions meant to people in a more psychological, collective consciousness type of approach. It seemed to me that the East/West thought forms had, as their basis, a dichotomy between the West's key values of human freedom, democracy, and the rights of human beings to develop themselves fully; and the East's ideals of protecting the collective, sharing resources and the results of human labor, sharing the means of production. It seemed to me that each of the poles of this dichotomy were like two sides of the same coin, and that it was important to find what they have in common, which could give us keys to discover how the conflict could be resolved. And what I found was that they both had in common a very similar vision of the nature of the human being, basically seeing human beings as materially driven, with an insatiable material appetite, leading them to conquer. The problem with the Western view is that freedom is understood as the freedom to compete in the marketplace, to develop fully in a *material* sense, and the West was defending the right of such a materially driven being to exist and to thrive. The Eastern bloc, on the other hand, was fearful of this vision of the human being, and was protecting the collective. And because it was mistrusting its own citizens, it was repressing them.

The more freedom one has — the more means one has to transform nature through the instruments we have created — the greater the responsibilities one has.

So the basic problem is this still-prevalent model of what human nature is about. This led me to reflect on the North/South dimension. What I came to think is that the North polarity has to do with the mind, and the South with the body. We have grown up in a Judeo-Christian heritage whose interpretation of the human being — particularly from St. Augustine onwards, through Descartes — involves a fundamental dualism between mind and body. There's a basic mistrust of the human body, and a very strong need to dominate the body. This kind of attitude is also the basis of our relationship to the outer environment. I see our human body as being our immediate inner ecology, from the point of view of consciousness; so whatever the relationship of our consciousness to the body, this will be our relationship to the outer environment.

It seemed to me that the North/South polarity reflects this dualism. I saw the industrialized North as being like the nervous system of the planet — this is where most information is gathered, and all the telecommunication capacities are concentrated. What we've been seeing on the planet is these great technocratic civilizations developing through systematic drainage of natural resources and the fruits of human labor from the Southern countries. Most political dialogue goes on between the Northern nations, as if the North feels it does not need to listen to the South. The problem is that there's been tremendous ecological drainage going on in the South; the tremendous debt situation reflects the increasing disparity in terms of trade. One-quarter of the human population consumes three-quarters of the resources and energy of the planet. The overall ecological effect of this has now reached a point of global consequence. The ecological imbalance now threatens not only the lives of people in the South — as has been happening for decades with relatively little consciousness on the part of the North — but now affects the North as well.

We need to realize that human intelligence is present in every cell; we need to learn to listen to the inherent wisdom of the body. Similarly, a dialogue must now take place between North and South for the very survival of life itself. We need to learn from indigenous peoples, who show us that when they are left alone, they are able to develop very nutritious relationships to the Earth, and community-based relationships to one another, seeking a natural balance, a reciprocity between themselves and nature. Each human being on the planet is being called to develop what I would call a holistic development of oneself, which means allowing the mind, with its fear-based action schemes, to develop a sense of quiet so that it can listen inwardly and have access to new sources of information, which can lead to a very deep inner healing and integration.

If individuals can develop this integral, balanced understanding of themselves — for example, if they can learn to listen to the body, to care for the body, not in a narcissistic way, but in a natural way — this will lead to lifestyles that are health-oriented. People will know what their basic needs are. Many of the actions that we have been taking until now, many of the things that we felt we needed to consume, particularly "conspicuous consumption," have to do with fulfilling needs that are more related to self-esteem. Learning to love the self on all levels, so that self can develop fully, is intrinsic to the resolution of this North/South polarity.

People who have this kind of consciousness will realize that their personal freedom will be protected to the degree that they behave in ways that are consistent with other human beings being able to do the same thing; that the health of one person and all others are interdependent; and that the health of the individual and the health of the planet are one. The resolution of the North/South polarity has to do with freedom. I believe in freedom to its highest degree, but at the same time, freedom entails responsibility. The more freedom one has —the more means one has to transform nature through the instruments we have created— the greater the responsibilities one has.

This kind of consciousness is also the basis for balancing the East/West polarity. Someone who is balanced personally can, on the one hand, recognize the uniqueness of each human being, and on another level can recognize that all human beings are the same in their basic aspirations and their basic needs. To me this is basically a spiritual experience, in the sense that it's a consciousness of *communion* — of knowing all beings to be of one nature, of one reality. We need just this kind of multidimensional consciousness on the planet today.

PG: These are issues that are very abstract for most of the citizens of the planet. They're complex issues. How do you think education can enable people to address them?

AB: Education is where the keys lie, and this is why I was very interested in sharing this general framework with the conference participants. I think that what has been developing, which has been called holistic education, essentially has these kinds of aims as well — this vision of integral human development.

Photo © Joel Brown, Tucson, AZ

[Holistic educators need to see their work in the context of recent developments in international cooperation and global problem solving. In June, 1989, The Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development was issued by the "Seeking the True Meaning of Peace" conference in Costa Rica. This important global conference was sponsored by the University of Peace and other organizations, and featured the Dalai Lama and Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, both Nobel Peace Prize winners, as keynote speakers.] The Declaration's basic premise is that human rights thinking now has to be balanced by human responsibility thinking, particularly if we all wish to enjoy the integral human rights of peace and a healthy environment. The second premise is that the basic locus of responsibility is individuals, and therefore the emphasis that has been given for security and peace affairs to nation-states needs to be balanced with the consciousness of responsibility that citizens have.

The third principle in this Declaration is that individuals' responsibilities are of a universal scope. The only thing that stops us from having this become a reality is our consciousness; therefore, this is basically an educational problem. We will develop this consciousness the more we reflect on the interconnection between our specific actions on a daily living basis. The more ecological understanding we develop, the better we can realize the universal implications of all our actions. The fourth principle is that the dimension of peace, which refers primarily to human consciousness and human relations, and the dimension of sustainable living, which applies primarily to the macro-ecological domain, come together in the human organism as the relationship between consciousness and the body. Therefore, if each person wishes to fully develop his or her own unique potential, we need to develop ways of thinking that are peacefully oriented, both towards ourselves and towards others. There is not any inherent contradiction between a personal need to be peaceful, and the universal consequence that this will have.

Getting back to educational problems, it seems to me that one of the fundamental problems in the Western liberalized culture is the dominant 20th-century trend of utilitarian individualism, where each person struggles to develop one's own material needs and greed. But there are other forms of individualism, which have been more recognized in previous chapters of our history, namely an expressive individualism — the need that each human being has to be acknowledged by others for one's uniqueness and intrinsic worthiness. If we analyze conspicuous consumption at a deeper level, it seems to me that many people want to be acknowledged for what they have achieved because they have been reared through family patterns that have prepared people more to compete outwardly, and have not been given, in early childhood, a sense of the intrinsic worthiness of their being. As I understand it, this recognition of the inherent worthiness of each person has been an essential value orientation within the holistic education movement.

So the Declaration was offered to the Chicago conference for the development of a holistic, global education. I've been calling it a global core curriculum, using the concept first developed in the mid-70s by Dr. Robert Muller, the former assistant secretary general of the United Nations and chancellor of the University for Peace.[1] The conference issued certain recommendations adopting this idea. Work will now be carried forward; we will see how the holistic education movement can develop its global potential.

It seems to me, as I said before, that the United States has been shaping the consciousness of people around the

world; the influence of the motion picture and television industries has been tremendously powerful in particular. Most of what comes out of there contains really negative images of what human life and dignity and human relations are about. So it seems to me that the United States has a very strong moral responsibility for not only how it is shaping material culture around the world, but also moral culture — the consciousness domain. So basically we're talking about educational issues.

The conference had only a minority representation from other countries; it was basically a U.S. conference, as many events are. There is a very large group of people in this country who are very visionary, very concerned, very pure in their intentions — but often competing with one another in thousands and thousands of projects, and often haven't been effective, haven't found ways to have an impact on the mainstream political institutions and educational institutions. I was challenging the holistic educators gathered in Chicago to find ways to address not only their national concerns, but to find ways to become truly global in their work. This challenge was ultimately met wholeheartedly, and I personally have very [high] hopes about what will come from this.

PG: We're really at a critical juncture in society. People are looking toward this decade for major change around the planet. They see it as a turning point — as a decision-making time for humankind as to whether we're going to continue as a species. I gather from what you're saying that you're optimistic about the future. I'd like you to turn the clock forward ten years and share a vision that you would have for the year 2000.

AB: Within ten years we do have the capacity to foster a state of consciousness, in a majority of the population on this planet, of a sense of universal responsibility, based on such qualities as altruism, compassion, love. I think this is possible because none of this is extraneous. I think it's basic to human nature. Nobody wants to suffer needlessly. Many people right now are being driven more, are reacting more out of fear than out of positive visions of what is possible. This is natural, and what is basically entailed from an educational point of view is to help people understand what true happiness is, and to realize that a lot of things we have been taught until now to believe are the nature of happiness, are basically of the nature of suffering.

I think human beings come to this planet to develop our inner moral being, whatever our beliefs might be. There is agreement on the basic qualities that can be nurtured — basic ethical principles that are universal to all religious and secular traditions. I can see a time when a sense of universal responsibility will be the dominant lifestyle because everyone has an intrinsic human yearning to feel deeply connected, and in a meaningful relationship to the cosmos as a whole. It is certainly possible for people to have a consciousness of planetary citizenship, even while acting responsibly as citizens of their individual countries.

Note

1. See R. Muller, "A World Core Curriculum," *Holistic Education Review* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1990), pp. 31-34).

Photo © Joel Brown, Tucson, AZ

Committee Reports from the 1990 Chicago Conference

Organization Committee Report

Contact person: Lynn Stoddard, P.O. Box 582, Farmington, UT 84025.

What is our name? or What words could be in our name?

1. Generally agreed upon terms that could be included: "world," "alliance," "network," "international"
2. Leaned strongly toward including: "transforming," some people wanted "learning," some "education"
3. Want the title to be (ideally) inclusive of (and not contain buzzwords for) people in business/corporate world/lifelong learning/related professions
4. Some suggestions (no consensus, consider them food for thought):
   a. World Alliance for Transforming Education
   b. World Network for Redesigning Education
   c. World Alliance for Learning and Development
   d. Network for Building an Educational Community
   e. International Organization of Learning Networks
   f. World Alliance for Radical Change in Education
   g. C.O.R.E. (Coalition of Organizations for Redesigning Education)

What form of ongoing organization do we want to create?

Basic assumption: There are some among us (and others who are not here this weekend) who would like to be part of some sort of alliance, minimal in structure as it may be. Working from this assumption, we envision three possible levels of activities requiring ongoing organizational involvement.

Level one: Theoretically, this structure would require minimal organizational development

1. Have a (mission) statement and/or "manifesto" expressing our beliefs and commitments
2. Annotated directories of
   a. Individuals/consultants/skills bank/speakers bureau
   b. Groups with similar goals, beliefs, commitments
   c. Newsletters with which to network, submit articles, announce meetings, etc.
   d. Alternative schools
   e. Resources available: books, tapes, videotapes, projects, curricular materials
   f. Teacher-training programs; independent training programs
   g. Businesses with compatible beliefs that are open to such concepts
   h. Health organizations
3. Directory of research available
4. Liaison to other groups, formally and informally, through our already existing personal contacts (AHE, AHP, ASCD, NASSP, NEA, AFT, parenting groups, etc.)
5. Computer networking; include in this a conference clearing house (We realize that existing computer networks may well facilitate or already provide the resources we need, and we would simply tap into these and/or add to them when appropriate.)

Level two: Requires moderate organizational involvement

1. Newsletter

Level three: Requires maximum involvement

1. Set up a nonprofit foundation
2. Satellite conferencing
3. Publishing
4. Mail-order sales of materials
5. Regional conferences for parents, students, teachers, businesses, etc.
6. Create videos
7. Create a TV show
8. Grant writing
9. Membership
10. Lobbying — using our clout wherever possible — letting the network know when there is a bill on a national or local level to support or clamor against!
11. Providing a supportive vehicle for an individual to have as backing when approaching organizations
12. Having an organizational business card and logo that we can use as members of the group

What kind of organizational structure do we want?

Some beginning thoughts...

1. Ask for individuals or teams within the group to assume responsibility for particular areas of interest and work to clarify and bring into being parts of our shared vision
2. Have consultants who receive work from being listed in the directory cycle back some percentage of their earnings to the organization (10%?)
3. Have everyone subscribe to *Holistic Education Review* and add a newsletter and/or additional inserts to mail out to others
4. Have a minimal dues/fee structure to provide operating capital
5. Have a coordinating council to provide ongoing continuity and focusing of the energy
6. Staff(?)

Introducing the Global Alliance for Transforming Education

As we went to press, the steering committee established at the Chicago Conference met in Evergreen, Colorado, to respond to the groundswell of interest and momentum in the aftermath of the Chicago gathering. The committee issued the following press release.

This Steering Committee enthusiastically announces the formation of an evolving organization known as the Global Alliance for Transforming Education (GATE). Our collective mission is to:

Proclaim and promote
a vision of education
that fosters personal greatness,
social justice,
peace,
and sustainable development.

GATE recognizes that a paradigm shift is needed to effect mainstream education and seeks to accomplish this through programs and activities supported by its membership. GATE further recognizes that there are individuals and other educational, social, and political organizations throughout the world prepared to commit to the transformation of education. We encourage and invite all to participate in building this alliance.

GATE will hold its second annual conference, "Expanding the Common Vision," from May 30 through June 2, 1991, in the environs of Denver. This conference will further the momentum necessary to create a critical mass for the transformation of education. For more information on the 1991 conference contact Arnie Langberg at 303/860-9586.

Membership in GATE is $15 per year in North America and $22 elsewhere. We solicit your support. Send membership and inquiries to GATE, 4202 Ashwoody Trail, Atlanta, GA 30319, USA. 404/458-5678.

The steering committee of GATE is composed of Chris Brewer, Linda Campbell, *Ed Clark, Ph.D.*, Larry Emerson, *Phil Gang, Ph.D.*, Kathleen Hatley, Larry Hedges, Arnie Langberg, *Nina Lynn, Ph.D.*, Dorothy Maver, Ph.D., Lynn Stoddard, Joey Tanner. (Italics indicate executive triangle.)

Transforming Teacher Education Group Report

Contact person: Chris Brewer, P.O. Box 227, Kalispell, MT 59903

The goal of this group is to explore ways to expand holistic education by increasing courses in holistic education within undergraduate and graduate teacher-training programs. Various members of the group shared their existing programs and discussed problems and successes. The group isolated two problems in undergraduate education programs: the lack of expertise and interest among faculty and the general lack of interest from the students themselves. Several areas of action were brainstormed as possible modes for increasing interest and expertise by the "holistic education coalition." They were:

1. Provide an opportunity for college professors to join the coalition. A nonthreatening approach might be an introductory letter outlining the goals and benefits of the coalition, with an invitation to join the network.
2. Send a survey to education departments, listing various holistic teaching methods and determining how much they are taught and used in education courses. This might also include an invitation to join the coalition and become more familiar with these technologies.
3. Have a resource list available for college professors, listing consultants in holistic education who would be available for training, summer courses, or consultation.
4. Sponsor a convention designed to inform college professors about the holistic teaching methods, such as a "Transforming Teacher Education in Colleges" conference.
5. Sponsor an accredited summer course for college professors in holistic education techniques and principles.
6. Expand the number of articles in journals and the popular press to substantiate results in holistic education.
7. Obtain feedback from students within undergraduate education programs as to their desires and needs. Also, obtain feedback from teachers who have taken extension courses on their problems and successes in implementing these ideas.
8. It was also noted that expanding the awareness of holistic programs to parents would elicit pressure to incorporate these principles within elementary, secondary, and ultimately college curriculum.

Global Education Committee Report

Contact: Nina Lynn, P.O. Box 217, Newfane, VT 05345

Nationally and internationally recognized innovative educators and parents, representing all learning levels, endorse the "Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development" (see text which follows) as a set of principles to be explored through holistic education. In addition, we recommend the following actions by the U.S. Government regarding the United Nations:

1. Pay all past dues to UNESCO, rejoin, and stay current.
2. Support a motion to bring the "Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development" to a vote for adoption by the General Assembly.
3. Become a signator supporting the University of Peace.
4. Support the development of an educational component, in accord with the principles of the attached declaration, for the 1992 Environment and Development Conference to be held in Brazil.
5. Support the proclamation by the United Nations for an International Year for Global Education.

We further recommend that future holistic education conferences explore and develop global core curricula in accordance with the principles set forth in the declaration.

Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development

Adopted by the International Conference in Search of the True Meaning of Peace, June 25-30, 1989, San Jose, Costa Rica.
Submitted to the United Nations General Assembly by the Government of Costa Rica.
Endorsed by the International Conference on Creating a Common Vision for Holistic Education, Chicago, USA, June 3, 1990.

Preamble*

Considering that [major UN reports] have recognized the imminent danger threatening the existence of the Earth as a result of war and environmental destruction...

Recognizing that the world has been evolving towards interdependence and the beginnings of a world community...

Recalling that, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable human rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...

Convinced that there is an urgent need for a greater awareness of the unity of life and of the special character of each of the expressions of life...

The Government of Costa Rica offers the present Declaration as an instrument for reflection and compromise.

Chapter I. Unity of the World

Article 1. Everything which exists is part of an interdependent universe. All living creatures depend on each other for their existence, well-being and development.

Article 2. All human beings are an inseparable part of nature, on which culture and human civilization have been built.

Article 3. Life on Earth is abundant and diverse. It is sustained by the unhindered functioning of natural systems which ensure the provision of energy, air, water and nutrients for all living creatures. Every manifestation of life on Earth is unique and essential and must therefore be respected and protected without regard to its apparent value to human beings.

continued

* The Preamble consists of 17 statements and 11 references to previous UN documents. It is considerably abridged here for the purpose of brevity and conciseness. The main body of the Declaration is here presented in its entirety. Write to Editor, *Holistic Education Review* (P.O. Box 1476, Greenfield, MA 01302) for a copy of the full, unabridged document.

Chapter II. Unity of the Human Family

Article 4. All human beings are an inseparable part of the human family and depend on each other for their existence, well-being and development. Every human being is a unique expression and manifestation of life and has a separate contribution to make to life on Earth. Each human being has fundamental and inalienable rights and freedoms, without distinction of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic status or any other social situation.

Article 5. All human beings have the same basic needs and the same fundamental aspirations to be satisfied. All individuals have the right to development, the purpose of which is to promote attainment of the full potential of each person.

Chapter III. The Alternatives Facing Humankind and Universal Responsibility

Article 6. Responsibility is an inherent aspect of any relation in which human beings are involved. This capacity to act responsibly in a conscious, independent, unique and personal manner is an inalienable creative quality of every human being. There is no limit to its scope or depth other than that established by each person for him or herself. The more activities human beings take on and become involved in, the more they will grow and derive strength.

Article 7. Of all living creatures, human beings have the unique capacity to decide consciously whether they are protecting or harming the quality and conditions of life on Earth. In reflecting on the fact that they belong to the natural world and occupy a special position as participants in the evolution of natural processes, people can develop, on the basis of selflessness, compassion and love, a sense of universal responsibility towards the world as an integral whole, towards the protection of nature and the promotion of the highest potential for change, with a view to creating those conditions which will enable them to achieve the highest level of spiritual and material well-being.

Article 8. At this critical time in history, the alternatives facing humankind are crucial. In directing their actions towards the attainment of progress in society, human beings have frequently forgotten the inherent role they play in the natural world and the indivisible human family, and their basic needs for a healthy life. Excessive consumption, abuse of the environment and aggression between peoples have brought the natural processes of the Earth to a critical stage which threatens their survival. By reflecting on these issues, individuals will be capable of discerning their responsibility and thus reorienting their conduct towards peace and sustainable development.

Chapter IV. Reorientation Towards Peace and Sustainable Development

Article 9. Given that all forms of life are unique and essential, that all human beings have the right to development and that both peace and violence are the product of the human mind, it is from the human mind that a sense of responsibility to act and think in a peaceful manner will develop. Through peace-oriented awareness, individuals will understand the nature of those conditions which are necessary for their well-being and development.

Article 10. Being mindful of their sense of responsibility towards the human family and the environment in which they live and of the need to think and act in a peaceful manner, human beings have the obligation to act in a way that is consistent with the observance of and respect for inherent human rights and to ensure that their consumption of resources is in keeping with the satisfaction of the basic needs of all.

Article 11. When members of the human family recognize that they are responsible to themselves and to present and future generations for the conservation of the planet, as protectors of the natural world and promoters of its continued development, they will be obliged to act in a rational manner in order to ensure sustainable life.

Article 12. Human beings have a continuing responsibility when setting up, taking part in or representing social units, associations and institutions, whether public or private. In addition, all such entities have a responsibility to promote peace and sustainability, and to put into practice the educational goals which are conducive to that end. These goals include the fostering of awareness of the interdependence of human beings among themselves and with nature and the universal responsibility of individuals to solve the problems which they have engendered through their attitudes and actions in a manner that is consistent with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Let us be faithful to the privilege of our responsibility.

The Chicago Statement on Education

Adopted by 80 Holistic Educators at a Conference near Chicago, Illinois, June 3, 1990

As we approach the twenty-first century, many of our institutions and professions are entering a period of profound change. We in education are beginning to recognize that the structure, purposes, and methods of our profession were designed for an historical period which is now coming to a close. The time has come to transform education so as to address the human and environmental challenges which confront us.

We believe that education for this new era must be *holistic*. The holistic perspective is the recognition that all life on this planet is interconnected in countless profound and subtle ways. The view of Earth suspended alone in the black void of space underscores the importance of a global perspective in dealing with social and educational realities. Education must nurture respect for the global community of humankind.

Holism emphasizes the challenge of creating a sustainable, just, and peaceful society in harmony with the Earth and its life. It involves an ecological sensitivity — a deep respect for both indigenous and modern cultures as well as the diversity of life forms on the planet. Holism seeks to expand the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world by celebrating our innate human potentials — the intuitive, emotional, physical, imaginative, and creative, as well as the rational, logical, and verbal.

Holistic education recognizes that human beings seek *meaning*, not just facts or skills, as an intrinsic aspect of their full and healthy development. We believe that only healthy, fulfilled human beings create a healthy society. Holistic education nurtures the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

Holistic education is not one particular curriculum or methodology; it is a set of working assumptions which include the following:

1. Education is a dynamic, open human relationship.
2. Education cultivates a critical awareness of the many contexts of learners' lives — moral, cultural, ecological, economic, technological, political.
3. All persons hold vast multi-faceted potentials which we are only beginning to understand. Human intelligence is expressed through diverse styles and capacities, all of which we need to respect.
4. Holistic thinking involves contextual, intuitive, creative, and physical ways of knowing.
5. Learning is a lifelong process. All life situations may facilitate learning.
6. Learning is both an inner process of self-discovery and a cooperative activity.
7. Learning is active, self-motivated, supportive, and encouraging of the human spirit.
8. A holistic curriculum is interdisciplinary, integrating both community and global perspectives.

Commentary on "The Chicago Statement on Education"

Where Do We Go From Here?

by Ron Miller

"The Chicago Statement on Education" was drafted in order to advance a holistic perspective in the public dialogue on education, and it was sent out, with a press release, to nearly 150 publications and organizations concerned with education. Those of us who wrote the document recognized that it was not a fixed, complete set of principles but an invitation to further discussion. The Statement originated as a paper, "Elements of the Holistic Education Vision," which Nina Lynn and I had written and circulated before the conference as a point of departure for discussions. A committee of about ten persons then had only one afternoon to discuss and rework this paper, and it was finally approved without much debate by the 75 or so participants who were present at the close of the conference.

In other words, "The Chicago Statement" is only the beginning of a long process of reflection, interpretation, and dialogue, which we hope will bring serious attention to holistic ideas. It is not, as some have feared, a categorical definition of holistic education meant to separate the true believers from the infidels. On the contrary, as other critics have already pointed out, the Statement makes general observations more than it offers any clear recommendations for policy and practice. It is a challenge to all of us to discuss and revise and refine our views, to compare perspectives, to talk with each other about what we believe in and why. In this spirit, I have been pondering the Statement in the weeks since the conference, and am in this article expressing my thoughts about it. In some ways, I have come to believe that the Statement, like the original "Elements of the Holistic Education Vision," does not state a holistic position as fully or powerfully as it could. It is a good start — but I would like to explore what lies beyond it. I offer these thoughts by way of inviting all readers to join the discussion.

First of all, I believe that we need to consider this document in relation to the culture and politics of public schooling today. The mainstream educational reform movement of the 1980s (by which I mean the political and educational fallout from the *Nation at Risk* report) has engaged the attention and efforts of thousands of educators as well as leading foundations, corporations, think tanks, commissions, politicians, and the mass media. This concerted attempt to reform public education is a response to severe and unsolved social problems — youth apathy and violence, urban decay, the drug epidemic, economic dislocations, and so on. Its approach essentially consists of seeking a stricter and more effective *social discipline* over the untamed problems of American culture — that is, demanding higher standards and more effective performance in the service of societal goals that are determined by elite professionals and institutions (notably business).

In key ways, the "at risk" movement of the 1980s resembles the Progressive movement of the early 1900s.[1] The Progressives spoke of "social efficiency" and "scientific management"; today's reformers are concerned with "cultural literacy" and economic "competitiveness" — new approaches to similar goals. The Progressives gave us IQ tests and standardized college entrance exams; the "at-risk" crusaders seek to make those tests more pervasive and rigorous. The Progressives turned school administration from a pedagogical task into a managerial profession on the factory model, and instituted the bureaucratic credentialing of teachers; today's reformers aim to fine tune, without seriously questioning, this hierarchical system of control. The Progressives were worried about the assimilation of peasant immigrant populations into the emerging industrial social order; the "at-risk" reformers see children as raw material for the economic and technological supremacy of the United States in some deadly serious game of international competition.

"The Chicago Statement on Education" challenges this entire industrial-age mindset. The Statement aims to realign the national dialogue on education away from economic and political agendas, toward the recognition and realization of human potentials. It explicitly endorses an holistic worldview: "All life on this planet is interconnected." It calls for transnational understanding and cooperation: "Education must nurture respect for the global community of humankind." It charges education with the task of "creating a sustainable, just, and peaceful society." It places the emphasis of education on "healthy, fulfilled human beings," and it focuses on the needs and qualities of the learner, rather than on the predetermined agendas of the curriculum. All of these positions stand in stark contrast to the bulk of "restructuring" efforts of the past decade. If the Statement is taken seriously by educators and policy makers, then it could transform the national debate over the course education will take in the late 20th century.

But the Statement is too vague and evasive about some important issues. These are principles on which we probably never will achieve unanimous agreement, even within the holistic movement itself — which is why they

are not mentioned in the Statement. But I think we need to contend with these issues and discuss them more willingly. I hope to provoke such discussion by stating the issues right now:

1. The Statement does not explicitly tackle the issue of standardized grading and assessment. It does not offer a strong enough critique of the present culture's obsession with quantitative, comparative measurement. What purpose do grades and standardized test scores serve? Do they enhance the learning experience of all students, no matter what their different styles and passions — or do they serve the goal of "social efficiency" by separating society's sheep (professionals and management executives) from its goats (everyone else)? If the latter is the case — and I believe it is — then we ought to get rid of them. Of course, this raises significant questions we need to face if we are truly interested in creating humane, democratic education.

2. The document does not recognize the pathetic conditions in which millions of children are forced to grow up. It does not mention the desperate plight of so many children in developing countries, and it fails to confront the contradictions in the myth of American prosperity. More than 20% of this wealthy nation's children now live below the poverty level — a figure that is *rising* steadily. Thousands are homeless. Child abuse — physical, sexual, and emotional — has reached a disturbing level. The mindless violence and hedonism of the mass media — television, movies, popular music, magazines, advertising — are indiscriminately unleashed on adolescents and even very young children. Families are stressed by economic difficulties, changed gender roles, alcoholism, divorce and domestic violence; millions of children return to empty homes every day. And even middle-class and wealthy families are not immune from this unraveling of the social fabric.

We need to address the social, political, and economic roots of these serious problems. The "at-risk" people, like most mainstream reformers throughout the history of American education, think it is enough to fiddle around with the curriculum and tighten discipline. They're wrong and we need to say so. The emperor has no clothes: public education is not a solution to problems that are deeply rooted in our culture and our inhumane social institutions.

3. Although conference participants reached a consensus that students have the right to make significant choices in their own education, this important assertion does not appear in the Statement. It should. Beyond this, the document should connect education with the burning global issue of human rights and with the important "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." The document should enumerate some of these basic rights; for example, children should be absolutely free from physical violence (corporal punishment), and they should be free to express themselves (the document should deplore the outrageous censorship of student newspapers and speech, for example). In short, young people should be given the human rights that adults claim — of course, with the concomitant responsibilities in exercising them.

4. The Statement does not specifically challenge the bureaucratization of education today. It should explicitly recognize that the centralization of educational authority in top-heavy administrative structures, federal and state bureaucracies, test and textbook publishers, and (as a reaction to all of this) powerful labor unions is not conducive to the practice of education as a "dynamic, open human relationship," as working assumption number one phrases it. This phrase has been criticized as mere fluff to which any educator would agree — but the important point it implicitly makes is that true education, rooted in genuine relationship between teacher and learner, is highly frustrated when it is ruled by centralized, hierarchical power structures, as it is today.

5. Finally — and this is probably the root of the matter, underlying all of the other issues — the document says nothing about education's role in building a participatory, democratic social order. What is the point of providing happy, nurturing learning environments for children if they must spend their adult lives filling narrowly prescribed economic roles in a distinctly hierarchical society? How can we seriously discuss "global" and "peaceful" values without examining the deeply rooted problems of racism, sexism, and social class right in the United States? We need to examine the barriers that discourage people from full participation in the political and economic life of the nation; I would argue that the increasingly concentrated power of government, corporations, and the information media needs to be seriously addressed.

This issue turned out to be surprisingly controversial at the Chicago conference. For various reasons, several of the educators *opposed* the inclusion of language calling for democratic values in education! One reason was strictly pedagogical: some educators argue that democratic decision making is not developmentally appropriate for young children. These educators are not antidemocratic, but they believe that genuine freedom and responsibility in adulthood require a foundation of security, derived from benevolent authority, in early childhood. This is an interesting question, worth a great deal of investigation and thought. Assuming that a fully democratic society is what we are striving for, can we determine *empirically*, by observing child development, which pedagogical approaches nurture democratic life most effectively?

Another objection to a social-democratic critique of schooling was raised by a number of educators who work with the business community in developing innovative programs for public education. These people argued that business is actively working to develop more creative and flexible thinking in its ranks, and is thus highly supportive of many holistic education projects. They argued that it would be counterproductive to alienate corporate allies by blaming educational inequities on the economic system. Business leaders, they claimed, are sincerely interested in expanding human potentials, and their support has contributed greatly to the success of some highly innovative programs. I find this perspective more unsettling than the previous one, for it involves ideological questions more than empirical ones.

Indeed, at the other end of the spec-

trum are educators for whom democratic values are the very touchstone of holistic philosophy. They insist that education must first address issues of inequality, disempowerment, racism, sexism, social class, and the like, if it is to contribute seriously to human development and a humane society. For them, the root of the problem is precisely the corporate domination of society, and they consider any approach that fails to recognize this to be unrealistic and impotent. As one conference participant argued, it is frivolous to say that business is interested in human potentials, when the very essence of the modern corporation is the exploitation of human (and planetary) resources for the maximum profit of the few who control it.

Granted that the business community is giving important help to some superb educational projects, these are issues that we need to address. *Can* a social-economic order based on the power and influence of massive corporations ultimately accept the emergence of a full-fledged holistic worldview? As I argue in my editorial in this issue (p. 2), the corporate-capitalist model of society certainly has had its benefits — but lacking a foundation of love, lacking a reverence for life and a passion for justice, this model does not offer a great deal of promise for a truly humane and democratic culture. As power and wealth, and control over resources, livelihoods, and information become ever more concentrated and centralized, modern American society moves ever further from its Jeffersonian democratic ideals.

Already there are ominous signs that an oligarchic power structure is gradually eroding social concern for civil liberties, human rights, freedom of expression, and provision for basic human needs. We have billions of dollars to keep the "defense" industry in business — but very little for the thousands of people without homes or the millions without adequate medical care. Thousands of children are being abused, and millions are turning to drugs and violence out of their desperation, but our nation's leaders find flag burning to be a more serious threat to the life of the community. The essential problem is that our culture is ruled by economic and technological values — efficiency, productivity, profitability, standardization, and conformity — rather than by humane and spiritual values such as compassion, justice, peace, and self-fulfillment. Who upholds these technocratic values? Who benefits from them — and who suffers? We must not be afraid to ask such questions.

Indeed, our culture's technocratic values have frightening implications for education, and these are evident in the rhetoric of the commissions and politicians calling for educational reform. A few months ago House Majority Leader (and former Presidential candidate) Richard Gephardt was quoted as saying that the federal government should tell the states, before handing out education funds, "We need kids who look like this.... If you can produce more of these, you get so many dollars for each one of these." This is not education for a democratic society — this is education for the fascist nightmare depicted in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where people are made to order for the requirements of the ruling class! Such an education is the epitome of "social efficiency." Is this where we are heading?

The holistic vision of a true global community rooted in cooperation and love is deeply threatened by the materialistic, technocratic worldview of the industrial age. It is not enough for us to proclaim the vision and wait for the world to recognize it — we have a lot of hard thinking and hard work to do first! The Bushes and Bennetts and Gephardts are firmly in power, while we are still on the fringe. Our vision is not a magic wand — it is the rallying cry for a major cultural revolution.

As my colleague Ed Clark would say, these are certainly "questions worth arguing about"! What do *you* think?

Note

1. This Progressive movement (ca. 1900-1915) should not be confused with holistic "progressive education"; it was a cultural movement led by conservative, influential figures in politics, academia, and industry, supported by educators who attempted to turn their field into a quantitative science.

Book Reviews

What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture

by Ron Miller
Published by Holistic Education Press
(Brandon, VT 05733-1007)
1990; $18.95 paperback

Reviewed by Donald W. Oliver

Ron Miller has written perhaps the first book that carefully documents the history of the three major educational movements in American history which constantly compete for citizen attention. What I would call the mainstream movement he traces back to the rigid moralistic cosmology of early Protestantism characterized by a fundamental distrust of human nature as well as nature itself. As Miller sees it, this earlier thread was woven into the fabric of a rapidly industrializing society which stressed the professionalizing and technologizing of every aspect of American life. And both of these elements are now embedded in our schools.

Thus early education of the Horace Mann variety stressed literacy for Godliness, social discipline to control irrational passions, and the celebration of the nativist, Anglo-Saxon core in the society. Likewise, the second thread, industrialization and scientism, stressed the need for talented scientific specialists and economic problem solvers. Like its earlier counterpart, it claimed a dualism between mind and spirit, humans and nature.

Opposed to these two threads of mainstream American education, Miller develops an alternative educational history with a different set of heroes. This is the history of what he calls *holistic education*; its historical heroes are persons such as Froebel, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, Ripley, Alcott, Parker, and, to some degree, Dewey. Among its modern figures are Wilber, Pearce, Holt, Neill, and Dennison. The center of Miller's definition of *holistic* is the inclusion of a spiritual element to the human experience. This spiritual element presumably includes, or in some way ties together, what others call the mental/cognitive, the physical, as well as the transpersonal and cultural.

The power of *What Are Schools For?* — and I think it is a substantial and powerful book — comes from two sources: First, it grounds modern educational programs and efforts at reform in longstanding historical events in the society. This meets the very desperate need Americans have to understand the persistence of our present educational system. We often have the illusion that it can rather easily be dismantled and reassembled along the lines of some more efficient or convenient or humane model. Miller shows with graceful and compelling prose that its roots run too deep for any easy or painless shift in orientation. Second, the book outlines the modern movement Miller calls *holism* and shows that holism too has deep and substantial roots, both worldwide and in America.

My major reservation about the book relates to a kind of fuzzy exclusion of the pragmatists from holistic education because of their failure to embrace the spiritual domain of human experience. I think one can make the argument that Miller's holism — and its quarrel with pragmatism — comes ironically from its sympathetic connection with some elements of "born again" Christianity. I would note its overly optimistic interpretation of the human condition and its rather romantic exclusion of the darker facts of the natural world of which we are all a part. (After all, most animals do live by preying upon each other, and the long-term future for most species on the planet is very likely extinction.) James, Whitehead, and Dewey faced very squarely what it means to place humans back into the natural world that Darwin had rediscovered. These same issues are now being worked over by nonreductionist scientists such as Stephen Jay Gould, E.O. Wilson, and Charles Birch. It is pretty unlikely that we live on a clearly progressive, positive planet. We live on an evolving, changing planet, and not all of the changes work in favor of the human condition.

But all of this is to stress another important value of the book: It lays out the holistic/spiritual school of educational thought within a sufficiently specific historical context to invite intelligent dialogue and debate. Unlike some other works with a New Age stripe, this work gives us significant intellectual substance with which to work — beyond simplistic claims and counterclaims supporting or damning holistic education as too touchy-feely or as the way to save the human condition.

The book fills an important need in the educational literature having to do with the history of curriculum and the history of educational reform. I intend to add it as required reading in my courses in these fields.

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The Wholeness Principle: Dynamics of Unity Within Science, Religion and Society

by Anna F. Lemkow
Published by Quest Books/ Theosophical Publishing House
(P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60189)
322 pages; $11.95 paperback

Reviewed by Ron Miller

Holistic education is a significant cultural movement because it is grounded in a revolutionary transformation of the modern worldview. *The Wholeness Principle* is the most comprehensive description of the emerging holistic worldview to appear so far. Anna Lemkow has brought together an impressive variety of ideas from the sciences, humanities, and world religions to demonstrate that the mechanistic, reductionistic assumptions underlying modern culture are no longer tenable and are soon to be replaced. Several fine books have already presented this case — including Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point*, Theodore Roszak's *Where the Wasteland Ends* and *Person/ Planet*, and Jeremy Rifkin's *Entropy* —

but Lemkow's *The Wholeness Principle* explores the philosophical roots of holism in greater depth.

Simply stated, the holistic worldview is a contemporary expression of the *perennial philosophy* — humankind's ancient understanding of its place in the unfolding cosmos. According to Lemkow, the principle themes of the perennial philosophy are these: "The oneness and unity of all life; the all-pervasiveness of ultimate Reality or the Absolute; the multi-dimensionality or hierarchical character of existence" (p. 23). The implications of these principles are far-reaching: They call for a sense of reverence for the connectedness between humanity and all of nature; they make it obvious that no single perspective, theory, or ideology can encompass the whole of reality (an awareness expressed in modern physics by the complementarity principle); and they force us to realize that every thing, every event, is a complex, organic, meaningful structure which cannot adequately be understood by breaking it into parts.

According to the holistic view, the universe is evolving — it is not static — and its evolution is meaningful, moving toward greater integration — it is not random. Lemkow draws a parallel between the traditional Oriental doctrine of *karma* and recent scientific theories (particularly chaos theory and holographic thinking) to show that *order pervades the universe.* What a mechanistic approach treats in terms of discrete parts, a holistic approach understands in terms of relationships, fields, patterns, and purposes. Mechanistic psychology, for example, likens the human brain to a computer — an electrical-chemical machine. But computers, observes Lemkow, must be programmed in order to function. Reductionism recognizes no programmer, but holism asserts that there is, in fact, a meaningful, all-pervasive whole underlying the physical diversity of the universe, which may be described as mind or consciousness or intelligence. What we can know through the senses or through the medium of verbal description simply does not encompass this ground of being; our knowledge, says Lemkow, "is always open-ended, never final" (p. 49).

What we cannot comprehend through our limited ways of knowing we must not attempt to control or suppress. Holism is essentially a reverence for the spontaneous unfolding of life. "In the perennial philosophy, life ... is the Great Mystery. Blavatsky stated that it is an eternal energy, uncreated in that it is underived from other forms. It is that which impels every entity to struggle to express itself, by means of self-unfoldment, self-regulation, self-determination" (p. 126). The educational implications of this view are enormous; we are called to see the learner as an expression of self-unfolding life rather than as a captive recipient of our limited understandings.

Lemkow is clearly influenced by the teachings of the theosophical movement, and frequently cites its founder, Helena P. Blavatsky. Indeed, it would appear that Blavatsky's work and the theosophical movement have played a large role in preserving the perennial philosophy in this age of reductionism. But the importance of *The Wholeness Principle* lies in Lemkow's ability to discover similar holistic principles in leading-edge science and philosophy. She reviews the ideas of leading physicists (including Einstein, Bohr, David Bohm, F. David Peat), biologists and chemists (Erich Jantsch, James Lovelock, Brian C. Goodwin, Ilya Prigogine, Rupert Sheldrake, and the Santiago School), brain researchers (Wilder Penfield, Sir John Eccles), philosophers (Alfred North Whitehead, Michael Polanyi, Arthur Koestler), and other theorists (Teilhard de Chardin, Pitirim Sorokin, Ken Wilber, Hazel Henderson, E.F. Schumacher, Ludwig von Bertalanffy's systems theory, James Gleick's chaos theory) — and also includes some impressive but lesser known Asian thinkers (notably Haridas Chaudhuri).

What emerges is a compelling picture of the emerging holistic worldview. Clearly, this way of thinking is not the private fantasy of a few romantics, mystics, or dreamers! Lemkow demonstrates that holistic thinking is far more *inclusive* than the fragmented, materialistic assumptions of modern culture, and thus far better able to address the complex, global problems that humanity now faces. Lemkow emphasizes that the scientific-industrial age has (among other things) created an interdependent global community, linked by communications, travel, trade, and common ecological and economic challenges, which is unprecedented in human history. The holistic paradigm in science and philosophy is a *necessary* response to the excesses of the industrial age, which now threaten humanity — and all of life — on a global scale.

> The image of a blind mechanical world, and ourselves as computers, inevitably underlies the normative practice of seeking personal advantage and letting the chips fall where they may. The emphasis on individualism and competitiveness, on the part alike of individuals, business enterprises, communities, and nations, has been part and parcel of the Western-inspired scientific-and-industrial culture.... This configuration of thought has not surprisingly led to the present ills of unbridled egotism, greed for material acquisitions or power, rapacious ecological exploitation, cynicism, corruption and terrorism. (p. 12)

The last section of *The Wholeness Principle* attempts to apply the holistic worldview directly to the pressing social and economic problems of the world today. Lemkow argues that since these problems are interconnected and transcultural, they require holistic solutions rather than narrowly technical or nationalistic ones. Yet I found this section to be the least compelling in the book. Its portrayal of social and economic alternatives does not seem inspired by the same depth of spiritual vision that Lemkow cultivated in previous chapters. It discusses holistic economic theory (Lemkow is an economist who worked for the United Nations for 30 years), but does not give an adequate picture of a possible post-industrial, community-based way of organizing economic life. Surprisingly, this section ignores the Green movement and its radical struggle to blend political and spiritual insights. Charlene Spretnak's work, for example, would have been immensely relevant here. Or Joanna Macy's. Or Matthew Fox's. If we are to transform the decrepit materialism of the modern age into a truly holistic civilization, then we will need the important insights of spiritual feminism and deep ecology, but Lemkow has left them out.

Lemkow also seems unfamiliar with the holistic education movement. She does note the importance of peace education, and in a significant passage in the preface recognizes that "the present educational environment" is a barrier to the full emergence of the holistic worldview: "Remedying this situation will be crucial, I believe, for world peace and justice" (p. xv). This certainly thrusts our work onto center stage — and I think she is right. But the book does not explore what the wholeness principle really would involve when applied to education. Perhaps Lemkow's next book will do so: she discovered *Holistic Education Review* in a bookstore in New York and phoned me just as I was finishing her book in preparation for this review! Needless to say, we had a lot to talk about.

Anyway, *The Wholeness Principle* is already so wide in scope, exploring so many diverse fields of thought, that it would be unfair to expect still more from one volume. More than any other book I have seen, this book explores and describes the *holistic* in holistic education. I heartily welcome it to the literature and strongly recommend it to everyone involved or interested in holistic education.

A New Look at Schools

by Daniel Greenberg
Published by Sudbury Valley School Press
(2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701)
1988; 123 pages

Reviewed by Lynn Stoddard

Daniel Greenberg is one of the founders and leaders of the private Sudbury Valley School for students aged from four through nineteen in Framingham, Massachusetts. It has been successfully operating since 1968. Sudbury is the only school, of which Greenberg is aware, that attempted to form itself on the basis of a "thoroughgoing new assessment of the current and future world scene; and was designed from the outset to deal de novo with the fundamentals of educational theory."

From this background Greenberg writes with the intention of "re-examining the meaning of education, teaching, learning and schooling," and sets forth his personal philosophy and a "model for the practice of education." Greenberg argues that for some time we have needed a "completely fresh view of the educational enterprise and its role in the overall cultural setting." He introduces his book with a list of twelve techniques that have been tried over the past 30 years to solve educational crises, all of which have failed to make any difference.

Greenberg defines learning as the process of model building: "creating, refining and modifying a person's world view" as it relates to the culture or "shared value system of a group of people." In the United States, this means that people will assimilate a unique "cultural pluralism" that embraces many cultures and allows them to coexist in relative peace. In addition to this value system, Greenberg lists other value systems that are somewhat unique to our country. These are sociopolitical democracy, proprietorship, and innovation.

Greenberg takes the reader on an interesting trip through three stages of cultures and describes the kinds of schools that are an inherent part of each. These are preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial. He maintains that we are now moving rapidly into a postindustrial era while we cling to a system of education that no longer serves our needs.

Greenberg proposes that we develop transition schools in which self-initiated learning and play are the main ingredients. He uses the term "unfettered model building" to describe this kind of learning, and he calls for schools in which there are "no restrictions, no controls, no direction, and no barriers." During the transition period, schools would continue to be provided that would "incarcerate" children in a safe environment under the "general care of adults chosen to fill a caretaker function." These schools would increasingly become "bases" from which children would make "forays" into the community and return to "practice model building" until the base is no longer needed.

A New Look at Schools is challenging, provocative reading. It does provide a "new look," one that puts traditional schooling on trial. Although I may not agree with everything Greenberg says, I am impressed with his scholarship and deep analysis of our changing society and the schools that reflect our value system. This book is worth reading, but it is not entertaining. If you like to grapple with ideas, it will fill a niche that we need to confront as we build a vision of the future of education in America. Just be prepared to struggle with abstract thinking and have some cherished notions challenged.

Lynn Stoddard is on the steering committee of the Global Alliance for Transforming Education. He was a public school principal for over 30 years.

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