Holistic Education Review

Volume 7, Number 3 Autumn 1994

Executive Editor
Jeffrey Kane
Associate Editor
Diana M. Feige

Editorial Board Members
Paul Byers
Edward T. Clark, Jr.
William Crain
Francine Cuccia
David Elkind
Philip S. Gang
Maxine Greene
Gerald Karnow
Kathleen Kesson
Jonathan Kozol
Carol Levine
Jack Miller
Ron Miller
Nel Noddings
Jack Petrash
Madhu Suri Prakash
David Purpel
Douglas Sloan
Huston Smith
David Sobel
Sheldon Stoff
Dilafruz R. Williams
Arthur Zajonc

Publisher
Charles S. Jakiela
Graphic Design
S. K. Sagarin
Anything Graphic
Managing Editor
Kimberly Werner
Compositor
Janet Mondlak

©1994 by
Holistic Education Press

Table of Contents

The Spiritual Dimensions of Curriculum

Editorial. Recollections: An Introduction to the Spiritual Dimensions of Curriculum. Kathleen Kesson 2

The Spiritual Foundations of Liberal Education: Classical Symmetry, Modern Duality, and Postmodern Contextuality. Dale T. Snauwaert 7

The Challenge of the Spiritual: Spirituality in U.K. Schools. Philip Woods and Glenys Woods 17

Rational Schooling and the Decontextualized Learner: Moral Dimensions of the Implicit Curricula from a Batesonian Perspective. G. Thomas Ray 25

A Critical Strategy for Cultivating Spirituality in Education. James G. Henderson and Janice K. Hutchison 35

Transcending Spirituality: On the Hegemony of Beneficence. Richard C. Pipan 41

Special Education Bureaucracy and the Dilemma of Modernism. Michael M. Warner 51

Book Reviews

The Holistic Teacher by John P. Miller (Reviewed by Ron Miller) 62

Building Community in Schools by Thomas J. Sergiovanni (Reviewed by Michael Umphrey) 63

Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World: Multicultural Education for Young Children by Patricia G. Ramsey (Reviewed by Peggy Placier) 65

Cover photo and design by Stephen K. Sagarin.

Holistic Education Review is an independent journal that aims to stimulate discussion and application of all person-centered educational ideas and methods. Manuscripts (an original and three copies) should be submitted to the Editor, Jeffrey Kane, School of Education, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY 11530, typed double spaced throughout with ample margins. Since a double blind review process is used, no indications of the author's identity should be included within the text after the title page. Style must conform to that described in the current edition of the *APA Publication Manual*.

Holistic Education Review (ISSN 0898-0926) is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by Holistic Education Press, 39 Pearl Street, Brandon, VT 05733-1007. Annual subscription rates are $35 for individuals and $65 for libraries and other multi-user environments. (Foreign subscribers, please add $9 to above rates.) Back issues are available at $10 per copy. Second-class postage is paid at Brandon, VT, and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Holistic Education Review**, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328.

Editorial

Recollections

An Introduction to the Spiritual Dimensions of Curriculum

For countless generations of the planet's history, human beings have been born into relatively stable systems of meaning, their personal development guided by the tacit morphogenesis of culture. For better or for worse, these meaning-systems have provided internally consistent frameworks that enabled people to make sense out of their world. In these "postmodern" times, meanings have been cut loose from their historic moorings, leaving many people and cultures adrift on shallow, relativistic seas.

Coincidentally or not, this loss of traditional ways of meaning-making seems to have been accompanied by a general "breakdown" of many world systems, and we are dealing with such traumatic collective events as the disintegration of nations and ethnic rivalries, the disruption and dislocation of traditional cultures, shifts in the customary roles and structures of families, rampant capitalism and accompanying economic uncertainty, the plague of AIDS, rising poverty, violence and crime, and ecological decline. It is an historical moment in which it is easier to identify what is crumbling than it is to imagine the shape of what is to come. The very tenuousness of our times has contributed not only to a loss of meaning, but to a crisis of value and purpose as well, perhaps most apparent in the alienation and anomie of our youth.

While some contemporary thinkers celebrate the relativism we find ourselves immersed in, others question whether humans can survive and thrive in the absence of a guiding "myth," or coherent story about the world. Huston Smith, for example, suggests that it is impossible for humans to live indefinitely with the world "out-of-focus," and that the will-to-order is fundamental to the human make-up. Consistent with this idea, a number of books have been written recently that begin the construction of such a new cultural story. While not proposing a new "grand narrative" that might subsume differences between people and cultures, they describe an emerging "spiritualization" of Western culture. Morris Berman's *The Reenchantment of the World*, his *Coming to Our Senses*, Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point*, and David Griffin's *The Reenchantment of Science* are just a few texts that have influenced my thinking about this phenomenon. Hundreds of other books deal with various aspects of spirituality, but what these particular texts have in common is the suggestion of a major shift in the way we conceptualize such fundamental philosophical categories as perception, cognition, nature, science, the self, human development, being, time, and consciousness. In other words, they reconceptualize and rearticulate our consensus reality.

The transformation that these books describe entails a movement away from isolated, atomized "observer" consciousness into relational thinking and being, or "participating" consciousness. Though it is admittedly difficult to discern the historical significance of the times in which one is embedded, it seems clear from a reading of these texts as well as from my own experience that we *are* participants in an historical moment characterized by the blurring of boundaries — between subject and object, mind and matter, nature and technology, human and non-human, science and mysticism, to name but a few common dualisms — and one in which our customary dichotomous, mechanistic, materialist world-view faces severe challenges. The "spiritualization" of the world seems to involve a unitary state of mind that has transcended such opposites — moving beyond dualistic thinking into the fullness of Being. It is a time of both breakdown and breakthrough.

Kathleen Kesson, Ed.D., is lead faculty in education at Goddard College, an experimental college in Plainfield, Vermont, and is co-director of its summer Institute on Teaching and Learning. Her work is in curriculum theory and educational philosophy, and she has a long-time interest in holistic education. She is actively involved with educational research, school restructuring, and policy issues in the State of Vermont. Reprint requests should be sent to the author at Teacher Education, Goddard College, Plainfield, VT 05667.

Defining spiritual

At the recent World Parliament of Religions, religious and spiritual leaders highlighted the necessity of coming to some consensus on ultimate values and spiritual principles. Participants in the assembly called for the transformation of consciousness through implementation of a Global Ethic, the development of a universal spirituality, a commitment to nonviolence, and a new civilizational order predicated on compassion, kindness, love, justice, and a sustainable relationship with the Earth.

The issue of spirituality is, of course, a highly personal one, and any hint of universalism must be scrutinized for potential attempts to suppress differences. It is with some trepidation, then, that I venture to propose some essential principles that might facilitate shared understanding of the term "spiritual," knowing full well that any definition I propose is limited, susceptible to omissions, and open to refutation. It might, however, enable us to begin a conversation.

A common thread in most spiritual traditions is the recognition of a unique individuality present at birth, a spark of "Self" that is not adequately explained by a particular genetic configuration. This Self is thought to constitute a nexus of connection with a larger reality, whether it be defined as the relationship between the Atman and Brahma as in Yoga and Hindu thought, between the personality and the Godhead, as in esoteric Christianity, or between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, as in Jungian psychoanalytic terms. This Self is thought to serve as an organizing center for psychic growth and development, a process usually characterized by an expanding sense of identification (with other humans, with the natural world, with ideas, with the past and/or the future, with other dimensions of "reality," or with evolution itself). Such development is facilitated by disciplined spiritual practices that enhance "mindfulness" and awareness, such as meditation, contemplation, prayer, concentrated aesthetic efforts, shamanic journeying, dream analysis, or certain forms of physical exercise, such as Yoga or martial arts. There are a multitude of practices that could be named here — an essential component of them being, in Ornstein's words (Peterson, 1986)

> a shift from that normal, analytic world containing separate, discrete objects and persons to a second mode, an experience of 'unity,' a mode of intuition. This experience is outside the province of language and rationality, being a mode of simultaneity, a dimension of consciousness complementary to the ordered sequence of normal thought.

This shift in perception is thought to facilitate the integration of opposites, the most obvious being the rational and the nonrational, and the many aspects of our humanness — body, mind, emotions, will, spirit. In addition, these practices often lead to what have been termed "nonordinary states of consciousness," which are thoroughly documented in the literature on parapsychology, transpersonal development, and peak experiences. From a psychoanalytical perspective, the central task of these pursuits is the integration of inner and outer realities into a coherent and meaningful wholeness. The key words here are "meaningful wholeness" — for many people, these integrative practices open the awareness to rich layers of meaning embedded in otherwise ordinary, everyday events.

I think of spiritual process as exploratory: Investigating the contents of the unconscious mind or the cosmological dimension of experience *is* rather like setting out on a journey into uncharted territory. It is inherently unpredictable and idiosyncratic. It opens the psyche to images and archetypal energies which can be unsettling as well as illuminating.

Religion, on the other hand, represents the creation of structured forms that contain and, to some extent, control the spiritual process. Most religions and religious practices stem from someone's original dreams or visions. This original archetypal material crystallizes over time into clearly defined and repeatable forms which can be shared and passed down from generation to generation. Participants in rituals often have no personal knowledge of the original psycho/spiritual experience, and once meaningful rituals can become dry and lifeless forms.

Religions tend to stress the ultimacy of categories such as "matter" and "creator," while spirituality emphasizes the actuality of process and self-creativity. Further, religion tends to codify and sanction those experiences which serve social needs for order, continuity, and stability, while spiritual process, because of its unpredictability, tends to introduce novelty into a system. While the practice and repetition of rituals and religious customs *may* continue to provide a vital context for genuine spiritual experience for centuries, *most* religious traditions resist the introduction of novelty, and remain reproductions of one person's spiritual process. Elsewhere, I have suggested that it is this incapacity to sustain a dynamic link between their mythic and symbolic constructions and the personal psycho/spiritual processes of their adherents, that accounts, at least in part, for the diminishing relevance of formal religion in many people's lives and the growing interest in the various forms of spiritual process. By differentiating between spirituality and religion, I don't intend to discredit one and privilege the other, but to provide a context for a discussion of *spirituality and education* that is not confused by the discussion of *religion and education*.

This deep self-knowledge and expanded sense of connection gained from individual and collective spiritual processes have provided many people with both the creative vision and the practical tools to help heal a world in crisis. An education grounded in a universal spiritual perspective could serve an important role at this time in enabling the young to make sense of their world and to cope with the monumental changes facing them. It could provide them with a conceptual framework with which they might help shape and participate fully in whatever new forms of organization emerge from the current chaos. Education, however, has not only failed to deal adequately with the general disintegration of our society, it has failed to note the signals of transcendence in our culture, and to keep pace with the sweeping conceptual revolutions occurring in many of its parent disciplines (the book *The Reenchantment of Education* has yet to be written!). As a teacher, a teacher educator, and curriculum theorist, I am interested in seeking out the generative connections that might be drawn between our emergent cultural story and the actual practice of education.

The disenchantment of education

Education in contemporary industrialized countries such as the U.S. is largely a pragmatic affair characterized by an overriding interest in the transfer of technical information, with the humanities serving as cultural adornments. This pragmatic interest, combined with the political sensitivity of schooling, has largely precluded a sustained discussion of the value-base of education, let alone the relationship of spirituality to education. Mention the words "spirituality" and "curriculum" in the same breath, and a variety of responses are evoked. One predictable reaction, on the part of liberal educators, is horror at the thought of the breakdown of the customary wall that separates church and state. They assume that the inclusion of spirituality in educational discourse implies the reinstitution of prayer in school or the teaching of religious dogma. On the other end of the continuum are those who would like to see us return to government-sanctioned prayer in schools and who favor tax support for the teaching of religious doctrine (*their* doctrine, of course) in schools. The religious/political right wing of our country seeks to claim the issue of spirituality for its own, as it has done quite successfully with such issues as morality and the family. I hope to persuade liberal, progressive, and radical educators to engage with the issue of spirituality in a meaningful and sustained way, lest this topic too be expropriated by forces who would move us backwards into dogma, superstition, and patriarchal control, rather than "outward" into a nondualistic, inclusive, and creative spirituality. The form as well as the fervor of response from both poles, I believe, emanates from the mutual failure to discriminate between spirituality and religion, a common error which we must overcome if we are to find some common ground in this discussion.

Curriculum

The definition of the term *curriculum* seems patently obvious at first, but upon closer examination, it proves elusive and problematic. Most people think of "curriculum" in terms of lesson plans or the content to be taught in these lessons. Teachers who have been through a traditional teacher education course are familiar with the basic format for organizing lesson plans developed in the late 1940s by Ralph Tyler, and little has changed since then. Tyler's four questions

- What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
- What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
- How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

have served generations of teachers as guideposts in their thinking about curriculum. Unfortunately, this paradigm has sustained a rigid approach to educational planning, a narrow understanding of scope and sequence, an understanding of knowledge as discrete and predigested bits of information that can be easily transferred from the teacher to the learner, and an obsession with what can be easily measured.

Many educators have moved away from this narrow "transmission model" of curriculum and instruction toward a "constructivist" approach, asserting that students need to be actively engaged in the construction of knowledge through interaction with the environment. This theory is classic Deweyan philosophy, and while certainly an improvement over earlier transmission models, it is still primarily concerned with the development of reason, logic, and other similar cognitive processes. With this shift toward constructivism, the notion of curriculum begins to expand to incorporate all of the experiences that the learner encounters under the direction of the school, not just the formal learning activities. Other theorists suggest that we should include the *entire range of experiences*, both in and out of school, formal and informal, planned and unplanned, in an expanded definition of curriculum. It becomes clear here how very important are the subjectivities of the students and the cultural context of learning. This last definition opens the door to addressing the needs of the whole person (and all that entails) through the curriculum. However wide our definition, curriculum is thought to serve as a bridge between the experience of the student and the skills, knowledge, and attributes valued by the wider culture.

I would suggest, in the context of the present discussion, that *curriculum* has most often fulfilled a *religious function* in our society, as it has tended to reify existing metaphysical categories, present knowledge as formal structures, reproduce the experiences of others, and serve social needs for order, continuity, and stability. What if, as countless writers and commentators have suggested, we *are* experiencing a "reenchantment" of our world, a "quickening" of our collective spiritual awareness? How might curriculum begin to fulfill a *spiritual function*? How might we begin to think differently about it? Could we adapt to the unpredictability, the idiosyncrasies, the dynamic process implied in such a model? Could we cope with the novelty that would be introduced into our systems? Might we move beyond the analogy of the bridge that connects the learner with the culture, and think of curriculum, as George Willis recently suggested, "as an occasion for drawing the finite closer to the infinite?"

At the very least, bringing the notion of spirituality into the educational discourse will involve reconceptualizing accepted ideas about human development and the experience of childhood. Much good work has already been done in this area by such theorists as Joseph Chilton Pearce, Robert Coles, Ken Wilber, Rudolph Steiner, Charles Tart, Maria Montessori, and James Moffett, but despite years of formal investigations and an extraordinary body of literature on the topics of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, holistic education, human potential, brain/mind interface, peak experiences, and spiritual experience, we have yet to design an educational framework that takes these dimensions of human experience into account. Such a framework would necessitate the integration of feeling, imagination, will, purpose, and intuition into existing theories of learning and cognition. This work not only has theoretical, but very practical dimensions which need to be worked out.

As well as rethinking our development theories with their implications for learning, the discussion of spirituality and education asks us to reconsider what knowledge is truly of most worth. Is a narrow technical focus and a shallow acquaintance with our cultural story the best we can hope for, or dare we ask for an education that nurtures the deepest longings of the human spirit for mystery, connection, meaning, awe, wonder, and delight?

By differentiating between *spirituality* and religion, I don't intend to discredit one and privilege the other, but to provide a context for a discussion of *spirituality and education* that is not confused by the discussion of *religion and education*.

In this issue of the *Holistic Education Review*, we will begin to explore some of these complex interfaces between spirituality, culture, education, and curriculum. In "The Spiritual Foundations of Liberal Education: Classical Symmetry, Modern Duality, and Postmodern Contextuality," Dale Snauwaert takes us through some major conceptual shifts in Western philosophy into a constructivist postmodernism that holds as central the "capacity to appreciate the relatedness that defines reality and human existence." G. Thomas Ray, in "Rational Schooling and the Decontextualized Learner: Moral Dimensions of the Implicit Curricula from a Batesonian Perspective," helps us to understand the ways in which schools are implicated in the increasing chaos and fragmentation of modern life, and how they limit the possibility of seeing the world as an integrated whole. Richard Pipan, in "Transcending Spirituality: On the Hegemony of Beneficence," draws upon the holistic, transformative curriculum theorizing of Dwayne Huebner, James Macdonald, and David Purpel to play out the intersections of spirituality, postmodernism, and critical curriculum theory, a theoretical triad of great importance in our reconceptualization of curriculum. Jim Henderson's and Janice Hutchison's paper, "A Critical Strategy for Cultivating Spirituality in Education" addresses one of the central contemporary educational dualisms — the split between theory and practice — and describes a curriculum leadership process that begins to address this historical split. Philip Woods, in "The Challenge of the Spiritual: Spirituality in U.K. Schools," provides us with a provocative look at a British national policy effort to promote the spiritual and moral development of students in publicly funded schools, and at some of the real challenges that need to be met if the spiritual is to become an acknowledged part of schooling. I hope that you find these articles thought-provoking and accept the invitation to enter into dialogue and discussion about what promises to be an important theme in future educational discourse — The Spiritual Dimension of Curriculum.

— Kathleen Kesson, Guest Editor

References

Berman, M. (1989). *Coming to our senses: Body and spirit in the hidden history of the west.*

Berman, M. (1981). *The reenchantment of the world.* New York: Bantam.

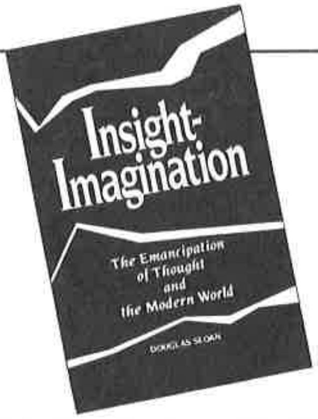
Capra, F. (1982). *The turning point.* New York: Bantam.

Griffin, D. R. (1988). *The reenchantment of science.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Peterson, R. (1986). *Everyone is right: A new look at comparative religion and its relation to science.* Marina del Rey, CA: DeVorss.

Smith, H. (1989). *Beyond the postmodern mind.* Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



Insight-Imagination

The Emancipation of Thought and the Modern World

by Douglas Sloan

First Paperback Edition Now Available

Insight-Imagination critically examines modern culture's "technicist" way of knowing that forms the basis of contemporary schooling. Drawing on the work of David Bohm, Michael Polanyi, Owen Barfield, and other holistic thinkers, Sloan describes an organic way of knowing that engages the whole person and portrays a deeply meaningful education that reconnects the learner to the world morally and spiritually.

> "*Insight-Imagination* is among the two or three most important books on the foundations of holistic education, and educators who consider themselves holistic need to consider the questions that Douglas Sloan explores. This is a great book that will stimulate and enrich the thinking of anyone concerned with where our education — and our culture — needs to be heading at this critical time."
>
> — Ron Miller, Founding Editor, *Holistic Education Review*

ISBN 1-885580-00-2; $21.95

Resource Center for Redesigning Education
PO Box 298, Brandon, VT 05733-0298

1-800-639-4122

The Spiritual Foundations of Liberal Education

Classical Symmetry, Modern Duality, and Postmodern Contextuality

Dale T. Snauwaert

Based on an examination of the classical, modern, and postmodern spiritual foundations of liberal education, constructivist postmodernism emerges as a potentially more viable foundation for a revitalized conception of liberal education.

At its very foundation, liberal education is spiritual. Liberal education is generally conceived as either being the kind of education that liberates the mind,[1] or the kind of education that prepares one to define and pursue one's own conception of the good life consistent with the equal right of others to define and pursue their own good.[2] Neither of these notions is apparently spiritual. In both cases, however, the liberation of the mind and/or conceiving one's own good entail the pursuit, discovery, and/or construction of meaning, thereby rendering them "spiritual."

The basic assumption here (one based upon extensive human experience and reflection) is that a central human concern *and* experience is the pursuit of meaning, and this pursuit is fundamentally "spiritual" for it entails the "aspirations and needs that relate to the meaning and purpose of one's life as a whole and entails the freedom and responsibility to pursue this meaning and purpose."[3] In other words, the pursuit of meaning is a spiritual process for it entails defining or discovering one's identity and place in the universe. This pursuit is by its very nature nonmaterial, even when meaning is derived from material acquisition. It is nonmaterial in that it involves an internal condition, experience, or state of consciousness (e.g., feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideals, intuitions, principles, and concepts). Human meaning is not found in the physical world, although it may have physical correlates. No one can produce a material object qua meaning. Physical objects may symbolize meaning, but the symbol and its referent are *not* equivalent.

Concerning liberal education, certainly to define one's own good entails the pursuit of meaning, for without meaning, without a conception of one's

The author would like to thank Mary Darbes, Jeff Kane, Matthijs Koopsman, and Jay Seitz for helpful comments in the preparation of this manuscript.

Dale Snauwaert is an educational philosopher, the author of Democracy, Education, and Governance *(SUNY Press), as well as articles in such journals as* Educational Theory, Holistic Education Review, Peabody Journal of Education, *and* Journal of Educational Thought. *His main interests are the relationship between moral and political philosophy and educational theory, policy, and international education.*

identity, place, and purpose, how can one define and pursue what is good? Self-knowledge is the foundation of defining and pursuing one's own conception of the good life. In addition, can the mind be liberated without meaning, or does liberation entail the construction or discovery of meaning? If we define liberation as an enlargement of the mind, then liberation entails the pursuit of meaning, for liberation is achieved by freeing the mind to experience the world in a broader sense and thereby to expand one's capacity for meaning.[4] Therefore, it can be argued that both conceptions of liberal education have a spiritual foundation.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the spiritual foundations of liberal education in its classical, modern, and postmodern formulations. The conceptions of classical symmetry, modern dualism, and postmodern contextuality will be explored below as constitutive of the spiritual foundations of liberal education. This project is essentially interpretive; what will emerge below is a dialectic between the classical and the modern leading to a constructive postmodern synthesis.

Classical symmetry

At the origins of liberal education is an epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical integration that conceives the individual human being as essentially unified with the cosmic order. Truth is attained when the individual soul has aligned itself with the basic fabric and order of the universe. From this perspective, there exists a symmetry between the mind and nature, such that if the mind can align itself with the cosmic order, through the direct apprehension of that order, one's mind will be liberated. Here, ultimate meaning and purpose are *discovered* through a direct cognition of universals. Liberal education is, therefore, conceived as a process of cultivating the mind's capacity to directly apprehend universal Truth, to align itself with the ultimate purpose and meaning of the universe. In the Western world, Plato is the most prominent exponent of this conception of liberal education.[5]

In Plato's epistemology, as exemplified in the *Republic* by the divided line and the allegory of the cave, the achievement of knowledge is based upon a movement from sensory experience to abstract cognition described by Plato as a process of "turning ... the whole soul and its organ of learning away from becoming until it faces being and can endure contemplating the brightest of what is."[6] This process constitutes Plato's dialectic. The dialectic allows one epistemic access to things in themselves, to what truly *is*. Plato likens this experience to being *awake*. When the power of the mind, a power which inheres in the soul, is turned toward reality, away from becoming toward being, then it directly apprehends the "brightest of what *is*." In this state of consciousness, one attains "knowledge," one directly experiences and comprehends the basic structure of the universe.[7] Once one has attained this knowledge, one lives in an internal state of "justice,"[8] an alignment of one's self with the inherent laws of the cosmic design. One is awake.

Plato describes mathematical reasoning, in particular geometry, as producing a kind of knowledge that, although "catch[es] hold of something of being, we see that [geometry and the studies that follow it] merely *dream* about reality."[9] One who possesses such understanding merely "clings somehow to a phantom of something, he clings to it not by knowledge but by opinion...."[10] Plato is implying here that various kinds of inquiry result from and/or are related to different states of consciousness and that the state of consciousness related to mathematical reasoning is dreamlike; it is equivalent to "living a dream."[11]

Dreaming for Plato is defined as taking something to be real when it is merely a resemblance of that which is real.[12] Thus, mathematical reasoning is a mode of inquiry that results in an understanding of conceptual representations of reality, perhaps even glimpsing reality, but not comprehending reality itself. The dialectic, which constitutes a different mode of inquiry, is necessary for a direct apprehension of the truth.

For Plato, education culminates in the dialectic and is thus the "art of turning [the power of the mind] around in the easiest, most effective way — not of implanting sight, which it already has, but of contriving to turn the organ around to look where it should."[13] The progression in Plato's educational design, as described in the *Republic*, from gymnastics and military training to arithmetic and poetry, to harmonics and mathematics, and eventually to the dialectic, is an attempt to systematically turn the power of learning away from the particulars of the world toward the universal Forms, which constitute the essence of those particulars. This turning from concrete sensory experience toward abstract conceptual analysis, culminates in the spiritual revelatory experience of reality. Thus, education for Plato is a process of acquiring the capacity to directly apprehend the universal archetypes that structure the universe, the human mind, and human society. Education is a process whereby one directly apprehends the symmetry existing between the human mind and the universe, thereby freeing one's mind from the slavery of passion, ignorance, and injustice.

Here we have the basic structure of liberal education, an educational process that proceeds in a spiraling fashion toward increasing levels of abstraction, beyond empirical investigation and even the abstract formulation of conceptual schema, toward the culminating experience of the direct cognition of the basic structure of the universe. It is in this experience that we find the classical conception of the spiritual foundations of liberal education, in that the individual *discovers* ultimate meaning through the realization of the symmetry existing between the mind and the cosmic order. However, as we will see below, the modern worldview shatters this basic symmetry.

Modern duality

The epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics of classical Greek philosophy was extended by the Neoplatonists and Stoics and eventually incorporated into Christianity by Augustine and then later by Aquinas. In a significant way, the symmetry between mind and nature of classical Greek philosophy was maintained in medieval Christianity. In the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, the divine power was embodied in human form. Christ represented the integration of cosmic intelligence within the human being. From this perspective, Christianity symbolized the fulfillment of Hellenistic philosophy.[14]

However, by the fourteenth century, cracks in this symmetry began to appear. The most formidable was the nominalism of William of Ockham. Ockham's basic position was that universals are not real per se but are creations of the human mind. Universals are conceptual abstractions derived from the empirical observations of particulars in the world. Aristotle asserted that real universal patterns could be discovered through empirical observation; Ockham maintained that those patterns are not implicit in nature but are projected onto nature by the mind. There is no metaphysical or ontological correspondence between the mentally constructed universal and particulars in the world. Universals, according to Ockham, are conceptual schema through which human beings make sense of their experience, nothing more. They are purely epistemological *not* metaphysical nor ontological. Ockham's nominalism was the first crack in the classical symmetry.

As Richard Tarnas demonstrates, the rejection of the classical position and the establishment of the modern worldview is based upon the three-pronged, sequential development of the Copernican, Cartesian, Kantian revolution.[15] In essence, this revolution is an extension of Ockham's nominalism.

With Copernicus's discovery of a heliocentric universe, the human being was metaphysically displaced from the center of the universe; the human being was thrown into a seemingly vast, decentered universe; the human being was now a mere speck on the cosmic landscape, not its epicenter. If the earth and its inhabitants were not at the center of the universe, and if the heavens were taken to be a reflection of the cosmic design (which it was in both classical and medieval cosmology), how could the human mind be a microcosm of the universal order? The Copernican discovery was truly revolutionary, for it seemingly provided evidence to refute the validity of the classical symmetry.

Liberal education is conceived as a process of cultivating the mind's capacity to directly apprehend universal truth, to align itself with the ultimate purpose and meaning of the universe.

The next phase in this revolution was Descartes' assertion that the universe itself is a vast mechanism, which operates on the basis of precise mathematical laws, a position taken to its fulfillment by Newtonian physics. Given the mechanistic nature of the universe, one could conceive, as Thomas Hobbes does, the human being in mechanistic terms (a precursor to Skinnerian behaviorism). However, Descartes attempts to preserve human subjectivity by separating the individual personality from the objective, mechanical world. In this separation, we have the Cartesian mind-body dualism, a dualism between mental and physical substance. If the mind and body are separate, distinct substances, how is it possible for them to interact? If they cannot interact, then knowledge of the world is impossible, for the mind can never have epistemic access to the world; it can only access its own mental impressions. Here, the individual human is not only cosmically decentered, but separated from even his or her most immediate physical surroundings, wherein the interaction between the mind and the body, subjective agent and objective environment, remains inexplicable.

David Hume argues, based essentially upon the above reasoning, that an individual cannot know what lies beyond sensory impression. However, the mind seemingly perceives relationships in the world, such as cause and effect, which imply a rational and knowable order to the world. Hume argues that the mind projects a causal set of relations onto a particular set of *random* impressions. The mind only experiences particular impressions; any seemingly inherent order or pattern is projected onto the impressions by the mind. The comprehensibility of the world is a mental construction formed out of mental habits; it is not implicit in the nature of reality. We are in a habit of assuming causal relations, but there is no logical certainty that these relations are in fact real (i.e., implicit in the nature of things) nor that they will continue. This position undermines the validity of induction and, hence, renders certain knowledge impossible. All human knowledge is merely opinion based in habits of thought. In this sense, Hume's skepticism is the logical conclusion of Descartes' dualism. Thus, Cartesian dualism alienates human subjectivity from the physical world, leading to epistemological skepticism.

Kant concurs that human beings are only capable of knowing that which is phenomenal (i.e., their own mental impressions), but he simultaneously believes that a valid scientific knowledge of the world can be gained (such as Newton's physics). Kant's position is essentially that the human mind does not passively receive sense data but, based upon the existence of innate categories of mind, actively structures those data. In a significant sense, we therefore can only know that which we structure by our minds. We cannot know the world in itself but only that world which is constructed by our mental categories. However — and this is Kant's attempt to refute Hume's skepticism — we can know reality to the extent that it conforms to the innate categories of the mind. Certain knowledge is possible for Kant because the mind bestows to reality a certain order. Nevertheless, Kant's critique of pure reason (reason capable of apprehending things in themselves) leaves the modern mind in isolation, only capable of knowing its own constructs and not reality itself.

Here the classical symmetry between the mind and nature, and hence the epistemological *and* spiritual foundations of liberal education, are shattered. The modern mind is left alone, left to comprehend its own constructions. A direct cognition of ultimate reality and truth is impossible, leaving liberal education without a spiritual foundation.

However, liberal education can be reformulated in order to preserve its spiritual grounding. In one sense, the epistemological foundation of liberal education can be saved by basing it, not on a realist theory of universals, but on conceptual nominalism. From this perspective, as Paul Hirst argues, to have a "rational" mind "implies experience structured under some form of conceptual scheme."[16] We are able to gain understanding of experience because we share a common conceptual scheme with others. Experience becomes intelligible only on the basis of the public sharing of conceptual systems. From this perspective, liberal education is a process of engaging with various heretofore-unknown conceptual schema in the form of paradigm examples of a variety of disciplines of knowledge. This exposure expands the mind by enlarging the conceptual systems through which we can more readily understand our experience. To undergo education is then "to learn to see, to experience the world in a way otherwise unknown, and thereby to have a mind in a fuller sense."[17]

In a profound sense, this is a spiritual process, for by broadening one's conceptual schema, one is enlarging one's capacity to construct meaning. However, meaning is not being derived here from an apprehension of, and alignment with, ultimate reality, but meaning is being internally constructed through exposure to the conceptualized experience of others. This is the basic spiritual impulse of modernity: to construct, rather than discover, ultimate meaning.

This impulse, for example, is at the core of modern art. As Wassily Kandinsky put it in his seminal reflections on the spirituality of modern art — *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* — the essence of art is the "inner need," the internal impulse of the artist for the expression of his deepest feelings and emotions.[18] As a recent commentator suggests, "more than any single factor, this book [*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*] helped disseminate and foster acceptance of the new principles upon which much of modern art developed ... it places Kandinsky at the center of a major artist revolution."[19] This revolution was a shift from the expression of conventional form to one of inner expression. Art became a vehicle for the spiritual expression of internal experience.

In a similar way, existentialism gives expression to this sentiment. At its core, existentialism is a philosophy of radical self-choice. It starts with "facticity," with an individual embedded in a concrete social world, and moves to "transcendence," the radical imperative of choosing the meaning of existence. From this perspective, one is confronted with an either/or choice: either conform to the dictates of the prevailing social world or make a self-conscious life choice. In the process of exercising a radical self-choice, value is created. Being both the expression and construction of meaning, choice is a value creation. Thus, the pursuit of ultimate meaning becomes again an internal construction.[20]

From this perspective, liberal education ensues at the moment the student has his/her first experience of self-awareness; this is the moment when the student first realizes his or her identity as an individual self. It's an experience that is marked by the question: Who am I? What is the meaning of life? What is my place in the universe? Here begins the search for and construction of one's own conception of the good life. It is this pursuit that is at the core of modern liberalism and modern liberal education. Education becomes a process through which one is prepared, through the attainment of self-understanding and exposure to a wide range of alternative conceptions of the good life (including, but not limited to, exposure to paradigm examples of a variety of disciplines of knowledge, which are the formalized and codified expressions of human experience), to conceive and pursue one's own good. Here education does not lead to an ultimate apprehension of reality but to the creation of one's own meaning and value. From this perspective, the teacher is not the embodiment and exponent of truth but a guide in the pursuit of meaning. Education is not the transmission of information nor the unfoldment of innate knowledge but a process of exploration and creation.

However, inherent in this conception remains the Cartesian subject–object duality. The individual can construct spiritual meaning within the realm of subjectivity, but the classical symmetry between that subjectivity and the cosmic order, which is based upon an ultimate universal ground, is dissolved. Hence spirituality, although remaining a central human experience, becomes groundless, in the sense that an objective, universal ground is no longer believed to be accessible to human experience.

Postmodern contextuality

Postmodernism, in both its deconstructivist and constructivist formulations, attempts to unify the modernist duality.[21] However, in the deconstructivist formulation spirituality remains groundless, whereas from the perspective of constructive postmodernism a new ground is forged based upon a quantum mechanical/ecological/process view of the universe.

Postmodern deconstruction asserts the "death of the author." What is left is the "text." The only reality that can be asserted with validity is the constructed discourse. There is no individual self-expression per se, only intersubjective communication. Meaning is constructed through dialogue with others, and through this communicative interaction, our identity is constructed as well. Thus, meaning is purely contextual. Social discourse, however, is not always benevolent. In many cases it is exploitive, dominating, and dehumanizing. In both cases, whether benevolent or destructive, the discourse requires deconstruction; it requires the methods of epistemological archeology and genealogy (to borrow Foucalt's terminology).[22] In the former case, deconstruction is necessary to uncover the meaning of the discourse through unearthing its contextuality and historicity. In the latter case, deconstruction is necessary to demystify the power relations implicit in social discourse so that individuals can attain liberation from its oppression. From this perspective, the construction and deconstruction of meaning is social: it involves the *other*. Implicit in this conception is the dissolution of the modern subject–object duality, in that there remains only intersubjective discourse. However, although unified, there is no semblance of the classical symmetry; there is no epistemological correspondence between ideas and reality, only the continual flux of the construction and deconstruction of social reality through a pro-

Cartesian dualism alienates human subjectivity from the physical world, leading to epistemological skepticism.

cess of intersubjective discourse. The constructive formulation of postmodernism, however, posits a valid epistemological correspondence. This view has its foundations in quantum theory, deep ecology, and process philosophy.

The worldview implicit in quantum theory is fundamentally different from the Cartesian/Newtonian view. It understands the universe to be, not a clocklike, inanimate mechanism, but an interdependent web of relationships wherein the Cartesian mind–body duality is dissolved and the world is epistemologically accessible, although contingent and indeterminate.

From this perspective, there is a basic complementarity between the field and particlized natures of reality. The universe is neither exclusively made up of waves nor particles, rather physical reality is *both* wave-like *and* particle-like.

This complementarity is evident in the famous double-split experiment. A light gun emits a continual stream of photons toward a barrier with two slits in it and a screen behind it. The slits can be opened or closed, and a particle-detector can be place behind the slit(s). If we set up this experimental arrangement with one slit open, either we will detect particles of light with our detector or an additive pattern will be recorded on the screen indicating particle behavior. If, however, we open both slits and do not employ a detector, an interference pattern is recorded on the screen indicating wave behavior. Light appears to be both particlelike *and* wavelike, and the exhibited behavior *is contingent* upon the experimental arrangement.

Erwin Schrodinger offers a mathematical equation that describes this phenomenon: the wave function of the particle. The wave function mathematically describes and predicts the probability of atomic events. However, the interpretation of the meaning of the wave function is varied and controversial.

The Copenhagen Interpretation maintains that the significance of the wave function is that it provides us with the probability of an outcome given a certain experimental arrangement. It predicts what we will observe under particular conditions. Under one set of conditions light is particle-like, and under different conditions it is wave-like. This interpretation does not pretend to speculate on why atomic events are contingent upon experimental arrangements; it merely correlates experience. However, other physicists, notably Werner Heisenberg and John Wheeler, have taken the interpretation much further in probing the apparent contingent nature of reality.

Heisenberg maintains that the wave function is a mathematical description of a field of potential. All the properties of the atomic system are superimposed in the wave function in potential form. However, when a particular measurement is taken, a specific property is actualized. In essence, the wave function collapses into a condensed point, a particle with precise features, such as position, and spin. Reality now appears to be particle-like. Thus, our particlized Newtonian world is comprised of condensations or junctions of the wave function. However, the property that is actualized is contingent upon the experimental arrangement, which is an embodiment of the experimenter's consciousness. Heisenberg interprets this contingency as epistemological rather than metaphysical, as the collapse of objectivity per se. What we observe is what we intend to observe. He writes: "The conception of objective reality ... evaporated into the ... mathematics that represents no longer the behavior of elementary particles but rather our knowledge of this behavior."[23] Heisenberg anticipates the deconstructivist position here, indicating that what is real is contextual in the sense that it is constructed through particular forms of discourse (in this case, a particular experimental arrangement).

The universe is an interrelated whole. It is a vast, interrelated field in which particlized, material permutations are created and destroyed in an indeterminate cosmic dance of energy.

John Wheeler maintains that the wave function does not collapse into a single property but manifests multiple properties existing in parallel universes and, more importantly, that the consciousness of the observer does actually affect the physical outcome. Here there is a fundamental interconnection between consciousness and reality. Wheeler writes: "The measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe will never afterwards be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out the old word 'observer' and put in its place the new word 'participator.' In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe."[24]

From this perspective, the universe is an interrelated whole. It is a vast, interrelated field in which particlized material permutations are created and destroyed in an indeterminate cosmic dance of energy, wherein there is a constant flow and interchange between energy and matter, emerging and collapsing waves, and permutations of fields of energy. The universe is constituted by an interrelated pattern of probabilities, wherein particles are not isolated entities bouncing off each other like billiard balls according to precise laws of cause and effect but are permutations of an interdependent field. The particle does not exist in isolation, but is interconnected with the totality of the physical universe. The very identity of a particular entity is thus contextual. The particle can be understood, not in isolation, but only in the context of its larger and more fundamental interconnectedness. And perhaps most importantly, there seems to be a fundamental interconnection between consciousness and physical reality, such that the fundamental modern dualism is dissolved. Not only is physical reality interrelated, but human consciousness is an integral dimension of the web of relations that comprise the contextuality and contingency of reality.[25]

The deconstructivist argues that there are only texts, wherein there is a dance of construction and deconstruction through social discourse, a discourse that is contingent but ungrounded. This position is consistent with Heisenberg's interpretation of quantum physics. However, from the perspective of Wheeler's interpretation, this contextuality is not ungrounded, but it describes the fundamental nature of the universe played out in the dance of the human–nature interaction. This contextuality (interconnectedness) is not, therefore, confined to the subatomic level of reality, but it includes human consciousness. There does seem to be the possibility of a fundamental correspondence between consciousness (which entails concepts, ideas, etc.) and reality, perhaps even an essential interconnection. This perspective is given further plausibility by the science and philosophy of ecology, in particular the ecosophy (deep ecology) of Arne Naess.[26]

Naess extends the principle of contextuality to include the ecosphere as a whole. This extension is based upon the notion of ecosophy. Philosophy, by definition, is the love (*philo*) of wisdom (*sophia*). Ecosophy concerns wisdom about interrelationship, in particular, the relationship between ourselves and nature.[27] When we inquire into our place in the universe, we are engaged in ecosophy. Thus, the pursuit of meaning is essentially ecosophical. The ecosophical conception of nature includes human beings as integrated expressions of nature, just as particles are modes of wave functions. Naess writes:

> Instead of matter, I will speak of the relational field. The term "relational field" refers to the totality of our interrelated experience.... Things of the order "material things" are conceived of as junctions within the field.... Similarly, a person is a part of nature to the extent that he or she too is a relational junction within the total field. The process of identification is a process in which the relations which define the junction expand to comprise more and more. The "self" grows towards the "Self."[28]

From this perspective, we are embedded in an ecological system, a system that is interconnected. Mind, body, and nature are one but simultaneously remain distinct expressions. Here, the atomistic conception of the individual fundamental to the modern worldview collapses into a relational conception wherein there exists ontological unity and the possibility of epistemological identification with the whole. As Spinoza points out, human beings are capable of achieving the "knowledge of the union existing between the mind and the whole of nature."[29] This may be understood as attaining an I–Thou relationship, in a Buberian sense, with nature.

For Spinoza, this identification is expressed by the Latin term *conatus*, which is generally translated as "self-preservation." However, *conatus* is derived from *conari* which means "to strive."[30] *Conatus* as interpreted by Naess thus refers not to preserving the self but to striving toward the self. Thus, *conatus* refers to self-realization rather than self-preservation, and for Spinoza and Naess, self-realization is a process of identifying with, realizing the union existing between, the mind and nature. This process is essentially one of enlarging the self, and in this sense, it is implicitly a process of liberating the mind to see and experience the world in a broader way. An education devoted to this enlargement would thus be "liberal." Here, meaning is not being created through exposure to an enlarged framework of symbolic systems, but it is being constructed through a process of the expansion of ontological identity.

Spinoza and Naess are not alone in this reading of nature; the constructivist postmodernists, William James, John Dewey (in his mature philosophy), and

Alfred North Whitehead, share a similar perspective.[31]

William James's concept of "radical empiricism" posits that connections or relations between objects of experience are as fundamental and real as the things themselves.[32] James writes: "*Radical empiricism*, as I understand it, *does full justice to conjunctive relations*, without, however, treating them as rationalism always tends to treat them, as being true in some supernal way, as if the unity of things and their variety belonged to different orders of truth and vitality altogether."[33] James is suggesting that we should give epistemological credence to both connection and distinction, for they are both constitutive of experience.

In his later work, John Dewey posits the notions of the "enveloping whole" and the "esthetic-imaginative" experience. Dewey maintains that nature itself is holistic and that its basic interrelatedness can be aesthetically appreciated. In the following quotation it is clear, however, as Joe Burnett points out, that the enveloping whole and its experience is not purely aesthetic nor religious but is central to Dewey's conception of inquiry.[34] Dewey writes:

> About every explicit and focal object there is a recession into the implicit which is not intellectually grasped. In reflection we call it dim and vague. But in the original experience it is not identified as the vague. It is a function of the whole situation, and not an element in it, as it would have to be in order to be apprehended as vague....
>
> The undefined pervasive quality of experience is that which binds together all the defined elements, the objects of which we are focally aware, making them whole. The best evidence that such is the case is our constant sense of things as belonging or not belonging, of relevancy, a sense which is immediate. It cannot be a product of reflection, even though it requires reflection to find out whether some particular consideration is pertinent to what we are doing or thinking. For unless the sense were immediate, we would have no guide to our reflection. The sense of an extensive and underlying whole is the context of every experience and it is the essence of sanity.[35]

Here Dewey is suggesting that within every experience is an enveloping whole or interconnection that is in fact responsible for the meaning of experience. The degree to which the whole is experienced is the degree to which the experience is meaningful. The full experience of the whole is available through what Dewey refers to as aesthetic imagination. This type of experience is most readily elicited through art and religious/spiritual pursuit, which are capable of stimulating the

> *quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive whole which is the universe in which we live.* This fact, I think, is the explanation of that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the *deeper reality* of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. *We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves.* (emphasis added)[36]

Here Dewey is describing the process of self-realization as defined by Spinoza and Naess. Through an experience of the whole, one transcends one's self and expands to encompass a larger self, a self that is identified ultimately with the "whole which is the universe." This identification is experienced as "exquisite intelligibility and clarity," indicating its epistemological significance. The importance of this experience in Dewey's mature thought, however, never makes it into his educational philosophy, which is premised upon his earlier analytical notions of problem solving and experimental method. As Joe Burnett suggests, "It boggles the imagination to think of what would have happened had the early Dewey decided to say instead, or add, that the sense of 'belonging to a larger, all-inclusive whole' was somehow importantly... a part of the 'native and unspoiled attitude of children.'"[37] The foundations of Dewey's educational philosophy would have shifted from an analytic to a synthetic orientation, wherein intuition, aesthetics, spiritual experience, and enlarged identity would have been central.

Alfred North Whitehead begins where Dewey ended,[38] and consequently, his conception of a process cosmology may be the most committed philosophical expression of the constructivist position. Whitehead's process cosmology, as expressed in *Process and Reality*, is based upon the holistic worldview emanating from quantum theory.[39] For Whitehead, reality is essentially a dynamic process with an implicit rhythm. Reality is constituted by a process of creation wherein occasions come into and out of being in a continual flow. In fact, for Whitehead there are no real entities per se, only process, defined in terms of relationship and pattern. What Whitehead is apparently describing is the wavelike nature of reality. From this perspective, concretized occasions are real only as prehensions; that is, what is real is not the concrete entity, but the relations between entities. Here again the world is viewed as an interdependent web of relations, a probability pattern in a continuous flow of dissolution and creation, with consciousness having a central place.

Whitehead also views education as a process that entails three phases: romance, precision, and generalization.[40] Romance is the initial encounter with a question, interest, or need. It is the beginning of any inquiry. This phase is characterized by excitement, enthusiasm, and passion. It is an immediate, enthusiastic encounter with a question or problem that is as yet undefined but compelling. It entails an intuitive sense of the importance and/or value of the question. Precision is the process of bringing order and structure to the question. It entails the application of various methods of inquiry in the pursuit of an answer or a solution. It is the hard, detail work of exploration and scholarship. The work here is disciplinary. The final phase is generalization in which one extends and connects the findings of precision into larger wholes. In this phase, one relates specific findings to larger frameworks. The work here is transdisciplinary, and it involves the appreciation and understanding of the relations between parts. These phases are cyclical, interdependent, and overlapping. They define the continuous process of human growth.

From the perspective of constructivist postmodernism, the spiritual foundations of liberal education would call for an education devoted to the cultivation of the capacity to apprehend the specific details of knowledge as being interconnected and interrelated. It would entail the capacity to appreciate the web of relations that defines knowledge, being, and nature. Here, the related concepts of the expansion of identity, the capacity of generalization embodied in the process of romance, precision, and generalization, and the cultivation of aesthetic imagination profoundly enlarge the mind and, in the process, enlarge one's capacity for the creation of meaning. Meaning here is contextual, and its creation is contingent upon the capacity to appreciate the relatedness that defines reality and human existence.

Conclusion

Plato posits the existence of an implicit order or symmetry between the mind and nature such that the apprehension of that order frees and enlarges the mind. Here, meaning is discovered through the direct cognition of the cosmic order. This order, however, is static and its apprehension is passive.

The three-pronged modern revolution separates the mind from nature, treating nature as a mechanism. Here, there is a fundamental disjuncture between the mind and nature. Universals become nominal rather than real, and thus meaning becomes an internal construction rather than an apprehension of the inherent order of the universe.

Deconstructivist postmodernism extends the logic of modernism into the realm of pure subjectivity, wherein reality is socially constructed through intersubjective discourse. The modern duality is dissolved into a unity, but a groundless one, in that, although positing a unified reality, the metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological integration found in the classical view is absent.

Constructivist postmodernism, however, while rejecting the passive and static nature of the classical view, reinstates a fundamental metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological integration by positing a quantum mechanical/ecological/process view of reality. Here, meaning is constructed, but it is constructed through a process that entails the expansion of identity to include nature. It preserves a unified worldview while not being confined by a static view of reality, in the sense that, while being unified, reality is also fundamentally varied. This is the notion of complementarity. Reality is both particle-like and wave-like, but its particlized manifestation is somehow contingent upon human choice.

The creation of meaning is contingent upon the capacity to appreciate the relatedness that defines reality and human existence.

In this sense, constructivist postmodernism provides an integration of the classical and the modern in that it posits a fundamental interconnection between the mind and nature while appreciating the contingency of reality. Reality here is not conceived as static, absolute, and eternal, but as in a constant state of transformation, a transformation that is in some fundamental way contingent upon human consciousness. In this sense, constructivist postmodernism may provide a more viable philosophical foundation for a revitalized conception of liberal education: one that is true to the inherent spirituality of an education devoted to the pursuit of meaning.

Notes

1. Paul H. Hirst, "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge." In R. S. Peters, ed., *The Philosophy of Education.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) 87–111.

2. Kenneth A. Strike, "The Moral Role of Schooling in a Liberal Democratic Society." In Gerald Grant, ed., *Review of Research in Education.* (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1991) 443–483.

3. N. Ross Peat and Edmund F. Perry, *A World Theology: The Central Spiritual Reality of Humankind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 7. The following introductory discussion is indebted to their insight. See especially pp. 1–45.

4. Hirst.

5. See Hirst; Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, Volume II, In Search of the Divine Center* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943); Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991).

6. Plato, *The Republic,* trans. R. Larson (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1979), 518c.

7. Plato, 518c–e.

8. Plato, 443d.

9. Plato, 533c, emphasis added.

10. Plato, 534c–d.

11. Plato, 476c.

12. Plato, 476c.

13. Plato, 518d.

14. Tarnas, 91–220.

15. Tarnas, 223–394.

16. Hirst, 97. One could take either a Kantian position here and maintain that the schema are structured out of innate categories of mind or one could maintain that the schema are social constructions.

17. Hirst, 98.

18. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1914; New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

19. Richard Stratton, preface, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* viii–ix.

20. See William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962); John Douglas Mullen, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy: Self-Deception and Cowardice in the Present Age* (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1981).

21. See Barry Smart, *Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

22. See David R. Shumway, *Michel Foucalt* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

23. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), cited in Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and the New Physics* (New York: Bantam, 1981), 3.

24. John Wheeler, cited in Talbot, 21.

25. For further discussions of quantum theory see David Bohm, *Quantum Theory* (London: Constable, 1951) and *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Danah Zohar, *The Quantum Self: Human Nature and Consciousness Defined by the New Physics* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1990); Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (London: Rider/Hutchinson, 1979).

26. Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle,* trans. and ed. David Rothenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

27. Naess, 36–38.

28. Naess, 55–56.

29. Spinoza, cited in Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), 260.

30. Fox, 105.

31. Spinoza was a contemporary of Descartes, and Spinoza's philosophy is profoundly shaped as an alternative to Cartesian dualism. One can only speculate what modernity would have been like if Spinoza's philosophy would have had the reception afforded Descartes. In a significant sense, Spinoza, writing at the cusp of modernity, anticipated what we refer to now as the postmodern.

32. See Ronald Lee Zigler, "The Holistic Paradigm in Educational Theory," *Educational Theory* 28, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 318–326.

33. William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), 25–26.

34. See Joe R. Burnett, "Dewey's Educational Thought and His Mature Philosophy," *Educational Theory* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 203–211; Zigler, "Holistic Paradigm."

35. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1934), 194.

36. Dewey, 195.

37. Burnett, "Dewey's Educational," 207.

38. See Joe R. Burnett, "Whitehead's 'Ultimate' Pragmatism." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association, April 24, 1981.

39. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929; New York: Free Press, 1969).

40. Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1929; New York: Macmillan, 1949).

It's Why You Became A Teacher In The First Place

The Waldorf method of education works with the child's natural pattern of development. The child is educated with an emphasis on the arts and social values and with a reverence for the world. Child, teacher and parent in creative partnership can grow together in a nurturing environment.

Sunbridge College, an adult educational center, trains people to take up the creative challenges of Waldorf Education. There are more than 600 schools worldwide. For further information, call the registrar at (914) 425-0055

- Teacher training programs in early childhood or primary and secondary education.
- Day and evening programs.
- Master of Science degree in Waldorf Education.
- Talks, workshops and conferences.

SUNBRIDGE COLLEGE
SPRING VALLEY, NEW YORK EST. 1967

The Challenge of the Spiritual

Spirituality in U.K. Schools

Philip Woods and Glenys Woods

As government in the U.K. takes on an increasingly prominent role in mandating spirituality in education, educators will be challenged to integrate the deeply personal issues inherent in the quest for spirituality into the curriculum and the school culture as a whole.

Philip Woods is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Education Policy and Management at the Open University in Britain. He has extensive research and policy experience in the field of home, school and community interrelationships, and is currently principal investigator on a major research program studying quasi-markets in schooling and parents' value-criteria in assessing schools.
Glenys Woods is engaged in consultancy work for the Open University's School of Education and for the University of North London. She has been active in voluntary capacities in school education and recently co-authored a paper on spirituality and the education marketplace presented at the first national (UK) conference on spiritual and moral education. Her principal and guiding interest is the personal exploration of spirituality.
Reprint requests should be sent to the authors at Ivylee Cottage, Lower Way, Padbury, Buckinghamshire MK18 2AX, UK.

The issue of spirituality in schools is attracting unprecedented attention in Britain. The government has in recent years placed enhanced emphasis on the spiritual dimension of schooling, together with religious and moral education. This contrasts with the relative paucity of attention given to it in previous decades — despite the fact that the promotion of pupils' spiritual development has been a statutory requirement since 1944 (Priestley, 1985b, p. 3).

This requirement applies to all publicly funded schools, both church and non-church schools, and involves both pupils from overtly religious backgrounds and those with other beliefs.[1] Spirituality in education, however, involves issues of a deeply personal nature, and there are dangers inherent in a strong state role in such an area. This paper briefly outlines some recent policy initiatives in the U.K. It then seeks to focus attention on some of the challenges that need to be faced if the spiritual is to be an acknowledged part of schooling. These concern the framework of belief in which the spiritual is understood (in particular whether it is seen as rooted in a transcendent reality) and the relevance of spiritual and religious experiences in modern society, the distinction between teaching and promoting spirituality, and the inexpressibility through words of much spiritual experience.

Recent policy initiatives in the U.K.

The question of spiritual development in schools has enjoyed a significantly enhanced profile in the U.K. in the recent years. The government stated recently in its guidance to schools on religious education and collective worship:

> The Education Reform Act of 1988 sets out as the central aim for the school curriculum that it should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The government is concerned that insufficient attention has been paid explic-

> itly to the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of pupils' development, and would encourage schools to address how the curriculum and other activities might best contribute to this crucial dimension of education. (Department for Education, 1994, p. 9)

Provision for religious education has long been a requirement in all state schools in England and Wales.[2] Indeed, it was the *only* legally required part of the curriculum until the advent of the national curriculum in 1988. The increased role of central government in educational matters betokened by the national curriculum and other fundamental reforms has involved religious education and the spiritual too. For the first time, (advisory) national religious education syllabuses are being established.[3]

This set of two syllabuses offers what might be seen as an official definition of spirituality:

> 1. The highest expression and activity of the human person deriving from whatever source.
>
> 2. Sometimes used more selectively to refer only to what relates explicitly to God. (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1994, p. 44)

But there is little elaboration of the spiritual in the model syllabuses. They refer to the need to "identify experiences which have not been easily understood and might be described as 'spiritual,'" and give as an example of how this might be tackled:

> Discuss religious experiences in their own lives or the lives of others, e.g., 'out of body' experiences, comparing points of view on the meaning of such experiences. Consider how these experiences might be explained by members of religions studied. (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1994, p. 13)

A discussion paper on spiritual and moral development has also been sent to all schools in England and Wales, its avowed purpose to "guide schools in their understanding of spiritual and moral development" (National Curriculum Council, 1993). This document states that the spiritual

> needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity...."

The enhanced focus on the spiritual has led to disturbing new initiatives involving the assessment of students' spiritual progress. School inspectors in England and Wales are now to judge schools by how far children appear to be developed spiritually: Nationally established evaluation criteria propose that "spiritual development is to be judged by the extent to which pupils display "a system of personal beliefs, an ability to communicate their beliefs in discussion and through their behavior, willingness to reflect on experience and to search for meaning in that experience, and a sense of awe and wonder as they become more conscious of deeper meanings in the apparently familiar features of the natural world or in their experience (Office for Standards in Education, 1993, p. 21). The national body in charge of school inspections (OFSTED) is consulting on issues relating to spiritual development. Its discussion document (Office for Standards in Education, 1994) characterizes spiritual development as being concerned with valuing a nonmaterial dimension to life and "intimations of an enduring reality" and acknowledges the personal nature of spirituality. While the document seeks to distance itself from attempts to assess individuals, it nevertheless proposes that inspectors may seek evidence of pupils having benefited from the "provision intended to promote spiritual development." These include the ability to give an account of personal beliefs and respond to questions about the purpose of life. We will return to the issue of assessment below.

In addition to official initiatives, work sponsored by the independent National Commission on Education affirmed the necessity of "spiritual perspectives" to any holistic view of education, acknowledged the difficulty in defining the spiritual, and argued that although many assume the spiritual to be

> nebulous and therefore utterly valueless, the truth is quite different. The spiritual is the term we use to refer to the essence of what it is to be human ... there are features of human experience which tend to point to the essence of the human even if it is not definable and therefore continues to remain debatable. (Wilson, 1993)

These common features of human experience are, Wilson argues, curiosity (about many things including the meaning and significance of life) and the will "for the most part" to work with others rather than against them. It is therefore, "if not necessary, at least desirable to pay attention to the possibilities which are opened to each person by relating the human to the divine" (Wilson, 1993).

In the policy documents referred to above, there are intimations that spirituality may be linked with notions of God or a transcendent reality. But the link tends to be made in a way that ultimately leaves open the question of whether or not this is a necessary link. The connection, in deference to the multiplicity of views (including atheistic beliefs) in society, is left vague and ambiguous. Is this tenable?

Exploring the spiritual in modern society

This ambiguity or tentativeness in relating the spiritual to the divine or otherworldly dimensions is not surprising in a society whose culture has become secularized in crucial ways and in which formal religious experience (such as churchgoing) has markedly declined. As one writer has pointed out, the secular trend is even more deeply embedded than such outward manifestations of religious observations suggest: "Religious preoccupations and judgments form neither the major nor the most persuasive aspect of any given set of accounts or justifications provided by any individual or group in a given context. We no longer routinely account for our actions ... through recourse to religious statements or conviction" (Merttens, 1993). Allied to this is the recognition that British society contains various faith communities and individual points of view. Hence, as we have observed elsewhere, it is impossible to presume a consensus on what constitutes the *landscape of the spiritual* — its nature and meaning — and whether its boundaries are confined to this world or encompass a divinity, dimensions, or forces beyond it (Woods & Woods, 1993).

Secularization is rooted in a fundamental break in how the world and humanity's place in it is seen. It has led to, amongst other things, attempts to study paranormal experience *scientifically*. Thus, the latter half of the nineteenth century saw the establishment of bodies such as the Society for Psychical Research in Britain, as well as similar initiatives in the U.S. and elsewhere. Although spiritualism played an important role during these early years in encouraging scientific research into all kinds of paranormal experiences (Beloff, 1988), interest in studying systematically spiritual and religious experiences has been less marked. Efforts to rectify this were given an institutional base in Oxford in the 1960s (Hardy, 1991). The founder of the Alister Hardy Research Centre described the kind of event that he saw as worthy of systematic study:

> At certain times in their lives many people have had specific, deeply felt, transcendental experiences which have made them all aware of the presence of [a benevolent nonphysical] power. This experience when it comes has always been quite different from any other type of experience they have ever had. They do not necessarily call it a religious feeling, nor does it occur only to those who belong to an institutional religion or who indulge in corporate acts of worship. It often occurs to children, to atheists and agnostics, and it usually induces in the person concerned a conviction that the everyday world is not the whole of reality: that there is another dimension to life." (Hardy, 1991, p. 1)

Analyses and discussions of such experiences have been reported in a number of books and reports (for example, Ahern, 1990; Hardy, 1991; Robinson, 1977). Robinson's *The Original Vision*, for example, provides a fascinating account of adult recollections of childhood experiences. The extent to which schooling helped the spiritual development of those whose accounts were reported is difficult to assess. Robinson reports that most said that on balance it was helpful. However, he also points to numerous examples of people who deliberately inhibited or disguised their 'inner life' because it did not fit in with the outlook of the school and its teachers, and suggests that education which reflects the needs of a competitive society is incompatible with the slowly maturing inner process characteristic of religious awareness (Robinson, 1977, pp. 78–80). One respondent, for example, referred to the "lack of love" at her school, which hindered her spiritual development; another said the school environment was

> mostly hostile to me and made me suffer. The schools we attended were poor and the teachers mostly indifferent. If my religious awareness was developing, and I believe it was, from the experiences I was having, the harshness, the indifference of my environment made me turn inwards, made we look to myself, for a faith and belief I did not find outside. (Robinson, 1977, pp. 86–87)

School inspectors in England and Wales are now to judge schools by how far children appear to be developed spiritually.

It is clear that spiritual experiences constitute a persistent and significant contemporary phenomenon. Based on people's own accounts, they include experiencing a presence that may or may not be referred to as God, answered prayers, a sense of the sacred in nature, experiencing all things as one, and are reported by substantial proportions of the population (from 20 percent upward) in surveys carried out in Britain, the U.S., and Australia (Hay, 1992).[4]

Despite the secular nature of modern Britain, we cannot conclude that in Britain people are disinterested in the spiritual and religious generally and, more particularly, in the context of schooling. There are indications that large majorities of parents want children in school to be taught that there is a God and to say prayers.[5] On the other hand, studies of why parents choose schools could be taken as suggesting that parents place little emphasis on the religious, spiritual, and moral aspects of schooling: The categories that parental choice research is more likely to show concern with are academic standards, the child's happiness at the school, maintaining friendship networks, school location, and school discipline (Glatter, Johnson, & Woods, 1993; West, 1993).

We need to explore such categories further, however. The notion of what we might term a *caring* environment is one that is highly significant for parents — and children — in thinking about schools. This has been posited as the *human warmth* value perspective in assessing schools. The *human warmth* perspective attaches importance to personal relationships (such as the child being with his or her friends), the child's happiness, a caring environment, and so on. It is contrasted with the *rational academic* perspective, which emphasizes academic standards, examination results, and the like (Woods, 1993). Parents do not generally adhere to one perspective to the exclusion of the other, but they tend to put greater emphasis on one more than the other. Recent research on parental choice of school in Britain shows elements of the *human warmth* criterion amongst the most influential factors, with over half of parents attaching importance to them and the child's perspective being highly significant and influential (Woods, 1994).[6] Value is attached to the child and the nature of the school environment in which he or she will spend their time.

There is, we would suggest, a spiritual element in this parental concern, an implicit recognition that hostile, alienating, friendless environments are not conducive to spiritual growth (nor other aspects of development). The link is made in different philosophical and religious contexts, for example, Noddings' emphasis on the centrality of spirituality in her challenge to care in schools (Noddings, 1992, pp. 84–85), the Dalai Lama's injunction that "on every level of human life, compassion is the key thing" (Piburn, 1990, p. 125), and the observation in modern spiritualism that "if we practice goodness, kindness, toleration, and unselfishness, we are better off, because our spiritual natures thrive as a result" (Barbanell, 1949, p. 177).

Moreover, the *human warmth* perspective would seem to be about exactly the kind of secure, loving environment that was lacking for some of the respondents in Robinson's work cited above. Parental comments on schools do not generally refer explicitly to the spiritual or to a connection between that and school as a caring environment. This, however, may result from the fact that modern, everyday language does not naturally and readily draw on the symbols and concepts of spirituality and religion. Reasoning about schools is, like other elements of social life, embedded in secular culture. We do not, however, wish to put words into people's mouths: there is a pressing need for more focused and sensitive research on parents' and children's views on the spiritual aspects of schooling.

Addressing some of the difficulties

The government's increased emphasis on the spiritual and its consequent policy initiatives have inevitably led education professionals in the U.K. to take increased interest in the teaching of spirituality. One participant in a conference of teachers and other professionals concerned with schools and the spiritual made a bold call to those present: "We need to decide what spiritual education consists of."

This begged the question of the legitimacy of the "we" (i.e., the conference) addressed to do this, and more fundamentally, whether the exercise of making such a definition is feasible at all. Where the spiritual is explicitly acknowledged as, and indeed required to be, an aspect of schooling, there is a need for education policy makers to recognize — and at least attempt to deal with — extraordinary difficulties. We highlight three of them here.

First, there is the question of whether it is at all appropriate to talk in terms of *teaching* spiritual education. If schools are to be measured by the spiritual development they bring about (as they are in England and Wales), the natural question is "How do we teach it?" and, indeed, "Who has the expertise to teach it?" The problem is, of course, that there is no commonly agreed-upon body of knowledge to draw from nor an acknowledged set of spiritual skills to be imparted. The spiritual cannot be reduced to intellectual constructs. In the end, education of the spirit "means enabling the spirit to express itself, to give recognition to what is at the root of our being and to bring it into communication (or communion) with others. To teach religious education … is to reexamine the whole meaning of the verb 'to teach'" (Priestley, 1985a, p. 116).

In Britain, the law wills the end (spiritual development) but does not specify the means (how schools are to bring about this development). It may be, however, that the law itself provides the clue to a path that may be profitably followed. The statutory requirement is that schools *promote* pupils' spiritual development. What promotion consists of in this regard needs to be defined. As noted, little attention — much less than that directed toward other parts of the school curriculum — has been paid to what spirituality means in the context of school education. "Promotion" could be seen to consist of the experiences that are afforded to pupils, experiences that are likely to be conducive to a personal and gradual opening up to the spiritual. Major contributors to promotion in this sense are:

- Opportunities to experience cultural events, artistic works, places of religious and spiritual significance, discussions of spiritual, religious, and moral issues.
- The quality of school culture — this refers not to culture in the artistic sense, but to the values, beliefs, and behavior that inform the everyday life of the school. It includes such things as the respect with which people treat each other, including the respect with which adults in school treat pupils.

Having said this, it should be noted that teaching about religion and other matters (spiritual poetry, for example) has an important role to play. In other words, conveying knowledge has a significance — or might be seen as itself another type of experience — that has an impact on spiritual development, though that impact may not become evident until long after a child has left school and become an adult. (See, for example, Robinson, 1977, pp. 81–82.) Spirituality cannot be treated as a discrete subject area. It must permeate the school curriculum and, as suggested above, be embedded within the entire school culture. And, of course, a major determinant of this culture is the school staff — their manner, understanding, and behavior: "If education is about the growth of persons then the educator must above all else be what he wants his pupils to become — a full person" (Priestley, 1985b, p. 5).

There is a measure of recognition in the policy documents referred to earlier that the spiritual cannot be approached in the same way as curriculum areas such as math, science, and history. It is acknowledged, for example, that opportunities for spiritual development arise across all subjects and through the ethos of the school (National Curriculum Council, 1993, p. 6). But, under the gaze of the heightened political attention and assessment procedures focused on spiritual development, there must a concern that schools will emphasize teaching strategies intended to achieve specific "spiritual" outcomes (such as the ability to express some view of the purpose of life) — this at the expense of more fundamental, wide-ranging, organic changes (in school culture, for example) whose effects may appear less predictable and identifiable.

The second challenge to face is the question of the relationship between spirituality and the divine or otherworldly dimensions. Education policy has to confront the question of the boundaries of the spiritual landscape, the implication of which is taking a stand on whether our understanding of the spiritual is set within a framework constituted by this world or one which embraces a transcendent reality. This question poses enormous problems for education policy in a multifaith and secularized society and leads, in the case of recent British policy initiatives, to tentativeness and ambiguity. The spiritual becomes so nebulous that it ceases to have meaning. Or, as we saw earlier, it necessitates specifying criteria for the purpose of school inspections — such as children's capacity to display a system of beliefs and a sense of awe and wonder. Yet it is unclear what legitimate basis there is for concluding that possession of such characteristics is in fact to be spiritually developed (this is aside from the feasibility of assessing them). They have to be sketched in such broad terms so as to encompass a variety of perspectives, both those that see the spiritual as rooted in a transcendental reality and those that do not. But is the capacity to provide a "personal response to questions about the purpose of life" (Office for Standards in Education, 1994, p. 10) an indicator of spiritual development *regardless* of the content of that response?

The very heart of a spiritual experience cannot be expressed in words.

There is no easy resolution of the problem. Nevertheless, it is important — indeed crucial to sensible decision making — to accept explicitly that there is a deep-seated difficulty. Recognizing the problem then allows it to be addressed specifically and for it to be subject to continual review.

Our belief is that the spiritual is *essentially* rooted in a transcendental reality. Research on spiritual experiences mentioned above — and the accounts of mystics and visionaries throughout the ages — suggest that the spiritual realm comes to be known in ways that are outside conventional science. One implication is that philosophy and methods of science need to be changed and developed in order to incorporate such experiences. (See, for example, Gauld, 1993; Scott, 1992.) Modern-day research does not, in itself, prove the existence of the divine or otherworldly dimensions. However, it does "quite radically alter the informational base out of which our understanding of the contemporary religious phenomenon is constructed" (Hay, 1992, p. 12). The problem is that this informational base is not a central part of our culture. We are not in touch with the experiences that are part of an otherwise highly secularized society. This means that the approach to the spiritual in education is limited, formed in the context of an official view that seeks to avoid the most crucial questions about our very being.

The third challenge to face is that of the apparent inexpressibility in words of much of spiritual experience. Such experiences are sacred, deeply personal, unfathomable. That which cannot be expressed in words about a spiritual experience is its very heart, "the sublimeness of later feeling-into, or a remembrance of, the experience" (Ahern, 1990, p. 39). Language in itself cannot do full justice to it; people with formal qualifications in higher education find that language reaches its limitations with such experiences as much as those without. This appears to represent a different form of communication, or of knowing, which leaves a profound impression on the soul.

The significance of this for learning can be put in many different ways. Words are only part of the means by which the spiritual can be developed.

> [They] stimulate your own spiritual receptivity to unspoken truth which you can only receive in your own way, in your own heart. Not in words alone does truth come, but in the silence, in a pure spiritual atmosphere, in cosmic rays which you can receive more readily in the atmosphere which by your love and service you can create. (White Eagle Publishing Trust, 1985, p. 108)

The inexpressibility through words of much to do with the spiritual is clearly a major obstacle to those charged with running the school system. Their mode of operation is that of all governments and bureaucracies — the impersonal language of legislation, policy documents, rules and guidance of the kind with which this paper began. With this in mind, we believe that setting down criteria for assessing children's spiritual development in school inspections is a matter of particular concern. Spirituality in schools is being focused on in Britain when for the first time a national curriculum (set out in some detail by central agencies) and national testing of children's progress have been established (this is part of a general trend toward centralization in many countries). A checklist of specific criteria is not a surprising outcome in this context. The contents of this list are, however, necessarily contestable and cannot be based on a widely agreed-upon body of expert knowledge. Those that have been laid down are framed, as suggested above, in general terms, without a framework of belief that provides specific content to the spiritual landscape. There is, therefore, an uncertainty at the core of this aspect of school inspection.

Setting down criteria for assessing children's spiritual development raises a number of questions concerning the ethics and appropriateness of evaluating spiritual development.

Assessment also raises a number of questions concerning the ethics and appropriateness of evaluating children's spiritual development. Is it right to expect of pupils that they can or wish to articulate their innermost beliefs? Do they not have a right to privacy, to decide whether or not to speak of such matters? What if they do not wish to give a personal response to questions on the purpose of life? They may not feel that the time or place is appropriate to reveal such deeply personal matters. There is, in addition, the matter of the *practice of spirituality*: Inner strivings to understand the self and to develop spiritually have outer manifestations in the way the person lives his or her life. The practice of spirituality opens large questions beyond the scope of this paper, but it underscores the difficulties of seeking to assess the spiritual dimension of any person.

Neither the uncertainty nor the ethical or other questions we highlight are overcome by specified inspection criteria for determining pupils' spiritual development. The inspectorate of schools is mindful of some of the dangers inherent in pursuing nationally directed policies on the spiritual; for example, they clearly point to the need for inspectors to avoid being partisan (Office for Standards in Education, 1994, p. 9). But, at bottom, such inspection requires inspectors to form judgments concerning intimate aspects of young people's thoughts and feelings (their willingness to search for meaning and how far they experience awe and wonder, for example). It might be said that inspectors are being called on to weigh the heart and soul of a person. But in doing this, who can claim to know their true quality?

Concluding remarks

It is essential that the challenges of the spiritual are openly acknowledged and that the framework of beliefs and values within which it is approached is more rigorously examined than presently. It is no chance event that the spiritual has become more prominent in educational thought in recent years. It reflects — at least in part — a recognition that the cramming of knowledge and the pursuit of examination and test passes is but one aspect of life, and that the concentration on these alone restricts human growth. Parents generally do not take such a restrictive view of education (even though in Britain, the government has put much effort into publishing league tables of schools' examination performances) (Woods, 1993, 1994); they consider the needs of the *whole child* and search for a balance between the child's various interests and dimensions of activity.

The place of spirituality in schooling needs to be explored, not as one segment of a whole curriculum (tacked on when other curriculum subjects have been dealt with), but as a fundamental quest concerning what it is to be human. However great the challenges, and however daunting the questions they raise, this is no reason to avoid them — nor to try to neutralize them in the dry language of education policy. This means we have to have the courage to imagine what may presently seem unthinkable — namely, a schooling environment and curriculum that is *led by* the spiritual — and to rise to the challenge that this poses.

Notes

1. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious education lessons and collective worship.

2. This requirement was reaffirmed in the 1944 Education Act and 1988 Education Reform Act (Harris, 1993, pp. 206, 227).

3. The draft national syllabuses, published in January 1994, stress that they are advisory. Religious education syllabuses are determined locally. Schools (with certain exceptions, such as "voluntary aided" church schools) follow the local education authority's syllabus on which the authority is required to seek local advice through a specially convened conference and a permanent Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The national syllabuses are, nevertheless, part of a trend toward much greater involvement by central government in the school curriculum.

4. One of the authors has reported such an experience (Woods & Woods, 1993).

5. A survey carried by *The Independent* newspaper in 1993 found that 71% of parents agreed that children should be taught there is a God and 70% that children should say prayers at school (reported in *The Independent*, September 6, 1993).

6. The findings concerning human warmth factors are part of a major project on school choice — the PASCI (Parental and School Choice Interaction) study — for which one of the authors is principal investigator. The factors are "child's preference for the school," "child will be happy at the school," and "child's friends will be at the school." Their relative position to other factors, such as standard of academic education provided by the school, varies according to area. Schools' caring approach to pupils is slightly less likely than these to be indicated as influential. This may reflect the fact that parents feel less able to assess a school's caring policy in advance of experiencing it. Qualitative aspects of the PASCI study (interviews with parents) indicate parents' intense concern for the welfare of their child in the environment of a new school.

References

Ahern, G. (1990). *Spiritual/religious experience in modern society: A pilot study*. Oxford: Alister Hardy Research Centre.

Barbanell, M. (1949). *Power of the spirit*. London: Psychic Press.

Beloff, J. (1988). *The importance of psychical research*. London: Society for Psychical Research.

Department for Education. (1994). *Religious education and collective worship*. (Circular number 1/94). London: Department of Education.

Gauld, A. (1993). The function of a society for psychical research at the present time. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, 57*, Part 217, 253–273.

Glatter, R., Johnson, D., & Woods, P. A. (1993). Marketing, choice and responses in education. In M. Smith & H. Busher (Eds.), *Managing schools in an uncertain environment: Resources, marketing and power*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam Univ. for BEMAS (British Educational Management and Administration Society).

Hardy, A. (1991). *The spiritual nature of man: A study of contemporary religious experience*. Oxford: Alister Hardy Research Centre.

Harris, N. (1993). *Law and education: Regulation, consumerism and the education system*. London: Sweet and Maxwell.

Hay, D. (1992). Religious experience — Testing the negative hypothesis. In *Occasional Papers No. 1*. Oxford: Alister Hardy Research Centre.

Merttens, R. (1993). *Marginal communions*. Unpublished manuscript. University of North London.

National Curriculum Council. (1993). *Spiritual and moral development — A discussion paper*. York: National Curriculum Council.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Office for Standards in Education. (1993). *Framework for the inspection of schools*. London: OFSTED.

Office for Standards in Education. (1994). *Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development: An OFSTED discussion paper*. London: OFSTED.

Piburn, S. (1990). *The Dalai Lama: A policy of kindness*. New York: Snow Lion Publications.

Priestley, J. G. (1985a). Towards finding the hidden curriculum: A consideration of the spiritual dimension of experience in curriculum planning. *British Journal of Religious Education*, Summer, 112–119.

Priestley, J. G. (1985b). Flushing out subversion. In *Religion, Spirituality and Schools (Perspectives 9)*. Exeter: University of Exeter School of Education.

Robinson, E. (1977). *The original vision: A study of the religious experience of childhood*. Oxford: Alister Hardy Research Centre.

School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. (1994). *Model syllabuses for religious education: Consultation document*. London: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Scott, M. (1992). Renaissance of the spirit: A new way to see ourselves. In *Occasional Papers No. 1*. Oxford: Alister Hardy Research Centre.

West, A. (1993). Choosing schools: Are different factors important for different parents? In M. Smith & H. Busher (Eds.), *Managing schools in an uncertain environment: Resources, marketing and power*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University for BEMAS (British Educational Management and Administration Society).

White Eagle Publishing Trust. (1985). *Jesus: Teacher and healer*. Hampshire: Author.

Wilson, K. (1993). *Moral and spiritual education* (NCE Briefing No. 19). London: National Commission on Education.

Woods, P. A. (1993, April). *Parental perspectives on choice in the U.K.: Preliminary thought on meanings and realities of choice in education*. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Woods, P. A. (1994, April) *Parents and choice in the local competitive arenas: First findings from the main phase of the PASCI study*. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Woods, P. A., & Woods, G. (1993, September). *Spirituality and the education market place*. Paper presented at the National Conference of Moral and Spiritual Education, University of Plymouth, Exmouth, England.

Lois Bridges Bird
C. A. Bowers
Jeffrey Kane

The Renewal of Meaning in Education

Responses to the Cultural and Ecological Crisis of Our Times

Kathleen Kesson
John P. Miller
Ron Miller
David W. Orr
David E. Purpel
Douglas Sloan

The Renewal of Meaning in Education
Responses to the Cultural and Ecological Crisis of Our Times
Edited by Ron Miller
ISBN 0-9627232-3-1; 160 pp., paper; $18.95 ($2 S&H)

"For nearly the last decade Ron Miller has provided indispensable leadership to all persons concerned to develop a truly holistic education. In his books and as founder of the *Holistic Education Review*, he has made known and shaped some of the most important aspects of the holistic education movement. Now in this book, and with the authors he has mustered for it, Ron Miller takes us another step on the way to making a holistic education a reality for our schools and children."

— from the Foreword by Douglas Sloan

Order Your Copy Today

Holistic Education Press
PO Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328
802/247-8312

Rational Schooling and the Decontextualized Learner

Moral Dimensions of the Implicit Curricula from a Batesonian Perspective

G. Thomas Ray

By expanding what we teach, how we teach it, and by adopting a more holistic Batesonian approach to learning — in short, by diminishing the separation between subject and object inherent in rational schooling — we as educators can help provide students with the tools needed to address the growing moral incompetence of our society.

G. Thomas Ray is an assistant professor at Western Michigan University, where he teaches courses in socio-cultural foundations of education. Reprint requests should be sent to the author at Western Michigan University, Department of Education and Professional Development, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

Commenting on the condition of modern life, Morris Berman laments, "Western life seems to be drifting toward increasing entropy, economic and technological chaos, ecological disaster, and ultimately psychic dismemberment and disintegration…" (1984, p. 1). How schooling might be involved in this "drift" is the focus of this essay. The purpose here is to develop a conceptual framework that draws from the work of Gregory Bateson so that unexamined and taken-for-granted ways of thinking about knowledge, learning, and schools can be viewed in such a way that their morally problematic aspects emerge into high relief.

An assumption underlying this essay is that as people acquire the languages, customs, beliefs, and so forth in the process of becoming members of a culture group, they also acquire the group's epistemological framework for apprehending reality and organizing their experience of it. The question here has to do with implicit learnings that result from extended exposure to institutionalized Western education and how these learnings might contribute to culturally grounded ways of thinking that limit students' moral capacity for addressing social and environmental problems that face us locally, nationally, and globally.

The school, as one of many socializing institutions, has had a traditional role in preparing young people for the responsibilities of adulthood. Typically, this has ranged from preparing students for economic self-sufficiency to transmitting a cultural heritage to providing a literate electorate for maintaining freedom and democracy. But as anthropologist Ward Goodenough observes, "Every social order necessarily contains within it a moral order" (1981, p. 81), and coincident with other socializing purposes, we can see in Western educational traditions a concern for the moral development of young people.

Around the first century A.D., Plutarch argued that it is "good education and proper training... which leads on and helps towards moral excellence and towards happiness" (1970, p. 51), and in 1503, Erasmus insisted that "the tutor should first see that his pupil loves and honors virtue as the finest quality of all" (1970, p. 60). Jefferson argued that "when [moral sense] is wanting, we endeavor to supply the defect by education" (1973, p. 317). The Cardinal Principles Report of the National Education Association in 1918 included "ethical character" as one of the seven main aims of schooling (Kliebard, 1986, p. 114). For Durkheim, "The task of the school in the moral development of the child can and should be of the greatest importance" (1973, p. 18). And in the State of Washington, we find this statutory requirement: "All teachers shall stress the importance of the cultivation of manners, the fundamental principles of honesty, honor, industry and economy, the minimum requisites for good health including the beneficial effect of physical exercise, and the worth of kindness to all living creatures" (1987). Clearly from these representative examples, moral learning is an integral and explicit part of the schools' efforts to develop socially competent adults.

Signs of moral incompetence are all around us, and they seem to be growing by leaps and bounds.

However, as Kenneth Sirotnik observes, "Signs of incompetence are all around us and seem to be growing in leaps and bounds" (1990, pp. 300–301). In addressing matters of shoddy workmanship and low-quality performance in any number of production and service sectors, he applies this idea of competence not only to skills and abilities but to attitudes and dispositions as well, and he offers the idea of "an ethic of competence or a moral commitment to doing, and learning to do, things well" (p. 301). But Sirotnik is largely concerned with mundane matters of shoe leather, highway engineering, and a multiplicity of governmental non-service, and I want to extend his thinking in order to offer *moral* competence as a way of thinking about our capacity to be moral — that is, to do what our collective ethical sensibilities tell us is right and to act effectively against what we believe to be wrong. Surely signs of moral incompetence are all around us, and they too seem to be growing by leaps and bounds.

The problem is not that we lack moral sensibility. We tithe to religious organizations, community charities, alumni development funds, and adopt-a-third-world-child programs. We support canned food drives and toys-for-tots. And Robert Bellah and his associates have thoroughly documented our penchant for community service by way of the Kiwanis, Rotary, Soroptimists, and the like (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). These are examples of the many worthwhile contributions that we make to our communities and which reinforce our moral ethos of service. But they have not been sufficient in acting against serious and pervasive social problems. We do not need to read Kevin Phillips (1990) on the effects of Reaganomics in order to discover how deregulation and the 1986 tax "reform" have widened the gap between rich and poor and added to the ranks at each extreme. Nor do we need to read Jonathan Kozol (1988) on the homeless and the inability of social services to deal with their problems in order to recognize how widespread this situation is. And we do not need to read the annual *State of the World* report (Worldwatch Institute, 1992) to appreciate how our practices of consumption and waste have brought the world precariously close to the limits of human survivability. Anyone who reads a newspaper even occasionally is aware of these problems. More to the point, I believe, although perhaps naively, that most of us agree that these in fact *are* problems, and problems of a most serious sort.

But our moral sensibilities notwithstanding, we continue to use whatever petrochemicals necessary for weed-free lawns or aphid-free roses. Or, if our yards are not chemically enhanced, we play on golf courses that are. We dither over the United States' role as world policeman while Eastern Europe undergoes ethnic cleansing. And in 1988, we elected a president apparently unable to differentiate between energy policy and military invasion, and whose popularity ratings were highest when this conceptual dyslexia was most apparent.

Something is not altogether right here, and it occurs at a deeper level than that of our competing and inconsistent conscious thoughts and behaviors. Gregory Bateson observes, "There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess" (1972, p. 484). The purpose here is to consider how schooling might be a part of this "mess" and to develop an explanatory framework to account for it.

But when we try to reappraise in fundamental ways our institutions or systems of belief, we have a difficult time of it because they are embedded in a transparent and taken-for-granted worldview or conceptual framework that goes unnoticed. This natural attitude, as C. A. Bowers (1977) puts it in describing ideology, can be understood as "an interlocking set of beliefs and assumptions that make up the background or horizon against which the members of society make sense of their daily experience" (p. 35), and to examine it within its own epistemological framework is a nearly impossible task. As Clyde Kluckhohn (1985) aphorizes, "It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water" (p. 11). Bateson's work is important in this regard, for it provides a different conceptual lens through which we may examine our natural attitude and brings into high relief ways of understanding the world that tend to remain out of focus and ignored.

A Batesonian perspective

One way of approaching Batesonian thought is to understand two of his more fundamental concepts. One has to do with circularity and reciprocity in relationships, and the other with the idea that such relationships constitute mental systems within which all component parts communicate with one another. Bateson's example of a person chopping a tree illustrates both. "Each stroke of the ax is modified or corrected, according to the shape of the cut face of the tree left by the previous stroke. This self-corrective (i.e., mental) process is brought about by a total system, tree-eyes-brain-muscles-ax-stroke-tree; and it is this total system that has the characteristics of immanent mind" (1972, p. 317). In this illustration, Bateson suggests that the tree is not a passively unresponsive object of an autonomous subject with ax. Rather, differences in the shape of the cut face lead to differences in subsequent strokes of the ax, thus illustrating a circular and communicative process in this action. Accordingly, the chopping is not simply a unidirectionally linear function of the mental intention of an autonomous ax handler. And because of the reciprocal communication involved in this activity, mentation is not a function of an individual organism but something that inheres in the system as a whole. As Bateson (1991) explains, "The 'mental' system involved in cutting a tree is not a mind *in* a man who cuts a tree but a mind which includes differences in other characteristics in the tree, the behavior of the ax, and so on, all around a circuit which in essence is a completed circuit" (p. 165).

Similarly, a thermostat does not autonomously "think" and linearly control a heating device. Rather, it is a communicative relationship of heater, thermostat, air temperature, etc., that forms a mental system. Thus, for Bateson "what is" does not exist in isolation or discrete atomistic pieces, but in relationships—in his own words, "Nothing means anything except in the presence of other things" (G. Bateson, 1991, p. 166).

When we try to reappraise in fundamental ways our institutions or systems of belief, we have a difficult time of it because they are embedded in a transparent and taken-for-granted worldview.

These two concepts — objects as relational and systems as mental — lead to what is perhaps Bateson's most valuable contribution: that "no part of such an internally interactive system can have unilateral control over the remainder or over any other part" (1972, p. 315). In other words, if a mental system is to be in sustainable balance, there must be a mutuality of control among the system's parts. Without it, the system will go out of control and destroy itself. "The stability of the system (i.e., whether it will act self-correctively or oscillate or go into runaway) depends upon the relation between the operational product of all the transformations of difference around the circuit and upon this characteristic time" (1972, p. 316).

For Bateson, the problem lies in our inability to see ourselves as situated in a larger scheme of things. He believes we have a difficult time conceptually detaching ourselves from an egocentric and anthropocentric position and seeing ourselves, instead, as embedded in a much wider ecology of relationships. If "you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration. The environment will seem to be yours to exploit. Your survival unit will be you and your folks or conspecifics against the environment of other social units, other races and the brutes and vegetables" (G. Bateson, 1972, p. 462). We are accustomed, however, to seeing ourselves situated in the world as autonomous moral actors, as rational individuals. We are embedded in a cultural framework that makes it difficult if not impossible to see ourselves as members in a wider ecology of relationships. And it is important to add that Bateson himself had difficulty with this. "If I am cutting down a tree, I still think 'Gregory Bateson' is cutting down the tree. *I* am cutting down the tree. 'Myself' is to me still an excessively concrete object, different from the rest of what I have been calling 'mind.' The step to realizing — to making habitual — the other way of thinking — so that one *naturally* [emphasis added] thinks that way when one reaches out for a glass of water or cuts down a tree — that step is not an easy one" (1972, p. 462).

To the extent that our thinking is limited in this way, our moral perimeter is similarly limited. Our moral incompetence with regard to recent events in Bosnia is in part a result of Europe's distance from us — it is outside of us, separate from us and far away. Our moral incompetence in attending to excessive automobile emissions has to do in part with atmospheric problems seeming to be minimally inconveniencing or dangerous — except in Los Angeles, Mexico City, or other places that involve others who are *outside* of us. "You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is part of *your* wider eco-mental system — and that if Lake Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of *your* thought and experience" (G. Bateson, 1972, p. 484).

A central argument in this essay is that isolating oneself conceptually from the Other limits a person's ability to apprehend the Other's reality and thus to act in concert with them and on their behalf. To put it another way, the separation of subject from object, which the habituation of rational objectification creates or reinforces, has an effect of subordinating object to subject, obscuring their ecological interconnectedness, and reducing ethical obligation between them. For Bateson, an individual is not self-contained within a definable perimeter, but "is a *system* whose boundaries do not at all coincide with the boundaries either of the body or of what is popularly called the 'self' or 'consciousness'..." (1972, p. 319). Parallel with this, Martin Buber argues, "There is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I–You and the I of the basic word I–It.... Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. *You has no borders* [emphasis added]" (1970, pp. 54–55). The distinction Buber makes here is important, for his I–It encounter stands in ethical relation to I–You in much the same way that modernistic separation of subject and object stands in relation to Batesonian holism.

Nel Noddings articulates this way of thinking similarly. "Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one-caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other" (1984, p. 16). It is important to note here Noddings' congruence with both Buber and Bateson. In an I–You encounter, relational distinctions blur, and the "I" becomes one with the "You." For Noddings, empathetic involvement with the Other is an ethical ideal. "At bottom, all caring involves engrossment. The engrossment need not be intense nor need it be pervasive in the life of the one-caring, but it must occur.... My first and unending obligation is to meet the other as one-caring" (1984, p. 17). The point here is that these ways of ethically encountering the Other require a way of thinking that can be seen as being fundamentally Batesonian, one that is obscured by implicit learnings that are acquired in schools.

Implicit curricula

A common way of thinking about education is to distinguish between the explicit (or formal or official) curriculum, "which refers to what we deliberately and overtly provide" (Barrow, 1984, p. 10), and what is variously known as the hidden, unplanned, or implicit curriculum. The former has to do with language arts, woodshop, geometry, drill team, and football, as well as the stuff of textbooks, curriculum guides, achievement tests, and graduation requirements. The latter involves other learning experiences that are not part of schools' advertised menu of learning options, experiences that may or may not be school-approved but are nonetheless an acknowledged part of life in schools — unofficial dress codes, which restrooms offer the best concealment for smoking, and "such varied experiences or engagements as teasing boys, pinching girls, advancing oneself inconsiderately in the cafeteria line, learning to like history, developing a prejudice against an ethnic group, protecting one's front teeth from being pushed down hard on drinking fountains ... and resisting pressure to smoke marijuana" (Doll, 1986, p. 7).

One way of thinking about this unplanned or unofficial curriculum is to distinguish between learnings that students and teachers tend to be aware of, such as the examples in the preceding paragraph, and those that they are not. What, for an example of the latter, do students implicitly learn about the relationship between orderliness and being "good" when they are required to raise hands before speaking, their desks are arranged in formal patterns, and their work is graded on neatness? What do they learn about the legitimacy of sources of knowledge when the bulk of what they are expected to learn comes from printed material? That is, what do they tacitly learn *while* they are learning?

Schools privilege linear and sequential ways of thinking — ways of knowing that have a difficult time accommodating an understanding of holistic mental systems and of one's place in them.

Elliot Eisner (1985) explains that "schools teach far more than they advertise. Function follows form. Furthermore, it is important to realize that what schools teach is not simply a function of covert intention; *it is largely unintentional* [emphasis added]. What schools teach they teach in the fashion that the culture itself teaches, because schools are the kinds of places they are" (p. 93). It is in this sense that I will use the term "implicit" throughout, and it is certain aspects of implicit learning experiences that are to be considered here with regard to moral competence.

Schools have a number of features that we think of as commonplace and routine — if we think of them at all. One, for example, is that learning is what *individual* students do. Although collaborative learning has recently reemerged to an enthusiastic reception, and although criterion assessment arguably reduces competition among students and fosters cooperative attitudes (Gage & Berliner, 1992, p. 576), the structures and practices of schools nonetheless isolate and assess performance of individuals and provide rewards and recognition based on individual effort and achievement. Students' achievements are regularly assessed at various thresholds, their work is evaluated, their learning tested and "checked for understanding" — all on an individual basis. Stressing learner-as-individual in this way puts out of focus a sense of cooperative interdependence. Or, to put it in a more Batesonian way, students do not experience themselves as part of a mental ecology of relationships; they instead acquire a perception that they are autonomous individuals, primarily, if not exclusively, responsible for their own achievement.

Another implicit learning results from schools' emphasis on reading and writing, particularly from how reading is emphasized as a primary vehicle for accessing knowledge. Authors write, usually alone, for unseen and typically unknown readers. And readers, also usually alone, are separated by time and space from all but a literal and abstract experience of an author's reality. Although schools provide ample opportunity, both formally and informally, for direct communication among people, they nonetheless implicitly teach that *important* learning is that which comes from reading, and in this way reinforce a view of learning as an independent process and the successful learner as an individual.

"Learning," argues Benjamin Bloom, "is a process which can be observed and evaluated..." (cited in Cummings, 1980, p. 111). Accordingly, what students come to understand as legitimate school learning is not what they internally experience or implicitly share with others, but what can be written down, assessed in some positivistic way, or otherwise explicitly demonstrated. As Fenwick English (1983) summarizes, "What was 'real' was that which was capable of being demonstrated, evaluated, and related to the ends of schooling..." (p. 4). Similarly, Ralph Tyler's (1949) fourth step, "How can we determine whether these [educational] purposes are being attained?" (p. 1) is not limited to his original intention in a curriculum planning model, but extends into nearly all aspects of institutional educational experience including the minutiae of lesson planning.

But learning that can be positivistically apprehended — measured or otherwise objectively observed by another — is necessarily explicit and also, with few exceptions, must necessarily be expressed propositionally in a linear and abstract form. When schools legitimate this sort of learning, they also privilege linear and sequential ways of thinking — ways of knowing that have a difficult time accommodating an understanding of holistic mental systems and of one's place in them.

The nature of "legitimate" knowledge is another implicit learning that schools teach. The formal curriculum is provided to students through two principal sources — textbooks and other print media and teachers. Although students learn a great deal from other sources — how to act on a date or to whistle with a piece of grass held between the thumbs — legitimate knowledge resides with outside authority. If one is to learn about worthwhile matters, one must read, listen to a teacher, seek out an expert, do research, or in some way look outside one's personal experience or apprehension of the world.

School knowledge is explicit and rational and is regarded with greater respect than knowledge that is apprehended affectively or intuitively. Accordingly, students acquire a view of knowledge that places it outside themselves as something to be acquired through academic work and appeal to authority, and they learn to delegitimate and devalue personal and other nonacademic learning experiences.

Because phenomena are interpreted by external authority, students acquire an understanding of the world as being external and separate from themselves. If, for example, students are to learn about grass — any sort of common lawn grass — a teacher might provide them with books and didactic instruction on the subject. Students would learn about seeds, germination, life cycle, classifications of species and varieties, cell structures, the nitrogen cycle, and similar matters. Or, less abstractly, students might be sent out to gather specimens, examine them with magnifiers, write descriptions or draw pictures of them, and germinate their seeds. Each of these activities would provide *a type* of knowledge about grass.

But they would also provide an implicit framework for understanding knowledge. The first set of activities, involving books and instruction, reinforces a way of thinking about knowledge as emanating from authority and existing in some fixed form prior to students' encounters with it. Further, because knowledge appears in print, it gives an impression of permanence and immutability. The relationship between students and knowledge becomes one of separation; students read, listen, and inquire in order to acquire knowledge from without.

The second type of activity is more concrete and potentially inductive, and it provides an impression of the value and importance of students' immediate and personal encounters with the world. But this impression is largely illusory for a number of reasons. First, *what* students investigate is usually assigned by teachers, and often by the teacher's edition of a textbook. Thus, what is a suitable subject for study is legitimated by authority. Second, the ways that their investigations occur are preplanned for them by their teachers. Students are provided, explicitly or implicitly, with ways of looking at what they study — scientific method, for example. In other words, their conceptual framework for how one should academically experience phenomena is provided by the school. Third, the conclusions they draw from their investigations are seldom their own. Typically a discovery lesson does not involve "discovery" in a literal sense, but one in which students *are lead* to discover conclusions that have been preplanned for them. From Tyler's model for curriculum planning (1949) to Hunter's lesson design (1982), what students learn and how they go about it are set for them by teachers and others. Knowledge is important only when it has been legitimized by the authority of teacher or text.

Because students in schools are involved with knowledge that is explicitly apprehended, they learn to read, speak, and write in a discourse form that is for the most part propositional and literal. Propositional language, as Rudolf Arnheim (1985) explains, involves a linear organizational structure that provides a way of understanding concepts and conceptual relationships in a sequential and logical coherence. This is a rational discourse pattern that must necessarily deal with facts and concepts sequentially and therefore separately. Propositional language, to use Marshall McLuhan's (1962) words, "means the spelling out of one thing at a time, one sense at a time, one mental or physical operation at a time" (p. 18).

Accordingly, this sort of language pattern can never apprehend at once the totality of a system that it describes — only individual components (Arnheim, 1985, pp. 84–85). Moreover, it reinforces a view of things as reducible to their component parts and puts out of focus a Batesonian view of holistic systems.

Despite excellent intentions, behavior management programs in schools also implicitly teach ways of thinking that are morally problematic. School rules are explicitly stated and are typically published in one or more forms — school handbooks, hallway posters, classroom bulletin boards, etc. — in order to make students aware of them. Randall Sprick (1985) advises teachers to "prepare handouts on your rules and expectations…" (p. 8) and to "present class rules and consequences for misbehavior" (p. 9). Similarly, Lee Canter (1976) argues that classroom rules and consequences must be clear and explicit, and that students must know both. "Children need to know what response there will be to their behavior by the teacher, both positive and negative. It is only then that the child will be in a position to chose how he will behave" (pp. 7–8).

One assumption of these approaches to classroom management is that knowledge must be made explicit if it is to be known. Another is that students should rationally and consciously apprehend school rules. And a third is that students are autonomous moral actors who consciously decide whether or not to obey. But by making rules explicit (which, incidentally, I believe is both necessary and just, given the structure of schools as they currently are), schools teach a legalistic way of thinking about social relations.

Hannah Arendt's (1968) distinction between authority and authoritarianism (pp. 92–95) is particularly relevant here. Authoritarianism, as she views it, has to do with external coercion. School rules and consequences, even when established with student participation and consensus, are an authoritarian means of encouraging appropriate behavior. Authority, on the other hand, is what emerges collectively, gradually, and implicitly as a culture group's moral or behavioral ethos. What is appropriate is a matter of "good form" and is taken for granted and unexamined because it inheres in a basic cultural framework that is shared by the group. An important difference is that an authoritarian ethical rubric, such as the sort offered by Sprick and Canter, is external to the moral actor. Authority, on the other hand, is within the moral actor — not in the "freely chosen" sense of Values Clarification (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978), but in a shared moral guidance system that frames the totality of ethical responsiveness. By immersing students in rules and consequences, schools implicitly teach that social responsibility is a matter of being rule responsive, a way of thinking that separates students from moral authority. Rules, in this sense, do not define what a good person *is* but are merely guideposts for what a person may or may not do.

When students assimilate ways of knowing that privilege objective apprehension of phenomena, they lose the ability to see themselves as integral components in mental systems. When they learn to use propositional discourse and learn that it is a more valued way of communicating, they lose the ability to apprehend totalities. When students learn that rational inquiry is more important than intuitive, aesthetic, or other nonrational ways of knowing, their ability to apprehend the world in nonexplicit ways is impeded. And when they learn to understand external rules as legitimate expressions of social norms, their legalistic orientation to moral authority reduces their ability to recognize implicit authority emergent in relationships.

Rules do not define what a good person is but are merely guideposts for what a person may or may not do.

Toward a moral ecology

Herbert Kliebard (1986) reports that the developmental psychologist G. Stanley Hall "once claimed that he liked to take off his clothes and roll around naked in the fields of his native Massachusetts…" (p. 13). Kliebard doesn't say how he came by this intelligence, for he fails to provide a citation for it in an otherwise thoroughly referenced study. As a way of apprehending grass, rolling around in it has something to recommend it — although I'm reluctant to suggest that schools adopt the practice — for it provides learning experiences that books and rational investigation cannot. Rolling in grass provides a more concrete and comprehensive experience of it — one feels, smells, and tastes it rather than simply looking at it or reading about it. There is an aesthetic experience in this that cannot be expressed propositionally, an intuitive or holistic apprehension of grass-as-experienced. Agreed, this sort of encounter may not be as much an experience of grass as an experience of one's sensations of it. But that is the point, for it offers a linkage between grass and sensate experience in a way that a Batesonian unity can be experienced. And the more concrete an experience of the Other, the greater the opportunity and likelihood that persons will see themselves as more closely involved with the Other, that they will be able to experience its (or her or his) reality, and that they will act in a way that supports the well-being of the Other.

Aldo Leopold (1987) puts it this way: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and the beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (pp. 224–225). Although he is primarily concerned with developing a land ethic that would provide a measure of moral restraint against humans' environmental abuse, his expression of moral rightness can be applied to social relationships as well. Matters of stability, integrity, and beauty can also contribute to ways of thinking about moral responsibility among persons. What is right emerges in a mental system, contributes to its integrity, and establishes itself as an ethical fixture in the individual who is a component in the system. What is right emerges as part of an ethical commitment that a shared and reciprocating encounter of the Other's reality creates. This is what a moral competence involves, and rational schooling impedes its acquisition.

When students understand subjects as discrete and isolatable, they fail to apprehend reality's ontological interconnectedness.

The point here is not to bring these morally problematic aspects of schooling into view so that they might be removed wholesale from educational structures and practices. We should rightly expect that students learn rational problem-solving methods, become literate, know how to respond to legal precept, and so on, and it has not been my intention to argue that these ways of thinking *cause* moral incompetence. Rather, it is that the overemphasis — almost to the point of exclusivity — that schooling places on them that contributes to this situation. When matters of rationality, individualism, literacy, etc., are given such importance as to exclude other ways of being and knowing, they tend to form a transparent ideological framework that makes it difficult if not impossible to see things any other way.

Bateson (1991) warns, "We, too, are creatures of a civilization which certainly since the Renaissance and possibly for a much longer time has cherished such irrational principles as reductionism, the conceptual division between mind and body, and the belief that ends justify means. It [is] therefore probable that any plan of action which we might devise would itself be based upon these erroneous premises" (p. 254). Accordingly, any suggestions I might offer for addressing the problems discussed here must be viewed with caution. But an attempt must be made, nonetheless, to advance some theoretical suggestions that inform how practitioners might regard students and learning so that a Batesonian way of thinking might emerge with respect to moral learning.

A reconsideration of Ralph Tyler's model (1949) offers one way of thinking about this. A problem with Tyler's rationale is not that it sets goals and evaluates learning. This sort of planning is necessary unless schooling is to proceed randomly and without direction, something I would not suggest. Rather, the problem is that it accommodates a restricted way of thinking about what constitutes legitimate learning and an acceptable demonstration of it. When learning is checked and measured against a prior set of expectations, it is too easy to reduce learning goals to easily testable and unambiguous expectations. But Tyler's framework can provide for learning experiences that are less explicitly planned for and that would allow students to explore and create, to encounter the world in personally unique ways.

The issue here is one of latitude — how much latitude a teacher is willing to permit in terms of what is a legitimate learning experience and outcome. A way of thinking about this is that as curricular expectations broaden and become more flexible, a more Batesonian experience emerges — Batesonian in the sense that students experience a greater sense of integration with whatever it is they are learning about. This is not to say that all learning must have flexible outcomes since some subjects — less advanced mathematics, for example — may require more precise outcomes than others, such as history and literature. Nonetheless it is important to note, as Kliebard (1975) suggests, that "the most significant dimensions of an educational activity or any activity may be those that are completely unplanned and wholly unanticipated. An evaluation procedure that ignores this fact is plainly unsatisfactory" (p. 80).

Eisner (1985) argues that "there is nothing wrong with being goal oriented, except for the fact that activities that are intrinsically satisfying tend to place a premium on the quality of the process, on how it feels to be engaged in the act itself ..." (p. 53). And it is this quality of process, an affective and aesthetic encounter with one's learning experiences, that schools tend to ignore when their principal concern is with achievement of objectives. What is important here is to consider the possibility that an aesthetic encounter with schools' formal curricula provides a more personal and concrete experience, one that reduces a sense of separation that a rationalized and subject/objected dichotomized learning encounter provides.

One of the things educators do, partly out of tradition and partly as a matter of convenience, is to divide formal curricula into disciplines. By doing this, schools reinforce a sense of conceptual divisibility and limit ways of seeing reality as an integrated whole. The separation of natural sciences from social sciences is a particularly good example of the danger of this. The former are typically organized as studies of nonhuman phenomena, human biology being an exception. When the latter, such as psychology, anthropology, and history, are treated as separate from the former, a sense of separation of humanity from other members of the biosphere is reinforced. The effects of this separation are clearly evident in such anthropocentric concerns over spotted owls, the ozone layer, and whether restrictions on auto emissions will bankrupt Detroit. When literature is separated from its historical milieu, it tends to be perceived as inert and decontextualized from the broader framework of human experience. Art and music lose important qualities when matters of biography are ignored and when they are separated from verbal and mathematical languages that describe them. When students understand subjects as discrete and isolatable, they fail to apprehend reality's ontological interconnectedness.

Madeline Hunter (1976), as well as others, stresses the importance of both teacher and student knowing that learning has taken place. "The most effective learning is accomplished when you make sure that the student knows when he has done well or, when he hasn't, what needs to be corrected.... As a teacher, your job is to encourage him by *helping him to be right*, letting him know when he *is* right, helping him to realize *when* he has learned, what he has learned, and *what he still needs to practice* " (pp. 33–34, 64). But when a student explicitly "knows" something, it is not an apprehension of a totality but an isolated segment of a linearly organized sequence. Rollo May (1991) suggests that "many authors are influenced *more* by writers they only partially understand than by those they fully comprehend, for the former leaves unfinished business going on in one's mind. The most powerful influence is that which grasps us as a totality ..." (pp. 170–171). A problem here is that because explicit communication tends to be propositional, students cannot grasp the totality of their learning experiences (or, perhaps better, cannot grasp their learning experiences as a totality), even though schooling provides an illusion that suggests otherwise. Moreover, as Merleau-Ponty (1961) argues, "the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness, since it congeals the whole of existence, as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it" (p. 71). And in this way, conceptual crystallization inhibits more subtle apprehension of a fluid, intuitively graspable, holistic reality, a way of knowing that a Batesonian approach to things requires.

Mary Catherine Bateson (1991) suggests that "it is out of our separation of ourselves from nature and the separation of our minds from our bodies that all of our estrangements are forged" (p. 19). Although she stresses humans' separation from nature as a critical factor in our problematic state of affairs — an important way of thinking that I have largely ignored here in attending to matters of schooling — her use of "estrangement" is critical to understanding moral competence. Our rational ways of knowing have estranged us from the Other, and because of this we can pursue our own projects—economic gain, chemically enhanced landscaping, sexual exploitation, or whatever—with only the barest regard for the circumstances of the Other, whether that Other be human, plant, animal, or otherwise. And even when our intentions are consciously benevolent, dichotomous subject–object relationships distort our efforts into a form of hierarchical stewardship — unilateral efforts that are ultimately bound to fail because our very separateness precludes apprehension of the Other's reality.

The point is this. If as a moral community we are to adequately address problems in the world that we know to be serious, we cannot rely on the decontextualizing moral framework that is an implicit part of schooling to assist us in accomplishing those aims. How we might succeed in revising our conceptual orientation to the world cannot be known, although this analysis may provide some ideas. But clearly, a rational schooling cannot provide for such a radical reconceptualization.

References

Arendt, H. (1968). *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought* (enlarged ed.). New York: Penguin.

Arnheim, R. (1985). The double-edged mind: Intuition and the intellect. In E. Eisner (Ed.), *Learning and teaching the ways of knowing* (pp. 77–96). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.

Barrow, R. (1984). *Giving teaching back to teachers: A critical introduction to curriculum theory*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine.

Bateson, G. (1991). *A sacred unity: Further steps to an ecology of mind* (R. E. Donaldson, Ed.). New York: Cornelia & Michael Bessie.

Bateson, M. C. (1991). *Our own metaphor*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution. (Original work published 1972)

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. New York: Harper & Row.

Berman, M. (1984). *The reenchantment of the world*. New York: Bantam. (Original work published 1981)

Bowers, C. A. (1977). Emergent ideological characteristics of education. *Teachers College Record, 79*, 33–54.

Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York: Scribners. (Original work published 1923)

Canter, L. (1976). *Assertive discipline: A take-charge approach for today's educator*. Los Angeles: Canter.

Cummings, C. (1980). *Teaching makes a difference*. Edmonds, WA: Teaching.

Doll, R. C. (1986). *Curriculum improvement: Decision making and process* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Durkheim, E. (1973). *Moral education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education* (E. Wilson & H. Schnurer, Trans.). New York: The Free Press. (Original work published 1925)

Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The educational imagination* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

English, F. W. (1983). Contemporary curriculum circumstances. In F. English (Ed.), *Fundamental curriculum decisions* (pp. 1–17). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Erasmus, D. (1970). The education of a Christian prince (L. Born, Trans.). In J. Noll & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Foundations of education in America* (pp. 58–60). New York: Harper & Row.

Gage, N. L., & Berliner, D. (1992). *Educational psychology* (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Goodenough, W. H. (1981). *Culture, language, and society* (2nd ed.). Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings.

Hunter, M. (1976). *Improved instruction*. El Segundo, CA: TIP.

Hunter, M. (1982). *Mastery teaching*. El Segundo, CA: TIP.

Jefferson, T. (1973). Letter to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814. In W. Smith (Ed.), *Theories of education in early America: 1655-1819* (pp. 314–318). New York: Bobbs-Merrill.

Kliebard, H. (1975). Reappraisal: The Tyler rationale. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing: The reconceptualists* (pp. 70–83). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Kliebard, H. (1986). *The struggle for the American curriculum: 1893–1958*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Kluckhohn, C. (1985). *Mirror for man*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona. (Original work published 1949)

Kozol, J. (1988). *Rachel and her children*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Leopold, A. (1987). *A Sand County almanac*. New York: Oxford University. (Original work published 1949)

May, R. (1991). *The cry for myth*. New York: Norton.

McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg galaxy: The making of typographic man*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1961). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California.

Phillips, K. (1990). *The politics of rich and poor*. New York: Random House.

Plutarch. (1970). Moralia (F. Babbit, Trans.). In J. Noll & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Foundations of education in America* (pp. 46–51). New York: Harper & Row.

Raths, L. E., Harmin, M., & Simon, S. (1978). *Values and teaching: Working with values in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Sirotnik, K. A. (1990). Society, schooling, teaching, and preparing to teach. In J. Goodlad, R. Soder, & K. Sirotnik (Eds.), *The moral dimensions of teaching* (pp. 296–327). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Sprick, R. S. (1985). *Discipline in the classroom: A problem-by-problem survival guide*. West Nyack, NJ: Center for Applied Research in Education.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Washington State. (1987). *Common school laws of the State of Washington* (RCW 28A.05.010. Common school curriculum: Fundamentals of conduct)

Worldwatch Institute. (1992). *State of the world 1992*. New York: Norton.

A Critical Strategy for Cultivating Spirituality in Education

James G. Henderson and Janice K. Hutchison

The scientific management paradigm that has governed American public schools and the traditional linking of spiritual values to religious dogma has deterred the cultivation of spirituality in education. In this paper, the authors examine a case in which these notions are being challenged and progress is being made.

Jim Henderson is Associate Professor in the Teaching, Leadership, and Curriculum Studies Department at Kent State University.
Janice Hutchison is a doctoral student at Kent State and a public school staff development specialist in northeast Ohio.
Reprint requests should be sent to Jim Henderson, Kent State University, 404 White Hall, Kent, OH 44242. Fax 216-672-3407; e-mail jhenders@kentvm.kentedu

That public education in America has been dominated by a scientific management paradigm is no surprise. The daily artifacts of this tradition (e.g., narrowly defined curriculum and instructional practices, inspection mentality, and top-down management) provide a social context in which spiritual concerns are ignored and/or resisted. In an environment focusing on meeting objectives, controlling behavior, and sorting students, there is little time for exploring deeper quality of life issues.

Scientific management has dominated thinking in education for approximately 100 years, which is a relatively short period of time. There is, however, a more historically rooted paradigm that compounds the problem of cultivating spirituality in education. This is the example, or perhaps archetype, of linking spiritual feelings and insights to religious dogma. The daily artifacts of this tradition (e.g., dogmatic beliefs, sectarian practices, and hierarchical structures) have resulted in the separation of church and state in most modern societies. Since education is generally perceived to be a state responsibility, educators are trained to carefully avoid religious and, by default, spiritual matters.

Advocates for spirituality in education must critically confront both paradigms. They must establish distance from the traditions of scientific management and religious dogma while embracing a rich spiritual sensitivity in the classroom. This is a tall order requiring an arduous, highly sensitive collective effort over a long period of time — perhaps generations. The purpose of this article is to describe how this challenge is being undertaken in one particular school district in the United States. We begin by describing the theory that guides our critical work, and then we turn to a narrative analysis of our progress to date.

A Critical Blueprint

Our overall critical strategy, which in its details is continually evolving, is theoretically complex and involves three related conceptual phases.

Phase one: Emancipatory constructivism

Because the scientific management paradigm is the more recent historical construction, we confront it first. We do this by enacting curriculum reform projects guided by a particular emancipatory constructivism. Constructivist curriculum reform shifts the focus from behavioral control to meaningful learning. Senge (1992) describes this fundamental change in orientation as follows:

> Making continual learning a way of organizational life ... can only be achieved by breaking with the traditional authoritarian, command and control hierarchy where the top thinks and the local acts to merge thinking and acting at all levels. This represents a profound reorientation in the concerns of management — a shift from a predominant concern with controlling to a predominant concern with learning. (p. 24)

The shift from a behavioral control to a meaningful learning orientation opens the door to two closely connected emancipatory possibilities. First, educational growth can now be understood as complex, multi-intelligent meaning making. This interpretation fundamentally breaks with the efficiency orientation currently dominant in North American education. Learning is no longer equated with the manufacture of products, and there is a rejection of the artifacts of a standardized learning culture: the dominance of textbooks, the employment of rigid time frames, the Balkanization of subject matter, the isolation of teachers, the use of high-stakes proficiency tests, and so on.

A complex diversified understanding of educational growth opens the possibility of approaching teaching–learning transactions discursively and aesthetically, rather than literally and logically. To be discursive is to allow for the overlay of multiple texts in the spirit of knowing/not knowing. There is no attempt to be precise and unequivocal. There is no preoccupation with positivistic truths, with certitudes. Instead, there is an openness to the "heteroglossia" of growth (Bakhtin, 1986). There is a willingness to embrace multiple discourses and diverse points of view in the spirit of eclectic artistry (Schwab, 1969). After all, who has the final say about educational growth? Rationalists with their concern about logical development? Behaviorists with their schedules of reinforcements? Cognitivists with their inferences about schema transformations? Experientialists with their concern about personal interests? Criticalists with their focus on social-consciousness-raising? Perhaps all of these perspectives carry an element of truth concerning human learning.

To approach learning-as-growth in this undogmatic spirit opens the possibility for a deep aesthetic awareness of teaching–learning transactions. There is a Zen proverb: "Do not confuse the moon with the finger that points at it." This Zen spirit of knowing/not knowing is linked to an aesthetic sensibility: "Zen cannot be expressed in words. The moment we start to explain it, we have missed it. We can be it ... we can dance it, but we can never bring it into words" (*Zen*, p. 52). Rosenblatt (1983) approaches literacy education in this aesthetic spirit. She writes:

> Terms such as the reader, the student, the literary work ... are somewhat misleading, though convenient, fictions. There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of literary works. A novel, poem, or play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. The literary work exists in the live circuit setup between reader and text.... Out of this complex process emerges a more or less organized imaginative experience.... Teaching becomes a matter of improving the individual's capacity to evoke meaning from the text.... The teacher's task is to foster fruitful interactions — or, more precisely, transactions — between individual readers and individual literary works. (pp. 25, 27)

Rosenblatt describes the texts that the student has transformed as an "imaginative experience" to underscore the aesthetics of this meaningful learning. She also acknowledges the teacher's facilitative role with this aesthetic process. From the teacher's perspective, this is an artistic undertaking, not a logical exercise. There are no precise, logical steps that teachers can follow to help students with their "dance" of meaningful knowing. In fact, if teachers were to comply with a prescribed competency protocol, they would be inhibiting their ability to practice transactional artistry.

The discursive/aesthetic liberation of teaching–learning transactions is enhanced by a second emancipatory consideration. Educators concerned with meaningful learning must give serious thought to the importance of a democratic morality. Dewey (1989) makes this point as follows:

> Self-governing institutions are the means by which human nature can secure its fullest realization in the greatest numbers of persons.... We have advanced far

> enough to say that democracy is a way of life. We have yet to realize that it is a way of personal life and one which provides a moral standard for personal conduct. (p. 101)

In effect, Dewey is saying that meaningful learning is integrally linked to democratic ethics, that there is a synergy between constructivist education and participatory settings. As Snauwaert (1993) notes, if a robust human development is our guiding orientation, then the "realization of the developmental ideal is contingent upon participation in the policy-making processes of the social institutions in which one has membership" (p. 35). The actualization of this participatory goal should involve all educational stakeholders: students, teachers, school support staff, administrators, parents, and community leaders. There would be a complete break from the many artifacts of hierarchical educational structures: the teacher-as-classroom-manager, the principal-as-middle-manager, the superintendent-as-chief-executive-officer, the state-as-board-of-directors, and so on.

Phase two: Critical reflection

The practice of this emancipatory constructivism (in classroom, school, and school-community contexts) is a challenging undertaking. This work, which can easily be undermined, requires constant vigilance. Social habits and structures in modern societies tend to inhibit constructivist learning, aesthetics, and democratic ethics. Educators concerned with emancipatory constructivism must timelessly work against the current of their culture. If their efforts slacken, they can be swept away by the forces of literality, narrow rationality, hierarchy, and competitive individualism.

The cultural default for modern societies is meritocracy not democracy. Schools are generally designed to test and sort students — to continuously reproduce an elite democracy (Snauwaert, 1993). It is for this reason that the emancipatory constructivism requires ongoing critical reflection, which we conceptualize as phase two. This vigilant activity should not be confused with Marxian critical praxis, which has a different focus. The critical praxis of emancipatory constructivism is guided by a deep constructivist aesthetic and a participatory democratic ethic.

Phase three: Deconstructing the religion/spirituality binary

The third and final phase, and in many ways the most sensitive, is the deconstruction of the religion/spirituality binary. The focus moves from indirect aesthetic to direct spiritual considerations. There is a conscious attempt to decouple spiritual feelings from religious dogma. The point is not to directly challenge, eradicate, or suppress religious beliefs. That strategy would simply encourage a reverse spirituality/religion binary, which is often associated with New Age religious perspectives. Rather, the approach is to cultivate a concern for *being* instead of *believing*.

Caputo (1987) describes the consciousness of "being-in-the-world" as a humbling call to authenticity. When we struggle to be authentic, we don't automatically embrace the traditions and rituals in which we are immersed. Instead, we explore forms of cultural criticism in an attempt to create our own evolving sense of meaningful existence; and in the spirit of common humanity and reciprocal dialogue, we invite others to voice their own personal critical journey toward "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1988).

From the perspective of critical authenticity, Ferguson (1980) defines spirituality as "a matrix of linked beliefs that we are invisibly joined to one another, that there are dimensions transcending time and space, that individual lives are meaningful, that grace and illumination are real, that it is possible to evolve to even higher levels of understanding" (p. 61). This sort of work is marked by inquiry and uncertainty and, as such, is much like Persig's (1974) work on his motorcycle during which he realized "in the high country of the mind one has to become adjusted to the thinner air of uncertainty, and to the enormous magnitude of the questions asked..." (p. 120).

A Brief Narrative Analysis

Phase one: Designing a constructivist reform project

The journey to the "high country of the mind" in education always begins in the present moment; and for the purpose of this article, the present moment is a particular curriculum reform project in the Newton City Schools, a pseudonym for the actual school district that is located in Ohio. When the Newton school system began its language arts curriculum revision process this year, there was a collective complaint from the school community bemoaning the "hoop-jumping" and paper work that loomed ahead. Yet from the first meeting of the Language Arts Committee, a new perspective began to emerge. Initial indicators of change included a more diverse group membership and different group goals. Instead of an exclusive gathering of central office administrators, building principals, reading specialists, and classroom teachers from elementary and secondary levels, the committee solicited input from parents, community members, and representatives from the nearby university's College of Education. The committee's first meeting began with a general goal: to design a K-12 language arts curriculum for the school system. In previous curriculum committee work, time and energy went into making sure the curriculum was "right." Group members typically turned their questions over to consultants and state department officials for exact and often immediate responses. Rather than reenacting this piece of history, the Newton School District took its first steps into "the thinner air of uncertainty." The committee decided to take constructivist reform seriously.

Over time, a shared interpretation of curriculum began to emerge, with the focus on how teachers and students make sense out of language arts experiences. Questions that guided the committee's work included:

- Is student comprehension or is student memorization central to this curriculum?
- Are literacy issues complex and conducive to imaginative problem solving?
- How do teachers maximize opportunities for students to express their ideas and opinions, to reveal their understandings, to reflect on these understandings, and to grow intellectually?
- How will students who are engaged in this curriculum think and behave as adult workers? (Will they be problem solvers? Will they engage in systems thinking?)
- What is the relationship of knowledge to power?
- How do teachers and students view power in the classroom?
- How do these participants use power in the learning process?

The focus on meaning making was not limited to an emphasis on the learner. Teachers, too, were regarded as meaning makers. As such, the role of the teacher included the capacity to grow, to collaborate, and to create authentic learning experiences that emerge from the existing curriculum. The teacher's challenge was to ask what Gardner (1991) calls "generative questions" that lead to answers that the learner ultimately crafts for himself/herself. Teachers were no longer viewed as dispensers of information, and they were expected to share "intellectual authority" (Wiske, 1994) with their students. To teach the writing process for understanding meant that the teacher must empower students to break the rules of writing, the rules that dictate what the finished product should look like and who assesses the work.

Phase two: Critical reflection on the reform project

The Language Arts Committee's initial curriculum design efforts have now entered the stage of critical reflection. Presently, this committee's view is that: (a) the finish line is mobile and (b) the benchmarks of progress have to do with questions not answers. Such questions will emerge from ongoing opportunities for critical reflection. As the committee continues its work, for instance, members will be given the time to consider questions like:

- What kinds of writing activities are included in the curriculum?
- How are different races and genders treated in this literature?

Questions of this nature usually appear in checklist format for curriculumdesigners. Not only will this level of reflection take the form of dialogue, it will also move to two deeper levels of analysis. According to van Manen (1991), "ways of knowing" can continue to a second level of reflection. During curriculum development, committee members thinking at such a level will ask (and, during curriculum enactment, educators will ask) questions like:

- Why am I teaching grammar the way I do?
- How do I view the relationship of power and the selection of literature? Am I the center of power? How are students empowered and what happens with classroom instruction when students are empowered?

Finally, at a third and even deeper level of critical reflection, questions about classroom constructivism sound like:

- Do I have the right to evaluate student writing the way I do?
- What would the reading curriculum look like if parents and students were allowed a "voice" in its design?

Committee members have returned to their respective buildings and have asked their peers these same questions. From their conversations, critical instances of collaboration with larger groups of teachers have ensued. As these teachers in the Newton school system have opened their classroom doors, the traditional sense of teacher isolation and curriculum fragmentation have been slowly replaced by a spirit of collaboration and wholeness.

Teachers meet regularly either after school or during released time in grade-level sessions, in study groups, or in a variety of support groups.

During these gatherings, teachers share their stories about curriculum design, curriculum development, and curriculum enactment. A few teachers write personal journals and share their entries with other teachers at meetings. Two pairs of teachers journal back and forth and use the group sessions to carry their "paper dialogue" to deeper levels of critical reflection. For example, an elementary LD teacher who journals with a second-grade teacher spent an afternoon reviewing their journal entries about their combined classes' efforts at group writing. A revealing conversation centered around the issue of control. The teachers realized they had slowly been relinquishing their control to the students during the revision process: They had their own finished versions in mind, while the students usually arrived at different conclusions. Together they asked how this process of releasing control could be fostered in other areas of classroom instruction.

As the language arts curriculum is developed and unfolds in the classrooms, the school system itself is developing and unfolding into a learning community. Traditional roles are beginning to change. The potential for teacher role expansion is beginning to emerge. Concepts like "lead teachers" and "curriculum-driven staff development" are entering our conversations about the school's future. References to "community" are made frequently in these conversations.

In his work on learning communities, Senge (1990) describes team learning as a process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results as members truly desire. As educators, we have responded to the trend of work teams by establishing cooperative learning experiences for our students, yet seldom do we work collaboratively. In an article about educators becoming team learners, Isaacson and Bamburg (1992) write:

> We are accustomed to defining "learning" as an individual phenomenon. The result? Most schools include neither time, structural arrangements, cultural norms, nor language to promote team learning, and most staff development programs only support the learning of individuals. Beginning teachers are left alone to learn the ropes. Teachers are perceived as really working only when they are supervising students. (p. 43)

To adjust to this level of curriculum reform, participants have experienced individual degrees of difficulty. Yet, as one teacher put it, "Not to be here would ultimately have amounted to the greatest difficulty of all."

The lessons learned on the way to this level of curriculum reform can inform the work of the future. Yet this accumulated wisdom itself will not overcome the prodigious barriers erected by years of scientific management. How do educators who have steadily evolved toward emancipatory constructivism really know when "empowerment" is "power given" under the guise of silent authoritarianism? Within the classroom itself, the call to power over learners is seductive. A teacher's willingness to relinquish control could all too easily be construed as "not teaching." The struggle with scientific management is not confined to school practitioners. Parents, too, have a stake in the scientific management paradigm with its rewards, incentives, and tradition of one-upmanship. Counteracting these forces will be tiring, frustrating work.

There are no precise, logical steps that teachers can follow to help students with their "dance" of meaningful knowing.

Phase three: Deconstructing the religion/spirituality binary

What has emerged from the initial work on the language arts curriculum is a small support group of educators. These teachers meet regularly outside of school to discuss better ways of teaching and learning. The phrase, "a better way," has become an in-group metaphor for examining something both unnamed and rarely experienced. Never before have these teachers had the language to describe ways of connecting practices, disciplines, and roles to spiritual feelings. The sessions have come to be called the "Language Arts Support Group." Individual teachers return to buildings and quietly share group questions like:

- Are the investments in the school hierarchy too ingrained to be relinquished?
- What is it about the educator's work that will remain familiar should these barriers be surmounted?

- How can we consider spirituality directly? (Even with the classroom door closed, this is not work that can flourish within the old culture.)
- With a lack of tradition to draw on, how will our spiritual explorations be explained to, and perhaps experienced by, the school community?

The group of educators evolving to this level of curriculum reform is engaged in two struggles. They must struggle to view their work in spiritual terms and not in religious terms. At the same time, they must struggle with the realization that they cannot return to the separation of the profane and the sacred in public schools. A number of teachers have declared that they will leave the profession before reassuming traditional postures and behaviors.

Transcending these subtle and not so subtle parameters seems to point to spirituality as both a means and an end. A sense of spirituality, "a matrix of linked beliefs that we are invisibly joined to one another" (Ferguson, 1980), is often experienced when two individuals agree that "there has to be a better way." When this "better way" is sought in communion by individuals who have glimpsed grace and illumination, barriers can become temporary lookout posts.

The Language Arts Support Group now looks to the past and to the future to evoke spiritual meanings in whatever ways occur to other educators with whom they work. As new curriculum work is undertaken within the system, this small group of teachers has generated a ripple effect. They continuously seek ways to deepen the reform conversation — to engage themselves and others in a celebration of the spirit of human growth, and their work emanates from sensitive dialogue and not from a title or a pulpit. Wolcott (1988) has questioned "the extent to which personal ambitions of educators exert a driving force in American education" (p. 196). Education will not evolve to even higher levels of understanding as long as the personal ambitions of school leaders are isolated attempts at ego-bolstering.

This constructivist, critical, spiritual vision of a school's future is a hopeful one. The hope is not unfounded as long as we continue to pose our questions within a framework of spirituality. De Chardin (1959) writes:

> In the passage of time, a state of collective human consciousness has progressively evolved which is inherited by each succeeding generation of conscious individuals, and to which each generation adds something. Sustained, certainly, by the individual, but at the same time embracing and shaping the successive multitude of individuals, a sort of generalized human personality is visibly in process of formation upon the earth. It seems that where Man is concerned the specific function of education is to ensure the continued development of this personality by transmitting it to the endlessly changing mass: in other words, to extend and ensure in collective mankind a consciousness which may already have reached its limit in the individual. Its fulfillment of this function is the final proof of the biological nature and value of education, extending to the things of the spirit. (p. 32)

References

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.; M. Holquist, Ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Caputo, J. D. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction, and the hermeneutic project*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

de Chardin, T. (1959). *The future of man*. New York: Harper & Row.

Dewey, J. (1989). *Freedom and culture*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.

Ferguson, M. (1980). *The Aquarian conspiracy*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher.

Gardner, H. (1991). *The unschooled mind*. New York: Basic Books.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Isaacson, N. & Bamburg, J. (1992). Can schools become learning organizations? *Educational Leadership, 50*, 42–44.

Persig, R. (1974). *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance*. New York: Bantam.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1983). *Literature as exploration* (4th ed.). New York: Modern Language Association.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Senge, P. M. (1992). *Building learning organizations*. Framingham, MA: Innovation Associates.

Schwab, J. J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *School Review, 78*, 1–23.

Snauwaert, D. T. (1993). *Democracy, education, and governance: A developmental conception*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Wiske, M. S. (1994). How teaching for understanding changes the rules in the classroom. *Educational Leadership, 51*, 19–21.

Wolcott, H. F. (1988). Ethnographic research in education. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 187–206). Washington, D.C.: American Education Research Association.

Zen: The reason for unreason. (1993). San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Transcending Spirituality

On the Hegemony of Beneficence

Richard C. Pipan

Reflections on indeterminacy, education, and beneficence occasioned by a Montblanc pen and *Schindler's List*

> Holistic thinkers ... have a powerful transformative vision, but generally fail to turn their critical attention upon themselves.
>
> — Kathleen Kesson

> Traditional education has not been much concerned with social justice and has contributed to or ignored human suffering. To remedy this situation, we as educators must reexamine our basic assumptions and ground our work in moral and religious critique.
>
> — David Purpel

These are thoughts aborning. I have been unable to shake the specter of indeterminacy from my thinking. It crops up in my conceptualization and critique of curriculum, of evaluation; it factors into my understanding of educational psychology à la Rogerian nondirectiveness and Riegel's (1978) dialecticalism; it precipitates out of my understanding of postmodern thought (especially as related to the history and philosophy of science). Everywhere I look, I see the presence of the accidental, the incidental, the random, untamed moments, entropic dissolution,... and paradoxically, contrarian moments of hopefulness, meaning, and intolerance of injustice, acts of compassion, unconditional love.

The indeterminate turns my attention to the moment — the still point, the dynamically tensioned string between the past and the future. T. S. Eliot (1943), in "Burnt Norton," framed it this way:

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered.

I don't yet know about conquering time; that is Eliot's portrayal. Transcendence in time, however, is another matter. In "Curriculum as Concern for Man's Temporality," Dwayne Huebner (formerly of Teachers College and now at Yale Divinity School) suggested (1975a) that a human "is a temporal being,

Richard C. Pipan is an assistant professor of education in the Department of Human Development and Child Studies at the School of Education at Oakland University (one of the public universities in the State of Michigan). James B. Macdonald and David E. Purpel were Pipan's mentors for his doctoral work in curriculum theory. His research interests include lifelong human development, philosophy and sociology of education, and cultural studies. Reprint requests should be sent to the author at 542 O'Dowd Hall, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401. 810/370-4161. pipan@argo.acs.oakland.edu.

whose existence is not given by his occupation of space, but by his participation in an emerging universe, the meaning of which is shown by the relationship between duration and succession" (p. 240). Duration alerts us to our historicity; succession to our influence. Duration asks us how we are living; succession is revealed in our reply to a child's question: "Why was I born?"

From this recognition of our temporality, Huebner (1975a) derives this perspective of the curricular task: "The responsibility of the curriculum person, then, is to design and criticize specialized environments which embody the dialectical relationships valued in a given society" (p. 245–246). Furthermore, Huebner (1975b) maintains that "Curriculum as a form of human praxis, a shaping of the world, means that the responsible individuals are engaged in art and politics" (p. 266). Thus, Huebner acknowledges the generativity of aesthetic and critical engagement.

Through aesthetic and critical engagement, I hope to portray holistic, transformative, and spiritually inclined observations that the curriculum theorizing of Dwayne Huebner, James B. Macdonald, and David Purpel have inspired. I believe that Huebner, Macdonald, and Purpel's work in the areas of spirituality and knowing, a transcendental developmental ideology, and prophetic voice can contribute to a process of reconceptualizing the aesthetic, political, moral, and spiritual dimensions of curriculum theory and practice.

I would be remiss if I did not disclose that the title of this paper, "Transcending Spirituality," is a *double entendre*. I intend, in this paper, to address a pervasive assumption reflected in the discourse of curriculum and holistic thought that there is a presumed goodness associated with spirituality and transcendence. I wish to critically revisit this portrayal and briefly sketch a curricular response to an indeterminate spiritual and transcendental possibility.

> Learning is not the accumulation of knowledge. Learning is the movement from moment to moment.
> — Krishnamurti (1984)

Acknowledgments and a preface

A few days ago, I received in the mail a book... well, not *a* book, but a book auspiciously titled *The Book* (subtitled: *On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*) by Alan Watts (1989). Janis Grant, a former student (and a good friend then and now), knew of my appreciation of Watts's thinking and she thought I should have a copy. Janis's friendship and timing have, on numerous occasions, extricated me out of various centripetal funks — the earlier drafts of this paper being some of the more recent. So what has her gift and my reading of the book occasioned? As I examined earlier drafts, I discerned a meanness of spirit, a competitive one-upmanship, an egotistical I-know-more-(or at least more sensitively)-than-they-do tone. I thank Alan Watts for rehumanizing my critical eyes and Janis Grant for intimate scholarly camaraderie. And to the most influential teachers in my life, James B. Macdonald, David Purpel, and Dwayne Huebner, I offer my deepest thanks for their inestimable contribution to the field of education and to my being-in-the-world. And beyond these thanks, I offer my humble apologies to the aforenamed individuals and to those not named who have contributed to my education, for my having to periodically rediscover "lessons" I thought I'd learned.

So, how to rebegin? It will not be, then, by excoriating — in the name of "critically evaluating" — curriculum theorists or curricular orientations that fail to meet whatever tests of holistic, transcendental, or spiritual adequacy I might have constructed. Rather, this project has been reframed in light of the following cautionary note from Watts (1989):

> If, then, after understanding, at least in theory, that the ego-trick is a hoax and that, beneath everything, "I" and "universe" are one, you ask, "So what? What is the next step, the practical application?" — I will answer that the absolutely vital thing is to consolidate your understanding to become capable of enjoyment, of living in the present, and of the discipline which this involves. Without this you have nothing to give — to the cause of peace or of racial integration, to starving Hindus and Chinese, or even to your closest friends. Without this, all social concern will be muddlesome meddling, and all work for the future will be planned disaster. (pp. 115–116)

To consolidate my understanding, to become capable of enjoyment, live in the present, to practice disciplined living. To offer thoughtful commentary that reflects all of the above. In the midst of this practice, as these words are being written, a news report from Canadian Broadcasting announces that more than 250 Muslims making their pilgrimage to Mecca have died in a stampede. These 250 will be added to the confirmed 819 who died earlier this week (due to heart attacks, exhaustion, old age). CBC noted that this year's death toll is lower than the 1,459 who died in 1990 during a panic stampede in a narrow corridor.

I must remember: *to consolidate my understanding, to become capable of enjoyment, live in the present, to practice disciplined....*

First movement: Finite to infinite in everyday life

> But there is a living mindfulness that has passed gently, like a stroking hand, over everything memorable. And when the flame shoots up out of these ashes, hot and glowing, strong and mighty, and you stare into it as though spellbound by its magic, then —
>
> But no one can write himself into this kind of pure mindfulness with unskilled hand and crude pen; one can write only in such white, undemanding pages as these....
>
> — Franz Kafka

The pen held in my hand as I write the words of this text is a Montblanc Meisterstuck, manufactured in, as the inscription on the gold band on the barrel indicates, Germany. The pen was a gift from a sister-in-law, an expatriate American film producer living in Paris. She thought it would add to the pleasure of my writing. The blood coursing through the hand holding this pen shares my father's genes (generations from Ireland and Austria) and, more salient to this writing, those of my mother's family (generations from Poland).

The pleasure of writing. And it is. It is such an exquisite agony. For last night, long after its opening, my spouse and I saw *Schindler's List.* With our daughter, Ilana Israel, in the care of a baby-sitter, we went out for what we knew would not be an evening of entertainment. It was not. Spielberg's project offers additional voices and images in the tradition of Holocaust memory, specifically about this particular historical Holocaust and, paradoxically and transcendentally, specifically about all forms of genocide. It is a candle flame presence of memory and hope in the face of horrific possibilities.

Meisterstuck, Polish blood
Jewish wife, Schindler's List.

The resonances and dissonances among and between these tangible empirical phenomena are one focus of this essay: What have these things to do with each other? What influence does one have on the other? Why seek connections among the seemingly unconnected? In what manner has the theorizing of Huebner, Macdonald, and Purpel contributed to these interpretive resonances and dissonances?

As this pen richly drags black ink across each white page, an afterimage of black blood seeping across white snow in Spielberg's black-and-white film projects itself on the screen of this page. Black ink bottles, steel nib pens, lists of names, checkmarks and notations. Official documentation. Order.

As I sit and write this narrative, I am a state worker ... as were those sitting on wooden folding chairs, behind tiny tables in town squares in Poland during the war. Pens move across pages, make notations, advance the plan, serve the State, make history.

It is not only the *knowing* that contributes to disquieted consciousness, it is the *not knowing* that extends beyond the horizon of knowing ... as when Isaac Stern, the accountant who managed Schindler's business said of the list of names of those being selected to be taken to the relative safety of a labor camp in Czechoslovakia: "This (referring to the page held in his hands) is good. All around it is the gulf."

That I know this pen I hold and use in this writing is what it is is good to know, however disquieting. From this small clearing in knowing, there extends a perilous and, as yet, minimally charted terrain: Is there blood in this pen? On this pen? How is the history and emergence of this pen's manufacturer implicated in the business of the Holocaust? How is my living in this world (of pens and state service and commercial cinema and...) in complicity with the obscenities of this particular historical Holocaust, and, consequently, these contemporary progeny: Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia, Detroit. The shadows and light of Holocausts are visited door-to-door, day-to-day.

It is not only the **knowing** *that contributes to disquieted consciousness, it is the* **not knowing** *that extends beyond the horizon of knowing.*

This is not to say that I must or I will research the Montblanc company. Other more pressing (but not necessarily more significant nor meaningful) projects abound. But it does mean that, as I glance down at the page scrolling before my eyes, searching and researching this experience, the gleaming black and gold pen's cap — now extending upward from the writing chamber — is crowned by Montblanc's signature trademark: a white six-pointed star — familiarly recognized within the Jewish community as the Star of David.

Meisterstuck, Montblanc
White Mountain, Aryan Nation.

So there is this uneasiness that accompanies knowing so little and so much. There is a wariness that beneath *this* recognition lies *another*, beyond *this* understanding lies an *incommensurable other.* That there can be a moral basis for a Jew (and non-Jew, alike) to refuse to purchase or drive a Mercedes Benz. And that the present artifacts of commerce are transformations connected to past historical processes only (but nontrivially) through human meanings. That it is not merely "the thing itself" that we apprehend, but also spheres of possibilities — however improbable — that constitute the gulf surrounding each momentary, illuminated page. As Gadamer (1989) said, interpretation involves "making the object and all its possibilities fluid" (p. 367).

One dimension of the malevolence of the Holocaust was that people were exterminated not for the threat their physical presence offered, but because their existence perpetuated a community of transcendent meaning that required human experience for it to be carried on.

Second movement: Faith and causation

> We choose to view the world as being part of a larger transcendent reality, and our task as humans to be that of being in harmony with it. We believe that much is already known about these divine intentions but that we still have much to learn about them and much to do before they are fulfilled. We believe that humans are intended to be participants in the development of a world in which justice, love, dignity, freedom, joy, and community flourish. We believe that we are meant to pursue a path of truth, beauty, and goodness. We believe that the world exists in an imperfect and incomplete state but that man and woman possess the aesthetic and intellectual sensibilities to recreate themselves and the world in unity with the divine, the wholeness of body, mind, and spirit, earth and cosmos, and humanity and nature.
>
> — James B. Macdonald and David Purpel

What dimensions of experience and meaning are reflected in Meisterstuck, Polish blood, Jewish wife and *Schindler's List*? Willis Harman (1993) offers a "nonreductionist epistemology of causation" (p. 78). Comprised of four levels, it looks like this:

- Level 1: Physical Cause
- Level 2: Biological Cause
- Level 3: Volitional Cause
- Level 4: Intuitional Cause

Harman describes these multiple causations as follows:

> We experience all four of these operating in our lives all the time, and experientially they are qualitatively different. They seem to lead to four different realms of science: physical, biological, cognitive, and spiritual. Each level has its own appropriate kind of cause; they operate simultaneously, and alone or together, they do not provide a "complete" explanation; that is a goal to be sought only in deep understanding of the Oneness.

The Meisterstuck is a physical object that may be traced to and from its physical origins: gold from South Africa, plastics and stainless steel from Germany, machine tools from France. Its construction from start to finish envisioned as it takes form and moves, moment-to-moment, from one stage of completion to the next ... from one ("guest worker's") hand to the next. Eventually gift wrapped and exchanged at Hanukkah in Greensboro, North Carolina. Its journey merely beginning in the material world. If *this* pen is to be mightier than the sword, other dimensions will have to come into play.

Polish blood is, fundamentally, a biological phenomenon. While, perhaps (I do not know with confidence) the blood of a native Pole is physically and chemically indistinguishable from that of an Innuit, genetic mapping can link with some degree of accuracy one generation to another. My mother's ninety-eight-year-old Polish mother approaches completion of a biological cycle. She held our daughter, her twentieth great grandchild in her arms (as she did me, and my mother), sang songs she heard her mother sing. The lineage is as direct as physical matter, as variable as biological heredity allows, and as fragile and robust as living is.

"Jewish wife" is a term that I have never (to my recollection) used to refer to the woman to whom I am married. When we use a term at all to refer to each other, we tend to employ the less gendered term "spouse." But for some, perhaps mythopoetic reason, and in some resonance with deeply gendered motifs in Spielberg's film, "Jewish wife" emerged as containing nuances of meaning I sought to identify. So, what makes for a "Jewish wife"? What an impertinent, if amusing, question for a non-Jew to attempt to answer! Ah, if one could only do justice to *any* description of one to whom one is committed life long. Of course, the physical and biological causative dimensions play their roles. To be human and alive and of certain families are noteworthy prerequisites. However, beyond these there extends a complex web, indeed. And largely constituting this dimension are volitional causes and cognitively arrived at distinctions. Is being Jewish a result of "conscious and unconscious choice in humans..."? Is this status reflective of one being associated with any community of faith and meaning? At least, it appears to me, such volitional and cognitive distinctions contribute to one's understanding of what it means to be 1) Jewish, 2) a wife, and more specifically, 3) a Jewish wife. While it may appear that one's status as a Jewish wife might be determined by reference to the three levels already described (physical, biological, and volitional), it need be acknowledged that identity and affiliation are not entirely matters of existence nor choice. After all, one might be physically present, alive, and cognitively oriented to a particular way of being, but that way of being remains unactualized. Especially when others' volitions are involved, we may make our desires known, but we cannot assume that others will be supportive. A sense of community cannot unilaterally be attained. Intersubjective understanding requires an Other, another subject.

And what now of *Schindler's List*? That it runs three hours, that it is a predominantly black-and-white film, that it will gross tens and hundreds of millions of dollars, that it portrays human existence during an historical era, that it strategically grounds fictive cinematic portrayal against documentary reportage (as survivors of those on the list and their descendants are included in film footage) — all these dimensions of the film contribute to its *tangibility*. What remains unexplored as yet is its evocative and transbiographical qualities — its intangible dimensions whose contours, textures, nuances, and impressions reveal themselves not under an optical microscope but in the deepest stirrings of our imaginations.

What crosses beyond physical, biological, volitional, and cognitive realms is the symbolic, emotive, mythic, poetic, aesthetic, and transcendent qualities of the film. Umberto Eco's (1986) citing of Charles S. Peirce's definition of a sign is useful here: "A sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (p. x–xi). Unlike films that offer centripetal preoccupations — that the film itself is entertainment, and that to extend association beyond it is extraneous to its function — *Schindler's List* is simultaneously opaque and transparent: opaque because its images are frequently arresting, unyielding, searing, and unforgettable; transparent because Spielberg crafted scenes *through which* we come to see *from which* they are derived. Like the Zen koan, which is sometimes described as a "finger pointing to the moon," the graphic and aural landscapes of *Schindler's List* point to historical events: their rapidly dissolving physical properties (the death camps are crumbling to dust); their biological consequences (that firsthand survivors are (relatively) soon to be dead and that generations have and are succeeding them); their volitional dimensions (that the incomprehensible must be encountered, that escape is not possible, that the human will may be engaged in monstrous as well as loving acts); and finally, that our nonrational, transrational, and intuitive faculties are presented with the unspeakable, the unspoken, the ineluctable, and the mysterious.

One sees in a single act a magnitude of actions. In one gesture, what is is transformed toward some other future: Tracing a single child in an anomalous red coat, (given the monochromatic rendering of the film) from Krakow ghetto streets to cremation fires alerts us to both the singular and personal suffering and the murder in the context of mass slaughter. The Holocaust was not a mass phenomenon: it was the oppression and murder of millions of people ... each dying singularly and in community. One dimension of the malevolence of the Holocaust was that people were exterminated not for the threat their physical presence offered, but because their existence perpetuated a community of transcendent meaning that required human experience for it to be carried on —

What remains largely unspoken in curriculum discourse is a conceptualization of possibility as indeterminate, ineluctable, and beyond schematic rendering, beyond polemical prescription, beyond desire.

the dialectic of the transcendent requiring the temporal and the temporal embodying the transcendent.

Third movement: Indeterminate possibility

> When the foundations of the great deep are once thus broken up and floods have come, it isn't over this or that loss of our green earth that we sorrow. It is because of all that endless waste of tossing waves which now row cubits deep above the top of what were our highest mountains. No, the worst tragedy of the world is the tragedy of brute chance to which everything spiritual seems to subject against us. The tragedy of the diabolical irrationale of the so many among the folds, of whatever is significant.
>
> — Cornel West

Within the field of curriculum, an often encountered, though hardly mainstream, expression used to convey a curricular discourse is a language of possibility. Like its rhetorical forebears (human potentiality, humanistic education, open education, self-actualization, person-centered curricula, etc.), a language of possibility conceals as much as it reveals. What remains largely unspoken in curriculum discourse is a conceptualization of possibility as indeterminate, ineluctable, and beyond schematic rendering, beyond polemical prescription, beyond desire.

There may be comfort to be found within conceptualizations of possibility and spirituality that weight the scale of existence in favor of goodness, beauty, and harmony. The logic of this conceptualization is that if one were to live more spiritually attuned, more holistically, more ecologically, more centeredly, more openly, more flowingly, even more critically conscious, the beneficent qualities of existence would be maximized, brought into greater possibility (if not actuality). I do not deny the appeal of such conceptualizations. My struggle is with their adequacy.

I am reminded of a story I have heard repeated a few times, most recently on an episode of *Northern Exposure*. The Athabascan receptionist in Fleishman's medical office tells one version: A male child is born to a Chief and his wife. Tribespeople congratulate the Chief on his good fortune. To them he replies: "We'll see." [In a Zen version of this story the reply is "Not know yet."] The child grows and before a battle against an enemy tribe is thrown from his horse and injured. Tribespeople say: "What a horrible accident." The Chief replies: "We'll see." The war party is sent out and is massacred. The remaining tribespeople say: "How fortunate your son was spared." The Chief says: "We'll see." By now you've gotten the picture. The *eventual goodness* of an act remains, as this story describes, indeterminate. The movement from moment to moment may be informed by each of the four dimensions of causality but surrenders not to them.

Why might a life-affirming, open, progressive, spiritually-oriented curricular conceptualization be inadequate for holistic educators? What might be accomplished by reconceptualizing a spiritual dimension of education in more indeterminate and not-yet-known terms?

First, such a reconceptualization honors multiple realities while consciously avoiding assigning preferred status to any reality a priori. "Good people" may or may not attain happiness, justice (see Kushner, 1981).

Second, indeterminate concepts such as dialectical influence and transformation situate our being-in-the-world as temporal and finite. Recognizing this, Huebner (1975a) suggests that our finite, partial understanding inevitably leads to some of our actions causing others to unnecessarily suffer. Our complicity in others' suffering presents us with opportunities to temper *hubris* and cultivate greater humility. It is our capacity to do good *and* evil; help *and* hurt that constitutes us as a moral agents (Purpel, 1989) who act not out of certainty, but hopefulness.

Third, that such a reconceptualization portrays the world as multifocal, polyvalent, and decentered. Holistic portrayals of the cosmos as unitary, the One, by design or inadvertently situate consciousness and being in relation to this unity. How close to Oneness can one become? Merged with? Returned home? Centered? Reborn?

And here, now, lies the Gordian knot: Is our reality that of our constituted meanings and perceptions? Is "the world" what we make of it? Phenomenologically, our experiences are real: the paranoid delusions of a madman and the epiphanies of saints enter individual consciousness as commensurables; it is through our interpretation and our attribution that the analogous experiences of the insane and "the called" mean otherwise. It is, perhaps, through a "participatory mode of consciousness" (Heshusius, 1994) that we begin to distinguish between delusion and epiphany and begin to dissolve false distinctions.

The measure of the world is not only of our (human) sense-making. Our appreciation of living, of savoring the moments that bring joy and meaning, does not provide a basis for concluding that such moments and such experiences typify the world.

Detail from a photo in the Bettmann Archive

That some may find satisfaction in the blend of joy and suffering, meaning and confusion in their lives is understandable if irrelevant to generalization. We are united in the vagaries of living.

My criticism of so many renderings of transcendental and spiritual portrayals is that they blithely edit the narrative so that goodness occupies a privileged position, the presence of evil and suffering is (sometimes) acknowledged but rarely accepted. As the Tao (and David Purpel) suggests, "it [all those sufferings and obscenities and unsatisfactorinesses and joys and meanings and...] comes with the territory." It is understandable that, in our well-meaning efforts to shield ourselves and others from pain, we build lattices of fancy and plant gardens of hybrid flowers to mask the unpleasant and assaultive.

But this caring screening, in the long run I believe, serves us poorly. As the Cinderella story feeds children's (and adults') imaginations with images of nobility, rescue, magic, and hope, it likewise offers counter-texts of gendered inequalities, "beautyism," and false promises.

As educators, we engage others and ourselves in inquiry and search. We attempt to interpret the world, broaden and deepen our understanding, and resist those conditions and influences that despoil, brutalize, or stupefy. As David Purpel has so wisely asked before, "How do we guard against blind activism or naive sentimentalism?" The work of Buber, Purpel, Macdonald, Huebner, Greene, Rogers, Gilligan, Noddings, and Coles all clearly and uniquely recognize human beings as dynamic, transforming, multidimensional forms of existence worthy of respect yet capable of the horrific.

If we deny the unscripted fullness of the world, we distort awareness and fuel the smiling, bland faces of the zealots of goodness. Let us not dishonor those whose lives have been visited by unspeakable horrors as we attempt to tell our stories of transcendence, spirituality, justice, and love. To be with and alone, centered and de trop, I believe more adequately describes our transcendent being.

One of the key indictments that I am making is that portrayals of spirituality and transcendental dimensions of the human being as inherently good, pleasant, or even as leading to meaning and understanding, are miseducative and therefore inadequate. As my dear friend Ira Weingarten suggested, Dewey (1938) provided a succinct and illuminating statement contrasting the miseducative from the educative when he wrote, "Any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25).

And just what are the effects of what I have come to label the "beneficent paradigm" or "hegemony of beneficence"? Apropos to my thesis, and quite amusing, the *American Heritage Dictionary* I just consulted to peruse shades of meaning of "beneficent" included this usage quotation: "The *transcience* [author's emphasis] of nature's beneficence stimulated thrift (Homer W. Smith)." Before any such effects are suggested, I wish to clarify that I am not seeking a substitution of a "hegemony of malevolence" for the hegemony of beneficence. This debate is a perennial one … and it is so, I believe, because human experience offers within its spectrum coherent and evocative assessments of our relation to the cosmos. Our disagreements may not only be based upon different interpretations of phenomena but upon different phenomena.

How might a hegemony of beneficence arrest or distort the growth of further experience? First, let me state that beneficence as a preference may be a caring and compassionate orientation; to see the "good side" of any situation does require great faith and vision. But just as an adept critic calls to task one who overinterprets, so might we seek the bases for claims and the consequences of our interpretations.

One serious implication of beneficence *as* prejudice is that, as oft quoted, it becomes an opiate, a narcotic. I am not recommending moderation in all things — something roughly equidistant from the affect portrayed in Carnival Cruise Line advertisements to, say, the agony of Lear in his blindness. To be "blissed out" is not the same as being open to joy. To be misanthropic or melancholic is not the same as being open to grief. Even respecting psychological arguments about human needs for integration and equilibration, we have not been shown in any discrete way what is the proper mix, the suitable ratio of joy to grief.

Is it true that if one were to live more spiritually attuned, more holistically, more ecologically, more centeredly, more openly, more flowingly, even more critically conscious, the beneficent qualities of existence would be maximized?

I believe that John Cage's (1959) view comes closest to describing mine. Cage noted that as he left another artist's installation in Germany, the artist, in conversation with Cage, claimed that his work was expressing that there was too much suffering in the world. Cage replied that he did not see it that way. He said: "There's just the right amount."

What are we to make of such a claim? Cage, I believe, was not suggesting that those conditions which bring about suffering require no action. To the contrary, however, given these conditions, suffering comes with the territory. To not suffer within these conditions and circumstances would be a distortion.

Fourth movement: All

> The prophet is a person who living in dismay has the power to transcend his dismay. Over all the darkness of experience hovers the vision of a different day.
>
> — Abraham Heschel

Note: Heschel says a "different" day, not a nicer day or a better day. Having recently struggled to find a definition of curriculum that reflects an indeterminate and transcendent possibility, I (1994) derived the following:

> **Curriculum can be understood to be multidimensional influences affecting processes of transformation.**
>
> According to this definition, curriculum is constituted by intentional and unintentional, conscious and unconscious, overt and hidden, material and nonmaterial, academic and nonacademic, purposeful and incidental influences. Such a conceptualization accepts the permeability of boundaries within which educational activity purportedly takes place. By this definition, the investment portfolio of a university's endowment fund becomes a curricular matter.
>
> A further clarification needs to be made. While "education" is more typically framed in terms of how human skill or capability is developed, or potential is actualized, a transformational-developmental model of curriculum is not anthropocentric. That is, the spectrum of transformations and developments included within this purview includes non-human-centered events and processes. Thus, instead of the question "What has been learned as a result of people encountering this curriculum?" a different question is raised: "What is influencing the transformations occurring at this moment?"
>
> Why do I suggest that the latter question is more adequate than the former? First, because I have come to distrust the broadbrush use of the term "learning." Too often the term is used as a shorthand for "experience that has personal meaning." Rarely can one persuasively describe exactly when "learning" is taking place and when it isn't. The sleeping person is not learning, someone says. Really? Have you not "come to a recognition" in your slumber? The actively engaged student is certainly learning, someone claims. Learning what?, I ask. We are all well aware that students often "learn" something quite different than what we thought we were teaching! So, where does all this lead? Perhaps to the more honest and humble portrayal of learning that Krishnamurti offered in the quotation at the beginning of this paper:

> "Learning is not the accumulation of knowledge. Learning is the movement from moment to moment." Learning is the unfolding path of transformations brought about by an intricate dance of influences. Does ego influence? Very likely. Does the alignment of the stars and planets? Of course. Do the secret desires of the individual sitting next to you on the airplane? Perhaps imperceptibly. But therein lies the crux. To paraphrase E. F. Schumacher: "The importance of a phenomenon is not based on its tangibility, but on its significance." Likewise, transformational-developmental evaluation (TDE) operates with less interest in prediction, confidence, or control; rather, TDE seeks the illuminating significance of particular incidents, unique experiences, unrepeatable phenomena, and the fleeting. When evaluation processes are transformatively and developmentally oriented, they honor both continuity and change, both succession and duration, freedom and conditionedness, patterns and indeterminacy. (p. 16–17)

A fear haunts me that others will perceive this definition of curriculum and this essay as misanthropic. And so much is revealed in this fear: that living in community with others is a desire of mine, that ostracism from others is painful, that being perceived as misanthropic breaks a tacit covenant among humans that we dwell not *too* long on our stupidity, weakness, or viciousness, that fear binds us together as a herd — massing together in families, tribes, nation states; exposing as few to the threats (real and imagined) that encircle us.

As to whether this essay is misanthropic, I assert that it affirms a different measure. It is irreverent with regard to humankind while positively embracing the human condition. It iconoclastically knocks over the pantheon of human deifications while returning to an oceanic sense of experience and being. Mine is a humble if unoriginal ambition — to unmake the cosmos as it had been made in man's male (and more rarely, but equally inadequate, woman's) image. Neither are we the pinnacle nor even a link in a Great Chain of Being. Rather, we coexist in courses of evolution and influences within whose timeless frame our temporal condition is neither a priori privileged nor meaningless. While some may describe the present calamity as a fall from Edenic grace, I suggest that Eden was never ours to possess.

To be sure, I claim not a superior view, a less clouded vision. This indeterminate view is, however, less nauseating personally (in both existential and physiological senses) than unproblematically held premises or sentimentally articulated platitudes. Universities in general, and schools of education in particular, are spawning grounds for some of the most grotesque forms of unconsciousness one could ever find. The proliferation of slogans, platitudes, moralisms (while many faculty professionally distance themselves from taking "moral positions" pedagogically), formulaic prescriptions for human development, "practical" advice for warriors in the global competition — all these and more are ugly, obscene, and shameful. (For one of the more vitriolic critiques of higher education, may I suggest Upton Sinclair's [1922] *The Goose-step.*)

It is with a peculiar mixture of hopefulness and shame that I identify generally with the human race and specifically with the field of teacher education. Whether viewed microscopically or macroscopically, from personal to species-wide, I believe that we can find the awe-inspiring and the despicable, the ennobling and the depraved, the awakened and the morose, the loving and the callous.

Beneficent prejudice discounts the horrific and the obscene and eviscerates the experience of tragedy. We need joy in order to begin to know the significance of misery. To reduce unnecessary suffering is honorable. To create joyous relationships is humane. To yield to pathos is not ignoble. To be with the fullness is more than we can hope for.

References

Cage, J., with Tudor, D. (1959). *Indeterminacy.* (CD #FT3704) Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian-Folkways.

Dewey, J. (1963). *Experience and education.* Toronto: Collier. (Original work published 1938)

Eco, U. (1986). *Travels in hyper reality.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Eliot, T. (1943). *Four quartets.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Gadamer, H. (1989). *Truth and Method* (2nd rev. ed.). New York: Crossroads Books.

Harman, W. (1993). Toward an adequate science of consciousness. *Noetic Sciences Review, 7,* 78.

Heschel, A. (1972). *The insecurity of freedom.* New York: Schocken. (Original work published 1966)

Heshusius, L. (1994). Freeing ourselves from objectivity: Managing subjectivity or turning toward a participatory mode of consciousness? *Educational Researcher, 23*(3), 15–22.

Huebner, D. (1966). Curriculum language and classroom meanings. In J. Macdonald & R. Leeper, (Eds.), *Language and meaning.* Washington, DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Huebner, D. (1975a). Curriculum as concern for man's temporality. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing,* pp. 237–249. Berkeley: McCutchan. (Reprinted from *Theory into Practice,* 1967, *6*(4), pp. 172–179.

Huebner, D. (1975b). The task of the curriculum theorist. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing,* pp. 250–270. Berkeley: McCutchan.

Huebner, D. (1984). Spirituality and knowing. In E. Eisner (Ed.), *Ways of Knowing*, 1982 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Washington, D.C., pp. 66–84.

Kafka, F. (1987). *Letters to friends, family, and editors* (Richard and Clara Winston, trans.). New York: Schocken.

Kesson, K. (1991). The unfinished puzzle: Sustaining a dynamic holism. *Holistic Education Review*, 4(4), 48.

Krishnamurti, J. In R. Fields, P. Taylor, R. Weyler, & R. Ingrasci (Eds.). (1984). Chop wood carry water. Los Angeles: Tarcher.

Kushner, H. (1981). *When bad things happen to good people.* New York: Avon Books.

Macdonald, J. (1974). A transcendental developmental ideology of education. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Heightened consciousness, cultural revolution, and curriculum theory.* Berkeley: McCutchan.

Macdonald, J. (1977). Curriculum, consciousness, and social change. *Foundational Studies, 5* (Fall), 27–45.

Macdonald, J., & Purpel, D. (1987). Curriculum planning: Visions and metaphors. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, Winter, 178–182.

Pipan, R. (1994, May). *Transformational-developmental evaluation.* Paper presented at the Third Educational Conference of the University of Bahrain.

Purpel, D. (1989). *The moral & spiritual crisis in education: A curriculum for justice and compassion in education.* Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Purpel, D. (1993). Social justice and education: The odd couple. *Holistic Education Review*, 6(1), 30.

Riegel, K. (1978). *Psychology mon amour: A countertext.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Sinclair, U. (1922). *The Goose-step: A study of American education.* Pasadena, CA: Author.

Spiegelman, A. (1991). *Maus I & II.* New York: Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1986)

Watts, A. (1989). *The book: On the taboo against knowing who you are.* New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1966)

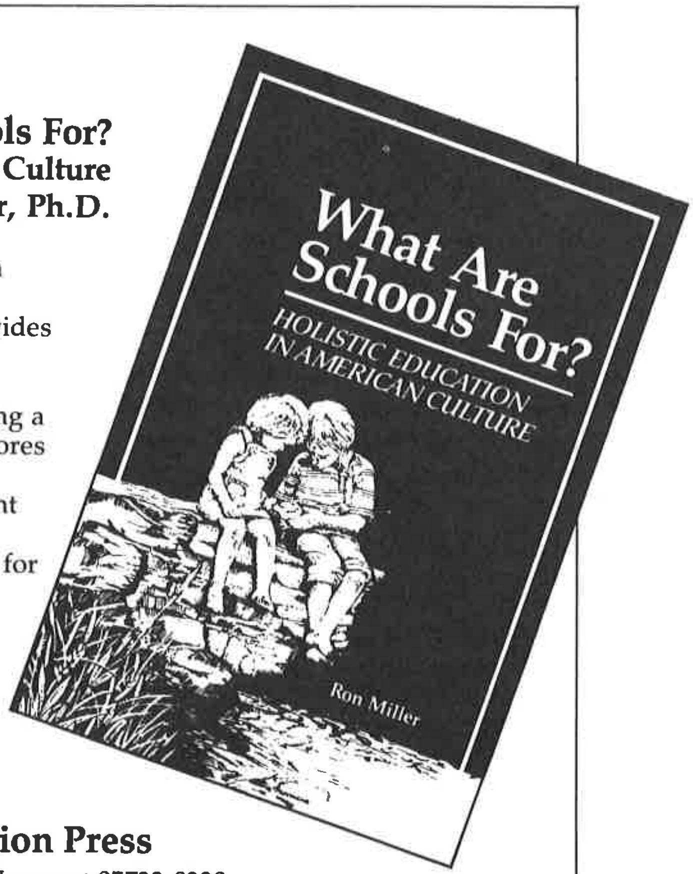
West, C. (1993). *Prophetic thought in postmodern times.* Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

What Are Schools For?
Holistic Education in American Culture
by Ron Miller, Ph.D.

This is the definitive history of holistic education and its pioneers over two centuries. Ron Miller, founding editor of *Holistic Education Review*, provides a thorough overview of the various educational movements founded on person-centered, progressive, global, and spiritual principles. Using a broad American Studies perspective, Miller explores the cultural worldview underlying mainstream American education and carefully describes, point by point, how holistic approaches offer a radical alternative. *What Are Schools For?* is a stirring call for a revolution in American education.

What Are Schools For?
SBN 0-9627232-0-7
175 pp.; $16.95 (quality paperback)

SECOND EDITION 1992



Holistic Education Press
P.O. Box 328 ◆ Brandon, Vermont 05733-0328
1-800-639-4122 ◆ 1-802-247-8312

Special Education Bureaucracy and the Dilemma of Modernism

Michael M. Warner

The increasingly bureaucratic nature of special education in the U.S. threatens to undermine the very principles the mandates were meant to ensure: a more humane and efficacious approach to students with disabilities.

Alan Wolfe, in his recent book *Who's Keeper,* describes the rise of modernism as a process in which citizens of modern democratic states become, at one and the same time, increasingly free from traditional obligations to others *and* increasingly interdependent in the context of huge governmental and economic systems. "To be modern," Wolfe states, "is to face the consequences of decisions made by complete strangers while making decisions that will affect the lives of people one will never know."[1] In such circumstances, Wolfe argues, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to develop as moral creatures. We become buffeted between the demands of a competitive and amoral marketplace on the one hand, and the rigidities and impersonality of a regulating state on the other. Neither the workings of the marketplace nor the imperatives of governmental bureaucracy "speaks well of obligations to other people simply as people, treating them instead as citizens or opportunities. Neither puts its emphasis on the bonds that tie people together because they want to be tied together without regard for their immediate self-interest or for some external authority having the power to enforce those ties."[2]

In the last few decades, public schooling in the U.S. has remained, for the most part, insulated from the dynamics of private markets.[3] But during this same period of time, the growth of centralized state bureaucracies of schooling has moved ahead in full force. While bureaucratic forms of schooling have existed for a long time at the local level, since World War II there has been a dramatic increase in the regulation of local schools from the state and especially the federal levels.[4] Special education has occurred in the context of this growth of centralized governmental authority and has itself seen the dramatic expansion of governmental regulation of its practices.

Special education can be construed as a profoundly moral enterprise. When we teach students who are mentally, emotionally, or physically disabled, we are constantly faced with the task of "recognizing and beholding them as valued and cherished human beings."[5] That such a task is often difficult is captured

Michael Warner is an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Nevada. His recent scholarly interests focus on the philosophical and social foundations of special education. He may be contacted at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, MS 278, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0029.

in the words of Richard Hungerford:

> Everywhere ... we hear talk of sameness. "All men are created equal!" it is declared. And at the ballot box and the subway rush in Hiroshima and Coney Island it almost seems that way. Moreover, coming back from Staten Island on the ferry, as you see an unkempt bootblack lift his head to gaze at the Manhattan skyline — you know that these words of Jefferson are not mere snares for votes and popularity. But standing on the same boat with the hand of your idiot son in one of yours — with mingled love and distaste placing a handkerchief against his drooling mouth — you know that Jefferson's words are not easy to understand.[6]

People with disabilities, burdened as they often are by stigmatization, and demanding as they often are of the time and efforts of others, constantly confront us with the question of our moral obligation to them.

Since World War II there has been a dramatic increase in the regulation of local schools from the state and especially the federal levels.

Before the 1970s, special education programs for those with milder forms of disabilities were rigorously segregated within the schools and relatively little money was allocated for them. Many severely disabled students were turned away from public schools altogether, either at the discretion of local school officials or by state law or both.[7] In some areas there were severe shortages of adequately trained teachers, and the warehousing and abuse of some disabled children in large state institutions was all too common. Prompted by these conditions of segregation and neglect, the goals of the burgeoning special education bureaucracy were meritorious — to provide disabled children and adolescents with proper care and education and to bring them into the social and economic mainstream of society. If Wolfe is right, however, then the late twentieth-century transformation of special education into a large, federally regulated bureaucracy, a process supported by a sense of obligation to children with disabilities, may have paradoxically contributed to an undermining of the conditions on which such a moral obligation is based.

Thus, the dilemma of modernism — to trust local institutions with the care and education of an often powerless minority such as children with disabilities — is to risk the continuation of their segregation and mistreatment. On the other hand, to rely on impersonal and bureaucratic mechanisms, abstracted from the face-to-face encounters of disabled and non-disabled people, may not achieve the integration of the disabled into local life, and may, in fact, make such integration more difficult by further undermining the basis for local community itself.

It is not the purpose of the present article to argue whether or not the conditions of students with disabilities in the U.S. have improved during the second half of the twentieth century — doubtless they have, especially for our most severely disabled youngsters. Rather, I wish to examine the bureaucratic direction that special education has taken and point to some of the deleterious consequences that have followed. In the initial section of the article, a brief synopsis of the growth of the special education bureaucracy during recent decades will be provided. This will be followed by discussions of the nature of bureaucracy as a form of organization and the undesirable consequences of bureaucracy that have been documented in special education since the 1970s. Finally, I will return to a discussion of the dilemma of modernism and the search for alternative approaches to the provision of care and education for children and adolescents with disabilities.

The growth of federal bureaucracy

During the 1960s, the relative power of the federal government, in relation to state governments, began to increase dramatically, especially in the area of public education.[8] In addition to an increase in the amount of involvement of federal authorities in education, there was also a shift in the type of involvement. Educational mandates moved beyond the control of educational inputs (e.g., funding and teacher certification) to specification of educational processes and outputs.[9] Federal influence took the form of provision of categorical aid to states and local schools, threats to withhold federal funds to those schools found in violation of federal civil rights laws, and the provision of funds for educational research and curriculum development. In addition, both private foundations and national accrediting agencies played an important role in the nationalization of educational policy.[10]

At the same time, the role of the federal courts in schooling began to change. The courts increasingly focused on charges that "some constitutionally protected right, privilege, or immunity of the individual [had] been violated."[11] The courts began to issue mandates requiring remedial action and they retained jurisdiction over cases in order to further compel schools to carry out those mandates.

In the context of this burgeoning federal involvement in education as a whole, the foundations for a dominant federal role in special education were laid. The role of the federal government in disability policy during the decades immediately preceding World War II had been quite limited, consisting almost entirely of the provision of some vocational rehabilitation services for veterans of World War I, and specific services for the blind.[12] Then, in the early 1960s, President Kennedy established the President's Panel on Mental Retardation. The President's Panel called for increases in services from a wide array of government agencies, and under the impetus of new federal laws, most states established "various task forces to examine community services; educational programs; residential facilities; manpower needs; prevention; public and professional awareness; vocational rehabilitation; state laws and legislation...; research; and administration, interagency collaboration, and finance."[13] According to Scheerenberger, although the amount of spending by the federal government had not yet dramatically increased, it was during this time that a paradigm was established "that would be repeated in the future — direct federal participation, comprehensive planning, and inclusion of people with varying backgrounds, experiences, and interests in the entire process."[14]

Prior to the 1960s, the education and treatment of disabled children could be described as very inadequate. It was for the most part segregated; it was often quite underfunded; and it was sometimes abusive — this, in spite of local political efforts by parents of the disabled to secure a better fate for their children.[15] During the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, with the help of civil rights lawyers and some special-education professionals, parents of disabled children and youth successfully used the courts to publicize their agenda and to obtain changes in federal, state, and local policies and laws.[16] As a result of parent initiatives, important decisions were handed down that required significant changes in the way the schools and other institutions provided for the needs of disabled children.[17] In turn, local and state school officials sought financial aid from the federal government in order to carry out the many mandated changes that the courts imposed.

Through these processes, as well as the political lobbying efforts of professional and parent organizations, important federal legislation was passed, culminating in the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94–142) (EHA), in 1975. As Fenstermacher and Amarel point out, federal involvement in local educational practices can take several forms. The federal government can *encourage* the schools, often by offering money in exchange for assurances from local schools that they will modify their practices to conform to federal agendas; it can mandate what local agents cannot do, but not specify what they must do; or, in its most controlling form, it may specify what local schools must do by law.[18] EHA represented the third approach, and in 1977, 149 pages of regulations associated with EHA went into effect.[19]

It is beyond the scope of the present article to present a detailed or comprehensive description of the contents of these regulations. In brief summary, EHA mandated appropriate education for all students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21, completely at the public's expense. No longer could students with severe disabilities be legally turned away by public schools. To the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities were to be served in the same settings as their nondisabled peers. General guidelines for identifying students eligible for special education were provided, and it was stipulated that assessment for eligibility be done in such a way that the process would not discriminate against ethnic minority groups. Parents were to be involved in significant ways in educational decisions affecting their disabled children, and these parents and children were afforded due process of law. Finally, all students being served in special education were required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Prior to the 1960s, the education and treatment of disabled children could be described as very inadequate. It was for the most part segregated; it was often quite underfunded; and it was sometimes abusive.

To receive funding, state educational agencies were required to submit a plan to the federal government, detailing the procedures they would use in implementing EHA. In turn, local school districts were required to submit implementation plans to their state education agencies. Provisions were included for the states to monitor compliance by local school officials and for the federal government to monitor compliance by the states.

The years that followed publication of EHA regulations can be described as a period of implementation and continued expansion of federal and state laws related to people with disabilities. By 1991, more than

60 federal laws touched on some aspect of life of disabled people, including education, employment, vocational rehabilitation, housing, income maintenance, transportation, legal rights, and the provision of numerous specific social services.[20] Among the most important additions to EHA have been those associated with children younger than the traditional school age (from birth through age five), and with adolescents who are making the transition from secondary schools to post-school adjustment and employment.[21]

With respect to infants and toddlers with disabilities (from birth through age two), states have been required to develop "...a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency system" of service delivery.[22] In addition, for each infant or toddler identified (ages birth through two), an individualized family service plan (IFSP) must be developed. The IFSP, like the IEP, is a written document developed by a team, including the parents. Among other things, the plan must include a statement of the present levels of development of the child, a statement of the family's "resources, priorities, and concerns," in meeting the developmental needs of the disabled infant or toddler, and a "statement of the major outcomes expected to be achieved...and the criteria, procedures, and timelines to be used to track progress and to determine whether modifications or revisions of the goals or services are necessary."[23] The danger that such regulations may pose in increasing family dependency on state bureaucracies is obvious and has not gone unnoticed.[24]

In 1990, EHA was amended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101–476). Pursuant to this law, "transition" regulations were subsequently published. These regulations require that IEPs include documentation of needed transition services for students age 16 and older, including, if appropriate, a statement of the way various agencies will link together in the delivery of transition services. The transition process is required to go beyond conventional secondary school instruction to include community services and the development of employment and other post-school adjustment objectives. In these transition regulations, the federal government has further specified not only the planning processes that must be in place in local schools, but, to some extent, both the content and processes of instruction.

The nature of bureaucracy

During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of research studies were conducted to document the implementation of federal and state regulations. For the most part, the studies were consistent in portraying legalistic and mandated processes in special education as having important limitations. Before turning to a detailed consideration of these studies, a preliminary discussion of the general nature and effects of bureaucratic forms of organization is provided.

Bureaucratic institutions are designed to amass and direct power. As such, they have several distinguishing features. They are characterized by vertical and horizontal divisions of labor and tend toward increasing specialization of functions as they grow. As Hummel notes, "people's work is divided, not only to make them expert and more efficient, but to make them dependent on managerial control."[25] A fixed set of rules and procedures is adopted for allocating resources and handling people. These rules and procedures, in theory, are designed to be applicable universally, without exception and without favoritism.

Actions in a bureaucracy become defined in terms of their rationality. There must be a clearly specified relationship between means and ends, and if actions are to be controlled, they must be made visible.[26] Such visibility can take the form of elaborate and detailed written plans, written documentation of actions taken, and documentation of the outcomes of actions (e.g., the results of standardized testing). "Instituting standard operating procedures and basing assessment of performance on observed compliance with these is a natural and normal solution to the problem of control experienced by an organization that grows larger and larger."[27]

When the number of people to be directed or processed is large, the goals of centralized control and efficiency *are* often achieved through bureaucratic organizational forms. But very frequently, bureaucracy also results in undesirable or unintended consequences.

In contrast to more traditional or primary forms of social interaction, human communication in bureaucracies often takes on an impersonal and straitjacketed form. Bureaucrats are often hindered from taking personal action to help their clients when such action violates official protocol. Clients in turn, are often confronted with functionaries that seem inflexible and speak in uninterpretable technical jargon. There is commonly a shift away from a dialogue in which meanings are constantly shifting, to a one-way presentation of fixed operational definitions.

In this context, a common consequence is *goal reduction*. Bureaucratic goals often become narrowed to what is most easily measured. In educational contexts, for example, the results of standardized tests of basic academic skills may become the focus of the policymaker's gaze, and more intangible goals, such as instilling a desire to learn or the development of capacities to reason critically, are lost from view.[28]

Another typical result of bureaucratic forms of action is that of *goal displacement*. Goal displacement is a process in which the original goal of a particular action gets detached from the processes designed to attain the goal and the process itself becomes the goal. By emphasizing compliance in the form of a visible trail of written documentation, "control comes to mean largely checking that procedures are followed — instead of looking at output. In other words, for the sake of visible procedures that can be easily supervised by control personnel (management), the first condition of modern rational action — that action be logically connected to some end or purpose — is … abandoned. Formality conquers substance."[29]

Goal displacement can contribute to another common bureaucratic phenomenon that Wise calls *hyperrationalization.* Here, additional bureaucratic "overlay" does not lead to intended policy objectives. "When the relationship between means and ends is not known and bureaucratic rationalization persists, we shall say that we are witnessing the phenomenon of hyperrationalization … imposing unproven techniques on the one hand, and setting unrealistic expectations on the other."[30] Hyperrationalization exists (a) where prescriptions for change are excessive, (b) where procedures are unnecessarily complex, (c) where solutions are unrealistic, inappropriate, or superficial, and (d) where the results of science are used selectively to buttress a predetermined conclusion.

Because of the bureaucratic nature of special education, students and parents, as well as school personnel, end up being tied down or buffeted about in ways that must often seem arbitrary and irrational to them.

To conclude this discussion of the nature of bureaucracy, it must be noted that for sometimes noble and sometimes not-so-noble reasons, human beings resist the churnings of bureaucracy. Clients resist being turned into "cases," and lower-level bureaucrats constantly adjust the directives of higher-ups in order to conform to the practicalities of immediate contexts and to advance their own idiosyncratic agendas. Moreover, mandates generated from afar can interact with local conditions in unpredictable ways. Frequently, local agents wittingly or unwittingly undermine bureaucratically derived objectives.

Implementation of EHA and the impact of bureaucracy

Singer and Butler, in a review of research on the implementation of EHA, concluded that by the early 1980s, local school districts had made significant progress in complying with the procedural aspects of federal and state regulations.[31]

But a number of studies appeared in the 1980s and early 1990s that pointed to significant implementation problems. These studies relied on interviews with participants and close, detailed descriptions of implementation efforts, including the contents of meetings, of informal conversations among local participants, and of IEPs and other pertinent written documents. All of the undesirable tendencies of bureaucratic organization cited earlier were documented, including, especially, hyperrationalization.

Bureaucratic overlay

In the early 1970s, the State of Massachusetts passed a special education law (Chapter 766) that would serve as a model for the subsequent development of EHA. Weatherley conducted an intensive investigation of efforts to implement the law in that state during the 1974-75 school year.[32] He encountered dedicated professionals in the schools who were, for the most part, eager to carry out the mandates of the new law. And, in his view, the state law resulted in a number of positive outcomes, including new efforts by the schools to identify and serve previously excluded children, to involve parents in educational planning, and to give special educators a more prominent role in joint regular and special education planning efforts.

Nevertheless, Weatherley concludes that:

> A law and regulations intended to produce a uniform application of procedures instead, in certain respects, yielded wide variations in application. The chances of a child being referred, evaluated, and provided special education services were associated with such presumably extraneous factors as the relative wealth of the community in which he or she lived, the child's disruptiveness or submissiveness in class, his or her age and sex, the sex of the teacher, the aggressiveness and socioeconomic status of parents, the current availability and cost of services needed, and the presence in the school system of particular categories of specialists.[33]

Skrtic, Guba, and Knowlton studied the implementation of EHA in five rural school cooperatives during the early 1980s.[34] In the U.S., small rural or remote school districts often band together administratively (in cooperatives or "intermediate units") to deliver special education services. Consistent with the conclusions of Singer and Butler, Skrtic, Guba, and Knowlton found that many of the specific provisions of EHA had been implemented by the time of their study. Federal funds, though inadequate for local needs, were reaching local schools. New services were being provided, and provisions such as the development of IEPs were being implemented.

At the same time, though, Skrtic, Guba, and Knowlton documented a number of implementation problems associated with the bureaucratic nature of EHA. For example, they found evidence of goal displacement and goal reduction. Monitoring of compliance usually took the form of quantitative "check-offs," in which the numbers of students served or the number of hours spent on particular activities was the focus of attention. Data were collected by school officials to show that certain minimum types of compliance had occurred, but little attention was paid to the *quality* of the services that were being delivered.

Skrtic, Guba, and Knowlton also found that all special education staff were weighted down by a tremendous amount of paperwork. Local implementers often feared censure by state monitoring authorities, which led to an overly narrow focus on leaving a paper trail to justify virtually every act.[35] Such an emphasis on procedure over substance was seen in other ways too. "Some procedures and structures exist *primarily* for the sake of compliance and pose a wasteful burden on Cooperative personnel. For example, all of the sites have developed elaborate procedures for establishing due process with respect to IEP generation: who will do what under such and such contingencies [e.g., parent contestation of school decisions].... Yet virtually no cases have ever been brought (and not too many seem likely)."[36]

Finally, given problems with lack of adequate funding, lack of certified special education teachers and other support staff, and the idiosyncracies of local cultures, a counterproductive "climate of fear" developed — fear that local personnel would be found in noncompliance.

Taking the findings of Weatherley and Skrtic, Guba, and Knowlton together, evidence of hyperrationalization begins to emerge. Some of the bias extant in local processes remained unaffected by regulations, and local actors were burdened with new expectations that didn't necessarily lead to improved outcomes for children. These same patterns were found in studies that focused on the process by which students are identified and placed in special education.

Federal/state regulation of special education has been tied to many of the irrationalities commonly associated with bureaucratic regulation: burdensome paperwork, goal reduction, goal displacement, and hyperrationality.

Identification and placement

Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls studied the decision making associated with placements in special education as guided by EHA.[37] Their study was conducted in a small coastal town in the State of California shortly after EHA regulations went into effect.

Children with presumed problems typically enter the special education evaluation system by way of referrals from regular classroom teachers. Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls found evidence that evaluation personnel would discourage such referrals at certain times of the year or in programs that competed with special education. Also, teachers were sometimes discouraged from referring students who might be in need of special education because the teachers didn't want to fill out the very elaborate forms that were required. In these ways, Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls pointed out, the needs of the bureaucracy itself "structure students' educational opportunities by regulating their access to certain educational programs."[38] These investigators also found examples of teachers who declined to refer students who were in great academic difficulty because those teachers believed that they themselves were more capable of meeting the needs of those students. On the other hand, they found examples of psychologists who, after finding no child deficiencies upon initial routine testing, would continue to test until they "found" child deficiencies that would confirm the referring teacher's claim that the child had a problem. Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls concluded that, even though the district made earnest and often creative efforts to comply with federal mandates (in spite of inadequate budgets, personnel shortages, excessive workloads of school psychologist and others, and shortages of time), the goal of systematically or reliably separating out students with disabilities was often undermined.

Similar problems with the federally regulated identification and placement process were uncovered by Mary Lee Smith. In the late 1970s, she conducted an in-depth study of formal and informal processes used to decide who was eligible to receive learning disability services in a suburban school district in Colorado.

Smith provided evidence of a staffing process so "complicated, legalistic, and technical that only the most sophisticated and persistent parents [could] cope with it."[39] Smith also documented a decision-making process plagued with error and controversy. Like Weatherley and like Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls, her findings point to hyperrationalization in that state and federal regulations had a limited effect on the actual decisions made and that decisions often had little to do with student needs:

> Because of the vague criteria and definitions, a district's staffing committee may be influenced by a variety of motives ... such as the need of the institution to protect itself, the needs of the parents to justify themselves, the needs of the [general education] teachers to deal with deviance by labeling and shifting responsibility for the deviant, the needs of the professional groups or individuals to establish their technical expertise and authority to deal with the handicapped, the needs of the local schools to maintain their traditional autonomy ..., the needs of the school to avoid litigation.[40]

The vagaries of the identification process were also documented by Ysseldyke. In a review of research carried out during the late 1970s and early 1980s, he characterized the processes of assessment and placement of those with specific learning disabilities (almost half of all school-identified students with disabilities) as irrational and arbitrary. He pointed to evidence that (a) significant numbers of nondisabled students met criteria for eligibility as learning disabled; (b) it was difficult to distinguish reliably between learning-disabled students and other low-achieving students; (c) school assessment teams frequently engaged in a "search for pathology," determined to confirm the negative judgments of teachers who initially refer students for testing; and (d) criteria for establishing the existence of specific learning disabilities differ dramatically from state to state.[41]

The studies of decision-making just cited lend support to the conclusion that much of that process took place in a hyperrational context, that is, a context in which regulations lead to professional activity that is unrealistic, inappropriate, and superficial. Students and parents, as well as school personnel, end up being tied down or buffeted about in ways that must often seem arbitrary and irrational to them.

The IEP process

Such hyperrationality, as well as other problems associated with the bureaucratic nature of special education, was also uncovered in studies of the IEP process. Goodman and Bond, in a review of such studies, argued that insistence "on objective ... evaluation requiring explicit measurable performance criteria and a projected timetable for attainment is likely to restrict the nature of curriculum goals."[42]

In their own study of early intervention programs in ten states, they frequently found that teachers would rely on the subtests of commercially-available developmental inventories to generate their curricula. These inventories contained test items, the contents of which were easily converted into IEP objectives. Yet, Goodman and Bond pointed out that these items were originally "placed in developmental tests because they differentiate children by age, not because they are of any intrinsic educational importance."[43]

In addition to narrowing curricular goals (goal reduction), Goodman and Bond contended that the IEP process was inflexible in ways that could be harmful to the teaching process, especially with preschool children (ages three to five). In order to modify the goals and objectives on an IEP once it has been formulated, teachers are required to reinvolve the parents. Because of this restriction and the long-term nature of IEP objectives (extending over several weeks or months), the IEP process "makes it harder for teachers to ... maintain flexibility in goals and objectives, and to seize the occasional open windows for learning presented by difficult children."[44] In the context of the current and shifting interests of a child, Goodman and Bond said, it is difficult for the teacher to "consider the preferred goals and methods ... with a particular constellation of motives and abilities, regularly taking cues from the child's changing responses...."[45]

Like Goodman and Bond, Heshusius also found evidence of goal reduction in the IEP process. She conducted an observational study of special education processes shortly after the implementation of EHA. Among the several examples of goal reduction that Heshusius observed was the following comment of a student teacher about a classroom teacher: "I was in a class for the mentally retarded as an aide, and the children were doing the same sort of worksheet all the time, day after day! The teacher told me that she would much rather do nice activities with them, but the skills on the worksheets were on their IEPs."[46]

Heshusius also recorded anecdotes that exemplify goal displacement. She commented that "after the teacher, to her distress, had rewritten IEPs as directed by the consultant in terms of numbers, scores, and predicted percentages of correct responses, the principal stopped her in the hall and indicated that the [original] IEPs were acceptable: 'No one can challenge them now.' The teacher replied, 'But they are meaningless!' The principal smiled in response. The teacher's field notes for the day commented: '...I am already judged accountable, before I have even taught anything.'"[47]

In the late 1980s, Goodman and Bond interviewed nine individuals who had been instrumental in shaping the contents of EHA, including especially the demand for educational accountability as represented by the IEP. These people included Alan Abeson, Elizabeth Boggs, Gunnar Dybwad, James Gallagher, Edwin Martin, Philip Roos, Lisa Walker, Fred Weintraub, and Wolf Wolfensberger.[48] Goodman and Bond wrote that:

> In retrospect, our informants are very disappointed with the IEP. J. Gallagher ... called it a "disaster." F. Weintraub ...explained, "It was never supposed to guide day-to-day classroom activities," and A. Abeson ... confirmed: "Nothing turned out the way it was intended...." These leaders believed the IEP has come to dominate rather than support the teaching process and has done little to promote children's welfare.[49]

Stephen Smith, in his 1990 review of IEP implementation studies, found that IEPs were frequently written in a flawed manner, with important elements either missing or inadequately constructed, suggesting a breakdown in the diagnosis-prescription-evaluation chain. Smith concluded that "after years of intense scrutiny, it is unknown whether IEPs actually enhance children's learning."[50] Given the time-consuming nature of the IEP development process, this may be another instance of hyperrationality, that is, bureaucratic overlay in the absence of intended outcomes.

Summary

In the studies just reviewed, federal/state regulation of special education has been tied to many of the irrationalities commonly associated with bureaucratic regulation: burdensome paperwork, goal reduction, goal displacement, and hyperrationality. It is simply not clear that the imposed bureaucratic processes (many of which have little to do with instruction), and the millions of dollars that are spent on the implementation of federal and state regulations, have led to their intended outcomes, at least for the majority of students with mild disabilities. This conclusion is strengthened by Gartner and Lipsky, who cite evidence that the dropout rates for students with disabilities are unacceptably high and that their post-school adjustment is poor.[51]

Some contend that when the federal government or state agencies mandate regulations to be followed at the local level, they have little or no appreciation of the particulars of local decision-making contexts such as classrooms.

In the preceding pages, the growth in state and federal regulation of special education during the late twentieth century has been sketched. It has been argued that the bureaucratic direction that this growth has taken has led to many unanticipated and undesirable consequences. In this final section of the article, I return to the theme with which the article began — the dilemma of modernism. The discussion is largely speculative. It focuses on yet another undesirable consequence of bureaucratic culture, but one that is more insidious and difficult to document — the erosion of autonomy and responsibility-taking among local actors and the resulting atrophy of a sense of moral obligation to others.

In place of traditional moral strictures, according to Wolfe, modern citizens are left increasingly with a choice between two logics of moral regulation, that of the market and that of the state. In the logic of the market, obligation to others is framed in terms of rational self-interest — I do best for others by doing what is best for me. In the logic of the state, government regulation and enforcement is necessary in order to prevent people from taking undue advantage of one another.

For Wolfe, the logics of the market and the state together form a most inadequate basis for the moral regulation of a society. Instead, Wolfe contends, the logics of markets and states must be complemented by the kinds of moral reasoning that develop in a third arena, that of *civil society*. Civil society includes local institutions, the family, voluntary civic and social organizations, and so on. It stresses self-restraint, ties of solidarity with others, trust, empathy, and voluntary altruism. It is the world of aesthetic expression and craft. It is the world of community in all of its mundane, comic, and tragic dimensions.

Civil society is itself imperfect as a realm for the development of moral obligation,[52] but it offers something that markets and states cannot — the development of autonomy and responsibility. "We learn how to act toward others," says Wolfe, "because civil society brings us into contact with people in such a way that we are forced to recognize our dependence on them."[53] The development of such virtues as trust, altruism, and empathy are, Wolfe maintains, rooted in civil society. It is only within the intimate realm of family, friends, voluntary organizations, and social movements that "we learn the art of understanding the moral positions of others."[54]

In civil society, human action is often based on the idiosyncratic nature of particular circumstances. For markets and states, the situation is different. "Since all situations are idiosyncratic, and therefore not comparable, the only way to develop rules that, in the interests of justice, will apply in universal fashion to all situations is to emphasize their procedural form.[55] Wolfe argues that such proceduralism is inimical to the development of people as moral selves. When we follow such abstract rules, he notes, "we lose our ability to judge social practices by their inherent moral content."[56]

In summary, Wolfe views the logic of markets and states as encroaching on the kinds of moral understandings that can only develop in civil society.

> Between them, the moral theory of the market and the moral theory of the state allow remarkably little scope for people to develop their own moral capacities. Markets and states combine to reduce the moral agent to being a mere chooser among alternatives rather than a sculptor of the alternatives to be chosen. Both approaches assume that in the absence of strictly defined rules we might favor association over principle, situation over procedure, context over universality, morality over law, and flesh-and-blood over abstraction.[57]

Wolfe's thesis is supported in the educational context by Fenstermacher and Amarel, who argue that the fundamental purposes of education and those of the state often work at cross-purposes. While, for these authors, the state has certain interests that are legitimate (e.g., to compel citizens not to choose ignorance, to protect the rights of minorities), if the state intervenes in the educational process in too direct a way, it can seriously interfere with the interests of individual students and with the interests of humanity as a whole. Fenstermacher and Amarel contend that when the federal government or state agencies mandate regulations to be followed at the local level, they have little or no appreciation of the particulars of local decision-making contexts such as classrooms: "Distal agencies [the state] strip [the teacher] of her pedagogical intentions; her own priorities are annexed, she defines her teaching activities according to the sentiment and rhetoric of distal agents."[58]

Central to Fenstermacher and Amarel's conception of the goals of schooling is the notion of *intentionality.* Schooling must promote the intentionality of students [whether disabled or not] for intentionality "is the foundation of humanity's interest. To act on the basis of one's own thoughts and values defines the condition and the potential of humankind."[59] If teachers are compelled by federal regulation to act merely as the servants of the intentions of distal agents (federal and state bureaucrats), then they are not in a good position to model intentionality for their students, but instead must model their servility to the will of the distal authorities. Yet, it is precisely through modeling of personal intentionality by the teacher that students come to understand and absorb important traits of character, including the development of their own capacity for intentionality.

Commenting on what he sees as the regulatory excesses common to the administration of community-based group living arrangements for the mentally retarded, Taylor echoes the concerns of Fenstermacher and Amarel: "When compliance with regulations becomes a substitute for doing what we think is right, our humanity suffers and this cannot help but affect how we treat and relate to people with disabilities."[60] Likewise, Skrtic, in an exhaustive study of the organizational context of special education, notes that as "more of life comes under the control of the specialization and professionalization of the professional bureaucracy, the need to solve problems and to engage in discourse diminishes...."[61]

"Help is not prescriptive," Rebecca Blomgren exhorts. "We do not know nor can we determine how someone else should be; however, within a partnership we might foster the care and compassion with which to affirm each other's dignity."[62] But this attitude, I would argue, along with Wolfe and others, is very difficult to cultivate within large-scale, centralized bureaucracies. And as I have tried to indicate in this article, the direction that U.S. society as a whole, and special education in particular, has been taking, is toward an ever-increasing overlay of bureaucratic rationality and practice.

One the other hand, the situation that disabled children and their families found themselves in before the rise of federal regulation was not particularly desirable either. In some cases it was intolerable. To completely deregulate special education is to risk a return to those unsavory conditions.

Whether a workable balance between regulatory protection of the disabled and the legitimate claims of civil society (including actors in local communities and schools) can be achieved remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the warning sounded in the present article stands. If we become transfixed on compliance with increasingly intrusive federal and state educational mandates, a more humane and efficacious approach to students with disabilities is likely to evade us.

Notes

1. Alan Wolfe, *Who's Keeper: Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 3.

2. Wolfe, p. 12.

3. This may be changing as "privatization" of public schools gains increasing numbers of advocates.

4. For artful discussions on the rise of bureaucratic forms of schoolings (with their emphasis on order, efficiency, and uniformity) during the nineteenth century, see Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools* (New York: Praeger, 1975) and David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

5. Rebecca Blomgren, "Special Education and the Quest for Human Dignity," in *Critical Social Issues in American Education: Toward the 21st Century*, edited by H. Svi Shapiro and David E. Purpel (New York: Longman, 1993), p. 242.

6. Richard H. Hungerford, "On Locusts," *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 54 (1950), p. 415.

7. Jack Tweedie, "The Politics of Legalization in Special Education Reform," *Special Education Policies: Their History, Implementation, and Finance*, ed. J G. Chambers and W. T. Hartman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 48–73.

8. Joseph F. Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism: The Growth of National Power* (New York: Praeger, 1992).

9. Arthur E. Wise, *Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 57.

10. See Thomas S. Popkowitz, *A Political Sociology of Educational Reform: Power/Knowledge in Teaching, Teacher Education and Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991).

11. John C. Hogan, *The School, the Courts, and the Public Interest*, 2nd ed. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Health, 1985), p. 12.

12. Martin L. Lavor, "Federal Legislation for Exceptional Persons," in *Public Policy and the Education of Exceptional Children*, edited by Frederick J. Weintraub et al. (Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1976), pp. 96–111.

13. R. C. Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation: A Quarter Century of Promise* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 1987), p. 112.

14. Scheerenberger, p. 114.

15. Marvin Lazerson, "The Origins of Special Education," in *Special Education Policies: Their History, Implementation, and Finance*, edited by Jay G. Chambers and William T. Hartman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 38.

16. See Thomas K. Gilhool, "Education: An Inalienable Right," in *Public Policy and the Education of Exceptional Children*, edited by Frederick J. Weintraub et al. (Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1976), pp. 14–21 and Tweedie, "Politics of Legalization" (see n. 7).

17. Barbara D. Bateman and Cynthia M. Herr, "Law and Special Education," in *Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman and Daniel P. Hallahan (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 334.

18. Bateman, "Law," p. 334.

19. Judith D. Singer and John A. Butler, "The Education for All Handicapped Children Act: Schools as Agents of Social Reform," *Harvard Educational Review* 57 (May 1987), pp. 125–152.

20. U.S. Department of Education, *Summary of Existing Legislation Affecting People with Disabilities* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 1992), p. iii.

21. U.S. Department of Education, *Summary of Existing Legislation*, p. iii.

22. U.S. Office of Education, *Summary of Existing Legislation*, p. 10.

23. Susan R. Sandall, "Curriculum for Early Intervention," in *Family-Centered Early Intervention with Infants and Toddlers: Innovative Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, edited by Wesley Brown, S. Kenneth Thurman, and Lynda F. Pearl (Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brooks, 1993), p. 130.

24. See Susan O'Connor, "Supporting Families: What they Want Versus What They Get," in *Family Involvement*, edited by Jeanne H. Nathanson (Washington, DC: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 1992), pp. 7–11 (Eric Document Reproduction Service Number: ED 350 768).

25. R. P. Hummel, *The Bureaucratic Experience* (New York: St. Martin's Press), p. 30.

26. Hummel, p. 27.

27. Hummel, p. 28.

GREAT IDEAS
IN EDUCATION

A FREE
catalog of today's most exciting books
and videos on education and teaching

❦

— *Featuring* —

hard-to-find materials on Montessori,
whole language, progressive education,
alternative schools and much more

❦

INFORMATIVE BOOK REVIEWS

❦

A UNIQUE AND DIVERSE SELECTION
OF POWERFUL BOOKS
AND ORIGINAL VIDEOS

To obtain your free copy of
GREAT IDEAS
please call toll free
1-800-639-4122

— *or write to the* —

RESOURCE CENTER
FOR REDESIGNING EDUCATION

P.O. Box 298
Brandon, Vermont
05733-0298

28. Wise, *Legislated Learning*, p. 61. (see n. 9)

29. Hummel, *Bureaucratic Experience*, p. 28.

30. Wise, p. 65.

31. Singer and Butler, "All Handicapped Children Act," p. 126 (n. 19).

32. Richard A. Weatherley, *Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

33. Weatherley, p. 124.

34. Thomas M. Skrtic, Egon G. Guba, and H. Earle Knowlton, *Interorganizational Special Education Programming in Rural Areas: Technical Report on the Multisite Naturalistic Field Study* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Department of Special Education, 1985), (Eric Document Reproduction Service Number 266 574).

35. Skrtic, p. 85.

36. Skrtic, p. 105.

37. Hugh Mehan, Alma Hertweck, and J. Lee Meihls, *Handicapping the Handicapped: Decision Making in Students' Educational Careers* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).

38. Mehan, p. 67.

39. Mary Lee Smith, *How Educators Decide Who is Learning Disabled: Challenge to Psychology and Public Policy in the Schools* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1982), p. 133.

40. Smith, p. 6.

41. James E. Ysseldyke, "Classification of Handicapped Students," in *Handbook of Special Education: Research and Practice* (Vol. 1), edited by Margaret C. Wang, Maynard C. Reynolds, and Herbert Walberg (New York: Pergamon Press, 1987), pp. 253–271.

42. Joan F. Goodman and Lori Bond, "The Individualized Education Program: A Retrospective Critique," *Journal of Special Education* 26 (1993), p. 414.

43. Goodman and Bond, p. 416.

44. Goodman and Bond, p. 415.

45. Goodman and Bond, p. 417.

46. Lous Heshusius, "At the Heart of the Advocacy Dilemma," *Exceptional Children*, 49 (1992), p. 8.

47. Heshusius, p. 10.

48. Goodman and Bond, "Individualized Education Program," p. 410.

49. Goodman and Bond, p. 413.

50. Stephen W. Smith, "Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in Special Education — From Intent to Acquiescence." *Exceptional Children*, 57 (1990), p. 10.

51. Alan Gartner and Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky, "Children at Risk in Special Education," in *Children at Risk in America: History, Concepts, and Public Policy*, edited by Roberta Wollons (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 166.

52. Wolfe, *Who's Keeper*, p. 18 (see n. 1).

53. Wolfe, p. 18.

54. Wolfe, p. 233.

55. Wolfe, p. 231.

56. Wolfe, p. 231.

57. Wolfe, p. 232.

58. Gary D. Fenstermacher and Marianne Amarel, "The Interests of the Student, the State, and Humanity in Education," in *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*, edited by Lee S. Shulman and Gary Sykes (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 401.

59. Fenstermacher and Amarel, p. 404.

60. Steven J. Taylor, "The Paradox of Regulations: A Commentary," *Mental Retardation* 30 (1992), p. 187.

61. Thomas M. Skrtic, *Behind Special Education: A Critical Analysis of Professional Culture and School Organization* (Denver, CO: Love, 1991), p. 231.

62. Blomgren, "Quest for Human Dignity," p. 243 (see n. 5).

RUDOLF STEINER
COLLEGE

- **Waldorf Teacher Education Program:** Preparation for kindergarten, elementary and high school teaching, 2 year program, also M.A. option
- **San Francisco Extension Program in Waldorf Teacher Education:** 3 year part-time program
- **Summer 1995 Courses For Teachers On Waldorf Education:** (June-August) Arts • Kindergarten • Grades 1-3 • Grades 4-5 • Grades 6-8
- **The Waldorf Approach Applied In The Public School Classroom:** Summer Institute (July 1995) Kindergarten • Grades 1-3 • Grades 4-6

also an Arts Program and Goethean Studies Program

9200 Fair Oaks Boulevard
Fair Oaks, California 95628 • (916) 961-8727

Bookstore • (916) 961-8729

National Coalition of
Alternative Community Schools

Teacher Education Program

Discover how to use your talents and desire to work with young people in an alternative education environment as a resident intern at one of the NCACS schools. You and your mentor will attend conferences and seminars while also participating in family and student-directed education. Visits to other programs round out the learning experience. Graduates receive a certificate on completion of the program.

Contact: Sandra M.Hurst, Director (215) 458-5138
429 Greenridge Road • Glenmoore • PA • 19343

Book Reviews

The Holistic Teacher

by John P. Miller

Published by Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press (Toronto), 1993, 139 pages, paperback, $24.50.

Reviewed by Ron Miller

Through his books, his courses at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and his work with public schools in Canada, Jack Miller has been one of the most visible and influential of holistic educators. His 1988 book *The Holistic Curriculum* concisely defined the scope of holistic education and became a landmark signaling this movement's emergence into the mainstream educational world. The key element of Miller's contribution has been his ability to translate the complex and (to most contemporary educators) unfamiliar and "mystical" perspective of holism into understandable ideas and practical methods of application.

The Holistic Teacher continues this project of translation. Basic holistic principles, such as the interconnectedness of life, the importance of the spiritual dimension of existence, and a recognition of different ways of knowing, are presented simply and directly. Miller describes holistic education's emphasis on balance between aspects of experience that have, in our culture, become polarized: autonomy and interdependence, quantity and quality, reason and intuition, technology and consciousness, and so on. As he has also explained in earlier writings, Miller shows that holistic education is most fundamentally concerned with connections and relationships, and he works to integrate and harmonize rather than merely to analyze and dissect.

This book specifically examines the teacher's role in such a learning environment. Miller suggests that the use of "holistic" methods, techniques, or curricular materials is secondary to the teacher's conscious and deliberate effort to move from an ego-centered perspective to a "compassionate service level of consciousness." This effort requires the sincere practice of centering exercises such as meditation, visualization and imagination, art, and various movement/play activities. Requiring teacher trainees to practice meditation, as Miller does in his courses, is a startling departure from conventional teacher preparation, but he discusses it in this book as a natural and necessary aspect of their training. *The Holistic Teacher* quietly observes that self-awareness, mindfulness, authenticity, receptivity and acceptance, and other such traits are essential qualities of holistic teaching. Miller does not call for radical spiritual awakening, religious conversion, or paradigm shifting; rather, he gently invites teachers to strive for a deeper level of awareness and engagement with the lives of their students.

> Through meditation we experience moments of deep inner joy in teaching as we connect with our students in profound and subtle ways. Holistic education can be defined in many ways; however, one definition I like is simply that it releases the human heart. Meditation is fundamental to that release. (p. 59)

For readers who have never been exposed to meditation, *The Holistic Teacher* is a simple and inviting introduction. However, it is not clear how far teachers can proceed in meditation practice, with its subtleties and obstacles, based on Miller's brief overview. (He describes *vipassana* meditation, for example, in three paragraphs; I still find the practice difficult after a ten-day retreat and reading several books). In other words, reading *The Holistic Teacher* will not, in itself, provide the insight or discipline required to be a holistic teacher. The book is only a beginning, a point of entry to new ways of thinking, teaching, and being.

I am concerned also about a theoretical blind spot in Miller's presentation; the book leaves the impression that a teacher may be "holistic" without seriously engaging the cultural, political, and socioeconomic realities that define schooling and circumscribe people's lives (both teachers and students). In very brief passages, Miller observes that modern culture (and hence its schooling) values competition and intellectual performance at the expense of compassion and wholeness. He emphasizes the importance of developing the inner life, pointing out, for instance, that children whose imaginations are nourished are demonstrably more adaptable and successful in school and life. Later in the book, he associates this imaginative capacity with a more highly developed "moral vision" that would challenge social injustice.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to read this book alongside a sobering work in critical pedagogy (such as Peter McLaren's *Life in Schools*), social critique (Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*), or activist teaching (Patrick Shannon's *Becoming Political*) and not feel that something important is missing here. Miller himself, in *The Holistic Curriculum*, recognized that Freirean and even

Ron Miller is the founding editor of Holistic Education Review *and currently the President of the Resource Center for Redesigning Education. His most recent book,* The Renewal of Meaning in Education, *was published by Holistic Education Press in 1993.*

Marxist perspectives added an important critical edge to "transformational" thinking, an edge that is lacking here. This book is, in fact, a revised version of *The Compassionate Teacher*, which Miller published in 1981, at the height of the transpersonal education movement. He explains that the notion of "holistic" education has become more widely accepted than that earlier approach, and he has reworked the book accordingly. Yet the book is filled with numerous quotations from personal growth researchers and gurus of the 1970s and, as I argued in a recent article in *Holistic Education Review*, the "holistic education" that emerged from that period is not as convincing or sophisticated as a holistic education informed by critical postmodern perspectives.

Of course, no book can be all things to all readers. Miller is effective in presenting holism to the educational mainstream precisely because he does *not* try to present complex philosophical and ideological issues. *The Holistic Teacher* is valuable as a point of entry to holistic education that is accessible to many teachers. But let us not forget that once people are familiar with this new perspective, they should use it to address the critical issues of our time.

Building Community in Schools

by Thomas J. Sergiovanni

Published by Jossey-Bass (San Francisco), 1994. 219 pages.

Reviewed by Michael Umphrey

In the summer of 1993, I canoed for several days down the Flathead River with 15 middle school students and 6 adults. There were enough adults on the trip to form a rudimentary community, which made teaching much easier and more natural than it tends to be when a solitary adult faces a throng of adolescents. The adults had real conversations about their real concerns, and the students wanted to hear, wanted to participate.

Though the kids were chosen for the trip largely on the basis of their failures to get along well in school, we had no disciplinary problems whatsoever. Most of the kids were of Indian descent, and so were two of the adults.

At one point, I watched a particularly interesting exchange. Greg was a poor student in school, prone to interrupting teachers when he wasn't ignoring them. He had an essentially cheerful nature and usually managed to find ways to enjoy himself, but he often didn't pay attention to class talk and he was chronically indifferent to class rules. While we were making camp, he picked up an owl feather and put it in his ball cap. Much of the talk on the river had centered on Indian culture and history, and though his family had little connection with tradition, he was playing with seeing himself as part of his heritage. He showed the feather to Bill, a biologist in the tribe's natural resources department.

"Did you know you're not supposed to keep owl feathers?" Bill asked.

Greg looked surprised and asked, "Why not?"

Bill looked away and then responded, "I was just always told you're not supposed to keep them."

Bill didn't tell the stories, didn't mention the connection Salish culture sometimes makes between owls and death. He just referred to a rule of the community that Greg wanted to join. Although there might have been a better time and place to explain further, the rule had to sound arbitrary in the slight way it was mentioned.

But Greg took the feather out of his cap and dropped it on the ground, enjoying letting it go as much as he had, a few minutes before, enjoyed picking it up. When teachers asked him to stop a certain behavior in the classroom, he was seldom compliant. But the classroom was not part of a community in which he saw himself as a member. As we do a better job of showing our children real communities that are open to them and of inviting them to join, many of the problems we now face will not need to be solved. They arise from the unreality of what we do.

Thomas J. Sergiovanni has written a good book that gets to the heart of the disquiets that trouble our schools. As we lose community, we also lose the power to educate our children because they turn away from us to form counterfeit communities of their own. But as we learn how to better live together in community, our children will be drawn to join us, and they will learn what we have to teach.

The book is developed through a contrast between two types of human order borrowed from the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies: *gemeinschaft*, or "community," and *gesellschaft*, or "society." Sergiovanni points out that "schools are never *gemeinschaft* or *gesellschaft*," but that "they possess characteristics of both"

Michael Umphrey is the author of two books of poetry. His most recent book, The Third Reality: Narrative, Community & Spirituality, *is undergoing final revision. He has worked as a teacher and school administrator on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana for many years.*

(p. 13). The issue is not which approach we will take — we will take both — but "which theory should dominate in which spheres of our lives" (p. 14). Our plight is that we have built schools in which our relations with others are means to some other end rather than ends in themselves, in the way of bureaucracies rather than in the way of friends and of good families.

Sergiovanni discusses several schools that illustrate how friendship and shared work can become the basis for schooling: The Central Park East Secondary School in East Harlem, New York; the Köln-Holweide Comprehensive School in Cologne, Germany; the Denali School in Fairbanks, Alaska; and the Jackson-Keller School in San Antonio, Texas. Those looking for ideas and direction will find them here.

However, since the book aims to be comprehensive, the treatments are not discussed in great depth, and the difficulties, dilemmas, and disagreements that those who work in these systems must face are glossed over. Is that a strength or a weakness? If we want to find things wrong, in our schools or in our families or with our friends, we can. I am glad to read a writer who is willing to state the alternative: "To be blunt about it, we cannot achieve community unless we commit ourselves to the principle 'love thy neighbor as thyself.' Yes, these are sacred words but then again community is a sacred idea" (p. 29).

Sergiovanni is at his best when he is blunt, or, as I would phrase it, forthright. We have no shortage of sophisticated and subtle thinkers, so adept at seeing through everything that they end by seeing very little. What Sergiovanni sees is as simple as it is hard: we must place "ourselves in service to students and parents and to the school and its purposes." If we can do this, "our work is elevated to a form of stewardship" (p. 145).

The book not only makes a compelling case and offers illustrations from schools that have made real progress toward building community, it also serves as a good introduction to the extensive literature of building community in schools. Along the way to explaining how we have let things get out of kilter, with too much attention to the rules of formal organization and too little attention to the work of personal relationship and care, Sergiovanni brings in useful insights from such thinkers as Alasdair MacIntyre, Nel Noddings, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Elliot Eisner, Mary Rousseau, and others. People who have a serious commitment to understanding what we must do to make schools more humane should read these thinkers carefully, and Sergiovanni has.

The book is optimistic and cheerful, and Sergiovanni's desire to find and bring good news perhaps lets him slight one issue that lies at the heart of our attempts to build communities of schools — the issue of authority. He shares with many educational writers today a readiness to dismiss hierarchical order and he, thus, barely explores its possibilities. Ecosystem biologists have clarified in recent years that all ordered systems are hierarchically ordered. When a true ecology of schools is written, we will understand better that a community is an ordered system with many levels and that different people are given stewardships for what occurs on different levels.

As a university professor, Sergiovanni is quick to draw on the writings of other education professors as the basis of his thought. He enters a school as a highly educated outsider with a ready command of a broad array of theoretical apparatus, able to quickly place what he sees in his rich philosophical framework. It would be uncharitable and untrue to imply that such an observer has little of value to offer practitioners. Sergiovanni is smart and perceptive, and his insights are highly practical, as good theory always is. But rather than being a practitioner of school leadership, he is a theoretician of it, and he maybe understates the importance that practices of authority play in building community.

Good teachers rarely "handle" discipline problems. Mostly they prevent them, using their authority so skillfully they appear not to need it. Other good teachers can see this happening in a thousand small ways when they observe it, but to those who do not teach, the best teachers often appear to be getting along without hierarchical authority. Power contests seem completely absent, and they seem to be relying thoroughly on the good will of the group. But nothing could be further from the truth. Sergiovanni leaves the impression that groups can reach consensus without authority. If this is true, it is true only when those groups share a hierarchy of values more thoroughly than is true of most public school staffs or most American communities.

Many recent ventures into community building, animated by the spirit that Sergiovanni serves, have ended badly. When the authors of a Public Agenda Foundation report spent a year studying four school districts in diverse settings, all struggling with reform attempts, they were discouraged by what they found. A pattern of suspicion and anger, of division and factionalism, was so consistent in each district that they could "only conclude that it was not the individuals but something about the system itself that encouraged conflict, not cooperation."[1] That "something," as our teacher James Madison told us well, is nothing other than human freedom in the absence of authoritative leadership.

We need to move in the direction Sergiovanni teaches, and the examples and iseas he offers clarify both why we need to move in this direction and how we can do so. But we must also pay close attention to the difficulties that many who have started on this road full of hope and optimism have encountered. True communities are ordered systems, and all ordered systems constrain their parts. The study of community must include a careful study of constraints. We too often become like Des Cartes' group of travelers who are lost in the woods, unable to agree on a direction. Though the truth is that any direction, taken and held to, leads out of the woods, if we cannot agree to let someone decide, we cannot stop arguing and begin moving.

Note

1. Steve Farkas and Jean Johnson, "From Good Will to Gridlock: The Politics of Education Reform," in *Education Digest*, October 1993, p. 4. Excerpted from *Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education in Four American School Districts*, Public Agenda Foundation, 1993.

Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World: Multicultural Education for Young Children

By Patricia G. Ramsey

Published by Teachers College Press (New York), 1987, 224 pages; paper, $17.95.

Reviewed by Peggy Placier

Early childhood education has not always been identified with multiculturalism. Since the first public kindergartens of the Progressive Era, this field has often been identified with cultural assimilation as a means of preparation for school. In the early years of the Head Start program, according to the cultural deficit theory, the goal was to compensate for the supposedly impoverished culture of the home by exposing children to the cultural knowledge a white middle-class child would bring to school. In the recent "at risk" movement, early childhood programs have been touted as the most economically efficient form of dropout prevention. Their goal, as stated in *America 2000*, is to see that children "come to school ready to learn," that is, ready to adapt to the culture of the school.

Yet from its beginnings, there has been another strand of thought in early childhood education that, as Patricia Ramsey's book explains, seems especially compatible with at least one strand of multicultural education. The child-centered developmentalist perspective holds that educators should be responsive to the individual child's identity and experience. Young children are social beings whose identities are formed in a cultural context and whose experiences reflect their families and communities. Therefore, genuine responsiveness to children requires knowledge of their cultural backgrounds.

Peggy Placier is an assistant professor in the Foundations of Education area at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her research and teaching interests include language and culture, multicultural education, policy analysis, and the socialization of female faculty.

Responsiveness, in Ramsey's Piagetian framework, also requires knowledge of the child's cognitive and affective development. Multicultural education must be adapted to the student's developmental stage. According to Piaget, preschoolers cannot grasp abstract concepts such as "culture" or categories such as "nationality." Their generalizations about other people are based on immediate, concrete experiences, both positive and negative. Therefore, it is the teacher's role to arrange positive encounters among children—experiences that enhance cultural identity and disrupt the formation of negative stereotypes.

In Sleeter and Grant's (1994) typology of multicultural education, this is termed a human relations approach. Later, I will return to their critique of this approach and consider whether Ramsey's book has avoided its potential pitfalls. Ramsey also incorporates elements of the social reconstructionist approach in her argument that multicultural early childhood education is part of a long-term strategy of social change and empowerment. However, the book is light on sociological concepts and political rhetoric; Ramsey relies primarily on cognitive and social psychology for her disciplinary grounding.

From my experience and observations, this book should appeal to early childhood educators. In my graduate course on multicultural education, I have been struck by the responses of early childhood educators in comparison with those from higher education. Moving past the political and theoretical complications of multiculturalism, early childhood educators seem to be spilling over with ideas for implementation. While the higher educators fret about the Western canon and political correctness, the early childhood educators create activities based on cultural themes. It is not that they are apolitical or atheoretical, but that their politics and theory are more often implicit, embodied in the *doing* of education.

In this book, Ramsey provides an explicit theoretical and political basis for "doing multicultural education" in the early childhood classroom, as well as a plethora of how-to examples. In the preface, she explains that she wanted to avoid both the "cookbook" approach, which provides a smorgasbord of practical activities with little theoretical grounding, and the heavily theoretical, research-based approach of child development texts, which offer little practical guidance. On that score, she succeeds. The first two chapters provide a discussion of the general goals of multicultural education and a review of the literature on concept and attitude development in young children, in particular the development of racial/cultural concepts and attitudes. Because this is an active field of research, some of her sources already seem dated; but the review is still a good foundation for further reading.

Seven chapters focus on implementation. Ramsey would advise the early childhood educators in my class not to move too quickly to the activity phase, but to begin with a thorough assessment of their own knowledge and attitudes, the school community, and their students' cognitive and social responses to cultural differences.

In Ramsey's framework, multicultural education is not a generic set of activities that will work with any group of children, but a specific response to a local situation. It is also not an updated form of compensatory education for minority children. In fact, Ramsey argues that isolated white middle-class children need multicultural education to compensate for *their* lack of cultural knowledge.

After establishing her framework, Ramsey moves on to suggest many, many examples of multicultural practices that are validated both through research evidence and teachers' experiences in a variety of settings. These examples reflect the remarkable inventiveness of early childhood educators. They include both conventional (picture, stories, food, celebrations) and unconventional (diversifying children's understanding of the physical environment) ways of introducing cultural knowledge to children. Language acquisition is a critical aspect of early childhood, and this book, (in contrast with many others) gives language acquisition and program alternatives for language learners significant attention. One chapter, of course, can only introduce issues that educators of children who speak languages other than English should explore in much more detail.

One of the most intriguing chapters is titled "When Parents and Teachers Do Not Agree." The chapter extends the human relations approach to include cross-cultural teacher–parent relationships. It includes an all-too-brief discussion of what can be a very sensitive issue: student recruitment. Ramsey argues that face-to-face contact with culturally different people is the key to improving human relations, but segregation has made this a rare experience for many young children. Therefore, early childhood programs in predominantly white areas may try to attract students from other neighborhoods to enhance their diversity, making enrollment more attractive to liberal parents. Intentions and assumptions behind these efforts must always be carefully analyzed. Conversely, middle-class parents may not be willing to transport young children to areas they consider unsafe, in order to provide them with an experience in diversity. If a program does succeed in diversifying its student population, there are implications for cross-cultural teacher–parent and parent–parent relationships that must be addressed. Ramsey has space only to touch upon these.

Parents may also resist the movement toward multicultural education. Although Ramsey cites a case in which resistant European–American parents soon became converts, some parents are likely to be swayed or at least disturbed by the political critique of multiculturalism that is much more evident today than at the time this book was written. The author also cites examples of immigrant parents who *expect* early childhood education to be assimilationist because they are concerned about their child's preparation for success in American schools. Early childhood educators should be familiar with these questions and ready to engage in potentially difficult dialogues with parents.

But an even more serious issue is the potential cross-cultural conflict between teachers and parents over children's socialization. The Piagetian developmentalism that Ramsey espouses, and other schools of thought on early childhood education for that matter, is not compatible with all cultural beliefs about childrearing. Early childhood teachers may believe that their expertise should be privileged above the cultural knowledge of parents (Delpit, 1988). They may even define some parental practices as abusive. This is a fundamental conflict, and Ramsey could not possibly offer a simple resolution. She briefly suggests open communication, negotiation, and compromise between parents and teachers. But she also warns teachers not to become so relativistic that they excuse child abuse and neglect (and become legally liable?). In my opinion, it is this issue more than any other that will test the commitment of early childhood educators to cross-cultural understanding and pluralism. It deserves further investigation and discussion.

There is much to admire in Ramsey's complete and practical book. However, it is worth examining Sleeter and Grant's (1994) critique of the human relations approach that the author espouses. They note that the human relations approach is the one most popular with white elementary teachers, who are the vast majority of elementary teachers. However, it is "limited in its analysis of why discrimination and inequality exist and in its simplistic conception of culture and identity" (p. 115). Stereotypes and prejudices, according to these authors, are symptoms rather than causes of inequality. "Kind treatment by individuals does not of itself eliminate poverty, powerlessness, social stratification, or institutional discrimination" (p. 116). Lessons in popular, packaged human relations curricula do not often focus on injustice and power. Genuinely multicultural education would address these "larger questions" (p. 117).

As mentioned earlier, while Ramsey is not silent about her political commitments, political and sociological analysis is not a major focus of her book. Such analysis also does not seem to be a major preoccupation of the white early childhood educators in my classes, despite my efforts (which they sometimes label "negativity"). The few African-American early childhood educators in my classes seem more politicized and less naive about the difference that human relations activities alone could make.

Sleeter and Grant acknowledge that many early childhood educators have critiqued their critique. Are young children ready for political analysis? Ramsey would no doubt argue that the human relations approach is the most developmentally appropriate for young children. Moreover, Sleeter and Grant concede that the human relations approach, if "done well," may be a good foundation for the introduction of other approaches. By "done well," they mean avoiding shallow "tourist" or "ethnic festival" activities. I think that Ramsey's book is sophisticated enough to avoid this pitfall. She explicitly critiques what she calls the "holiday syndrome" — the practice in early childhood education of attending to cultural differences only through token celebrations of exceptional events.

In conclusion, I would recommend Ramsey's book to my early childhood students, with the caveat that the human relations approach is only one way of "doing multicultural education" and that early childhood education is the foundation, but not the entire structure, of a comprehensive multicultural education.

References

Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Education Review, 58,* 280–298.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (1994). *Making choices for multicultural education* (2nd ed.). New York: Merrill.

IMMEDIATE OPENING FOR DIRECTOR. Experientially-based private elementary and preschool committed to small classes, community building, and personal growth for children and adults. Established 6 years, 100 children, 20 full and part time staff.

Director applicants must have classroom experience and be skilled in staff support and development, child assessment, and program development, and must also have love for children and a passion for the learning process.

Please answer the following questions and return with your resume and references:

1. Describe your experience in early childhood and elementary education.
2. How will you support the teaching staff and their classrooms?
3. Describe your ideal school community and roles of the participants, including yourself as director.

Friends British Primary School
5465 Pennsylvania Avenue
Boulder, Colorado 80303
(303) 499-1999
FAX (303) 494-8430

The ***AEPL Annual,*** the journal of the NCTE Assembly on Expanded Perspectives on Learning, invites submissions for its inaugural issue to be published during the winter of 1995–1996. The issue theme is Beyond the Boundaries of Traditional English Education: What It Means to Explore Learning and Teaching in Contemporary Language Education. Contact Alice G. Brand, Editor, AEPL Annual, 217 Brittany Lane, Pittsford, NY 14534. (716) 232-1828.

Prepare For

Waldorf Teaching

and a

Waldorf Education Certificate

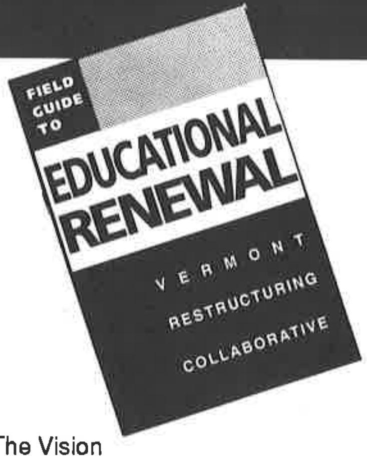
3 Summers of course work, 4 weeks each

2 school years of guided study and practice

Applications for July 1995 being accepted from experienced educators seeking to teach from indications of Rudolf Steiner.

CONTACT

Waldorf Teacher Development Association
Box 2678 – Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-2678
Phone: (313) 741-4808 Fax: (313) 662-7856



"A practical guide to all
who are serious about the promise of
public education in our democratic society."
— Carl Glickman

Field Guide to Educational Renewal

Vermont
Restructuring
Collaborative

Table of Contents

The Vision
  Why We Must Change Our Schools. Schools for the Twenty-First Century.
Leadership and the Organization of Schools
  Involving a Community in school Development. Leadership for Systemic Change. The Teacher as Leader. Collaboration and the Process of Change. Budgeting and the New Change Process.
Teaching and Learning in the New Schools
  Defining and Teaching the New Curriculum: Building from Examples of Quality. Teaching the New Methods. Performance Assessment for Restructured Schools. Educating All Children. Harnessing Technology: Teaching and Learning in the Future Tense.
Educating Ourselves and Others
  Aiming Teacher Preparation Toward High School Restructuring. Teaching Ourselves and Others: Reconceptualizing the University Course. Educating the Administrator for a Reflective Practice.
Building Communities of Learners
  Integration of Education and Human Services. The Role of the State Education Agency in Capacity Building. Higher Education and the Schools: Partnership for Mutual Renewal. Business/Education Partnerships.
Bringing It All Together
  Moving the Whole Thing at Once: Cabot, Vermont. What We Have Learned.

"Here for the first time, we have the authentic voices of caring, thoughtful, committed people who really know what the score is…." (Marc Tucker)

ISBN 0-9627232-5-8; 1994; 352 pp. (paper); $22.50

Holistic Education Press ◆ PO Box 328 ◆ Brandon, VT 05733
1-800-639-4122