# Holistic Education Review

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## Table of Contents

**Special Section**
**Care of the Soul in Education**



*Cover design and photo by Stephen Sagarin*

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# Editorial

# Soulful Education (or Let's Get Real)

In 1995-1996, Madhu Prakash and Peter Corcoran organized a session at the annual meeting of the American Educator's Research Association (AERA) to explore the meaning of Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* (1992) for college educators. Building upon the present thinking and discussion, Drs. Prakash and Corcoran took the lead in editing the thematic portion of the review. We are indebted to them for their courage and initiative.

The thematic papers in this issue are largely narratives as one might expect. They tell the stories of educators attempting to deepen the level of achievement with their students, not only to communicate ideas, but to help their students achieve some level of engagement with others and the world around them. The stories are particularly important as they portray the significance for soulful education with the personal immediacy that makes such education possible. While the soul may be defined with words, it may be understood only within one's own experience of being. Education directed at nourishing students' souls does not eschew practical matters, but rather contextualizes them within the streams of meaning of which they are a part. Those educators concerned with the care of students' souls recognize practical problems and harsh realities, but attend to them with a sense of responsibility to nourish them so that they might live with a greater sense of meaning, purpose, and identity.

The papers describe a continuous and manifold process of the personal awakening necessary to be responsive to students' souls. Individually and collectively, they address the question of how we may as teachers engage our humanity fully in the service of those we teach. In this context, they initiate a dialogue to educators at all levels and in all subject areas. The dialogue began with the universal question of how to approach our students with a sense of sacred responsibility.

The use of words such as "soul" and "sacred" seem to point to an otherworldly frame of reference, a romantic vision, which though sentimentally healing, provides virtually no foundation for dealing with the poverty, despair, violence, racism, abuse, and indulgence that are so much a part of our culture. However, these aspects of our daily lives make the need to nourish students' souls that much more pressing.

Ironically, educational policymakers at the federal and state levels, who call for educational reform, focus on abstract academic standards and curriculum content that in the end do not account for actual factors that govern the growth of children as intelligent human beings within and beyond schools. The commitment of the nation's governors and economic leaders at the educational seminar held in New York in March of 1996 to improve students academically and extend the use of technology in schools, amounted to nothing more than a "fire and brimstone" exhortation from a public pulpit. Economic considerations have replaced the notion of the divine as the source of both fear and wisdom, but the futility of intent cannot compete with its practicality and wisdom. You would have hoped that the failure of previous national and state initiatives with the same faulty assumptions would have led to a reevaluation of educational policy focused on the children as living, breathing, human beings. The only certainty about these efforts is that the cycles of failure and reaffirmation will continue until policymakers grasp the obvious and ineffable need to nourish children's' souls.

The governors and economic leaders are not alone in their reluctance to come to grips with the real needs of children. A review of past several catalogues at the national meetings of the AERA would likely leave a visitor to our country with the impression that we have very little poverty here. The fact that one in every five children is born below the poverty line does not appear to be a very significant factor for those seeking to understand and improve education through research. Nor does it appear there is recognition for the importance for something as significant as consistent human contact in helping children unfold all of their potential — social, academic, and otherwise. Despite a welcome movement toward ethnographic and qualitative research, the central thrust remains on the surface of things.

The subtlety and profound significance of meeting soul to soul is dramatically illustrated by Martin Buber. He recalls that a young student had come to visit him one afternoon just as many other students had. Buber spoke with him attentively, but was "not there in spirit." He did not guess at what questions the young man wished to ask, but didn't. A little while later Buber learned that the young man was dead, that his visit was

not incidental but "borne of destiny." Buber (1971) writes,

> Since then I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken. The mystery is no longer disclosed, it has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens. I know no fullness, but each hour's fullness of claim and responsibility. Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in the claim I am called and may respond in responsibility, and know who speaks and demands a response. (p. 14)

A teacher need not imagine that nourishing the soul of a student involves esoteric knowledge or training. There are no theoretical frameworks or belief systems except for those which one leaves at the doorstep of encounter. Theories and techniques have no place once we step into the moment of encounter. Nothing is represented; all is experienced in the fluidity of the moment. The goal is to attend in fullness to the full humanity of the student. Thomas Moore explains that "the first point to ask about care of the soul is that it is not primarily a method of problem solving. It's goal is not to make life problem-free, but to give ordinary life the depth and value that come with soulfulness" (p.4).

In this regard, the prime requisite for the educator is to be fully present in encountering students. A teacher of mine once told me, "When you meet your students, give them your full attention, and when you respond to them, do so with your full intention." This level of interaction can pierce through all the distractions which keep us apart and let the student know that there is, in Buber's words, "a presence by means of which we are told ... there is meaning" (p. 14).

The point here is not that teachers should be psychologists, but rather that education begins with human encounter. While the enormous complexity of classrooms makes it extraordinarily difficult to fully meet each individual child consistently, even brief moments of encounter create a vital human foundation for learning which streams through the daily events of classroom life. In Waldorf Schools, teachers often begin and end each school day by shaking the hand and meeting the eye of each individual child. While the practice may not be best for all schools or all cultures, the effort to engage the child in openness, without agenda, is of the utmost importance. Such encounter provides a soulful foundation upon which all else rests.

The focus on education is often placed upon curricular content and instructional methods, but the content of our lessons and the activities of the children themselves are secondary to the full presence of the teacher. If we recall those teachers who most influenced us, we will likely recall that they were in some way "there for us." Whether we remember a single touch or gesture, whether we recall their patience or refusal to compromise on what they held as essential to our growth, the world was revealed in a more meaningful and wondrous light for their being with us.

It's difficult to grasp the importance of the presence of the teacher in guiding student growth. We are so accustomed to technologically initiated communications that we seem, as a culture, to have lost sight of the meaning of daily meeting as a form of communion. Perhaps the most universal mode for the transmission of culture, other than language itself, is television. With children spending an average of 20 to 25 hours per week — which amounts conservatively to 20% of their waking lives — one would not expect them to learn how to attend to the needs, rights, sanctity or depth of other human beings.

The problem is compounded by computers and the worldwide web where individuals all too often define themselves to suit passing whims. There is no sense of responsibility to the other even as the exchange draws its power from a sense of personal contact. Although we may believe these new technologies merely create new forms of communication, they, in fact, create a confused sense of the other whom we address and who addresses us. As Chet Bowers has detailed, the magnification of one aspect of a mode of communication reduces the role of another. With the emphasis on the rapid exchange of specific, referential information, the tacit foundations of authentic human encounter have receded further from conscious awareness.

The reason the notion of "depth and value" in human encounter is misinterpreted as a renewal of Romanticism or a call to sentimentality in the face of a cruel and demanding world, because our capacity to perceive the sacred in the other is diminished. Lacking the attentive discipline to perceive, we chide others for their insight. Our failure is touted as virtue, and we recycle our plans again for efficacious school reform without reference to children.

The most critical factor in education is the presence of the teacher as human being. Our students as growing souls reach out to us; nothing else matters if we are not there to receive them and answer with our souls.

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# Tending Our Souls

## How We Re-membered and Regenerated Ourselves

Hedy Richardson, Rodney Reynar, and Madhu Suri Prakash

**A conversation in three parts wherein the authors reflect on the resonances of Moore's *Care of the Soul* in their lives.**

> I'm a bit moon and a bit traveling salesman, and my specialty is finding those hours that have lost their clock. There are hours which have drowned and there are hours which have been eaten up by cannibals....
>
> — Vincente Huidobro (cited by Illich in Cayley 1992, 238.)
>
> ... goofing off becomes the only poetry at hand
>
> — Ivan Illich

Some months ago, we embarked on the journey of writing this essay together. Our journey began with reading Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul*. We met to reflect upon the book, seeking to deepen our understanding of educational practices important for nourishing the human soul. We shared stories of past and present; stories that spoke of the loves and losses, the insights and failures that gave our lives their texture; stories in which the voices of our souls could be heard. Sometimes we laughed. Other days, we mourned, feeling heavy-hearted, empty-handed. Our conversations wandered, full of unexpected twists and surprising turns, "through the maze of our life's unfoldings" (Moore 1992, xv).

For a few cherished moments, we pushed to the margins of our lives the loneliness we all too often feel within the large educational institution where we work. We were joined in communion through these explorations of how we succeed or fail to nourish our own spirits and those of others in schools and colleges that epitomize the modern "loss of soul." During these hours of journeying together, we became soulmates; we re-membered. We rediscovered hours that have lost their clock.

In hindsight, we now better understand why we could neither plan nor predict our meanderings through the different shades of darkness and light, laughter and anxiety of doing shared work — to reflect together, followed with this conjoint writing about the care of the soul. This paper, like the rest of our journey together, eluded all our attempts to man-

*Hedy Richardson is a Ph.D. candidate in the Educational Theory and Policy program at Penn State University. Her current interests lie in the writings of Jacques Ellul and Wendell Berry.*

*Rodney Reynar is pursuing a Ph.D. in Agricultural Education at Penn State. He is currently searching for the connection between the professional and the personal in the writings of Ivan Illich and Wendell Berry.*

*Madhu Prakash is an associate professor of education at Pennsylvania State University. She has been a Spencer Fellow at the National Academy of Education and has chaired the program of the Wholistic Education SIG of the American Educational Research Association. Reprint requests should be sent to Dr. Prakash at Pennsylvania State University, 220 Rackley Bldg., University Park, PA 16802.*

date the direction in which we would take it. It wrote itself even as it taught us how we can care for the Other only when we abandon the "efficiency" or the desire for power that drives us to seek control over other beings. It revealed to us ways of breaking through many of our earlier preconceptions, including those that fixed our institutional roles: separating us with divisive formal categories like "teacher" and "student."

Practicing and learning the art of caring for each other, step-by-step we transformed and liberated ourselves, becoming Freirean teacher-students. Our unfolding understanding made transparent what it really means to listen or attend to the soul of the Other. Our friendship flourished as every "dialogical dialogue" deepened our shared trust — allowing each to discover the other's unique voice, while celebrating the improvisation of music created together.

### Creating Our Jazz, Our Soul Music: Point and Counterpoint in Three Voices

#### Madhu's musings

On the dark cover of Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* sits Vuillard's woman. Her head is bent in deep concentration over the cloth she holds in her hand as she quietly embroiders the designs of her life. While the needle moves in and out with serene deliberation, time stands still. She sits by the window whose dappled light is cast on her cloth and clothes. A deep mystery envelops the other parts of the room. It embraces the embroidering woman. In the depths of the mystery, we receive a glimpse of Vuillard's soul.

Is this woman not tending her soul as she quietly, ever so quietly, gazes at her pattern of thread moving in and out? She seems in no rush to get "somewhere." She is Here. Not at some airport, in permanent transit. As I gaze at her, entering the dark depths of the painting, even the watch stops its mechanical motions that cannibalize the hours.... The calendar of today's tense schedule, packed with appointments, starts to recede, to lose its tyrannical grip as I enter Vuillard's sacred space. Without forcing, very gently, Vuillard makes me pause. Re-collect myself. Ourselves. For, remembering, I re-member again with the women of my past — my mother and aunts, grandmothers and grandaunts; close neighbors or other women of the extended neighborhood. Women like Vuillard's.

They were not individual selves. They knew no other way to describe themselves than as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, neighbors, in-laws, friends.... They owned neither curriculum vitae, personal calendars, nor knowledge of time-management studies; those symbols with which schools [that they never went to] taught me how to become an "I," an individual self: upwardly mobile, bound for "somewhere," successful, free to be Me — outside-the-traditional-trap-of-relationships.

Foolish and young, I learned to pity those older women as slaves of domesticity. Several decades older, having trapped myself within the "liberated modern woman's" plastic-coated office prison of midget time, shrunken with globe-trotting, and being Nowhere — neither here nor there — I can only now begin to understand how they escaped being managed and monitored, protecting their lives and their times from being cannibalized by my modern clock.

Sitting by the light of windows, they contemplated their "traditional" lives as they sewed floral designs on cloth held lovingly in human hands. Sometimes we talked. Other hours stretched out in the eternity of long afternoon silences. Deeply we plunged into the dark recesses of our memories, dreams, and reflections. Basking in the warm, winter Delhi sun, we munched peanuts and cracked pistachios in the long, lazy afternoon; sometimes laughing, sometimes crying at our madnesses, our funny and crazy human idiosyncrasies, or, then again, the flashes of wisdom we often discovered in the loved ones with whom we shared our commons.

Those were still hours. Even the ceaseless clock lost its mechanical ticktock in their sacred groves. Hours when the soul was free to do its wandering, meandering from darkness to light, and then back again into darkness. Delving into depths where minutes and hours drowned and disappeared.

My remembrance of things past is interrupted by a knock. I return myself from the depths of the past to the cinder blocks and fluorescent lights of my professional world, the office. Here time is perpetually and desperately scarce. Starved we remain for the abundant hours of those women and men who do everything with their own slow human hands. Hedy enters.

#### Hedy's struggle and resistance to soul searching

As I enter Madhu's office, I note that I have clearly interrupted her thoughts. I have pressing school business to take care of and need her assistance in filling out some required graduate school paperwork that she must approve. I am very tense under

the pressure of bureaucratic time constraints, of institutional hoops that must be jumped. But Madhu has other thoughts. She is ruminating about the soul.

Within the next few minutes, I find myself being sucked into those thoughts by her comforting voice, lulling me into a new space. My mind is racing. I try to fight the land of the lotus eaters she is talking me into. I attempt to keep my focus on the purpose of my visit. I didn't come to Penn State to discuss the soul, but rather in search of information regarding academic matters and professional concerns. I don't have time to talk about frivolous soul stuff.

Yet Madhu's voice and ideas continue to seduce me. Perhaps it is a result of the burnout I have been feeling lately. I am tired of the lectures in sterile environments, the time constraints of assigned readings, the writing of papers that are supposed to demonstrate a new understanding of material but permit little time for ideas to germinate. I am tired of trying to find the "right" people for my dissertation committee, of taking in more and more academic information, of daily running the gauntlet. I sink deeper into my exhaustion and frustration, while Madhu continues talking about the soul, about reading Moore's book together, inviting me to write a paper with her.

The soul? What relevance does caring for the soul have to do with my academic program? These questions notwithstanding, I start to consider how nice it would be to feel as if I did have a soul rather than being reduced by the mechanics of the university into a less-than-efficient machine with insufficient memory bytes.

I find myself lost between Madhu's words and my own thoughts, struggling to break free from the seduction of her voice and ideas. What is the soul? What does education have to do with caring for the soul? Systematically, I have been trained to believe that these questions do not belong to my field of specialization, but to the realm of theologians. Soul stuff goes beyond my qualifications as a professional educator. Studying educational theory and policy has assured me that modern education is a complex set of fragmented academic disciplines, including the technical mechanics of methodology and curriculum design. Why is Madhu dragging me into the strange realm of souls? Shaking off my dreamlike state, still sensing my struggle, I return to reality, to Madhu quoting Thomas Moore: "The great malady of the 20th century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially, is loss of soul."

Is this true? Have I lost my soul? How can I know? I try to pay closer attention to what she is saying but am caught in a whirlpool of thoughts. Her words invite me to consider the meaning of finding and nurturing our souls; of fully experiencing what it means to be human, especially today, when moderns are aspiring to be more than "merely human."

Thinking of the soul gives me a discomforting pang of personal risk, of vulnerability, of being lost in a foreign land. It seems to me far-fetched to bring depth and sacredness, as Moore advocates, into the huge bureaucratic institution where I teach and am taught. Yet, Moore's words evoke into consciousness memories of being in the jungles of Guatemala. There I had witnessed depth and sacredness incorporated and infused in every aspect of daily life. In that foreign world, I distinctly remember the warmth of being at home. Yet, "back home" in the cold, sterile, megabyte modern university, I encounter only the depth of information manufactured within the narrow confines of academic specialization. I am swamped.

Madhu's readings from Moore once again catch my attention, suggesting paths out of the swamp. She muses about studying the book together; taking a shared journey of the soul, perhaps. She proposes that I call Rod and invite him to join us. A feeling of pleasure sweeps over me. Since arriving at Penn State, my most enjoyable conversations have been with Rod, his wife Susan, and Madhu. I admire their patience and insightfulness. Suddenly, I hear myself agreeing to the journey.

Then, I glance at my watch. Again, I am late; out of time. I close the conversation. As I flee down the cold, metal stairwell, anxiety grabs me with the nagging thought that I did not accomplish the "important" institutional task I came to complete. Worse yet, I have taken on the new challenge of sojourning. How will I find the hours to embark on this journey of the soul, exploring readings and ideas for co-writing a paper on finding and nurturing the soul in modern institutions? Before I proceed with mentally flogging myself, thoughts of sharing time and ideas with Rod and Madhu stir a well-hidden longing for something long missing. I inhale deeply.

**Rod's reflections**

When I agreed to explore and write about the care of the soul, I never thought it would be so difficult.

Each time I attempted to write, I found myself secretly hoping for an interruption, and if not forthcoming, creating one myself. When words from the gut, soul, or heart reached for paper, I quickly cast them off, seeing them as too transparent, too full of potential risk, should any one of my colleagues happen to stumble upon them. It is to these questions, however, that I repeatedly returned: How does one speak of education and the care of the soul if not with the language of the soul? How does one do so without the element of risk? Which thread in one's own life should one follow?

Seeking for places to understand and speak of the soul, I strained to hear the whispers and the stories of my own soul's journey through the classroom. As I wandered through my memories of school, I paused many times; sometimes in the memory of pain, other times in the memory of satisfaction; almost always when the voice of my soul was to be heard — whether in nurture, neglect, or devastation.

There are many places that I could stop and speak. But, if I am permitted, I will speak of nurture. Not to do so, I believe, would in some way disrespect the profound wonder and potential resting in humanity's dance. I will speak of these soulful meetings, because in their elegance and loveliness, they escape the grasp of official curricula — as they should. I suspect that if we ever design a course dealing with the care of the soul, we will be dangerously close to, if not in the midst of, committing blasphemy.

As a boy of seven, I entered the classroom in tears. My mother (having just given birth to my sister Rhonda) and my father (a teacher on his way to another classroom) did not accompany me. I was the only one who came alone that first day. Alone did I feel — the excitement of a classroom of parents and students only making my tears more intense. Of that day, I remember three things most clearly: tears, loneliness, and a touch. Mrs. Bracken, a teacher, already of many years, graced with an insatiable delight in the lives of her young students, saw me enter lost in tears. That day she did what I expect many teachers have done in the past but now, I believe, feel constrained from doing. She reached out to me and joined her hand intimately with mine, guiding me to a chair at the rear of the classroom. As she sat beside me, her fingers moved through my hair, adding to the profound compassion of her words. I have tried to recall other events from my first year in the classroom. They remain sketchy, at best. Undoubtedly, I learned plenty about reading and writing from Mrs. Bracken. But it is not to learning school subjects that my thoughts are now drawn, but rather to a touch, a soulful meeting between a teacher and a student.

Entering into my fifth year of institutional education, I was, as I expect were many of my fellow students, already convinced that the classroom was to be endured, not enjoyed. From the time Mr. Gidiuk greeted me at the door, however, it was a magical year ... but why? I have asked myself. Why does that year stand out? One could point to the curriculum or to his teaching technique, both of which were undoubtedly wonderful. But to speak only of curriculum or technique, I believe, would render me guilty of disrespect for what really transpired in that classroom.

I vividly remember standing out in the hall waiting for Mr. Gidiuk to come out of the classroom. I had something important to tell him, something that I was excited about, although what it was now escapes me. Nevertheless, what I said, or wanted to say, is not important. It was the look in his eyes that was and still is important. His eyes were alive and receptive to me. At that moment it was me he was interested in hearing. Many times over that year, my classmates and I would see his eyes come alive. They were, I believe, an expression of an invitation to a soulful meeting between a teacher and a student.

There are many other places where I chose to stop, to remember, and to once again feel satisfied. Eventually my memories drew me back to the present. Each of these memories has reminded me of the many opportunities in life that exist to, in meaningful ways, be with friends, family, and students.

### The End of a Beginning

Despite the pressures and pulls of overworked days and overstuffed calendars, we rediscovered lost time, listened to each others' stories, retold forgotten tales. We experienced the joy that comes with knowing, really knowing that the others were completely attentive, fully present. Magically, in the midst of deathly deadlines and Mondays to Fridays chock-full of class lectures or committee meetings, we created some open spaces of time to recollect; to savor and contemplate each others' words and memories, hopes, and yearnings.

We discovered that the best way for teaching and learning about nourishing the human spirit is through the gift of our own lives: making ourselves transparent, telling real stories about our real selves, which are too often hidden under the masked per-

sona of the knowledgeable or very well-read teacher /student we present in class or at the office to "the boss" and to all those who need to be impressed by our capacities to compete and succeed. It would seem that the soul resides outside of academic techniques for sharpening the intellect and can only be touched through personal experiences, through the senses, through intuition, through silent meditation, through witnessing human dignity and grace. These elements are generally scarce in our institutions, which are designed for efficient modes of teaching and learning.

Escaping the tyranny of being "efficient" and "productive," we began to practice the arts and skills forgotten or thoroughly marginalized in the academy: the art of playing; of laughing and sharing experiences that "serious scholars" would definitely consider unintellectual, if not plain silly or sentimental; of recreating the sense and experiences of carnivals, which undoubtedly are neither efficient nor productive.

For those stolen moments, we gave ourselves up to "goofing off." In humble play and the sharing of ordinary stories, we read and recited the poems of our lives, all too often shyly tucked out of sight. Renewing and renewed, we made poetry.

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# Care of the Soul in a Preservice Teacher Education Program

Clive Beck and Clare Madott Kosnik

**Teacher education programs need to address more than practical training for the classroom. They also need to pay attention to the fullness of the student's humanity.**

*Clive Beck, Ph.D., is a Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, specializing in the philosophy of education, teacher development, and school renewal. He has published many books and articles on values education and the theory and practice of schooling, including Better Schools (1990) and Learning to Live the Good Life (1993).*

*Clare Madott Kosnik, Ph.D., is a Coordinator of Staff Development in the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board, cross-appointed full-time to the Elementary Teacher Education Program of the University of Toronto. Her publications and conference presentations have been mainly on teacher education, language arts education, and action research. In 1996 she received the University of Toronto's award of Teacher of the Year for Professional Faculties.*

The soul or spirit (and we do not distinguish the two) is often thought to be shrouded in mystery. Whereas the personality and body can be studied by the appropriate sciences in a straightforward way, it is assumed that the nature of the soul or spirit must be disclosed by a special revelation or remain obscure. This, however, is not our point of view. To us the soul certainly shares in the mysteries of life, but so do many other phenomena. Indeed, contemporary thought suggests that the soul cannot be separated from other phenomena: how we see the world, even the so-called physical world, is deeply affected by the nature of our being.[1]

The soul is not an unobservable *part* of us, in contrast with more conspicuous parts such as our body and our ways of talking and behaving. Rather, our soul is the whole of us, our whole way of being, which to a large extent is open to observation. It includes our emotions, attitudes, values, ideas, friendship patterns, habits, behavior patterns, and bodily states. To care for the soul, then, is to care for the whole person and not just a specific subpart.

It is true that *neglect* of the soul often has to do with specific parts of us. Thomas Moore in *Care of the Soul* appropriately regrets the common disregard for "depth and sacredness" in everyday life and the neglect of some of the "darker" aspects of our personality that are essential to soulful living in the real world.[2] But this does not mean that the soul *is* the deep, sacred, and dark parts of us: these are simply the ones Moore feels have been especially overlooked. An enriched soul is also characterized by playfulness, intuitiveness, and passion, as earlier writers such as Harvey Cox and Sam Keen have noted,[3] and we could go on to mention joy, celebration, mutuality, insight, courage, openness, gentleness, love, and many other qualities. A soulful life includes all these in varying degrees, depending on local culture and individual circumstance and temperament.

Some writers associate the soul or spirit with what is *inside* a person. Jack Priestly, for example, in a valuable article on spiritual education, argues that "interiority" is the connecting link between a child who shows spirit by acting according to forces deep within, rather than norms of typical or required behavior, and a yogi who plumbs the inner recesses of his soul and lives in accordance with the resulting enlightenment.[4] We believe, however, that such a dichotomy between inner and outer is unjustifiable and indeed potentially harmful. Spirit/spirituality is as much an external as an internal characteristic of a person, being seen clearly in speech, action, and overt expressions of emotion. To view the spirit or soul as "inner" creates a division and fragmentation within the person that undermines soulful living.

Simply put, a soulful approach is a holistic approach, one that cares for the whole person. And there are two main reasons for adopting such an approach: first, because in this way the whole spectrum of a person's needs are attended to; and secondly, because it is difficult to promote particular aspects of the individual in isolation. Cognitive development requires social understanding; social maturity relies on emotional depth and openness; physical health is dependent on emotional health; and so on. The entire Western strategy of specialized attention to areas such as academic inquiry, psychological development, and physical health in the interests of greater efficiency has — as Buckminster Fuller showed so convincingly in *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* — backfired in a thousand ways.[5] The result has in fact been a high degree of "inefficiency" in human affairs. There is need for "synergy" or "working together" rather than specialization and fragmentation in our approach to human well-being.

This, then, is the general theory that underlies the approach to preservice teacher education we wish to describe in this paper. In our view, to be effective a teacher education program must "care for the soul" of teacher candidates in the twofold sense of attending to and integrating a wide range of aspects of their lives. This is very ambitious, of course, and may well be queried in just the way that attending to "the whole child" has been criticized by opponents of child-centered education. In trying to do everything, it is said, we neglect "the basics." In the case of teacher education, it might be objected that if we become too broad we will not have time, in the typical one-year program, to teach basic educational theory, teaching skills, and curriculum.

However, we feel that such an objection can be met by appealing to the very principle of synergy that underlies a holistic, soulful approach. As Buckminster Fuller maintains, it is often possible to do more in several areas than one could in a single area pursued in isolation; specialization often leads to achieving less, not more, even in the area of specialization. For example, if we focus just on training in teaching skills, our training program will not be successful even in that area. As we say repeatedly to our students, "teaching is a relational act"; accordingly, teacher education must take account of the social and emotional aspects of teachers and teaching, not to mention the cultural, political, and aesthetic. To take another example, if we focus exclusively on academic content and skills, neglecting social, emotional, and other dimensions of life and learning, we will not be very effective even in the academic arena.

Certainly academic achievement and teaching methodology are essential; we agree that education in general and teacher education in particular must strive for greater effectiveness in the academic domain. Apart from anything else, adequate ongoing support of schooling by the public depends on this. Our point is merely that this cannot be done in isolation, as proposed, for example, by Carl Bereiter, who in a book significantly titled *Must We Educate?* argued that in order to teach effectively we must separate "training" in academic skills from "child care" and from "education in values" (in fact he maintained that education in values should not take place *at all* in schools).[6] This type of "divide and conquer" strategy has been championed repeatedly over the years by "mastery learning" proponents and, more recently, by many advocates of "outcomes-based education" who see the specification of clear objectives as preliminary to popping them off one by one like targets in a shooting gallery. Once again, we are not against specifying educational objectives; being clear about the life goals and other objectives we are trying to achieve in school is basic to our approach.[7] Our concern is simply that these goals be pursued in a holistic manner.

A holistic, soulful approach is as necessary in a preservice teacher education program as in a school classroom. This may seem obvious; but it is remarkable how often we teacher educators who advocate a progressive, democratic, child-centered approach in schools ignore the social and emotional needs and distinctive intellectual and cultural interests of our own students. For example, we give two-hour lec-

tures on the importance of dialogue! We fail to see that unless student teachers experience — and see modeled — an interactive, social, emotional form of education, they will not have the personal or professional skills to foster it in their own classroom. To be able to create a soulful community one must have belonged to one.

In what follows we will describe briefly our attempt to create such a holistic, soulful preservice teacher education program. We will do so by looking at the various aspects of the preservice teachers' lives that were attended to. We will address these aspects in pairs in order to indicate the integrative thrust as well as the breadth of a soulful approach.

**The intellectual and the social**

University study (including professional education) is usually seen as an individual matter. Students may go partying together but they usually study, and are certainly examined, alone. The term "community of scholars," if used at all, is applied to groups of professors, not groups of students. In our view this means that important opportunities for nourishing students' social life are lost and their intellectual development suffers as a result. In a deeply social context, students spend less time defending their egos, are more open about what they do not know and would like to know, and are constantly learning from each other's insights and skills.

We were determined that the typical gulf between intellectual and social life would be bridged in our teacher education program. This was aided by the fact that most classes took place off-site in a school away from the mass of student teachers (close to a thousand altogether) and the impersonal university classrooms. Each of our two groups (39 primary-junior students and 22 junior-intermediate) had their own room of ample size, comfortably furnished and decorated with their own artwork and memorabilia.

From the first day the social side was emphasized, with extensive introductions, announcements by the students, friendly and humorous interaction during class, the modeling of a social emphasis by the staff among themselves and with the students, extensive group work (often ungraded to reduce competition), recognition of distinctive talents in the class, celebration of birthdays and other joyful and not so happy occasions, field trips together, and regular sporting and exercise activities in informal groups. During practice teaching, we always placed several students together in the same school and then visited often to help build camaraderie among these students and with the associate teachers in the school. Thus, either the intellectual and the social were combined in activities or purely social activities took place that later fed into large and small group work. This made for more authentic discussion and more honest and intense sharing of experiences and ideas about life and education. For example, the sharing sessions on the first day back from each teaching practice were among the most fruitful and sophisticated exchanges on the theory and practice of schooling we have witnessed in any setting.

**The theoretical and the practical**

The strong aversion many teachers have to theory limits the possibilities for their classrooms. "By the time most students complete their final field experiences they have become 'passive technicians who merely learn to execute pre-packaged instructional programs.' Rather than becoming more reflective, they learn to accept uncritically and provide a rationale for the practices of their cooperating teachers."[8] We were concerned that our student teachers should not make this typical separation of theory and practice. We wanted them to be reflective practitioners who saw the practical value of research and thought deeply about their practice. We also wanted theory to be an *integrating* factor in their practice so that they became child-centered, seeing their students *as people* and reflecting on all aspects of their needs.

To this end, on the one hand, we wove together theory and practice in all their courses; and on the other hand, we made action research a major and integral aspect of the program. To facilitate the students' action research projects, the first two practice teaching blocks were back-to-back in the same school with the same class and associate teacher; also, students were given a major research essay on the topic of their action research. Because what they were doing was "research," the students naturally went to the research literature for answers; but they also saw that much academic writing addresses only theory. As a result certain authors whose work deals with both theory and practice, such as Donald Graves and Nancie Atwell, were sought out.[9] Furthermore, the student teachers learned to trust their own judgment; they discovered that textbooks and journals will not "tell" you what to do in your specific class. As a consequence, they developed both in their theoretical knowledge and ability and in their

embeddedness in the real world of teaching, and they integrated the two.

**The academic and the domestic**

Jane Roland Martin in *The Schoolhome* stresses the importance of bringing many of the domestic aspects of life into the school.[10] Being committed to this view of schooling, we looked for ways of modeling it in the preservice education experience. Home-cooked food was constantly in evidence in the homerooms of the two preservice classes, with parents and grandparents being enlisted to supplement the students' cooking. The students quickly established a system for making coffee, providing other refreshments, and cleaning up afterwards. Discussion of family happenings often took place in class or at breaks. Romance blossomed visibly and unashamedly in the class. Some students got married or became pregnant in the course of the year, and these events were warmly celebrated. Parties were held in a professor's home, and in other ways as well, students were brought into the private lives of the staff. E-mail interchange developed rapidly, with news, information, and jokes being shared often late into the night. In this way they were learning that domestic life is to be valued, and that the academic and the domestic can be integrated.

**The professional and the personal**

We were concerned that the student teachers should feel that they could "be themselves" in their profession, that they could see teaching as a personal expression engaging their deepest desires and energies, that they should not be mere technicians who leave their individuality at the classroom door. This is important not only for the soulful development and personal fulfillment of the teachers, but also for the well-being of their future students who need to experience personal care and warmth in their classroom both from the teacher and from each other.

With this in view, we worked to bring the professional and the personal together in the preservice program. At the beginning of the year the student teachers produced "personal shields" and "me-books," which told a great deal about their personal lives. Each day opportunity was given for personal announcements: Danila invited everyone to the final performance of her opera course; Carrie spoke about celebrations at her church to which visitors were welcome; Tino organized a ski trip as an expression of his passion for skiing. The students kept journals that reflected both their professional and personal journey; they were given opportunities to read from their journal in class, and in other settings staff also responded to their journals in a personal way. Discussions both in and out of classes covered a wide range of topics, going far beyond educational issues. The students were met, listened to, and respected as total human beings, not just as professionals in training. This enhanced both their personal development and their professional preparation.

**The cognitive and the emotional**

Emotion is a key dimension of the soul: it is seen in such "spiritual" qualities as joy, courage, gratitude, hope, and love. Moore in *Care of the Soul* stresses the importance for soulful living even of so-called "negative" emotions, such as anger and jealously, and we agree with him. Anger, for example, can make us aware of things that are wrong in our relationships and can push us to do something about it. Emotion helps give us sound direction, is a key source of motivation, and is essential to an enjoyable and fulfilling life.[11]

Unfortunately, however, education (including teacher education) has tended to neglect the emotions and focus almost exclusively on cognition. In illustrating this shortcoming of Western education, Jane Roland Martin cites George Eliot's depiction in *Middlemarch* of Mr. Casaubon, a man who studies incessantly but has "a blank absence of interest or sympathy."[12] Eliot as narrator comments:

> It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self — never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action.[13]

Needless to say, we did not want our student teachers to develop in this direction. We expressed our emotions and invited them to do the same: about the pleasure of being together, the challenges and satisfactions of teaching, the delightfulness of children, the bewildering complexity of contemporary life, the frustrations of school-board politics, the triumph of the final action research conference, the uncertainty of the employment outlook. Good times and bad were shared, with celebration or commiseration. Passionate disagreements were a common feature of group life, underscoring the need to accept conflict *within* community. Emotional support was

given freely by staff and students alike, and in the course of the year, the self-esteem of many students soared. In general, we believe the students experienced an emotional liberation and flowering, right in the midst of their continued academic development and beginning professional life. Their souls were nourished, *including* their academic and professional lives.

Care of the soul, then, is essential to teacher education. It is not just an add-on, to be covered in a few units on values education or a nice but not necessary gloss on the *real* work of training professionals. It is fundamental to the whole enterprise: without it all else will fail. Growth in holistic, soulful living along the lines described above is necessary if preservice teachers are to experience fulfillment themselves and become effective professionals, able to assist in the social, emotional, *and* intellectual development of their future students.

### Notes

1. See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 377; and Jean-François Lyotard (Brian Beakley trans.), *Phenomenology*, 10th ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 131–132.
2. Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 3–9.
3. Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); and Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
4. Jack Priestly, "Religion, Education and Spirituality," in *Religious Education Belongs in the Public Schools*, ed. Ernie Johns (Toronto: The Ecumenical Study Commission, 1985), 36.
5. Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), Chapters 2 and 3.
6. Carl Bereiter, *Must We Educate?* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Spectrum, 1973).
7. See, for example, Clive Beck, *Better Schools* (London: Falmer Press, 1990), Introduction and Chapter 1; and Clare Madott Kosnik, *Keep the Conversation Going: An Approach to Primary Education with an Emphasis on Values Education and Language Arts* (Toronto: OISE/University of Toronto Ph.D. dissertation, 1994), Chapter 3.
8. Dorene Ross, "Action Research for Preservice Teachers: A Description of Why and How" *Peabody Journal of Education* 64(3), 131.
9. For example, Donald Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); and Nancie Atwell, *In the Middle: Reading, Writing and Learning with Adolescents* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987).
10. Jane Roland Martin, *The Schoolhome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
11. See our "Caring for the Emotions: Toward a More Balanced Schooling," in *Philosophy of Education 1995* (Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society), 161-169.
12. Martin, *The Schoolhome*, 88-89.
13. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1965), 314.

# Reflections on "An Application of Poetics to Everyday Life"

## A Graduate School Experience

Elaine G. Schwartz

**The author describes a graduate school class she co-taught that became a serendipitous odyssey into soulfulness.**

Thomas Moore (1992) invites us to imagine the care of the soul as an "application of poetics to everyday life" (p. xix). This quote serves as the key to unlocking some of the mystery surrounding the soulful experience I recently participated in as co-teacher of a graduate seminar entitled, Multicultural Education: Race, Class, Culture, and Social Justice Issues. As I reflected upon the title of the seminar, I realized that this narrative is fully embedded in my personal history. That is, both seminar and soulful experience are representative of my lifelong "soul work," my genuine odyssey — or what Moore calls "a deeply felt, risky, unpredictable tour of the soul" (p. 36).

Moore notes that "care of the soul requires that we have an eye and an ear for the world's suffering" (p. 273). For a good portion of my adult life I have tenaciously exemplified what Moore describes as "bring[ing] a creative edge to every action, and sow[ing] the seeds of power in every moment and event" (p. 129). My passionate and creative involvement in life began with my early adolescent awakenings to the Civil Rights Movement. This led to my lifelong involvement in diverse struggles for peace, social and economic justice, and the antinuclear and environmental movements. Fortunately my town, Tucson, Arizona, has a history of social activism; I was never alone in this struggle. At times my fellow activists and I found ourselves facing seemingly impossible odds: trying to keep Arizona's Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant from opening; closing down the local plant that spewed radioactive tritium over central Tucson; or establishing a Tucson Peace Camp in protest against the training of cruise missile crews at our local air force base. A "soulful" community grew over the years through our passionate struggles, hopes, joys, and communion. While we did not

*Elaine G. Schwartz is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Language, Reading & Culture at the University of Arizona. Her research and pedagogical interests include multicultural education, ecoliteracy, and children's literature. Her previous publications may be found in The Journal of Children's Literature, The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies, and the Harvard Education Review.*

necessarily "overcome life's struggles and anxieties," we experienced life firsthand, existing fully in context (Schwartz 1994, 260).

Simple pleasures nurtured our souls and created a lasting community: pot-luck dinners; sharing the visual ecstasy of the vibrant purple and pinks of the desert sunset illuminating the small group of regulars at the Peace Camp; or coming together for a soulful community sing. While these and many other struggles have come and gone, those of us involved remain friends to this day.

Over time we found new lifeways. I returned to public school teaching after a 15-year hiatus, bringing the passion of my social activism with me.

We were on the pathway toward a soulful life in my classes. As Moore notes, "We know we are well on the way toward soul when we feel attachment of the world and the people around us and when we live as much from the heart as from the head" (p. 304). My fourth and fifth grade Chicano students didn't just read about slavery; oral histories of the era and the music of the spirituals and the Civil Rights Era penetrated their souls.

My students, coming for the most part from blue collar families, well understood Cesar Chavez's calls for "Huelga!" After all, many of their relatives had been involved in various union struggles in the copper mines of southern Arizona. I knew that I had touched their hearts and minds, reached into their souls, the day they decided that I had unjustly imposed a new seating plan upon them. They went on strike against me, marching with placards and singing "We Shall Overcome." This brought me to tears as they had learned the true meaning of nonviolent resistance.

Moore believes that "... soul has to do with genuineness and depth ... experiences that stay in the memory and touch the heart" (p. xi). Such was my experience as a public school teacher. However, after ten years I realized that while I could effect change within the confines of my own classroom, I needed to work my way into a position where I might be able to effectively reach out to other teachers, to effect change in education on a much broader scale. Thus, I decided to return to the university to work on my doctorate.

As I now reflect upon my sojourn in graduate school, I think of the ways in which the care of the soul is neglected even in our "humanistic" department. The culture of modernism, with its overriding sense of individualism, competition, and hubris pervades the graduate school experience. Prior to graduate school, whether in social activism, or in the public schools, people came together, for the most part, out of a common purpose, i.e., to save the earth or to look out for the welfare of our students. However, in *my* academic experience there has been no overarching touchstone that served to bring students together to build a caring, soul-nurturing community. Students, whether at the master's level or doctoral level, brought their own agendas. Many, but not all, exemplified the markers of modernism noted above.

Even with the rigors of graduate school I continued to nourish my soul through music. Against the background of the less than soulful experience of graduate school, I listened with joy and sadness to my daughter's voice on her first professional recording. Singing in Quichua and Spanish, she carried me back to our few days together in Ecuador. There I had been astonished by the way in which the proud and reserved Otavaleño people demonstrated their love for this 25-year-old "child" of mine. As she embraced their language, culture, and music, they embraced her. She lived amongst them, as Moore says in "the heat and passion of life" (1992, 260). Her music, the heartbeat of the Andes, sustains and nourishes our souls. Her voice is a testimony to her living life to its fullest as she brings both joy and tears to those who hear her sing. Would that we could rise to such passionate, soulful heights in graduate school!

This brings me back to the subject of this reflective piece: the building of a passionate, soulful community in our graduate seminar entitled, Multicultural Education: Race, Class, Culture, and Social Justice Issues.

### The essential energy of the soul

> The word passion means basically 'to be affected,
> and passion is the essential energy of the soul.
>
> — Moore (1992, 280)

This seminar was unique in the broader context of my graduate school career. The title itself brought together a self-selected group of ten graduate students. A seminar of such small size was almost unheard of in our department! I believe the size of the group, as well as the topic, contributed to the evolution of a soulful and nurturing community of scholars. In addition, my co-teacher, Teresa (Terri) McCarty, and I brought our shared commitment to social justice, a passion for life, and a love of teaching to the classroom. Our passionate souls, touched by

our common experience of 20 years of life in the Southwest, brought us together in ways previously unimaginable. These common bonds facilitated magical moments in our collaborative teaching experiences. At times conversations seemed to magically weave themselves between us, slowly building a holistic, yet open-ended view of a critical progressive multiculturalism. The very Navajo weavings that Terri and I both love were reproduced metaphorically through our collaborative teaching experience. For me, this represents Moore's definition of "hermeneutics, the art of reading our experiences for their poetry" (1992, 47). Perhaps these poetic experiences represent nothing more than a serendipitous encounter in time, bolstered by shared visions of social justice and democratic teaching. Then again, perhaps there is something more here, for this experience reaffirmed my own beliefs in the power of education to touch the heart and the mind and to bring passion to the forefront. Somehow, without planning, we were able to create a collaborative caring community, a community in which people took enormous risks in opening their hearts and minds. Did this occur because Terri and I both spoke passionately from *our* hearts and minds as we demonstrated what I will call soulful teaching? Was it because the dialogic process, as "a flow of meaning" out of which emerged new understandings, was a central focus of our pedagogy (Bohm 1992, 1)? Perhaps it was purely serendipitous. Yet the ten students in this graduate seminar opened their hearts and minds to us in ways not previously seen in my five years in graduate school. Many spoke passionately of their beliefs, their lives, and learning experiences. Whatever the mysterious source, for a small moment in time, the space of one semester, we shared what I would like to call a serendipitous odyssey.

### Our serendipitous odyssey

> ... the image of odyssey serves the many-faceted soul. It offers an openness to discovery and a trust in movements that are not intended or even expected.
>
> — Moore (1992, 37)

This serendipitous odyssey was truly diverse. Terri and I facilitated new avenues to a better understanding of multicultural education through poetry, narratives of female teachers' lives, a multitude of diverse articles, and videos on the impact of "progress" on the Navajo nation and the small East Asian country of Ladakh. Heart, mind, passion, collaboration, reflection, dialogue, social critique, and visions of possibility were woven throughout the semester. Students worked across differences to make sense of power relations in American society. Gabriel[1] mesmerized us with tales of his struggles over holistic education in an adult literacy program. Maria shared the ways in which reflective moments in the desert, in the midst of a jackrabbit warren, aided her in thinking through her own place in this multicultural world. Miguel brought to us the joys and pains of growing up Chicano in a small northern California town, a town whose local power structure is represented by a now numerical Anglo minority. Clara shared the world of deaf education as she strove to fully understand the broad significance of multicultural education. There were days that I left the class and simply reflected in astonishment upon our 2½ hours together.

### Dissonance and insights

Moore (1992) says that it may be necessary to stretch the heart wide enough to embrace contradiction and paradox. "To some extent, care of the soul asks us to open our hearts wider than they have ever been before, softening the judging and moralism that may have characterized our attitudes and behaviors for years" (p. 17). This encompasses what Moore calls a "polytheistic morality," a morality in which "we allow ourselves to experience the tensions that arise from different moral climes" (p. 66). His words echo a moment when, like any community, ours was filled with tension and potential conflict. One member took a great risk and tearfully shared a perspective that contradicted some of the basic values of a critical progressive multicultural education. Other class members opened their hearts wide at this difficult moment; responses were measured, nonjudgmental, even protective. We were on an odyssey that would bring us new insights, not immutable truths.

This discordant voice was given a safe haven; within discord we found paths to further discussion and inquiry. The eloquence and care that were expressed around this issue touched me deeply. We were collectively and passionately involved in caring for the soul of each and every member of our classroom community. Throughout the semester our community continued to nurture our souls as we collectively shared new insights. For Moore (1992),

> Insight is a fragment of awareness that invites further exploration. Intellect tends to enshrine its truth, while soul hopes that insights will keep coming until some degree of wisdom is achieved. (p. 245)

There is no way to measure the "degree of wisdom" (p. 245) achieved in our seminar. However, the students' voices speak to their insights:[2]

> Today we passed beyond collegiality. We moved to a new level of community. A sense of purpose and direction was established through our sharing.
>
> It is the work of education to open pathways for people so they can once again experience the unblocked natural exchange of energy that allows each of us to live life at our highest potential for the betterment of all humanity. It begins with each of us. I see myself as a facilitator and mutual learner on this journey.
>
> I am also awestruck by the people in this class. Each person has approached the issues with such integrity and passion, coming from their individual backgrounds. I am in awe.
>
> I've got to live my own questions and to be with others as they live theirs, to choose to be with people who have to struggle and to walk with them as they do, not so I can save them (because I can't), but so they may not be alone.
>
> I have never really been able to express myself in totally conventional ways, but instead I strive to find and remain in balance between structure and randomness, the conventional and the unconventional.
>
> It's healthy to have opposition. It makes us decide if and why something is important to us.
>
> This class has been a gift.

### Reflections upon the mystery

This seminar has indeed been a gift! Yet my soul does not seek to unravel the mystery of the creation of this special moment in time, a moment in time described by Moore as "an experience founded upon genuineness and depth, an experience that continues to stay in the memory and touch the heart" (p. xi). I will use my own "intelligence and skill" to both engage and preserve the mysteries "that foster the care of the soul" (p. 125).

As my personal odyssey continues, I will cherish and engender the experience and the mystery of the "poetics of everyday life." I will strive to bring "the heat and passion of life" into my future teacher education courses. At the core of my syllabus will be my own touchstone: "Care of the Soul."

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### Notes

1. Pseudonyms have been used in order to provide complete anonymity for all seminar participants.

2. Students' names have been omitted in order to provide complete anonymity for all seminar participants.

# Down-to-Earth Imagination and Soul-Nourishing Practices at the Environmental Middle School

Dilafruz Williams, Sarah Taylor, and John Richter

**Portland's Environmental Middle School integrates ecological awareness and practices with a sense of community and the rhythms of daily life.**

*Dilafruz Williams, Ph.D., is an associate professor at Portland State University. She has been part of a team of parents, teachers, and community members involved in starting an alternative Environmental Middle School in Portland. Her interests in middle schools and ecology converge at this school. She can be reached at Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751.*

*Sarah Taylor is coordinator and teacher at the Environmental Middle School in the Portland Public School District. She has taught for over 20 years in public schools. Her dream was to start a school for adolescents that would provide an alternative education that would be earth-centered. As a gardener and a midwife, environmental education comes naturally to her. For further information about the school, contact her at EMS, 2421 SE Orange St., Portland, OR 97214.*

*John Richter is a teacher at the Environmental Middle School. He has a Master's degree in Outdoor Education. He has taught for over 15 years at the middle school level. He loves to sing and play the guitar, and enjoys the energy of adolescents. He can be reached at EMS.*

> Storytelling is an excellent way of caring for the soul. It helps us see the themes that circle in our lives....
>
> — Moore (1992, 13)

Our story is about a dream and its realization. It is about people who have come together with a dynamic power of convergence in quest of a common vision. It is about caring for our children and about imagining possibilities. At its core, the story is about earth and education woven together in an intricate web of connections.

An instrument of the soul, explains Moore (1992), is *imagination.* In 1994, the Environmental Middle School began as Sarah Taylor's dream[1] that brought parents, teachers, students, and the community together to embark on a journey of imagination: How could our school programs be designed to respond to the pressing ecological problems that we encounter today? What would an alternative education that would address these problems look like for adolescents in our urban areas? How could a safe and nurturing educational community be created where students could learn from their relationship with the natural environment? With passion, commitment, enthusiasm, and a "down-to-earth" philosophy, interested members of the educational profession and the community got together and an alternative Environmental Middle School (EMS) opened its doors in September 1995. Here we highlight some of the significant educational practices experienced by students at EMS that cultivate depth and relatedness essential for attending to one's soul. We find that the very nature of reflecting upon and sharing these day-to-day experiences is nourishment for our own souls, too.

Imagine, for a moment, a vibrant community of 135 urban adolescents, seven teachers, hundreds of parents and volunteers somehow coming together in

a loosely planned network to experiment with something never done in the Portland *public* school system: shaping the enterprise of schooling that engages adolescents to learn *in* and *from* the natural environment. Five mixed-age classes of grades six, seven, and eight undertake a study of themes (such as rivers) from the environmental core that is used to integrate the curriculum; they also learn Spanish as a second language. Community service plays a significant role as do direct educational experiences with nature. Hence, twice a week students and educators engage in a variety of hands-on environmental and community projects. Interaction with elders is made possible not only through community participation but also by bringing them into the school in an effort to fracture the artificial barriers between elders and youth. At EMS, special efforts have been made to involve a significant percentage of Native-American students; hence, it is not uncommon to find elders from the Native-American community and students interacting in a variety of ways in school activities. All aspects of the curriculum — math, environmental science, health, language, history, art, music, dance, and literature — are combined with an intent to make learning meaningful.

It is this *meaningfulness* that we would like to particularly focus upon as we ask ourselves, what happens in the day-to-day ordinary activities that promote the kind of care of the soul that Moore suggests? He writes: "It is impossible to define precisely what the soul is. Definition is an intellectual enterprise anyway; the soul prefers to imagine. We know intuitively that soul has to do with genuineness and depth, as when we say certain music has soul or a remarkable person is soulful" (Moore 1992, xi). Nor is the "soul" a thing for Moore. It is "a quality or a dimension of experiencing life ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart, and personal substance" (Moore 1992, 5). Hence, we present what appears to us to be a flavor of experiences that are congruent with Moore's explanations: the morning meeting; preparation of the community meal; contact with nature; and participation in community service. These experiences are contextualized to provide a sense of how community gets formed at EMS and ways in which students become attached and bonded to the school and to the larger community, including the environment. We believe that the sorts of experiences we share here lead to depth and relatedness and cater to the heart of individuals.

### Ritual: Daily Morning Meeting

The entire school assembles every morning for a school meeting that begins with songs. John Richter, who is one of the teachers, plays the guitar and teaches everyone at EMS to sing. This ritual of singing is critical to the formation of the collective and to the attachment of students of all grades to the school as a whole. The songs that are sung are about peace, love, and care for the earth and are indeed a way to address the expression of the soul. For adolescents, to be able to sing together with others their age and with adults means they learn to loosen up and break down their barriers of communication induced by peer pressure. Many songs also incorporate wit and humor that are appropriate for this age. The songs serve a purpose for celebrations, too. For example, there are songs such as:

Garden Song

Inch by inch, row by row
Gonna make this garden grow
All you need is a rake and a hoe
And a piece of fertile ground
Inch by inch, row by row
Someone bless these seeds I sow
Someone warm them from below
'Til the rains come tumbling down....

Other songs include: "Blowing in the Wind"; "Garbage" by Bill Steed and popularized by Pete Seger; "Teach your Children" by Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Morning meetings serve another important function. A variety of people from the community come to the school to present topics related to environmental, health, and other issues. Elders who come to these assemblies tell stories. Aren't soulful singing, associating with the community at large, and participating in storytelling all means for promoting a sense of place and rootedness, community and relatedness? We present two examples that capture the quality of depth in caring for the soul during the ritual of the morning meeting.

### What do bats have to do with our souls?

At one of the morning meetings, we had a high school teacher who was an expert on bats present a beautiful slide show for the morning meeting: we saw bat habitats, their features, their classifications, what they ate, what they liked, where they lived in Oregon, and which ones were endangered species. The next day during morning meeting, John Richter brought a song he had written on bats and taught the students to sing this:

Bats' Breakfast
John Richter

If you go out in the night tonight
You're gonna see quite a sight!
As the sun goes down and the moon comes up
and day becomes the night
Their wings unfold and little mouths yawn
They drop and fly and eat until dawn
'Cause night is the time, the bats come out for their breakfast.

Some eat nectar and some eat bugs
Other eat fruit or fish.
Some can swim and some can crawl
Some can jump if they wish.
But when their wings unfold and little mouths yawn
They drop and fly and eat until dawn
'Cause night is the time, the bats come out for their breakfast.

Insects, moths, and flying bugs
You better hide or you will disappear
The bats are flying all about,
Squeaking radar sounds in the air
They'll get you, you better beware
But it's actually really very good
There's too many bugs and the bats can eat them by tens
So if you need a project to do
Then build a bat house or two
Because our bats are great little friends.

What a pleasant surprise for students who reacted by clapping, singing, and applauding their teacher — they thought it was "really cool" that their teacher had written a *bat* song that they could relate to. Next, students and teachers captured the relevance of what they had learned during the morning meeting on bats by making bat houses. They did research and, with the help of Envirocorps[2] volunteers and parents, built bat houses and distributed them to elders in the community. Thus, a presentation on bats was not a one-time event to be forgotten. Connections were made by the teachers and students so that even months later, students select to sing one of their favorite songs — the bat song. In a recent survey, some students indicated how meaningful it was to make and distribute bat houses.

**Watershed stewardship:**
**Sacred act of propagating for ecological restoration**

The EMS community assembled in a circle one morning close to Martin Luther King Day. Envirocorps staff had placed hundreds of cuttings of willows and rich smelling dirt at the center of the circle, and each student was holding onto a mug brought from home. We began the morning meeting with a song of peace. Next, questions were asked: Have you ever wondered why banks of creeks and rivers erode? What can be done about such erosion and flooding for our own creeks? Why do we need to propagate plants? Why did we select willows in particular? As we began to understand the significance of what we were about to do *collectively*, everyone sat in silence as the act of propagating began. Each student and teacher took a willow cutting and while planting it in their mugs, they were guided by Envirocorps staff: "Take care of it, water it, pay attention to it. Write your name on a tag. In a couple of months these cuttings will be ready to be planted at restoration sites around our creeks.... And five years from now, you can go to each site and see how tall your tree has become and how well it is holding the banks of the streams." Then, once more, songs of peace and harmony were sung:

We shall not
We shall not be moved (2)
Just like a tree
that's planted by the water
We shall not be moved.
Making peace together
We shall not be moved (2)....

Sarah Taylor explained why the song was symbolic for planting trees. It was sung in the civil rights movement. And, she added, the strength of the tree planted by the water lies in its ability to keep the riverbanks in place. It was a song about being strong, a song about establishing deep strong roots, even as we keep the world cleaner and fairer, she explained. Students and teachers sang the song as planting went on. Then, one of the teachers read two poems from a book entitled *Soul Looks Back in Wonder* (Feelings 1992). These poems were historical, hopeful, and written by African Americans. Another teacher who had been an activist shared that King's birthday was meaningful in that it reminded us of the values King stood for and his willingness to confront injustices of all kinds: "An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," said King. His wife Loretta King had requested that on King's birthday, each person should do something for another person and take *service* seriously. Reconnecting with the propagating of a tree, Sarah Taylor advised the students that their personal acts of goodness can spread and become larger; the tree was a symbol of how something can start small and become bigger. Each small act of service had the same impact; its influence could grow bigger. Before the closure of the meeting, students left books they had brought for homeless children in a huge handwoven basket placed at the center of the circle. A profoundly significant meeting

— combining issues of peace, service, and stewardship. Two months later, some students took the willows they had propagated and helped with ecological restoration of the Johnson Creek streambank in their watershed by planting them there.[3] Hopefully, some of us will come back in a few years to see that our trees are holding the banks sturdy by growing and establishing strong roots.

### Formation of a Healthy Community

> The goal is not to make life problem-free, but to give ordinary life the depth and value that come with soulfulness.... Care of the soul ... has to do with cultivating a richly expressive and meaningful life at home and in society. (Moore 1992, 4)
>
> Soul is revealed in attachment, love, and community, as well as in retreat on behalf of inner communing and intimacy.... Care of soul is about ... a practical, down-to-earth philosophy of life. (Moore, pp. xi-xii)

The EMS curriculum requires participation in *community service* — doing things that are good for the earth and for other people. Students have participated in a variety of activities including planting trees at the local arboretum; distributing brochures in the neighborhood to save the elms from Dutch Elm disease; pulling ivy from trees at one of the creeks in the city; building raised garden beds for the elderly and creating handicapped-accessible community gardens; feeding the hungry at a local homeless shelter; making and distributing birdhouses to the elderly; and naturescaping and planting trees for ecological restoration in the city's watersheds. These hands-on activities have given a sense of purpose to the students and the community alike.

When students and parents were asked in a recent survey about what a *healthy community* meant to them and how they felt about EMS in relation to that, typical responses were as follows:

> Students and teachers care about and respect one another; the environment feels safe and nonviolent ... [a healthy community is one] where kids are accepted for themselves and they are free to experiment and make mistakes without being teased or embarrassed.
>
> A healthy community is enjoying people and all the differences they bring. Being respectful of these differences, but seeing the commonalities we also share. Having fun times together ... morning meetings seem to be a very uniting, bonding, relaxing time. Music at EMS is great and fun.
>
> EMS is the only community I know that is a healthy school community where parents, teachers, and children have a common sense of purpose. Sarah Taylor sets the tone with her non-punitive, caring, and accommodating attitude where every child or person counts.
>
> I feel a healthy school community is one in which all members are accepted and respected and encouraged to put forth their best efforts. I think EMS is extremely healthy in that respect! No gangs, weapons, cliques, fighting ... EMS seems to be able to help kids hang on to "the positive" and does a good job at encouraging students.

These responses parallel what their children had to say about healthy community, when asked the same question:

> We have a community here. People treat each other with respect and there is no fighting or violence and guns. We also take care of animals and plants. Community meals are fun. Community projects are interesting and it's all neat.
>
> We have a healthy school. Very fun doing gardens. Makes air fresher. Fun to be around everyone. Everyone is kind.
>
> Everyone is valued at EMS. Our opinions are valued. We are involved in decisions and there are many committees, like recycling committee. And hospitality committee. I like the way age does not separate students.
>
> Our morning meetings are neat. I like to sing. They bring everybody together when we sing new songs. And people have a choice to sing or not sing. You don't find this in other middle schools.
>
> I like community service and like especially to go to Blanchet House (homeless shelter). I also like to build gardens at the home for elderly people. Teachers treat us with respect. I want to see students treat each other with respect more.

Whole-school events such as community meals, construction of historical and cultural gardens at the school, a river festival, a colonial crafts festival, and dances have brought together parents, volunteers, students, teachers, and other community members for meaningful interaction with one another. We capture one such event to show what the parents and students mean when they acknowledge that there is a healthy community at EMS.

### Community meals: The act of preparing and eating food together

Care of the soul, writes Moore, is also about "good food, satisfying conversation, genuine friends, experiences that stay in the memory and touch the heart" (p. xi). At EMS, once a month, each class takes turns preparing a meal for the entire EMS community. We delight in memories of smells of a variety of foods, watching students, teachers, and parents plan their special meals and hustle with shopping at a nearby store that sells organic foods. The very act of cooking can bring people closer; we have seen a sense of efficacy in children's faces when the class in charge of serving the meal plans, cooks, sets up the classroom to serve, and

welcomes people, providing ample opportunities for carrying on good conversations while eating together. In its seven months of existence, the EMS community has been blessed with meals from Mexico, India, the Native-American community, and from one of our teacher-owned local bakeries where eighth graders learned to bake a variety of breads. We have also begun a "Salad Days Project" at a nearby farm to teach students ecologically sound and sustainable agricultural practices. Students have already planted salad starts in their classrooms using growlabs. Soon they will be utilizing these starts to plant in vegetable beds that they will have created and cared for at the farm and also in the gardens we built at the school site. The day of harvest is also our "Salad Day" when we will appreciate the implications of harvesting food grown locally.

**A river of words: Contact with nature**

The environmental core activities outdoors are meant to nurture a sense of wonder, care, and connectedness. For instance, one term the entire curriculum was organized around the theme of rivers. Students picked a river in the U. S. and conducted historical research on the impact of that river on humans and also ways in which humans had changed the course and nature of the river. They read historical novels, did art projects, sang songs on rivers, experimented and studied about water properties, learned about water conservation techniques in their own homes, and monitored streams as they participated in streamwalks. We include a sample of poems written spontaneously by the students and compiled in a book entitled *A River of Words*.

The Sacrifice
(Grade 7 girl)

As I watch the long rivets of rain,
slowly moving across
the deep dark river,
I think of all the things I see.
I imagine the waves,
slowly taking me, grasping me as if I were a part of it,
soon I feel the soft sand,
sinking me into the murky river.

I suddenly sit up,
trying to retrace my dream.
I am now relaxed
I can see the real river.
Across it is a big plant,
I see hate and anger.
I smell the thick smog,
I see the pollution and the
brownness of the ground,
as the trucks take the trees.
Soon I realize this life isn't mine,
I don't belong.
So I sacrifice myself to the river,
and as I cry over the river,
I become the river, and it becomes me.
Soon my body turns to dirt,
and the river becomes clean and my fulfilling
dream
becomes the river
that I have accomplished.

River Story
(Grade 6 boy)

The river was gracefully cascading down the mountain side.
The radiance of spring flowers flowed up my nostrils.
I looked at the bright sun as I waded down the river on my back.
The flouncing leaves on the trees were like silken chocolate.
The rapids formed froth on the top of the river.
Now I must disembark from this dream.

The Unimaginable River
(Grade 6 boy)

I once saw a wonderful River
a color of deep blue.
Sitting on the bank I
felt a cool breeze and clean water flow over me as
I swam on a sunny day.
I could taste sweet water as I smelled a smell of dinner
and I ran home.
In the distance I heard a waterfall as birds sang to me.
When I came back it was gone.
And replaced with a polluted river.
I guess I was dreaming of
The Unimaginable
River.

And the River Ran Wild
(Grade 6 boy)

The world turned
and the river ran wild.
It was a fact of nature
and nobody knew that things would,
or even could change.
But it did
and they came
and things changed.
They came and they dammed the river
not like the beaver dam
but big, ugly, cold slabs.
They tamed the river,
slowing it and flooding the land,
and it no longer
ran wild.

The difference in the educational approach at EMS is that unlike "environmental projects" added to the

curriculum in many schools, field experiences at EMS are *integrated. Central* to this activity is a focus on ecology. Thus, students get a cohesive and holistic understanding of the environment, rather than having disjointed and fragmented experiences.

In our view, EMS is a comfortable enough place to be called a "home." Here parents, teachers, and students take joy and pride in their work and relationships in an atmosphere of respect for others, including the environment. Human decency is to be found at its best here as we all flow with our rivers while at the same time establishing strong roots to develop a sense of place and soul.

## Notes

1. Sarah Taylor has been a teacher for more than 20 years and she dreamed of providing what her own adolescent children did not get in the large public middle school: a small school with a caring environment where parents and children would feel safe and be nurtured and where education would be centered on ecology. We would like to acknowledge the assistance of many community members, parents, volunteers, and Envirocorps staff who have dedicated their energies to this vision. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Jan Zuckerman's zealous support, without which this school could not have started.

2. Envirocorps staff are funded through a federal grant (similar to Americorps); in this case, Portland State University has provided partnership services to EMS through the support of 12 Envirocorps staff.

3. Johnson Creek has been adopted as a site for our watershed stewardship through a grant awarded to Portland State University (PSU) by the Bureau of Environmental Services in Portland. Dilafruz Williams serves as a liaison for PSU for this Watershed Stewardship Project.

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# The Soul in Soule School

Peter Blaze Corcoran and Eric Horne

**A former teacher and a former student at the George C. Soule School describe the school in terms of Moore's *Care of the Soul* and acknowledge the role that the school has played in the shaping of their lives.**

*Peter Blaze Corcoran is President-Elect of the North American Association for Environmental Education and a member of the National Environmental Education Advisory Committee. His research interests include the formative experiences that lead to environmental concern, professional development in environmental education, and the philosophy of the environment. He may be reached at P.O. Box 333, South Freeport, ME 04078.*

*Eric Horne is a fifth grade teacher at the recently opened Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School in Orleans, MA. He hopes his work will help students learn the skills necessary for active participation in democratic systems. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 510, Dennis, MA 02638-0510.*

Founded upon participatory democracy, committed to freedom with responsibility, and unified by a commitment to the arts and nature as central organizing principles in the curriculum, the George C. Soule School has survived for 25 years and thrives as a model for other alternatives within the Freeport, Maine, public school system.

When we were there from 1974 to 1980, Soule School was ungraded for students aged 5 through 12. Students chose their teachers and their subjects beyond the required math, reading, and music. Many opportunities existed for student-initiated courses, freedom to study at one's own pace, and participation in the arts. The community was the classroom. At one point, we used every piano in our village of South Freeport. Members of the community taught everything from carpentry to cake baking, and the streets of South Freeport were home to countless parades — a grand Soule School tradition, a parade for every occasion.

We often thought of "soul" — naturally, given our name. Indeed our motto, inscribed on every graduation diploma, was "Keep your Soule." A critical reading of Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (1992) has provided us the opportunity to think more explicitly about soul. In this paper, we would like to examine the themes suggested in the book for the care of the soul and relate them to the philosophy and practice of education at the Soule School. We will also explore how our vision of Soule School has informed our subsequent teaching and how we have brought the ideals and insights from Soule School into our daily attempts at "depth and sacredness" in our lives as teachers.

To address the first objective, we will cite selections of Moore's ideas and relate them to the "George C. Soule School Philosophy," (see inset below) a statement, taking the form of a Deweyian creed, written in 1975 by students, parents, and teachers in a process the first author helped facilitate. To address the second task, we will tell the stories of our various perspectives on the school and its influence on us.

Eric is the young student, now become teacher; Peter the young teacher, now become professor.

**Care of the soul**

Certainly Soule School was a place that appreciated the existence of soul as a matter of depth, value, relatedness, heart, personal substance, genuineness, attachment, love, and community as described by Moore. The school was committed to the growth and development of the whole child — not just the student. Moore writes, "our soul is inseparable from the world's soul" (p. 4) and that the soul's "instrument is the imagination, not mind nor body" (p. xiii). At Soule, we tried to connect the lives of the children to the world beyond the school door, both the human and natural communities, in the belief that this is where children thrive. The cultivation of the imagination was a profound commitment of the staff, with the arts and play part of every school day.

The Soule School philosophy states, "we believe that children need time to follow their interests, to experience success and failure — in other words, to give the child practice in some of the behaviors that make responsible adults." Moore talks about not "solving the puzzle of life" (as we often try to have children do in school) but rather that "care of the soul ... is an appreciation of the paradoxical mysteries that blend light and darkness into the grandeur of what human life and culture can be" (p. xix). We always tried to encourage a sense of learning from the dark as well as the light, and for students to be comfortable with the complexities of their feelings. One of our tenets about teachers was, "We believe that teachers should be available and unshockable so that children will not have to live with unnecessary guilt for their human behavior." Care of the soul, it seems, involves acceptance of who we are as human beings. Children's souls need to be educated to accept the depth of their feelings, their attachments, and their passions.

Moore writes the "ensouled body is in communion with the body of the world" (p. 172) and that "love of self engages a sense of union with all" (p. 74). At Soule School, we encouraged the strongest possible connection to community and to the natural world. Each day students met in small group meetings to attend to the complexities of living in community with others — personal problems, playground difficulties, celebrations of accomplishment or friendship. These meetings were designed to improve students' self-images by attending to individual concerns and to improve the sense of community through practice in listening to one another. Many occasions were provided for students to find their soul in the larger soul of nature. Classes were taught on nature study in each season. Field trips to all the natural environments of Maine were well-attended by both students and parents — many of these were overnight adventures. It was always clear to Peter that children who learned to love themselves first were best able to learn to love nature. Peter also believed, as Moore does, that for those who did not love themselves, "nature heals" (p. 12).

The school was firmly committed to "acknowledging the place of eternal childhood" (p. 54), as Moore puts it. Parents were invited to be in school anytime. They came as volunteers but also as students, especially of the arts. One of our many arts endeavors was to help students find their own clown, the clown within. Peter vividly recalls the power of this experiment for adults, including one who gave up a successful law practice to become a professional clown.

Finally, Moore talks of the spirit of the workplace. We never knew a child who didn't want to come to school. Even the most doubting parents were persuaded by this passionate love of school. Children cried at vacations and, at the end of Soule School, were known to cry for days. Teachers, too, loved the place passionately and almost never did one leave other than to go to graduate school. Three of four teachers from our era have since gone on to earn doctorates, much as they hated to leave.

**Impact on Peter's life as a teacher**

I took a good deal of Soule School with me, particularly to my first college teaching position. In fact, I think I was looking for the higher education version of Soule School. To Soule School's Big-Meeting-in-the-Hall at which school rules were made and difficulties settled, College of the Atlantic (COA) had All-College Meeting — the governing body of the institution. To Soule School's minimum requirements and maximum student choice, COA had minimum distribution requirements and self-designed concentration in the single degree in human ecology. To the passionate, mature schoolchildren of Soule, COA had passionate, childlike adults wishing to become teachers.

I carried many insights from Soule School into my work at College of the Atlantic. If the soul is served by genuineness and depth, then authenticity in

teaching is to be aspired to. I realized college students needed the same mindfulness as children, that they sought the same depth and power of experience in their learning. I wanted especially to bring the arts to my classes as an expressive possibility. Having a grand piano in the classroom was an inspiration to invite students to respond to class assignments in music rather than words, for example. I opened the possibility for students to offer themselves to the community of the classroom with authenticity of feeling. They created rituals that offered the possibility of depth. After inviting students to lead opening activities for class, yoga, tai chi, and meditation became fairly regular opening rituals. Indeed, the importance of ritual has become clear to me in caring for the soul. Even the simplest ritual, such as a song or inspirational reading, opens imaginative possibilities and the opportunity for depth and power of experience.

Experiences like camping build community in powerful ways by providing opportunities for sharing food, story, and song. Many of these group experiences I have carried with me to Swarthmore and Bates Colleges, as well. For example, I have always recommended that students attend a professional conference with me, such as that of the New England Environmental Education Alliance, where they can spend extended time together and in community with professionals in their field to see what their joys and frustrations are.

Even while certain experiences seem appropriate in several various contexts, it has also been important for me to seek the soul of each institution and draw upon its particular ethos for indications of students' needs and yearnings. For example, at Swarthmore I learned from the Quaker tradition of silence and incorporated it into teaching. Awkward at first, my students and I learned together how silent reflection can assist in understanding. It became commonplace in certain classes for a student or for me to call for silence.

As I moved to institutions less like Soule School and became more familiar with the needs of college-aged learners, I realized how rare were the educational experiences that feed the soul. I also increasingly have realized the abiding importance of listening to the students by creating spaces in which they can find their souls and speak from them. At Swarthmore, for example, students invited to participate in the development of the class created a term-long student-designed course, Environmental Education II. Students will imaginatively respond to a sense of possibility for soulful expression. I was delighted one fall at Bates by the harvest of a student garden planted to provide healthy snacks for an environmental education class. What was it Moore said? "We feed the soul and the soul feeds us"...?

In my classes in environmental education, I have long believed it is important to allow students to give voice to their concerns about the environment. This possibility always offers depth, given the centrality of this concern to today's college generation. We engage, for example, in an optional Council of all Beings, a ritual of mourning and renewal created by Joanna Macy and John Seed. In it, each student is allowed the opportunity to speak on behalf of any being other than a human being. We use it as an example of an educational methodology for depth of expression of genuine concern.

As teachers, it behooves us to listen as well as to lecture. Departing from abstract discussion at times to move to issues of the students' "lived lives" brings depth and power to classroom life. So I try to highlight the questions we are confronting in our lives outside of the classroom, as well as in the classroom.

Finally, even as our students study our academic subjects, they study us. We are teachers, yes, but also objects of study, always. We teach by who we are. Thich Nhat Hanh (after the Buddha) has written, "It is not by preaching or expounding the sutras that you fulfill the task of awakening others to self-realization, it is rather by the way you walk, the way you stand, the way you sit and the way you see things" (1985). Ah, yes ... I think I learned this at Soule School.

**Eric's experience as student and teacher**

On September 6, 1975, I walked into the George C. Soule School for the first time as a wide-eyed little first grader. Just inside the door, I found Joyce Hopkins — then teaching principal — leaning hard into the multicolored keys of the school's hand-painted piano. Her foot-stomping rendition of the Virginia Reel sent all 86 kids jumping, laughing, and dancing through the building's central hallway. Several of the "big kids" (third and fourth graders) scooped me up and guided me through a tangle of clapping hands and smiling faces. At the time, I was not quite sure how any of this had to do with my preconceived notions of "school," but my apprehensions soon faded as I was overtaken by an overwhelming sense of happiness. I had no idea that this tiny school in

Maine would have such a profoundly influential effect on my life, but even from this first day, I gained a sense of its awesome wisdom and power.

This joyous introduction to Soule School set a celebratory tone that pervaded five years there. Teachers, parents, peers, and I came to love this place deeply. And now, as a first-year middle school teacher, I am fascinated once again by the magical nature of the Soule School experience. Through a reconnection with Peter Corcoran, I have had the opportunity to reflect on my time at Soule School and explore two fundamental questions: What was it about our school that made it such a rich and engaging learning community? And, how can I create an environment for my own students that reflects the depth and sacredness that defined this Soule School experience? In treating these questions, I reflect on aspects of the school that I, as a student, remember being most important. I then discuss how my subsequent inquiry into the school's philosophical tenets has had a direct impact on my work as a teacher.

One of the most remarkable qualities of the learning environment at Soule School was the fundamental respect for student individuality. While teachers were present to run group activities in math and reading, I can remember having vast amounts of free time to build forts, draw airplanes, construct "marble machines" from blocks, write in my journal, and race around the playground pretending I was a motorcycle. (I have since had several "real-life" motorcycle trips to San Francisco, Baja, Mexico, and Tierra del Fuego.) This day-to-day freedom to express childhood creativity and cultivate my imagination through play was truly a gift.

Another powerful feature of daily life at Soule School was its firm commitment to the democratic process. Whenever a major issue came up that affected the lives of teachers and/or students, the entire school was brought together for a "Big-Meeting-in-the-Hall." All major concerns — from teacher smoking to snowball fights — were processed in this public forum. We students, and others, were given the opportunity to state our opinions, voice our concerns, and vote on reasonable solutions. This empowering process gave each of us a sense of ownership that is so rare in a child's school experience. So satisfying was "Big Meeting," that any time such a gathering was called we would race through the halls excitedly yelling, "Big meeting in the hall! Big meeting in the hall!"

Related to this democratic process was the school's use of a student council in dealing with disciplinary issues. Every year, students elected a council representative from each grade. This five-person body came together whenever there arose a major problem among students. The Council would hear each side of a case and determine appropriate consequences for the offending parties. Teachers were sometimes present to keep proceedings running smoothly, but we students had full ownership of the process itself.

In developing a philosophy of education, as a new teacher, my ideals have been directly informed by these early school experiences. Now in my mid-twenties, I have been working with Peter to learn the critically important philosophical tenets that lay at the heart of Soule School. Applying this wisdom to my own teaching, I find the creation of a student-centered, democratically run educational environment to be an exciting, soul-feeding experience for myself, fellow staff, and students.

Like Soule School, the sixth grade section of the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School is a small, tight-knit student/teacher community. Three of us teach 54 kids in, what is effectively, one large room. We work together, eat together, and now, have begun to democratically resolve issues of community together.

We found that the biggest obstacle to a functioning learning environment is the lack of respect that can develop between students. Left to "fend for themselves," students can quickly make one another feel unsafe. Physical safety is one part of this equation, but more common is the threat to students' psychological safety. Insensitive or disrespectful comments among peers can be devastating for preteens. With no formal rules or consequences put in place by teachers, students' interpersonal difficulties increased and tensions ran high in our learning environment.

Informed by Soule School tenets, I decided it was time to have a "Big-Meeting-in-the-Hall." We needed a meeting where everyone in our community could vent their problems and frustrations. Together, we began the messy process of sorting out pressing behavior issues. Just minutes into our discussion, I knew that students were feeling empowered by the collective spirit of this gathering. With some teacher guidance, students began to find their voices. For the next hour and a half, an incredible thing happened: without mentioning any names, students generated

a list of everything they thought was problematic in their environment. From name-calling to stolen property, all the major offenses were covered. With momentum from this process, students went on to articulate their own bill of rights, their own set of rules that protected these rights, and a list of consequences students could expect if these rules were broken. The next day, students elected a seven-member student council charged with protecting student rights.

Having thus voted in council elections, each student has ownership of a student-run disciplinary system that does not tolerate disrespectful behavior. Students no longer need to turn to adults for conflict resolution: they look to their peers. In allowing students to forge workable solutions and share in their triumphs, we have begun to build a democracy.

Often the pace of my life as a first-year teacher in a first-year school doesn't allow for thoughtful reflection on important philosophical and spiritual questions. When I make time for such questions, however, I am propelled into a far more productive and energetic state. I am a novice at applying philosophy and spirituality to my everyday teaching, but as I begin to walk this path, I catch glimpses of the power and harmony that might lie ahead.

### Keeping your Soule

It has been a great source of inspiration in our teaching to rediscover one another as teachers, as colleagues. Having followed the dictum, having kept our "Soules," we have found joy in each others' work and fascination in the critical nature of the Soule School experience in our lives as teachers. As each of us continues to seek depth in the classroom and sacredness in everyday educational practice, we are greatful for the opportunity to nourish and guide one another.

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### George C. Soule School Philosophy

We believe that children should be encouraged to be self-directing, to make decisions and accept the consequences.

We believe that children need time to follow their interests, to experience success and failure — in other words, to give the child practice in some of the behaviors that make responsible adults.

We believe that children should have the freedom to pursue their personal interests and goals and to develop new ones.

We believe that children should be encouraged to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their actions.

We believe that children should have the total community as their learning environment and should be taken to every possible place of interest.

We believe that children should practice self-government and should come to feel important as part of the school community by participation in decisions that affect the school.

We believe that children should be allowed to work and play with children of other ages in a family-like atmosphere.

We believe that children should evaluate their own progress, have regular input into their curriculum, and take some responsibility for the planning and carrying-through of related learning activities.

We believe that children should feel good about themselves, and should meet regularly for the opportunity to discuss their feelings and concerns.

We believe that children should have fun in school.

We believe that children should have personal freedom, but not at the expense of the freedom of others.

We believe that teachers should identify individual needs and make provisions for work at different levels of difficulty and for different styles of learning.

We believe that teachers should take children's ideas into consideration when planning learning activities.

We believe that teachers should provide an environment of mutual trust and understanding — an environment that is warm, loving, relaxed, and non-competitive.

We believe that, where appropriate, teachers should share decision-making with parents and students.

We believe that teachers should recognize that the learning process is usually as important as its content.

We believe that teachers should report students' progress by stating what they have accomplished.

We believe that teachers should be encouraged to expand the basic curriculum by bringing their own interests into the classroom.

We believe that teachers should enjoy their work and share their enthusiasm with the students and each other.

We believe that teachers should be available and unshockable so that children will not have to live with unnecessary guilt for their human behavior.

We believe that teachers should foster a close association with parents based on honest communication.

We believe that teachers should have personal freedom, but not at the expense of the freedom of others.

We believe that parents should play an active role in the education of their children and in the Soule School program.

# The Greening of C. A. Bowers

## Reframing the Relations Between Thought, Language, and Community

David A. Gabbard

**Bowers's most recent educational proposals challenge assumptions about the primacy of the individual, rationality, and the nature of change, which represent a shift from his earlier writing.**

C. A. Bowers has consistently maintained that overcoming the now inveterate environmental crisis requires that we develop an acute awareness of its educational and cultural dimensions. Since the early 1970s, he has alerted us to the manner in which the discourse-practices currently in circulation within the educational community reinforce the underlying cultural orientation that perpetuates the ecocrisis. A discussion of Bowers's critique of individualism as a central component of this cultural orientation prefaces the more novel arguments that I present in this paper.

The significance of this discussion lies in its relation to the epistemological and ideological shift that we witness in Bowers's writings by the 1980s. As I will describe, his early attempts at developing educational strategies for addressing the cultural dimensions of the ecocrisis were steeped in existentialist thought. My main concern, then, is with how Bowers was forced to reformulate his epistemological and ideological positions as the result of his early existentialist arguments' inability to withstand his later critique of individualism. This analysis concludes with a discussion of how his adoption of a Batesonian framework has since enabled Bowers to enhance our understanding of the educational and cultural dimensions of the ecocrisis while avoiding the problem of individualism.

Bowers's critique of individualism takes a variety of forms that appear across the span of his works. For reasons to be discussed later, I will direct considerable attention to the charges of individualism that he levels against Paulo Freire and other neo-Marxist educational theorists. Before turning to these charges, however, an account of his more general reflections on individualism will facilitate a deeper understanding of Bowers's criticisms of Freire.

*David Gabbard is an assistant professor in the Foundations, Research & Reading Department at East Carolina University's School of Education. He is currently conducting educational policy analysis from a global perspective. The author welcomes questions and comments at aagabbar@eastnet.edu.ecu.edu.*

Because his critique of individualism has become such a prominent feature in the work that he has conducted over the past several years, it is impossible to cite a single instance of its occurrance that transcends all others in terms of its relative centrality to Bowers's work. One very poignant instance where this critique surfaces, however, relates to his concern for our contemporary usage of political metaphor — how the hiidden effects of individualism corrupt our understanding of the terms "liberal" and "conservative." "For the most part," Bowers argues, "conservatism in the West has been grounded in folk beliefs, religious traditions of thought, and in the customs and practices that are commonly associated with traditional cultures" ... and much of its convention "has been directed at preserving the status quo in thought, customs, and religious practice."[1] He stresses that traditional cultures such as those connected to Western conservatism give legitimacy to forms of knowledge that are tacit, context-dependent, and communally shared. These forms of knowledge, he contends, exercise a significant level of cultural authority over the experiences of traditional peoples by imbuing their lives with a sense of continuity and delimiting their range of activities. This understanding of conservatism bears little resemblance to the context-free metaphor that is currently used as "the code word for selfish individualism and reaction" and juxtaposed against the equally context-free metaphor of liberalism that stands as "the code word for rationality and progress."[2]

Bowers raises this issue in order to challenge the view of schools as conservative institutions. Though he does recognize that the schools have been influenced by conservative groups (e.g., Christian groups that seek to preserve their religious and moral traditions), Bowers argues that the primary conceptual categories taught in the schools reflect a mode of consciousness that is decidedly anticonservative in its ideological orientation. It is important to note that Bowers's use of the term "ideology" does not follow the convention of designating "a belief system that concentrates and legitimates the power of one social class over another," but rather "denotes a socially constructed and maintained belief system or cosmology that provides the overarching rules and assumptions for symbolizing reality."[3] He acknowledges, of course, that the belief system in question benefits some social classes more than it does others, which brings us back to the issue of political metaphor.

Those who are labeled conservatives in contemporary political discourse, Bowers argues, are conservative in an economic sense only. That is, all that "economic conservatives want to conserve are the privileges, possessions, and power *made possible by* ... a set of beliefs that promote change within the culture."[4] In promoting change, these beliefs, associated with the ideology of technicism, destabilize the continuities that Bowers associates with the cultural conservatism of traditional societies. Indeed, their modernizing tendencies relativize cultural traditions, especially those traditions that threaten to impede changes germane to economic activity. Industrialization, for example, can be viewed as having eroded the sustainability of traditional family relations by removing labor from the home. Had these relations been taken more seriously and not subjected to relativization, the cultural value of the traditional family may have impeded the growth of industrialization as well as the various forms of social and biological degradation that accompanied it. This, of course, would have been unacceptable to the economic conservatives who benefitted the most from industrial practices.

By pointing to the potential restraints that traditions can place on human activity, this example underscores the importance that Bowers attaches to the cultural dimensions of the ecological crisis. In relativizing all forms of cultural authority, however, the ideology of technicism has lifted those restraints, thereby creating the conditions where change is regarded as normal. The ideology of technicism, which includes the belief that technological advances are always progressive, contributes to the economic conservative's concern for maximizing profits (either through the introduction of technologies to displace labor, save transportation costs, etc., ... or by introducing technologies for the purpose of creating new consumer markets). Bowers would contend that we need to recognize the important parallel between the instability that these forces create in our natural environment and the instability they have fostered in our cultural environment.

Schools play an important role in reproducing the technicist belief system that lends ideological support to the material interests of the economic conservative agenda. Though this is not surprising in light of the fact that the schools are part of the state apparatus, Bowers causes us to recognize the inappropriateness of viewing this belief system as conservative in any traditional or cultural sense. Further, Bowers

goes against the grain of most educational thought by arguing that this belief system demonstrates a higher degree of ideological continuity with liberalism than it does with the conservatism associated with maintaining cultural traditions. And insofar as it promotes change within a culture, neither the technicism that drives economic growth nor the schools can properly be considered conservative.

Bowers characterizes technicism as "a synthesis of utilitarianism, positivism, and Taylorism, along with the liberal view of progress and individualism."[5] As suggested in the example presented above, the nihilistic tendencies of technicism are foremost among Bowers's concerns. He explains that "Nihilism involves the loss of meaning and the sense that nothing has authority in one's life. It is the relativization of all ideas, values, and cultural norms."[6] To better understand how technicism contributes to nihilism, we need to examine its positivisitic epistemological foundations and their relation to individualism.

To begin with, positivism grants epistemological authority to the individual subject, presupposing the potential autonomy of her mind from the influence of cultural traditions and values that would impede the exercise of her rational powers. Rationality, then, is defined as a context-free mode of thought, a technique by which the individual *gains distance* from the world in order to acquire positive knowledge of the world. The normative appeal implicit in this spatial metaphor ("gains distance") assists in creating the illusion that such knowledge is superior to those forms of knowledge established within the traditions of the individual's sociocultural context because of its alleged neutrality. In gaining this distance, one frees herself from the chains of cultural values and tradition and establishes a neutral position from which to further deploy the techniques of her rationality. Insofar as the successful results of her efforts will break with the same traditions from which her rationality originally lifted her, these results will be regarded as innovative, as signs of progress. Not only, then, do the epistemological foundations of technicism induce nihilism by relativizing all forms of cultural authority; they also justify nihilism by associating it with progress. As Bowers asserts: "By viewing the primary purpose of reason as the demystification of all cultural beliefs and traditions, the Western mode of consciousness introduces a seemingly progressive impulse that threatens the foundations of culture and ultimately erodes the basis of belief itself."[7]

In technicism, we see a set of epistemological foundations that separate the individual from the context of her lived experience, which includes the cultural traditions of her social order as well as her natural environment. By separating her from this context, technicism bestows authority upon the individual to direct her rational techniques back upon the world in order to better predict its unfolding events, to improve the efficiency of those same techniques in controlling it, and to increase the productivity of her activities within that world. De-contextualized, the individual is free. And in exercising her rationality, the abstract individual gives the fullest expression to the power that this freedom brings. There is nothing to restrict either her endless pursuit of truth or her insatiable desire to increase the efficiency and productivity of her techniques. John Carroll has observed that "the 'positivistic epistemology which underlies purposive rationalism separated knowledge from ethics, with the result that questions of value could not be regarded seriously if they fell outside the calculus of measurability.'"[8] But this separation hinges on the prior segregation of the individual from tradition, the central dynamic of individualism as defined by Bowers. Therefore, when reflecting upon the impact that the separation of knowledge from ethics has had on our political economy and, consequently, its contributions to the ecological crisis, we must not lose sight of its underlying individualism.

Bowers contends that: "Technological-scientific progress thus becomes the new norm of moral behavior."[9] Economic conservatives, of course, benefit heavily from and encourage this behavior. It contributes to their power, privilege, and wealth by creating new technologies, new products, and new consumer demands. While the changes wrought by such behavior have generated tremendous instability within our cultural and natural environments, Bowers demonstrates that the technicist ideology informing those behaviors continues to be taught in our schools. And students learn this ideological orientation at an implicit as well as an explicit level of awareness. "In terms of the formal curriculum," he explains,

> the mode of thought that produced the scientific-technological revolution is not only given a preeminent place, but even serves as a basic source of reference for separating the rational and progressive from the irrational and backward. More specifically, the context-free mode of rational thought so essential to systems thinking, theory building, and prefiguring a more rational and efficient ordering of everyday experience

> is used as a paradigmatic mode for thinking about what constitutes knowledge in most subject areas.[10]

Bowers does not claim that the schools achieve absolute success in socializing all students into this mode of consciousness. Rather, he offers the more limited argument that "the schools serve as a primary carrier of this mode of knowing and ... this mode of knowing serves as the basis for social stratification."[11] Earlier, in considering the positivist foundations of technicism, I noted that the epistemological authority that this ideology grants the individual presupposes the *potential* autonomy of her mind from the influence of cultural traditions and values that would impede the exercise of her rationality. Those individuals who realize this potential by demonstrating competence in abstract forms of thought receive the benefits of being tracked into a curriculum that will prepare them for the more prestigious positions in the socioeconomic order. Individuals who fail to demonstrate such competence are tracked into curricula aimed at preparing them for careers of lower social and economic status. Accordingly, the disparities across these curriculum tracks reflect the cognitive hierarchy that legitimates the privilege that mental labor receives over manual labor in our technocratic society. Covertly, then, at an implicit level of awareness, students are taught to value the knowledge of the rational expert over that of the layperson. This rational knowledge is formulated from the context-free mode of thought previously associated with technicism.

Through both the formal and the covert curriculum, then, schools promote forms of knowledge whose epistemological foundations rest upon a view of the individual as rational and autonomous. Therefore, and in contradiction to the more dominant understanding of the schools as conservative institutions, schools exhibit the same nihilating tendencies previously described as characteristic of technicism. This, Bowers argues, situates the ideological foundations of our public schools in much closer alignment with liberalism than conservatism.

"Individualism and liberalism," Bowers asserts, "are nearly synonymous terms; in fact it would be impossible to think of liberalism without considering the individual as the basic social unit."[12] Though liberals of various brands align themselves against economic conservatives, their common assumption regarding the primacy of the individual as the basic social unit reflects the ideological orientation of those same commercial interests. This assumption exhibits the same propensity toward abstract, context-free thinking as technicism. Bowers writes that:

> The bourgeois revolutions waged in behalf of "the rights of man" reflected a context-free way of thinking about property, freedom, equality, and the nation. Their universal claims were intended to erode the authority of the clergy and aristocracy by legitimating a universal legalism that would make the state the ultimate source of legal authority in protecting the pursuit of private interests. Reason was used to legitimate the universal claims that were to be become the basis for liberal democracies. As universals, the new metaphors of freedom, equality, and the individual pursuit of happiness provided a conceptual map for organizing a supposedly neutral state, but the rationalist formulation of these legitimating metaphors was never checked against the context of people's actual social circumstances.[13]

Bowers views both the notion of Rationality associated with technicism and the notion of Reason associated with Enlightenment-liberalism as grounded upon individualistic epistemological foundations. In privileging the individual, as the locus of Rationality/Reason, over cultural tradition, both technicism and liberalism promote abstract, context-free modes of thought that contribute toward the nihilism previously discussed. Further, insofar as Rationality and Reason each promote a view of the individual as detached from her cultural and, especially, her environmental context, both technicism and liberalism contribute toward an anthropocentric worldview in which "the world is to be understood and valued only from the perspective of human needs, interests, and sense of rationality."[14]

On these counts, then, Bowers claims that liberalism is ineffective as a basis for critiquing the technicism that underlies our ecocrisis because of the ideological continuities they share. From this, it follows that liberal assumptions will not be effective in leading us out of that same crisis.

An ability to recognize the continuities between technicism and liberalism and their relation to the cultural nihilism that underlies the ecological crisis is essential for comprehending the significance of Bowers's critique of Paulo Freire. As stated earlier, Bowers levels the charge of individualism against Freire, and he traces the foundations of this charge back to Freire's philosophical anthropology, his conceptualization of what it means to be a human being. Those familiar with Freire's work will, no doubt, verify Bowers's identification of his commitment to dialectical thought.

Given this commitment, Bowers expresses surprise at what he views as Freire's nondialectical understanding of the relationship between language,

culture, and thought. On the one hand, he "has a dialectical view of man as both forming and being formed by culture."[15] He also, Bowers points out, recognizes that "language serves as a carrier of cultural codes (cognitive maps that shape the individual's perceptions and way of understanding)."[16] However, Bowers believes that the full dialectical potential of Freire's view of this complex set of relations is undermined by the familiar epistemological assumptions of Enlightenment-liberalism. These assumptions lead him to adopt a dichotomous pattern of thought that casts the individual's relation to culture and language in binary terms.

On the one hand, Freire's philosophical anthropology acknowledges that the individual is conditioned by the historical traditions of culture that are built up within language. His dichotomous thought patterns, however, cause him to frame the individual's embeddedness within culture as a dehumanized condition. The unconscious internalization of the cultural belief system understood by Bowers to be characteristic of all processes of socialization represents for Freire an act of oppression that leads individuals to adopt a passive attitude toward the conditions of their existence. As Bowers understands Freire's position, these individuals who manifest a state of "semi-intransitive consciousness" "think within the patterns given them by their oppressors, they speak the language that both reinforces their 'limit-situations' and prevents them from conceptualizing how human beings ought to live, and they act in a subservient manner in order to insure survival at a biological level."[17]

While acknowledging that this view of things may be legitimate in specific cultural and political situations, Bowers rejects Freire's generalized view that "treats culture as synonymous with 'limit-situations,' where the socially constituted culture is a source of domination."[18] If culture is a source of domination, and if the individual is unable to realize her authentic human nature while existing in a dominated condition, then it would only be possible to become authentically human if the individual were able to escape the 'limit-situation' represented by the cultural traditions in which she is embedded. In other words, the culture must be overturned if the individual is to realize her true nature. The ontological maneuver that we witness in Freire's philosophical anthropology equates human nature with freedom, which includes the freedom from culture.

The dichotomous pattern of thought that Bowers views as characteristic of Freire's writings produces the binary oppositions of "oppressor" versus "oppressed," "oppression" versus "freedom," and "dehumanization" versus "authentically human." If we examine Freire's explanation of how the individual is to achieve an authentically human existence that is free from the dehumanizing forces of culture, we are able to locate a further binary opposition between "culture/tradition" versus "critical reflective thought/conscientization." It is through the critically reflective process of conscientization that the individual realizes the freedom inherent within her nature. And this freedom is achieved, in part, as the result of the individual's transcendence from the dehumanizing hold of cultural tradition made possible by her powers of conscientization. The dichotomous thinking that leads Freire to pit the individual's critically reflective consciousness against the authority of tradition produces an understanding of emancipation that involves "escaping not from specific forms of injustice, but more generally from the authority of tradition and the norms of community."[19]

***Schools play an important role in reproducing the technicist belief system that lends ideological support to the material interests of the economic conservative agenda.***

Bowers views Freire, then, as aligning "himself with an emancipatory tradition within Western thought that accepts the relativizing of ideas and knowledge claims. The relativizing process, which is nihilistic, is accepted by Freire because of his unquestioned acceptance of the Western myth that equates change with progress."[20] That is, in assigning ultimate authority to the critically reflective thought of the individual, Freire assumes this mode of thought to be progressive. It "empowers" the individual to decode and relativize (nihilate) those traditions that keep her submerged in culture. Once the nihilation of tradition occurs, the individual is further empowered to invest both language and the world with her own meanings. These new meanings fuel the critically reflective individual's actions upon

the world that facilitate progressive change. But the individual remains committed to problematizing even these new meanings and the changes they produce in society.

This leads us back to an earlier issue raised by Bowers concerning the nihilating tendencies in the Western mode of consciousness. Like technicism and the various expressions of Enlightenment-liberalism that Bowers associates him with, Freire's "approach to knowledge is based on epistemological categories that drive us continually to search for truth while denying that it can be found."[21] The ecological implications that Bowers derives from this element of Freire's thought are worth considering at length.

> Freire's narrow view of knowledge ... delegitimates the forms of knowledge within the dominant culture that are ecologically responsive as well as the myriad forms of knowledge of groups that have evolved habitat based cultures — like the Hopi, the Australian aborigines, and the others. Freire's insistence that all knowledge be made explicit and judged in terms of the existential time frame of an individual leads to viewing traditions as a source of domination. He does not recognize that in the broadest sense tradition and culture are nearly interchangeable terms that refer to complex message systems and artifacts whose use, and thus whose value as a source of empowerment, are largely taken for granted. To recognize traditions as a source of authority in people's lives does not have to lead to the claim that all traditions must be uncritically accepted. Traditions cannot be adequately understood in the binary categories Freire uses; nor is there in his system any way of assessing the worth of traditions overturned as his idealized individual continually renames the world.[22]

Turning for a moment to the specific charge of individualism that Bowers levels against Freire, it is important to note that he acknowledges Freire's opposition to the atomistic form of competitive individualism associated with technicism. Further, Bowers credits Freire for having attempted to avoid this atomism by arguing that individuals should engage their conscientization while in *dialogue* with others in order to promote the bonds of community that we do not detect in the technicist and some other liberal variants of individualism. "Freire," Bowers asserts, "reflects the existential-humanist view of individualism."[23] Bowers ought to be familiar enough with this brand of individualism because it tremendously influenced the epistemological and ideological positions that he adopted in his early works.

Most of Bowers's existentialist writings appeared between 1965 and 1974. The ideas that he developed in this period were synthesized and presented in their most complete form in 1974 with the publication of *Cultural Literacy for Freedom: An Existential Perspective on Teaching, Curriculum, and School Policy*.[24] As an existentialist, the importance that Bowers assigns to cultural literacy revolves around the contributions that it can make toward developing the existential freedom of the individual's consciousness. Consciousness possesses three traits, Bowers argues, that give expression to this freedom. First, the *intentionality* of consciousness gives the individual the freedom to determine which elements of her experience she will take as the objects of her consciousness — what she will be aware of. Second, the *interpretative* abilities of her consciousness enable her to determine which meanings she will ascribe to the objects of her awareness. These first two traits concern the individual's freedom to respond authentically to the 'here and now' of her existence. The third trait, *imagination*, allows her to transcend the 'here and now' by imagining future possibilities for her existence. Moreover, the identification of these traits leads Bowers to posit the individual as the subject of consciousness.

Concurrently, however, he problematizes the individual's ability to realize the existential freedom of her consciousness with the assertion that she is object of culture. Even in these early writings, Bowers draws heavily from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's classic work in the sociology of knowledge, *The Social Construction of Reality*. He contends that the individual's "conscious life begins with his encounter with a world that is predefined."[25] Through the socialization process, the individual internalizes the predefinitions of reality that have been established by previous generations. These predefinitions of the culture are imposed upon the individual's consciousness, and yet, because she has internalized them at a taken-for-granted level of awareness, she is not cognizant of the extent to which they restrict the existential freedom of her consciousness. So long as she holds these culturally defined patterns of belief and behavior at a tacit level of awareness, the individual remains dependent upon them in formulating the interpretations that she gives to her existence and her experiences within the objective world. As Bowers explains, "this dependency undermines the individual's ability to use his freedom to make choices that reflect his own intellectual and emotional responses."[26] Moreover, it undermines the individual's existential freedom as the subject of her own consciousness.

We can locate the impetus for Bowers's concern with fashioning an educational project aimed at ele-

vating the individual's consciousness from the confines of culture in the discrepancy that he identifies between our society's current cultural patterns of belief and the actual circumstances of our contemporary existence. Since the early 1970s, Bowers has been calling our attention to the cultural dimensions of the ecological crisis. The cultural patterns that orient many of our thoughts and behaviors, he argues, are out of sync with the objective conditions of our existence. More specifically, the tacit knowledge that we hold toward the nature of work, progress, and technology have contributed heavily to the ecological crisis. And, so long as our thoughts and behaviors continue to be conditioned by these assumptions, we can only expect that crisis to escalate.

Even today, Bowers contends that achieving a more sustainable relationship with our environment requires that we address the cultural dimensions of the ecocrisis. What distinguishes his early existentialist writings from his contemporary position are the epistemological and ideological assumptions upon which Bowers bases his existentialist notion of cultural literacy. Reflective of the same dichotomous thinking that he would later find problematic in Freire's writings, Bowers creates a dualistic understanding of the individual. On the one hand, she is the subject of consciousness. On the other hand, she is the object of history and culture. Within this dualism he creates a dichotomy between the autonomy of the individual and the authority of culture. As suggested in the title of *Cultural Literacy for Freedom*, he frames the development of the individual's cultural literacy as an emancipatory project. It aims to (to use contemporary jargon) empower the individual to recognize and overcome the cultural forces that would otherwise restrict the existential freedom of her consciousness. To this end, Bowers claims that "educators have a responsibility to assist students to understand their culture without being blind to its underlying assumptions and myths.... No aspect of the culture is to be taken for granted, but instead is to be brought to the level of conscious awareness and examined."[27] This process "would not only add to a cognitive understanding of one's own culture but also existentially expand the consciousness of the individual and thus his sense of freedom."[28]

Epistemologically, then, Bowers identifies the individual, insofar as she is able to exercise the existential freedom of her consciousness, as the site of ultimate authority. In becoming culturally literate, the individual increases her degree of freedom from the cultural predefinitions that filter her experience of the world. By lifting this filter from between her consciousness and the world, she gains direct access to the circumstances of her existence. She experiences the world, in other words, first hand, thereby, enabling her to develop authentic responses to that experience. At an epistemological level, then, Bowers's existential understanding of cultural literacy situates authority in the figure of the individual *qua* autonomous subject of consciousness. This, of course, also holds certain ideological implications. If the individual is constituted as the site of epistemological authority over the cultural traditions that would otherwise restrict her freedom, it would follow that she possesses the ideological authority to break with those traditions whenever she sees fit. That is, the culture in which she finds herself exercises no restraints over her individual actions. Such actions would be interpreted as the realization of the existential freedom of her consciousness, which, again, is presented as the site of ultimate epistemological and, therefore, ideological, authority.

Given the previous discussion of Bowers's critique of the nihilating tendencies of the Western mode of consciousness underlying technicism and various expressions of educational liberalism (e.g., Freire), we can clearly detect a certain irony in all of this. As an existentialist, Bowers calls for an educational process aimed at maximizing the existential freedom of our consciousness. And he contends that this can only occur insofar as we become aware of the cultural patterns that threaten to limit our autonomous control of our consciousness. The irony lies in the fact that, at this point in the development of his thought, Bowers, himself, is unconsciously under the sway of a taken-for-granted cultural belief that he would later come to recognize as contributing to the ecological crisis. His existentialist arguments concerning the freedom that is inherent in human consciousness, and the concomitant belief that the individual can gain autonomy from her culture's predefinitions of reality promote the same brand of nihilating individualism that he later identifies in various traditions of liberal humanism as problematic. Moreover, his existential-humanist view of individualism could not withstand the same critique that he would later direct toward Freire and others. Our next concern, then, involves tracing Bowers's reformulation of the ideological and epistemological positions that had contributed so heavily to his former individualism.

While the sociology of knowledge continues to occupy a central place in Bowers's thought, his critique of individualism has forced him to recognize the dangers of situating the individual in opposition to culture. To dichotomize the relation of the individual to culture, however, first requires that the individual be viewed as separable from culture. Only then can authority be situated on either side of the divide. If authority is situated on the side of the individual, we encounter the problems already identified with nihilism. If, on the other hand, authority is located within culture, we wind up advocating a deterministic view of culture that cannot account for change at either an individual or a societal level. Averting these dualisms created by what Bowers identifies as a Cartesian mindset requires the development of an epistemological position that does not operate under the premise that the individual is separable from culture. Such a position would simultaneously de-center the individual as an autonomous rational agent. Herein lies the promise that Bowers identifies in Gregory Bateson's work.

In contradistinction to the tradition within Western thought that isolates mental activity (Rationality/Reason/Conscientization) as a quality of the individual human being, Bateson understands the individual to be but one interactive element within a larger system of mental activity that includes human culture/s as well as the natural environment. The interactions occurring within this system involve information exchanges between the various elements. These exchanges, rather than the autonomous individual, are the basic mental units of the overall system. Bateson explains that: "The total self-corrective unit which processes information or, as I say, 'thinks,' 'acts' and 'decides,' 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."[29] Bateson's notion of a mental ecology does not negate the immanence of the individual mind. It does, however, de-center it as the ultimate source of authority. Bowers explains Bateson's conceptualization of the individual mind as lodged within a larger mental ecology as analogous to an individual cell's location within an organism or an individual person's role within a community.

Supportive of the sociology of knowledge framework that Bowers continues to integrate into his work, Bateson argues that most of the information exchanges that directly impact upon the individual occur at a tacit level of awareness. Bowers explains that: "What he means here is that the information exchanges ... are processed at a taken-for-granted level because the 'appropriate' response [of the individual] has been encoded into the learned cultural patterns."[30] The importance of this point may not be immediately obvious, but it can be viewed as undermining the extreme degree of intentionality that is typically attributed to human consciousness by theorists operating under a Westernizing mode of thought. The sense of agency (intentionality) that technicism, Freire, and the existentialist Bowers attribute to human consciousness provides the basis for viewing the individual as capable (at least) of gaining autonomy from her cultural-biological context and "purposively" bringing that context under greater rational control. These, Bowers contends, are the foundations of the anthropocentric view of the universe that he is attempting to move us away from. Bateson's point about the tacit nature of most information exchanges challenges the authority of the rational autonomous individual.

For example, Freire developed his pedagogy in opposition to all forms of cultural domination. In doing so, he failed to recognize that his own pedagogical techniques, which he assumed to be culturally neutral, imposed a Western cultural orientation on those who adopted them. Therefore, an individual who had received these techniques may understand herself to have escaped the domination of traditional culture that had kept her previously oppressed. Through the process of empowerment preceded by conscientization, she understands herself to now be capable of imbuing the world and language with her own meanings. What she fails to see is the tacit knowledge that she received through critical pedagogy: a view of the individual as rational and autonomous; an understanding that equates change with progress; and a propensity to associate rationality with progress. In other words, while believing herself to be empowered to engage in subjective forms of self-expression that are free of cultural domination, the individual is unconsciously giving expression to tacit forms of knowledge reflective of the Westernizing mode of consciousness. In the end, she has neither "distanced" herself from culture, nor "emancipated" herself from tradition to the extent that she assumes.

In undermining the authority of the individual's unilateral control over the mental process of which she is just one element, Bateson contributes not only to Bowers's reformulation of his epistemological po-

sition, but to the reformulation of his ideological position as well. According to Bateson, "In no system which shows mental characteristics can any part have unilateral control over the whole." Anthropocentrism, which rests upon the belief in individualist control over the rational process, is ideological in the sense that it privileges human "needs" over all others, including those of ecological balance and long-term sustainability. Bateson, then, not only displaces the individual as the basic unit of the mental process; he also displaces the individual as the basic unit of survival. As Bowers claims, Bateson's work helps us to recognize that

> the basic unit of survival is not the individual but organism plus environment. We are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself. If, now, we correct the Darwinian unit of survival to include the environment and the interaction between organism and environment, a very strange and surprising identity emerges: the unit of evolutionary survival turns out to be identical with the unit of the mind.[31]

This correlation between the biological and the mental is crucial for Bowers's development of an epistemological position that is commensurable with his ideology. Ideologically, his commitment to ameliorating the ecological crisis is longstanding. And yet, as demonstrated earlier, his existentialist approach only served to reinforce some of the deep cultural assumptions responsible for creating that crisis. These assumptions were most heavily entrenched within his epistemological position that presented the individual as capable of "gaining distance" and rationally liberating herself from the external authority of tradition. These epistemological assumptions led him to unconsciously lend ideological support to the same anthropocentric view of the universe that he was challenging. He was unaware that, in titling his existentialist work *Cultural Literacy for Freedom*, his language was metaphorically communicating tacit forms of knowledge that were not intended to be communicated.

This raises a further point that Bowers believes educators should reflect upon — the metaphorical nature of thought. Thought, he contends, is only made possible by language. Though the two should not be conflated to mean the same thing, they cannot be treated separately either. Language imposes conceptual boundaries on our thought that may or may not be explicit to our awareness. In acquiring language, then, we simultaneously acquire a preconceived, though tacit, way of viewing the world. Our thought reflects the cultural patterns built up over time and embedded within language. For example, the notion of freedom that Bowers uses in the title of his existentialist book can be treated as a generative metaphor that functions as a conceptual template for organizing our experience of reality.

Again, this particular metaphor causes us, however unknowingly, to conceptualize the individual as separable from culture, rational thought as superior to tacit forms of knowledge, and change as progressive. The anthropocentrism fostered by this generative metaphor led to the formation of analogic metaphors (culturally and historically specific metaphors that allow us to think of one domain of experience in terms of another domain) such as "natural resources." This metaphor compares nature to a stockpile of goods to be developed and exploited. The similar intimations of "human resources" are equally deplorable.

It is possible to attribute Bowers's inadvertent perpetuation of cultural assumptions antithetical to his concern for ecologically sustainable relationships to inconsistencies in his ideological position that were rooted in his epistemology. The epistemological authority that the liberal assumptions embedded within his existentialism granted to the individual had to be rejected if those inconsistencies were to be resolved. Bateson's notion of a mental ecology enabled him to achieve a greater degree of ideological continuity in his writings by providing him with an "interpretation of the person as part of the ecology of mind that includes both cultural and natural systems."[32] When viewed from this perspective," Bowers claims, "educational empowerment becomes more understandable in terms of enhancing the total system — and not just the autonomy and rational power of the individual."[33]

Reflective of this position, Bowers is currently describing his ideological framework as "cultural/bio-conservatism." The ecological imperative is essential to his ideology. This imperative states that: "Any species that destroys the part of the eco-system that is the source of its food will perish."[34] Bowers also lists Alan Durning's ecological Golden Rule: "that is, 'each generation should meet its needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations to meet their own needs,'" as central to cultural/bio-conservatism.[35] Together, the ecological imperative and the ecological Golden Rule stand as the sort of moral codes that Bowers believes must be established if we are to survive the environmental crisis. And they are representative of the ecocentric cultural beliefs and

practices that his brand of conservatism seeks to maintain.

Given the earlier discussion of conservatism, Bowers's inclusion of the term as descriptive of his ideological orientation should not engender any fear that he aligns himself with the political right. He associates conservatism with traditional cultures. To guide us in reconstituting our "discourse on the purpose and curricular content of schooling, from kindergarten through graduate schools," Bowers has identified a number of characteristics shared by those traditional cultures that have proven to be ecologically sustainable. These include ecocentric rather than anthropocentric mythopoetic narratives; "an inclusive sense of community that extends the moral responsibility of humans to the rest of the biotic community"; "a sense of time where the past and future are sources of authority in the decision-making process of the present"; and "analogs that communicate ecological centeredness."[36]

While we see little or no evidence of these characteristics within our own culture at the present time, Bowers firmly believes that our culture must be reconstituted to reflect them. This, of course, will be no easy task. The above-listed characteristics of ecologically sustainable cultures, however, point us in a direction that can lead to our developing a language "based on metanarratives that accurately represent how humans are absolutely dependent upon the natural energy cycles within the biosphere."[37] In acquiring such a language, our future generations would acquire an ideology that would guide their thoughts and actions in a manner conducive to creating and "conserving" a set of more ecologically and culturally sustainable relationships than we enjoy today.

Remember that Bowers uses the term "ideology" to express the notion of a conceptual framework of understanding, to include the values, morals, beliefs, and various other forms of symbolic knowledge of a given culture. In advocating the development and transmission to future generations of a cultural/bio-conservative ideology, Bowers has undergone a major shift in his educational thinking from the days when that thought was guided by the liberal assumptions of existential-humanism.

Many liberals, at least those who define themselves in terms of identifying the individual as the basic unit of mental processes and survival, are likely to be offended by Bowers's more recent proposals. As demonstrated throughout this paper, he challenges the dominant culture's deepest assumptions regarding the agency of the individual, the authority of our rational powers, and the nature of change. Given these assumptions, many liberals would interpret his educational proposal as an act of domination aimed at oppressing the child's consciousness. They would likely contend that each child should be allowed to exercise her own creative/rational powers in determining for herself how the ecological crisis should be dealt with. What they would fail to realize, of course, is that the child's thought patterns will be ideologically influenced by some educational process whether Bowers's proposal is adopted or not.

In light of these hypothetical responses, it is more likely that the child's consciousness will be most heavily influenced by the liberal ideology that mistakenly grants moral and epistemological authority to the rational autonomous individual. Ideologically, these critics of Bowers might agree that we need to educate ourselves and future generations in a manner that is more sensitive to the cultural dimensions of the environmental crisis. But, Bowers would assert that, before they bring their epistemological position in line with their ideological commitment to environmental recovery, they will not have entirely understood the full range of those cultural dimensions.

For his part, Bowers extrapolates on Bateson's epistemological assertion that "in no system which shows mental characteristics can any part have unilateral control over the whole" to contend that in no social or ecological system that shows the characteristics of sustainability does any part have unilateral control over the whole. This complimentarity between Bowers's epistemology and his ideology should cause educators and noneducators alike to recognize the significance that his postliberal work holds for our educational, cultural, and ecological future.

## Notes

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2. Ibid., 294.

3. C. A. Bowers, "Emergent Ideological Characteristics of Educational Policy," *Teachers College Record* 79, no. 1 (September 1977), 35.

4. C. A. Bowers, *Elements of a Post-Liberal Theory of Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), 92 (emphasis added).

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6. C. A. Bowers, "The Dialectic of Nihilism and the State: Implications for an Emancipatory Theory of Education," *Educational Theory* 36, No. 3 (Summer 1986), 228.

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9. Bowers, "Emergent Ideological Characteristics," 38.

10. C. A. Bowers, "The Reproduction of Technological Consciousness: Locating the Ideological Foundations of a Radical Pedagogy," *Teachers College Record* 83, no. 4 (Summer 1983), 540.

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12. Bowers, *Elements of a Post-Liberal Theory*, 22.

13. Bowers, "Ideological Continuities," 307.

14. C. A. Bowers, *Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 28.

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21. Bowers, "Culture Against Itself," 467.

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25. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, (New York: Anchor, 1966).

26. Bowers, *Cultural Literacy*, 83.

27. Ibid., 5.

28. Ibid., 85–86.

29. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 319.

30. C. A. Bowers, *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 96.

31. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 483.

32. Bowers, *Responsive Teaching*, 96.

33. Bowers, *Critical Essays*, 117.

34. C. A. Bowers, "Children, Environmental Education, and the Implications of Moving from a Liberal to a Cultural/Bio-Conservative Ideology" (Paper delivered at the conference on Children and the Environment, sponsored by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, University of Tronheim, May 13-16, 1993), 4.

35. Ibid., 4.

36. Bowers, *Critical Essays*, 179-201.

37. Bowers, "Children, Environmental Education and the Implications of Moving From a Liberal to a Cultural/Bio-Conservative Ideology," 3.

# Critical and Constructive Postmodernism

## The Transformative Power of Holistic Education

Christine M. Shea

**There is a powerful need for collaborative dialogue between the differing forms of postmodernism as we explore the metaphor of the classroom as an "ecological web."**

One of the problems of living in a period of transition comes from the dissonance created by an episodic shift away from older meaning systems and our inability to react with any kind of sensibility or coherence to the fragmentary new symbol systems that strike our bewildered consciousness. If the old order seems too rigid and constraining, the new order offers an equally obscure and incoherent range of unfamiliar fragmented belief systems and attitudes. Advanced industrial societies are deep in the midst of a period of transition. In his book *The Post-Industrial Utopians,* Boris Frankel catalogs some of the terms that have been used to express this epochal break with the modern era: the postmodern era, the post-bourgeois society, the post-economic society, the post-scarcity society, the post-industrial society, the knowledge society, the personal service society, the service class society, and the technetronic era (Frankel 1987, 2). Taken as a whole, these labels tell us that existing institutions are being dramatically reshaped.

In the "Introduction" to his analysis of postmodern trends in education, Donald Oliver and Kathleen Gershman write of the loss of a sense of belongingness that such paradigm shifts inevitably provoke:

> It is an age in which the unconscious cultural symbols providing our lives with deep meanings are losing their vitality, the passion that drives our love for inventing material things is drying up, and our intimate connection with the natural living world is steadily decreasing. Although awed by the power of our technical achievements, we are nevertheless bewildered by the crassness that increasingly characterizes our personal relationships. (Oliver and Gershman 1989, 2)

Quoting a passage from Walker Percy's book *The Message in the Bottle,* they liken us to people who live "... by reason during the day and at night dream bad dreams" (Oliver and Gershman 1989, 2).

*Christine Shea, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Foundations and Curriculum, College of Education, Georgia Southern University. She has worked as an inner-city teacher in Rochester, NY, and a Peace Corps volunteer in Tunisia. She formerly taught at Hampshire College in Massachusetts and at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV. She is interested in the topics of the history of school reform, theories of teacher renewal, constructive postmodernism, holistic education, and ecofeminism.*

### The Enlightenment Dream

The Enlightenment dream entered history as a progressive force promising to liberate humans from ignorance and irrationality. The good society, for most of the sons and daughters of the Enlightenment, was the meritocratic ideal where individuals took up their positions in life not because of special privilege resulting from wealth, caste, status, or power, but due to natural talent and virtue. The various inequalities that resulted from caste, class, and privilege had to be overcome in order to allow the true natural talents of human beings to emerge and be rewarded.

This Enlightenment dream became the American dream as well. American educators, likewise, predicted that in the scientific society of tomorrow, a universal system of enlightened education would be created (Dewey 1929). But, this Enlightenment dream included more than the mere identification and development of natural talent and opportunity. That dream evolved into a process of social selection promising to shape individuals more easily to the ideals of the emerging meritocratic state (Karier 1973; Shea 1980). This agenda was most aptly expressed by Edward Ross when he suggested that to educate is "... to collect little plastic lumps of human dough from private households and shape them on the social kneadingboard" (Ross 1912, 168).

Enlightenment social science thereby became a story not of the triumphal emergence of the great "American paideia," but rather, a saga showing how the idea of rationality as social control (i.e., the quest for certainty in the new post-Newtonian world) became the fundamental societal quest (Karier et al. 1973). Thus, while the Enlightenment dream entered history as a progressive force promising to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality, its nightmarish fulfillment in the concentration camps, Hiroshima, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf have obliterated any continuing naive commitment to its social ideals. The concept that real social progress will only occur through the continued application of science and technology to solve social problems sounds awkwardly archaic (i.e., politically and morally bankrupt) in this emerging postmodern era.

### What Does Postmodernism Mean?

The question of what postmodernism actually means is not an easy one to answer. The term "postmodernism" has been used in a confusing variety of ways, some of them contradictory to others. It has meant different things to different people at different times. In a flood of recent articles, scholars have reviewed some of these endless questions, debates, and schisms in regard to the term, and have posed some probing questions: Is postmodernism primarily an epistemological, artistic, political, scientific, theological, linguistic, or social phenomenon? (Bertens 1995; Callinicos 1989; Deleuze 1988; Giroux 1991; Jameson 1991; Lather 1991; Natoli and Hutcheon 1993; Rosenau 1992). Does it promise liberation from outmoded traditions or regression into irrationalism? What are the implications of postmodernism for educational theory and practice? Is it a theoretical movement that will enable us to escape the patriarchal paradigms of Western thought, or is it just more "class privileged, Eurocentric, logo-obsessed white male discourse?" (Lather 1991, 155). Does it allow us to image what a real emancipatory politics might be?

The variety and complexity of the current postmodernism discourse has led to an extraordinarily rich and playful dialogue as significant players crisscross and interrupt one another in an endless steam of argumentation. Giles Deleuze focuses on the microlevel and the interaction of bodies driven by desire (Deleuze 1991). For Lash, too, postmodernism is inextricably bound up with a "theory of desire," the equivalent of Nietzsche's will to power (Lash, cited in Bertens 1995, 218). Hutcheon argues that postmodernism "is a contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and subverts, the very concepts it challenges — be it in literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, television, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics of historiography (Hutcheon 1991; reprinted in Natoli and Hutcheon 1993). Others view postmodernism as a new form of abstract, disengaged radical chic or "nouveau smart" and celebrate its "intellectual vandalism" as a necessary process of erasing the old, harmful intellectual structures of liberal humanism (Norris, cited in Bertens 1995, 8). Lyotard, too, understands postmodernism as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" and urges the further debunking of the empiricist model of science (Lyotard, cited in Peters 1989, 99).

Jurgen Habermas condemns postmodernism as a neoconservative reaction against the emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment (Habermas 1987). Allan Bloom expresses the conservative view of postmodernism as "the last, predictable, stage in the suppression of reason, and the denial of the possibility of

truth" (Bloom, cited in Nicholson 1989, 197). Conservative scholars, in this vein, tend to bemoan the postmodern fascination with the "degraded landscape" of pop culture, TV series, advertising, late shows, B-grade movies, airport pocketbook novels, freak shows, fantasy sitcoms, and popular biographies. They charge that postmodernism fosters nihilism, relativism, irrationality, anarchy, and political irresponsibility.

Others use the term postmodern in a derogatory sense and see it hopelessly enmeshed with the exhaustion of monopoly capitalism in its final stages, as the inevitable outcome of capitalist decline and decadence (Callinicos 1989, 10). Frederick Jameson, for example, characterizes postmodernism as resulting from the forces of multinational capitalism, a necessary by-product of its "schizophrenic" attitude toward space and time (Jameson 1991, 154). Cornell West fears that it is especially dangerous for the marginalized (West, cited in Lather 1991, 154).

## What are Schools For? Education in/for a Postmodern Era

The divergent, even contradictory, expositions of postmodernism underline the need to distinguish among its various orientations. With this in mind, I would like to explore in this essay some of the elements that would help provide a coherent conceptual framework for a new postmodern educational program. The attempts to transcend modernism, I think, has resulted in three very different postmodern agendas: the first, characterized by a more nihilistic deconstructivist agenda; the second, grounded in a more critical poststructuralist discourse; and the third, characterized by a more visionary, constructive postmodern program. It is important to differentiate between the terms "deconstructionism" and "poststructuralism" conceptually. "Deconstructionism" refers to the analytic method of dissecting or tearing apart a "text" in order to reveal its basic contradictions, inconsistencies, or assumptions. Deconstructionists consider everything a "text" — events, situations, experiences, as well as books. The intent of deconstructionism is not to improve, revise, resolve, or offer a better version of a "text," but rather, to disclose tensions, often using a sensational, bombastic style. "Poststructuralism" is a postmodern philosophy that questions the legitimacy of any authoritative metanarrative, social standard, or social structure; it attacks the assumption that societies are made coherent by their underlying form or structures. Poststructuralists reject the notion of universal truth or that the mind has an innate, underlying structure. Instead, they work from the premise that language/discourse constitutes rather than merely reflects reality; "reality" is the by-product of historically and socially constructed ways of making sense of the world (Leistyna et al. 1996, 342). They hold that dominant groups (especially Western European white males) have controlled not only access to social power but also access to the standards by which society determines what is valuable and legitimate. Therefore, they place great emphasis on the presentation of "multiple voices" and "multiple realities" to explain or interpret any event or situation, especially the voices of the less powerful members of the social system — women, minorities, and students.

In the later part of this paper, I would like to explore why I believe that a comprehensive postmodern educational framework might well include a growing alliance between the critical poststructuralist critique and the work of the emerging revisionary constructive postmoderns. Lastly, I would like to discuss the rise of the holistic education movement in the 1990s and to situate it strongly within this new constructive postmodern paradigm.

## Varieties of Postmodern Critique

### Nihilistic deconstructive postmodernism

The nihilistic deconstructive postmodern paradigm, popularized by Derrida and Baudillard, offers a pessimistic, negative, gloomy assessment of the human condition by arguing that the postmodern age is one of fragmentation, disintegration, and malaise, absent of any moral commitments. As Rosenau has pointed out in her recent book *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences* (1992), this paradigm is inspired by the earlier continental European philosophers, especially Heidegger and Nietzsche, and represents the dark side of postmodernism — the postmodernism of despair and nihilism (Rosenau 1992, 168). This nihilistic strand of postmodernism speaks of the demise of the subject, the impossibility of truth, and the repudiation of representation. When postmodern theorists talk about "the demise of the subject" they do not mean that they wish to become more objective, but rather, they seek to challenge the liberal humanist ideal of the rational, effective, unified subject. Instead, the nihilistic deconstructive postmoderns conceptualize one's subjectivity as multiple, contradictory, and largely irrational — the inevitable result of the renouncement of the subject-

object dichotomy. They contend that the subject is "... only a mask, a role, a victim, at worst an ideological construct, at best a nostalgic effigy" (Carravetta, quoted in Rosenau 1992, 42). In a tonal discourse strangely reminiscent of that in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, these postmodern texts proclaim that all is grim, cruel, alienating, hopeless, mean, nasty, and ambiguous.

In their deconstructivist critiques of objective science, these postmoderns reject even modern chaos theory as ultimately embedded in a positivist paradigm. Instead they view the universe as impossible to understand. In contemplating the universe, Lyotard and Latour write only of "undecidables," "fractors," "catastrophes," and "paradoxes," (cited in Rosenau 1992, 170). Closely related to their postmodern critique of objective science is their critique of representation. What is really interesting cannot be represented: ideas, symbols, the universe, the absolute, God, the just, or whatever. Like Derrida, they argue that representation is dangerous and basically bad (Derrida, Lyotard; cited in Rosenau 1992, 170).

The nihilistic postmoderns argue that reality is pure illusion; everything is intertextual, not causal or predictive. Their preferred social critique is introspective interpretation and deconstruction. Relativism and uncertainty characterize their views. They doubt the value of reason and contend it is impossible to establish objective, standard criteria. Many of these nihilistic postmoderns also dismiss democracy as easily as they repudiate representation. As political agnostics, they propose that all political views are mere constructions. Many are pessimistic about changing society; some argue for nonparticipation as the most revolutionary position in the postmodern age; others argue for play; still others recommend terror, suicide, and violence as the only truly authentic political gestures that remain open. Time and space are conceived to be uncontrollable and unpredictable: "... time becomes disparate, crisscrossed, layered, and maligned rather than homogeneous, evolutionary, purposive, and regular... what the postmoderns refer to as 'pastiche' reigns." (Rosenau 1992, 171). As time and space dissolve, nothing can be assumed; nothing is worthy of commitment; nothing is foundational; no one is to be trusted.

### Critical poststructuralist postmodernism

With the increasing politicization of the debate on the postmodernism in the 1980s, the earlier nihilistic, deconstructionist postmodernism rapidly lost its attraction. A new critical deconstructivist program grounded in the emerging poststructuralist approaches derived from Foucault, and, to a much lesser extent, Lacan, gained popularity in America (Turkle 1979; Poster 1984). This poststructuralist paradigm is especially designed to critique the power that is inherent in the discourses and in the institutions that support these discourses (i.e., education). It attempts to expose the politics that are at work in our everyday lives, to challenge institutionalized hierarchies, and to work against the hegemony of any single discoursive system. Specifically, the poststructuralists choose to see their work within a politically critical framework, as engaged in the necessary process of challenging the outmoded repressive institutions and ideologies of positivist Enlightenment social science.

Much of the earlier critical and revisionist educational research agendas of the 1960s and 1970s generally defined power as a negative force that only worked in the interests of domination. Theories of ideological hegemony and social reproduction were used almost exclusively to show the extent of elite and professional social control and domination of American schools. Questions about how elite power worked focused on debating various theories of social reproduction and hegemonic control.

The work of Michel Foucault began to change the focus of American social theorists, and later, American critical theorists and revisionist historians working in education began to consider the schools as more active, conflictual sites for social class, ethnic, racial, and gender-related intervention and struggle. Foucault, for example, believed that power was both a positive and a negative force, as he wrote:

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression." (Foucault, quoted in Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, 155)

In repudiating the nihilistic postmodern discourse, the critical poststructuralist agenda called for "a return of the subject." However, this new subject was not a return to the outmoded, instrumental agenda of the Enlightenment citizen in search of mastery and control, but rather, one who struggled against oppression, humiliation, and subjection as a

"subject-in-process." These critical poststructuralists were as likely as the nihilists to reject universal truth and dismiss the idea that "truth is out there" waiting to be discovered. However, in contrast to nihilistic postmodernism, the poststructuralist stance argued that while "the real" was mediated through language, it had not disappeared (Lather 1991, 166). Instead, the critical poststructuralists were concerned with relativizing the language games into specific local, personal, and community forms of social praxis. In rejecting an extreme linguistic relativism, the critical poststructuralists argued that there could be a certain consensus about words and concepts and language games, both scientific and narrative. Certain truths might hold for a certain community at a specific place and time. In rejecting the intellectual hegemony of grand theory, the critical postmoderns relied instead on everchanging, community-based, micronarratives, and geneology to ground social praxis. Instead of repudiating representation per se, these critical poststructuralists talked more about the need for more and better forms of representation.

In the course of the 1980s, this mostly Foucauldian postmodernism had a far-reaching democratizing influence within educational institutions and enabled close links to be established with feminism and multiculturalism, terms that are now generally associated with this critical poststructuralist stance. Those committed to a "postmodernism of resistance" have identified a multitude of critical strategies and commitments in quest of a politics of empowerment. These critical postmoderns support a wide range of political and social alliances and recommend moving back and forth among the various critical discourses — i.e., of the poor Appalachian elderly; urban black teenage males; lesbians; teenage Latino gangs; Native Americans on reservations; the unemployed; the homeless; gays; punk rockers; Black separatists; AIDS victims; rural teenage girls; migrant laborers; prison inmates; the handicapped — in order to interrupt one another, in search of a more spontaneous and dynamic discourse. Here, subjectivity is no longer a search for "essences," but rather, is "... multiple, layered, and non-unitary ... constituted out of oftentimes different and contradictory selves ... (here) ... the self is constructed as a terrain of conflict and struggle; as a site of both liberation and subjugation" (Giroux 1991, 30). Such an approach to social praxis places an examination of one's own and others' oppression at the center of a critical politics of opposition, difference, and cultural struggle, and as a GSU faculty colleague of mine teaches, these "oppressions must be linked" (Spencer 1966). The recovery, affirmation, and sharing of their "stories of oppression" from these discontiguous and marginalized local groups, it was thought, would result in a social praxis that embodied a kind of struggle and resistance that was nondogmatic, tentative, and nonideological. Giroux put it well:

> I believe that by foregrounding and interrogating the variety of textual forms and voices that inform such narratives, students can deconstruct the master-narratives of racism, sexism, and class domination while simultaneously questioning how these narratives contribute to forms of self-hatred and contempt that surround the identities of blacks, women, and other subordinate groups. (Giroux 1991, 244)

In this way, the poststructuralism praxis nurtures, prods, and honors the emergence of a variety of everchanging alliances amongst these previously marginalized and silenced groups.

**Postmodernism as a doubled movement/doubled consciousness**

The third broad orientation in the postmodern debate is that of the constructive postmodern approach. While the constructive postmoderns do not question the accomplishments of the critical postmoderns, they realize that the critical postmodern paradigm is one of critique, opposition, and emancipation from, rather than one of creation and construction. They perceive, rightly I think, that this model's dominant emphasis on subverting the Enlightenment agenda has rendered both its tonal and textual orientation less sensitive to the power and language of other more transformative, visionary, futuristic agendas, particularly those concerned to help us see our human and natural relationships in more holistic, dynamic, and dialogical frameworks.

Although the critical theorists talk and write about creating "a language of possibility" and "a discourse of hope," in fact, their own critical discourse has failed to move beyond a language of critique, and oftentimes, seems to confuse an authentic transformational program with merely the introduction of a new language of critique (Senese 1991, 13). In their book *Education Under Seige*, Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) seem dramatically aware of this difficulty: "In our view, most exciting critical accounts of schooling fail to provide forms of analysis that move beyond theories of critique to the more difficult task of laying the theoretical basis for trans-

formative modes of curriculum theory and practice" (p. 154). Peter McLaren similarly pointed out recently that "little in the corpus of poststructural or postmodernist theories has been significantly appropriated for the purposes of educational reform, except by way of critique" (McLaren 1986; quoted in Nicholson 1989, 201).

What seems to be lacking is some kind of collaborative praxis/discourse upon which to construct a vision of postmodern education that embodies both the critical discourse needed to emancipate ourselves from the class privileged, Eurocentric, white male discourse embedded in the Enlightenment tradition (in both its classical and Progressive liberal phases) and the more visionary, constructive postmodern discourse needed to situate us meaningfully in the emerging multicultural ecosystem-sensitive global economy of the twenty-first century. However, both orientations are essential to a comprehensive postmodern program. It is in what W. E. B. DuBois and others have called this "doubled movement" of "doubled consciousness," this dizzy dance between subversion and inscription, that rests the heart of a comprehensive postmodern agenda (Lather 1991, 154). Thus, a transductional dialectic paradigm that joins the largely contestatory, oppositional work central to the work of critical theorists and revisionist historians with the more futuristic, creative, exploratory, metaphoric visionary work of the constructive postmoderns could form the superstructure for a more authentic, transformational postmodern discourse.

## Constructive ecological postmodernism

In his SUNY Series in "Constructive Postmodern Thought," David Ray Griffin, the series editor, describes some of the underlying themes and commitments in the constructive postmodern orientation (Griffin 1992, preface). This new emerging postmodern paradigm obviously represents a major shift in the context through which we understand ourselves and our relationships to each other and our natural world. Very little before the 1970s prepared us to understand the crisis in ecological sustainability — what Madhu Prakash referred to as "... the global race toward an ecological holocaust" (Prakash 1994, 1). This crisis is unique in its range and scope, including the pollution of freshwater and marine environments; atmospheric pollution; chemical and nuclear wastes; the degradation of our croplands, forests, and grazing lands; desertification; the destruction of wilderness habitats and ecosystems; the extinction of plant and animal species; and the ever-increasing human population growth (Fox 1990, 3). The magnitude of this ecological crisis, in effect, now confronts us with the challenge to completely reconstitute our guiding ideological and epistemological frameworks.

While the overwhelming task of rethinking our cultural habits, attitudes, and values in terms of their implications for creating ecologically sustainable ecosystems has only just begun, some of the key elements in such an enterprise now seem obvious. In particular, I would like to identify four themes that seem to reveal the deepest underlying commitments in constructive postmodern thought, which might well be employed to help establish a beginning foundation for collaborative praxis between the critical and constructive postmodern paradigms.[1]

***The environment as the ultimate context.*** Constructive postmodernism is about seeing the environment as the ultimate context in which all social and political activism can be viewed. All of us are nourished and nurtured by the earth and without this lifeline of nourishment we would perish. Thus, issues of social justice, equality, economic opportunity, political empowerment all derive from and are enabled by an environment that provides sustenance for people and other living systems. In this way, the environment is the ultimate ground of being. Without clean air, fresh water, and healthy food, survival would be impossible; all other issues become subordinate.

***Beyond the anthropocentric self.*** The Enlightenment way of understanding the subjectivity of the individual was predicated on maintaining a series of dualisms (specifically, mind and body, and mind and nature) that led to the calculating pattern of thought essential to scientifically based technological advances. Indeed, the entire Judeo-Christian tradition is based on metanarratives that represent humans as essentially separate from the natural world, and only in the most optimistic of these, humans view themselves merely as "wise stewards" of nature. The Romantics metaphorically diminished the concept of nature even further by reducing it to an inner subjective Self, grounding its view of individual growth, social progress, and human creativity in a sense of time and space that begins and ends with the expectations of the individual. This kind of anthropocentric thinking continues to be supported by leading critical theorists such as Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire,

and Peter McLaren among others. While such a dialectical conception of Self is useful to the discourse of emancipatory social praxis, it is less central to the enterprise of seeing the interconnectedness of reality, the fundamental unity of the universe, and the development of more ecologically responsible forms of social organization.

Constructive postmodernism places the person within a continuum where an awareness of past and future generations helps to define what constitutes meaningful knowledge, values, and responsibility. The practice of Native-American cultures making decisions with the seventh unborn generations in mind captures this sense of life as part of a continuum. Specifically, their work has focused on the development of forms of community, agriculture, work, and art that improve the quality of human life (and cultures) by living more in dynamic harmony with the earth's everchanging ecosystems.

***The sacredness of nature.*** The view of nature as transformative and sacred, and the search for the key to "the reenchantment of nature, life, and art" does not have to mean something "cosmic," "transcendent," or "otherworldy" — it emerges quite naturally when we cultivate compassionate, caring, responsive modes of relating to our natural ecosystems and cultural environments and to each other. With the realization that all life is sacred, we begin to radically alter our idiosyncratic value systems and our consumer-driven exploitative lifestyles. The underlying ethos of constructive postmodern thought in regard to the sacredness of all life is perhaps most clearly stated in the "Declaration of the Four Sacred Things" written by Starhawk (1993):

> To call these things sacred (earth, fire, water, and air) is to say that they have a value beyond their usefulness for human ends, that they themselves become standards by which our acts, our economics, our laws, our purposes, must be judged ... all people, all living things are part of the earth, and so are sacred. No one of us stands higher or lower than any other ... only ecological balance can sustain freedom.... To honor the sacred is to create the conditions in which nourishment, sustenance, habitat, knowledge, freedom, and beauty can survive.

While it is easy to dismiss (or mistake) such statements about the sacredness of nature as the return to an overly naive premodern form of tribal spirituality, one should consider that recently some well-known scientists (among them Carl Sagan and Stephen Gould) recently issued a collaborative statement proclaiming the ethical responsibilities of the scientific community in words strikingly similar to those of Starhawk:

> As scientists, many of us have had profound experiences of awe and reverence for the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred. (in Bowers 1995; Suzuki and Knudtson 1992)

***An ecological view of emancipatory pedagogical praxis.*** Constructive postmoderns have also argued for a different view of intelligence, what they refer to as "ecological intelligence" (Bowers 1995, 126ff). Combining the more culturally grounded view of intelligence employed by the critical theorists with the ecological view of intelligence of the constructive postmoderns would lead to a more inclusive approach to social praxis. For example, such an alliance would place at the center of the curriculum process the more ecologically problematic aspects of the dominant culture. Helping students to understand how the dominant culture has achieved social progress only at the expense of the degradation of both our natural systems and our indigenous cultures would be central to the teacher's responsibility.

David Orr and C. A. Bowers are the foremost holistic educators working within this constructive postmodern paradigm. Together they have produced an extraordinary corpus of scholarship on the theme of "ecological literacy" that has comprehensively worked out both the theoretical and practical aspects of such programs (Orr 1992, 1995; Bowers 1987, 1993a, 1993b, 1995). For example, Orr's curricular pedagogy brings together school communities in a critical study of all it consumes and wastes. Orr's pedagogy does not address these questions in the abstract discourse and difficult terminology so familiar to critical postmodern educators but, rather, depends on a "hands-on approach" for transforming the daily life of the educational community. He also leads the way in his attempts to combine holistic ideals with authentic praxis in actual local communities and schools. In this way, he demonstrates how our communities and schools can become an important part of the transformation toward more sustainable, human-scale, postmodern communities. "Think globally, act locally" is rediscovered and enriched by this new paradigmatic webbing of cultural critique with ecological praxis.

The constructive postmodern movement has recently been criticized as a white, middle-class endeavor with an exaggerated interest in flora and fauna and distant indigenous peoples. However, Jim Schwab's new book, *Shades of Darker Green: The Rise*

*of Blue Collar and Minority Environmentalism*, focuses on a more recent development with the postmodern movement that has important implications for both critical theory and holistic educators (Schwab 1994). Schwab writes of the birth of ecological community activism here in the United States among those most ignored by most environmental groups — blue collar whites, Native Americans, and people of color. Schwab's focus is on impoverished inner cities, poor rural communities, and isolated Native-American reservations. The common enemies here are industry, with its dreadful plans for toxic waste dumps, carcinogenic get-rich-quick schemes. His book reveals the extent to which our real constructive postmodern heroes and heroines are, literally, average citizens — housewives and ministers, small business owners and practitioner-based academics — who discover the power of working quietly in small groups to accomplish extraordinary social transformations in their simple, ordinary, everyday lives. I suspect that such a collaborative praxis/discourse between critical theorists and holistic educators would address some of the concerns recently raised by scholars about the seeming lack of any transformative power in critical theory formulations pedagogy (Pignatelli 1993; Senese 1991; Thompson and Gitlin 1995). It is also the kind of collaborative social activism that Ron Miller has been so persuasively and passionately advocating for holistic educators in the last few years (Miller 1990, 1991, 1993).

In his most recent book, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*, Wendell Berry, one of our important postmodern commentators, decries the devastation of the American small farm and small town, in the words: "A nation will destroy its land and therefore itself if it does not foster in every possible way the sort of ... households and communities that have the desire, the skills, and the means to properly care for the land they are using" (Berry 1994, 21). That's why for him, words such as "globalism" and "international development" are worse than abstractions; they promote the idea that our really important work will be some kind of "big deal" in the "global strategy." They function, he tells us, as some kind of environmental and commercial Star Wars. By contrast, Berry argues,

> The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and unrewarding, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count ... too small to make anyone rich or famous. (Berry 1994, 24)

Ultimately, for Berry, we must learn to grow like a tree, not like a fire: "to go down and down into the daunting, humbling, almost hopeless local presence of the problem" (Berry 1994, 24). It is here that ecology meets consciousness; critical theory meets holistic education.

**Pedagogical Implications for the Postmodern Teacher**

Metaphors help shape the way we view the world and enable us to more clearly envision new ways of understanding ourselves, especially during times of rapid social change. Metaphors of American classrooms have of course changed along with our evolving perspectives on our relationship to the world around us. There are, of course, a wide variety of metaphors current in today's educational literature. In everyday educational discourse, one frequently hears life in classrooms compared to that in prisons, factories, shopping malls, war, and drugstores, as well as families, gardens, and streams. In many of these metaphors, there are dramatic contradictions and tensions that reflect the competing visions and priorities that different social groups have for the American public school system. One metaphorical image that postmodern classroom teachers might employ to begin the process of revisioning for themselves what life in a postmodern classroom might entail is that of the classroom as a living ecological web of relationships. Teacher educators can learn, therefore, a great deal about themselves and their relationships to their students by exploring this metaphorical image.

The image of the classroom as a living ecological web of relationships is a favorite metaphor used to describe the structure and functioning of the American public schools. This metaphor is grounded in the image of caring, sharing, and of mutual coexistence; the implication here is that since we are all connected, we should all act cooperatively to maintain and preserve our collective work environments. Here, one sees oneself and others as part of a collective whole, an organic "Gaia," a universal classroom, a part of an interconnected bioregionally based web of community alliances and obligations. At its core, then, the living ecological web metaphor resonates with a concern for the delicacy of the strands that connect us and provide us with sustenance — it dramatically captures the theme that we affect everything and everything affects us. Perhaps Teilhard de Chardin expressed it best when he wrote:

> "The farther and more deeply we penetrate into matter, by means of increasingly powerful methods, the

> more we are confounded by the interdependence of its parts. Each element of the cosmos is positively woven from all the others.... It is impossible to cut into this network, to isolate a portion without it becoming frayed and unraveled at all its edges. All around us, as far as the eye can see, the universe holds together, and only one way of considering it is really possible, that is, to take it as a whole, in one piece. (Chardin, quoted in Miller 1993a, 76)

The critical postmodern educator, however, is also aware that this web can entrap and ensnarl its prey as well as nurture and protect its allies. For example, most American public school teachers must work under conditions largely beyond their control, implementing national and state-mandated standards, curriculum, textbooks, evaluation, and testing in which they have little or no input (Miller 1995). Not unexpectedly, this sort of top-down "colonization" of teachers and students has resulted in myriad forms of teacher and student subservience, passivity, and acquiescence, as well as disruption, resistance, and revolt.

The development of a critical classroom pedagogy, therefore, rests on the difficult and demanding task of becoming familiar with the new "language of critique." Words such as: boundary crossing, commodification, discourse, counter-discourse, counter-hegemonic practices, critical consciousness, demystification, cultural capital, cultural reproduction, cultural worker, deconstruction, deficit model, dialectics, domesticate, dominant ideologies, false consciousness, grand/totalizing/master narratives, hegemony, hermeneutics, hidden curriculum, historical amnesia, internalized oppression, logocentrism, marginalize, metanarrative, objectification, political awareness, positionality, positivism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, praxis, problematize, resistance, oppositional identity, subordinated cultures, technocratic, telecratic, and voice must become woven into the very fabric of how teachers construct and make meaning out of even the most mundane, ordinary, everyday classroom events and practices. It is this new "language of critique" that can assist postmodern educators in their daily classroom struggles to ensure that equality, social justice, and tolerance for diversity are the strong supporting strands that form the foundational core in everyday classroom processes and practices.

The metaphor of "the classroom as an ecological web" is one that the constructive postmodern teacher can successfully employ to counter the top-down, control-oriented modes of "democratic" restructuring that have resulted in the decline of local schools and communities as repositories of local commitment, loyalty, and obligation. In her book, *African American Mothers and Urban Schools: The Power of Participation*, Winters tell us that "communities [as well as classrooms] should be a place where compassion abounds and where individuals are valued for their uniqueness" (Winters 1993, 110). It is only by a revival of such intimate school-community relationships that authentic local traditions and values can flourish, be reinforced and celebrated. In recent works John Miller (1985, 1993a, 1993b, 1994) has been carefully working out the dimensions of a new transformational "holistic" approach to classroom practice that is grounded in a rich network of human-scale, community-based, ecological webs. He writes,

> The focus of holistic education is on relationships ... the relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationships between various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and community, and the relationship between the self and the Self. In the holistic curriculum, the student examines these relationships so that he/she gains both an awareness of them and the skills necessary to transform the relationships where it is appropriate. (Miller, 1993a, 73)

The postmodern classroom teacher is intuitively aware that this web of relationships begins with the internal web of relationships that each child weaves within. The cultivation of such awareness, of the intimate web of relationships that connect us all, lies at the heart of Buddhism, Taoism, and other Eastern philosophies and is also embedded deeply within the Native-American wisdom traditions, the African-American folk cultures, as well as the American Transcendental movement (Katagiri 1988; Miller 1967; Suzuki and Knudtson 1992; Suzuki 1970; Thich Nhat Hanh 1975, 1987).

Most of us get so busy teaching the "required" curriculum that we forget to ask ourselves what a real education (and person) should really be? Try asking yourself from time to time in the classroom: Am I awake right now? Am I aware of the creative possibilities in this moment for myself and my students? The postmodern classroom teacher is attuned to the unique opportunities that each moment presents for connecting and weaving new webs of relationships within the local school-community nexus. Parents are welcomed guests and volunteers in the postmodern classroom. Teachers and students share tasks and conegotiate learning options in educational cultures that are collegial, respectful, and collaborative. In making the metaphorical imagery of

"the classroom as a living ecological web of relationships" come alive in one's spirit, postmodern classroom teachers can (re)envision for themselves and their students how local schools can become rich resources for exploration, adventure, and discovery as well as joyful places to grow in strength, wisdom, and compassion.

### Summary

Still marginal to mainstream academic conversations, this emerging revisionary constructive postmodernism is struggling to move us beyond the modern world's drive toward greater mechanization, economism, nationalism, consumerism, militarism, rugged individualism, and patriarchy. It is uniquely suited to help us (re)envision ecologically viable postmodern ways of relating to self, community, nature, and the cosmos. The scope of the present crisis underscores the powerful need for a collaborative praxis/dialogue between critical poststructural postmoderns and constructive, (re)visionary postmoderns.

### Note

1. The author is grateful for conversations with Paul Gallimore, Director of the Long Branch Environmental Center in Leicester, NC, for helping her conceptualize the themes upon which this section is premised.

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# Could It Happen Here?

## Gay Fawcett

As I walked into the Holocaust Museum, I was handed a passport and became, for a few hours, Eta Rubenstein. I tried to put myself in Eta's place as I watched filmclips of events leading to Hitler's rise to power: social unrest, bread lines, unemployment. Did I watch from my window? Did I stand in line? Did I long for a leader who would bring hope to my country?

I tried to live Eta's confusion as I viewed artifacts from the concentration camps. Were those my shoes lying among thousands of others — no longer needed by their owners? Was that a lock of my hair in the pile that would be collected and hauled off to the pillow factory? Was that my child facing Mendele's sinister medical experiments?

I tried to feel Eta's bittersweet pain as I listened to survivors tell of their liberation from the camps as the Allies stormed into Germany. But I couldn't do that; Eta didn't survive. At the end of the tour I dropped Eta's passport into a box and stepped into a bitter cold Washington day. I was depressed and frightened.

"We can't allow this to happen again," I said passionately to my friend, trying to block thoughts of Bosnia, South Africa, and, yes, Los Angeles. "The only hope we have is our children," I said. "This is what our schools should be about." "It could never happen here," my friend replied.

On the walk back to our hotel, we passed the White House. I pondered our nation's ideal of what schools should be for. I thought about the emphases in Goals 2000 of being "... first in the world in math and science achievement" (p. 14) and of "compet[ition] in a global economy" (National Education Goals Panel 1994, 14). I knew I had to visit the Jefferson Memorial the next day — to revisit the founding of our public schools.

As I looked at Jefferson's imposing statue, I thought of his ideal of education — that the human mind free to inquire and contemplate would seek truth, find it, and serve it (Ulich 1971). Have the minds of our students in Los Angeles been free to inquire? Are the students living in poverty in East St. Louis contemplating truth? Will the pampered students in our wealthy suburbs serve the truth when, as adults, their generation faces yet another Bosnia?

Has the fourth grade teacher in a nearby elementary school talked with her students about tolerance and understanding? Or do the students spend their days practicing skills that will be on the state proficiency test? Has the history teacher in my town's high school asked his students to participate in projects that will serve those with heavy burdens, or does he consider his students participants in democracy when he gets his 18-year-old seniors registered to vote? Is inquiry a way of life in the nearby university? Or do the professors transmit and test their own understandings?

Americans have appropriated Jefferson's language, we are quick to write "vision statements" for our schools that speak of preparing students for a democratic society. But have we lost sight of Jefferson's ideal? Are we really dedicated to education for democratic civility? Or have we decided that the purpose of schools is to advance our competitiveness in a global economy, to beat other countries on math and science tests, and to prepare students to get jobs?

I am writing this as I sit in a meeting sponsored by the U.S. government. Participants are recipients of Federal Challenge Grants for Technology in Education. I've anguished in the four months since our office was awarded one of the grants about how we can best use technology to support a curriculum that helps us examine what we are about as human beings. In front of me is a handout stating, "The President has set a national goal of providing all students access to computers and to the national information infrastructure." Around me people are talking about one computer for every five kids, the size of pipelines, and preparing students to get jobs. They haven't talked about the purpose of schools — or have they? My friend says it can't happen here. But I'm depressed and frightened.

*Gay Fawcett is Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Summit County (Ohio) Educational Service Center. She is an associate editor of the Reading Teacher and has published in Language Arts, Educational Leadership, Kappan, and other journals.*

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# Book Reviews

## A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls

by Susannah Sheffer

Published by Boynton-Cook (Portsmouth, NH), 1995, 191 pp. Hardcover, $22.95

### Reviewed by Lynne M. Lieberman

The most recent feminist movement, which began in the 1970s, brought with it an increased curiosity about who women were and what they were about. Jean Baker Miller's book *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, *Ms* magazine, and Gloria Steinham, to name just a few, all took a long hard look at the ways in which women were defined and portrayed, and found them sorely lacking. One of the major problems was that women were being defined by men and in men's terms. Carol Gilligan noticed that by Kohlberg's definition of moral development, women never attained the highest levels. In the psychological profile studies done by Braverman and Braverman, a healthy woman was defined by the same characteristics that defined an unhealthy person. By person, of course, was implied man. Independence, autonomy, and separation have been, and still are, considered to be the hallmarks of healthy maturity. Connection, empathy, and nurturance are thought to be nice traits in a mother, but won't get you high points as an "achieving adult." By and large, women have had an implied choice: to be "feminine" and considered nice but not terribly effective or to be more aggressive, more "male," and be considered effective, but neither feminine nor nice.

In the last decade, studies have focused on adolescent girls and the psychological toll this dilemma takes on them. Many of these studies have concentrated on preadolescent and adolescent girls in their school settings, e.g., *Making Connections: The Relational World of Girls at Emma Willard School* by Carol Gilligan et al.; *Meeting at the Crossroads: Woman's Psychology and Girls' Development* by Lyn Mikel Brown; and Carol Gilligan; and *School Girls: Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap* by Peggy Orenstein. Others focused on other relationships: *The Mother-Daughter Revolution: From Betrayal to Power* by Elizabeth Diebold et al. and *Girls and Psychotherapy: Reframing Resistance* by Carol Gilligan et al. These are examples; there are others.

With depressing uniformity, what these authors and researchers have found is that adolescent girls, caught in this definitional dilemma are also caught in a relational dilemma: to give up parts of themselves in order to maintain connections or to hold onto what they know and feel and risk losing relationships. The risk is not an imaginary one. Women who are insistent about who they are and what they believe in are most often called names that begin with "B" and rhyme with "witch"! More and more, the studies showed, girls silence themselves in response to being silenced by others or watching other girls and women around them be silenced. Our society loses half its voice.

Susannah Sheffer's *A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls* challenges the inevitability of this process. Asking many of the same or similar questions as those Carol Gilligan and her colleagues asked adolescent girls, Ms. Sheffer states she heard very different answers. Her population was 55 homeschooled adolescent girls ranging in age from 11 to 16. Where Gilligan's study found girls this age to be on the verge of, or over the threshold of, silencing themselves, fitting themselves into a mold of who they thought they should be, Ms. Sheffer states that the homeschooled girls were far more likely to be positive about who they were and what they thought. Rather than give up their thoughts or feelings when faced with controversy or contradiction, these girls stood their ground, sometimes relishing the ensuing argument, other times demanding to be seen and heard for who they were, even at the risk of making someone mad at them. Several girls are quoted saying variations on the theme of: "if they don't accept me for who I am, then who needs that relationship." This sentiment does seem remarkable given the findings of other studies of adolescent girls. Sheffer's adolescents do still want to be liked and even considered "nice," but the quotations she presents indicate a far greater expectation that they will be liked even if they hold firm to what they believe in.

Ms. Sheffer's hypothesis about why these girls appear so much more able to speak their truths has everything to do with their being homeschooled. First, she states, the very act of homeschooling is an act of resistance to a culture that supports in-school education. Also, many of these girls had to fight to be heard about their experiences and feelings in order to be homeschooled. Ms. Sheffer believes this act of resistance sets the stage for resisting other cultural disempowering messages. Furthermore, she states, homeschooling is based on a girl's own choices and style: particularly by adolescence, a homeschooled adolescent is usually choosing what, how, and with whom to study, how to spend the majority of her time, and how to judge her own performance and learning. It is this experience of

competence and agency that allows homeschooled girls to believe in their own worth.

Although Ms. Sheffer rejoices in this finding, it leaves me feeling less optimistic. Must adolescent girls be homeschooled to maintain their voice? Despite the author's attempt to claim this is a viable option for diverse families, it is, in fact, not truly an option for most. Inner-city girls would have far fewer opportunities available to them to aid them in their endeavors. Most two-parent, full-time working families could not arrange schedules to accommodate homeschooling. How do we as professionals who work with teenage girls, either in schools or elsewhere, think about this problem? If Ms. Sheffer is correct that having the authority to make choices, to see oneself as agentic and a resister, empowers girls to hold onto their own truths, then how do we supply our society's young girls with these opportunities? Can we adapt our schools in ways that encourage choice and agency?

It is important to remember that what adolescent girls do in their relationships stems from their wish to preserve the connections they have with others. This desire is an honorable one. It is through our connections and our relationships that we learn who we are. As stated earlier, our society values autonomy and separation and devalues those skills that maintain and foster connection. It has, thus, fallen primarily to women to do the work of maintaining relationships. It is this split that forces adolescent girls, and women, into those definitional and relational dilemmas described earlier.

Ms. Sheffer writes clearly and powerfully about the ways in which these homeschooled adolescents resist silencing themselves. She mentions, only in passing, however, the struggles involved in valuing oneself and valuing relationship. Independence outside of relationship leads to disconnections and devaluing of so-called feminine traits. It would be important to know more about how these homeschooled adolescent girls manage the struggle to care for the relationship at the same time that they maintain their own voice. Does the ability to speak out loud mean girls value autonomy and independence over relationship? Can we enable girls to become resisters to losing their voice while maintaining the ability to attend to connections? Too often in our culture these two tasks become separate, done by different people.

If Ms. Sheffer is correct that these homeschooled girls have an advantage over other adolescent girls, we need to understand more about why this is so and learn ways to encourage the same abilities in all teenage girls. *A Sense of Self* describes one path. The ideas it promotes and the questions it raises demand our attention and explorations of further paths. Our society cannot afford to keep losing half its voice.

## Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society: A Critique of National Goals, Standards, and Curriculum

Edited by Ron Miller

Published by the Resource Center for Redesigning Education (P.O. Box 298, Brandon, VT 05733), 1995; 284 pp. Paper, $18.95.

### Reviewed by Frances O'Connell Rust

*Goals 2000*, like numerous educational reform initiatives, has spurred heated debate about the role of the federal government in education and the purposes of schooling in a democratic society. One perspective in this debate is articulated by the authors whom Ron Miller has brought together as contributors to *Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society: A Critique of National Goals, Standards, and Curriculum*. The central argument of the book runs along the following lines: With the passage of *Goals 2000*, the federal government has usurped state and individual rights to determine the content and process of our children's education, a task which, according to these authors, should devolve to families and communities. "In this book," writes Miller, "we are arguing that education should not be used as it has been for the past 150 years — as an agency of intellectual, cultural, and moral uniformity, as a means of imposing one or another cultural perspective on the lives of young people and their families" (pp. 3-4). These authors argue against public education and for individual initiative in matters of schooling. Some, like Pat Farenga and Linda Dobson, argue specifically for a type of education — homeschooling; others like Seth Rockmuller and Katharine Houk, Jeffrey Kane, Gary Lamb, Ronald Milito, and Stephen Arons argue more generally for the rights of individuals and communities to determine the content of their children's education and the ways in which it should take place.

Now, this is not a new discussion. Every 30 years or so, this debate reenters the national consciousness, and

*Frances O'Connell Rust is associate professor and coordinator of the Undergraduate Early Childhood and Elementary Education Program in the Department of Teaching and Learning at New York University where she works with student teachers, Professional Development Laboratory resident teachers in the Teacher Leadership Institute, and Head Start teachers who are part of a four-year staff development project that she designed and implements with two other NYU faculty.*

the federal government, the states, and various education organizations issue reports, commit funds, develop curriculum and standards, and press for change. The debate then fades and teachers, schools, and families are left to muddle through albeit with some new factors shaping their interactions. So, one way to respond to this book is to note that *Goals 2000*, if it ever was of much import to the average person, is quickly becoming a non-issue. It has spawned a number of reforms, most notably the development of curriculum standards by almost every organization representing the various "disciplines" currently taught in schools. We are beginning to cope with and assimilate these and look at their impact on teaching, schools, and education in general.

However, with the exception of an article by Patrick Shannon on the undemocratic development of the English standards by NCTE, there is no effort in this volume to look at the impact of *Goals 2000* where history would tell us it will most likely be felt — in curriculum and teaching. Instead, we are led through various discussions of the rhetoric of *Goals 2000* all of which decry in one way or another the language of the law, its focus on "human capital," and the arrogation of responsibility by the federal government. The fact is that the Constitution leaves education to the states, and the states via their governors and representatives have moved increasingly toward the embrace of federal aid. None of these authors seem to pay attention to the fact that *Goals 2000* grew out of an initiative of state governors who wanted, even demanded, help from Washington, or that it was voted into law by state representatives in the House and Senate, or that there is not now nor has there been a hue and cry from the states about it. No one takes time to acknowledge some of the most important legacies of federal involvement in education, namely, school desegregation and education for the handicapped.

However, more needs to be said about the tone of this collection and particularly about what has been left out. To my way of thinking, advocating cutting off funding for public education and dismantling the whole thing because of the articulation of a set of national standards is such a naive, simplistic, and "privileged" response that it suggests an impressive insensitivity, even blindness, both to the critical role of schools and education in the shaping and reshaping of this nation and to the inequities that are rife in the very fabric of this society. Two excellent articles — one by Harold Berlak and one by David Purpel — draw attention to deep rifts within our society and to the dangers inherent in policies that attempt to legislate these away. As Purpel writes,

> If there ever was a time for those who aspire to leadership and responsibility to speak out with passion and conviction on our shared vision of an end to poverty, to unnecessary human suffering, to homelessness, to humiliation, to authoritarianism, and to anything else standing in the way of a life of meaning and dignity for all people, this is surely it.... As responsible professionals, we are uniquely positioned to affirm the capacity of education to contribute to a consciousness of compassion and justice. (p. 168)

Purpel has put his finger on what's wrong with *Goals 2000*, but the troubling thing about this volume is that with the exception of his and Berlak's articles, it is devoid of thoughtful, incisive pieces that might focus educational debate on possible futures, pieces that might point out the serious flaws in *Goals 2000* for the education of children of poverty, pieces that acknowledge and grapple seriously with the inequities that are rife in our schooling. What most of these authors do here is just what they accuse the federal government of doing: They attempt to impose an orthodoxy on the rest of us as they argue against public education and for individual initiative.

There are some perennial questions that must be asked in any discussion of education and schooling — questions such as "What knowledge has most worth?" "Who decides?" "Who is in control?" "How do we decide what is good?" All of these revolve around questions of purpose and power. Nel Noddings focuses on goal setting and concludes that "national goals can only distract attention from matters of great local importance" (p. 85). She's correct, but putting the problems of poor children and their families entirely in the hands of localities can only serve to divert the national consciousness away from the plight that these people face.

A story might help to illustrate my point. For the past several years, I have been working as a staff developer and researcher with a small group of Head Start Centers in New York City. Teachers, parents, and administrators in these centers are working very hard and sometimes against great odds to help the children whom they serve to get a good education. They are working to help these children and their families move beyond the narrow circle of opportunity that is defined for them by poverty and prejudice. And, in spite of the odds against them, they are succeeding in big and small ways: Children are leaving these centers speaking English, aware of and participating in rich language environments that have supported their emergent literacy and mathematical thinking. Children are leaving these centers bound for kindergarten in public and parochial schools with confidence about themselves as learners. Children are leaving these centers ready for school.

What they and their parents often find, however, is that the schools are rarely ready for them, rarely open to seeing as strengths the diversity of languages, cul-

tures, and learning styles that these children and their families bring. More often than not, these bright, exciting, talented children experience school as a closing of doors that had appeared to be open and as a dimming of dreams.

For Head Start teachers, parents, and children, a free public education holds promise. For these people, the possibility that someone might hold schools and teachers accountable is cause for hope. They have found the intervention of the federal government in their children's education via Head Start to be something of value. They do not find similar commitment, foresight, or concern in state and municipal activities relating to education. And most of them do not have the luxury of choosing among a variety of alternatives including homeschooling. These people are living in the bleak "communities" of Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*; theirs are the stories from which he has constructed *Amazing Grace*.

It is because I am so aware of these stories and of the tremendous inequities that are part of the educational landscape of this country that I found many of the articles in this collection deeply troubling. What many of these authors seem to miss is that the people who might be most affected by Goals 2000 are the ones who have the least ability to shape the educational experience of their children. As Lynn Stoddard points out in his article "The Secret of Education," "True respect of individuals requires a fundamental change in the way schools are managed and do business" (p. 255). And as James Moffet notes in his article "Reforming School Reform," "Merely blaming school people will change nothing. They need help from a society that will take responsibility for what they cannot control" (p. 55).

The answer then is not to get rid of public education and substitute local initiatives. *Goals 2000* does not take away our right as individuals to choose other options for our children's education. A free, public education is *the* great American innovation. As citizens, I believe that we have an obligation to support and contribute to the public weal. Furthermore, I believe that an educated citizenry is essential to democracy. I know I would have sided with Horace Mann and his colleagues at the end of the last century when they pushed for compulsory schooling because I am convinced that we cannot do this important work of education without a conscious, thoughtful, widely participated in discussion, even debate, on the critical issues in education. *Goals 2000* has rekindled that debate. The response should not be to isolate ourselves among enclaves of like-minded others but, instead, to embrace the challenge that this initiative poses.

There are problems with *Goals 2000*. No doubt about it. One of the most egregious ones is the fact that it came from politicians not educators. As Moffet points out here,

> We already know what works. More practical evidence exists for effective learning than special research could ever tell us. The prospect for reform is much more positive than it looks: find out how to act on what we know about learning, and don't let politics and economics obscure this obvious practical knowledge staring us in the face from the whole environment. (p. 55)

To this, I would add, act in community, act in the belief that we, as educators, can do much to shape the future in ways that work for *all* of us.

## School with Forest and Meadow

by Ikue Tezuka

Translated from Japanese by Katsusuke Hori; edited by Dayle M. Bethel, illustrations by Etsuko Kibai

Published by Caddo Gap Press (San Francisco), 1995, 150 pp. Paper, $17.95

### Reviewed by Nathaniel Needle

*School with Forest and Meadow* is a valuable addition to the literature on holistic and experiential education. It provides us with detailed descriptions of learning activities, and the philosophy behind them, in schools under Giichiro Yamanouchi's direction throughout his remarkable career.

Yamanouchi, born in 1931 in Niigata prefecture in Japan and now retired, "taught in elementary schools for many years, and served as principal for five schools. He believes that the central purpose of education is the creation of joy, and he has devoted his life to developing methods of learning and teaching which make learning joyful and exciting for children" (from the book's preface). Yamanouchi's efforts as an innovative educator matured during his first job as principal. The school was in a village of 900 people deep in the mountains, where "snow, up to four meters deep, stops traffic and isolates the village at times during the winter" (p. 33). It was his desire to "perceive the village and its school as a unity" (p. 34) that brought forth his basic approach.

The core elements of Yamanouchi's educational practice stand in marked contrast to conventional Japanese education. Indeed, taken together, they reveal a

***Nathaniel Needle, Ed.D., has been Dean of the Campus High School at Clonlara School since 1991, working with teenagers in a democratic, noncoercive, and holistic "alternative to school." This fall, he will move to Japan to work with Dayle M. Bethel as Assistant Director of the Kyoto Learning Center.***

holistic culture that goes far beyond mere "reform" or any tinkering with curricular content. The following approaches clearly confirm Yamanouchi's visionary role.

*Creating connections with the community.* Educators develop projects that connect children to adults in the community who have experience related to the project. In this way, the school brings people of different ages together so as to enrich the educational life of the whole community, rather than making a wall to keep children separate from the business of adults. Through such connections, children learn how to raise carp, make noodles, and plant forests. In a larger sense, connection with the community means rooting education in an appreciation of one's relationship to, and responsibility for, the earth and all its creatures.

*Trusting in the power of "integrated experiences."* Within the context of growing sunflowers or protecting local wildlife, children prepare charts, write essays and poetry, make observations, and learn about the history of their community. It is more important that children live a full, enriching life through meaningful activity than it is to worry whether precise lists of information are being "covered." There is faith that children will grow to be alert, productive, and peaceful through a life of such activity:

> The most important responsibility of teachers is to help children grow to be a human being; having much knowledge is not important. To think for oneself, to learn independently, to treat others kindly and fairly, to work with friends, to encourage others, to say what one thinks, and to act as one thinks: these are the things which are important. In other words, a child needs help in developing all aspects of her personality and her life as a human being. These things cannot be taught from textbooks. This is why integrated activity is so vital for children's learning. (p. 45)

*Establishing humane, respectful relationships between teachers and students.* Teachers are taught and encouraged, through staff meetings and by the example of others, to promote group deliberation instead of sheer authority and to act in a spirit of friendship and affection rather than creating distance in order to facilitate control. "Within the safety and security of a caring, nurturing community whose adult members perceive themselves as partners with children and teachers in learning and community-building and with opportunity for interaction with the natural world of the community, children can develop as socially and environmentally aware and responsible human beings" (p. 100).

*Making use of the full range of human expression to promote learning.* Within the context of some global mission, teachers lead students through exercises and experiences that call attention to all five senses as gateways for appreciation of the matter at hand. For example, physically, almost ritually, acting out the life cycle of sunflowers or birds helps young children empathize with their subject. Walks through nature, touching and exploring trees, is important preparation for efforts at conservation and reforestation. Also, according to Yamanouchi, "the key to motivating children to develop their own relationship to learning materials and to extract the possibilities resident within them is the use of fantasy and imagery in learning activities."

Yamanouchi stresses the concept of "learning through joy." This joy is threefold: the joy of *being able to do*, the joy of *understanding*, and the joy of *making decisions*.

With respect to students making decisions, U.S. alternative educators from democratic schools, or those with a specific interest in this area, may not find much guidance. The reader has to reconcile statements that seem to advocate students' pursuit of personal interests with statements that argue for direction by teachers. Yamanouchi says it is important "to express oneself freely without following orders from someone else" (pp. 70-71). According to Ms. Tezuka, the integrated activities that "draw on the children's own inner energy and power ... cannot happen when a school's activities are dominated by teachers" (p. 48). However, Yamanouchi also says:

> I place high value on what the children learn for themselves, but that does not mean letting them do whatever they want. There are some who believe that children will develop an independent mind and a confident, mature personality if we let them do whatever they want. But in most cases this results in the children's doing nothing more than following their temporary whims. If left entirely to themselves, children do not have the ability to pursue activities in depth. They aren't able to reach really deep experience which can advance to joy, vivid impression, and awareness. Thus, they need adult help in developing exciting, meaningful activities. (pp. 45-46)

I was able to gather a sense of how this seeming contradiction works out in practice within Yamanouchi's school. My impression is that it is the staff that invents and designs the basic themes and projects that serve as the basis for most student activity. But within this context, staff are probably on the lookout for students' spontaneous ideas and interests that might serve as inspiration for such plans. Although the organization for each project remains within the control of staff, I imagine that staff make a special effort to solicit ideas from students and to create opportunities for personal choice and decision-making within such a framework.

Further, I imagine that teachers rely upon the students' sincere enthusiasm for a project to keep it mov-

ing, rather than on overt or covert threats of failure or promises of extrinsic rewards. Therefore, teachers act so as to enlist honest cooperation rather than mere obedience. Since it is precisely this joyous, cooperative spirit that is the priority and not mere productivity or conceptual mastery, staff direction must be attuned to the ideas, longings, and natural learnings of the students. In addition, Yamanouchi recommends that there be time included in the week for genuine "independent activity" as well, so that students can have the experience of planning their own time.

In the United States, I suspect that aspects of this approach can be found in hundreds of public and private elementary schools, although these still constitute a minority. So to the American reader, as compared to the Japanese one, Yamanouchi's efforts may not seem so unusual. In the elementary public school where I taught in rural Massachusetts, for example, I was not alone in using global themes to organize and unite children's experiences. I learned a good deal from other teachers about using hands-on experience, music, drama, art, poetry, and movement to make learning come alive for students. I also had considerable support for taking students outside the school and bringing adults from the community in. Perhaps my school district was more progressive than most. Even so, I would say that within U.S. elementary education, although Yamanouchi's vision would be seen as quite progressive, it is not completely outside mainstream thinking. (At the secondary level, however, such attitudes become rare, even in the U.S.)

It is nonetheless true that the philosophy underlying such efforts has to work within the basic belief that still overwhelmingly dominates the American educational landscape: that ensuring the performance of specific, predetermined academic skills is the purpose of education, and that standardized testing is the means, not only for comparing students to each other, but for judging the quality of each school.

Within Japan, this notion is even more firmly entrenched in the public mind. Family life as well as school life is thoroughly oriented by it. That Yamanouchi was able to touch the hearts of not only the parents and students in the school but of the village population in general is a testament to his personal character as well as to the fundamental wisdom of his ideas and obviousness of their results. Given the situation in Japan, the refreshing and enlightening power of this book, with its spiritual as well as practical orientation cannot be mistaken. I hope it inspires other Japanese parents to call for change. At the least, it should reveal clearly the gulf between the reality of most schooling in Japan and what is truly possible for children to do with their lives. That American public schools might use it as a blueprint for self-transformation seems even more feasible.

Ikue Tezuka's poetic account of Yamanouchi's life and work is supplemented by a number of illuminating treats: Professor Jack Miller's Introduction, which exhorts us to be attentive to "universal" as well as culturally "contextual" elements in holistic education; Yamanouchi's own rendering of his philosophy in simple, direct terms; Masasuke Kuroda's background information on the general educational situation in Japan (especially helpful for the foreign reader); and Professor Dayle Bethel's blow-by-blow narrative of the unfolding alternative education network in Japan's Kansai region, which includes Kobe, Kyoto, Osaka, and nearby cities. The drawings by Etsuko Kibai capture the warm and playful spirit of Yamanouchi's world nicely and give the imagination a helping hand.

Finally, Katsusuke Hori's translation raises few barriers to understanding. Yamanouchi's sublime musings come across clearly. Vivid pictures of daily life in the village and the school emerge. Even the children's poems sound authentic: "Roots are pretty, white, and funny/They are winding and go right and left/They are playing tug of war/They go under the soil/Sometimes they are thin" (by Nozomi Nagahashi, second grade). Adults and children alike find joy and self-knowledge through a deep raport with nature. Tezuka and Yamanouchi show us an alternative to industrial, technological education in which the best preparation for the future begins with finding the way back to our own "roots."

## The Private Eye: (5x) Looking/Thinking by Analogy

by Kerry Ruef

Published by Private Eye Project (Seattle), 1994, 224 pp. Paper, $18.95

### Reviewed by Stephen Sagarin

This is more than a book review; it is a review of an educational program called "The Private Eye Project," founded by Kerry Ruef, writer and educator, as represented by a promotional package that included a 5x

*Stephen Sagarin is a Ph.D. candidate in American History and Education at Columbia University. His dissertation will be on the history of Waldorf education in the United States. He teaches part-time at the Waldorf School in Garden City, NY, where he has taught art, art history, architectural history, math, and genetics and evolution, among other subjects, for ten years.*

loupe and an extended guide for its use. The guide, *The Private Eye: (5x) Looking/Thinking by Analogy*, is the book that forms the basis for the substance of this review, although I did spend one afternoon using the program with my own children.

In a nutshell, here is "The Private Eye" in practice: A student looks through a jeweler's loupe at something familiar (or unfamiliar), the tip of her own finger, for example, and sees it anew, magnified five times. She asks, "What else does it look like? What does it remind me of?" She writes a list of analogies. She draws what she sees or writes a poem about it. She speculates about the structure and function of what she sees. What she sees may become the basis for a work of art, a poem, a conversation, or a science project. In the words of Kerry Ruef:

> Hands-on, investigative, *The Private Eye* is about the drama and wonder of looking closely at the world, thinking by analogy, changing the scale and theorizing.... The *Private Eye* develops the interdisciplinary mind."

The bottom line, of course, is this: Would I use this program, essentially a magnifying device and a structured investigation involving questions of quality as well as of quantity to look at the world with my students? Yes, as a springboard into many investigations of the natural world it seems appropriate and helpful. But in order to recommend it wholeheartedly I would wish that some of its inconsistencies were worked out and that it presented alternatives to some of its more conventional views.

The first thing to point out is that this is an interdisciplinary program, not necessarily a holistic one, although I believe that *The Private Eye* could be adapted easily to fit the requirements of holistic teachers. By a holistic approach I mean one that sees questions of quality and value as inseparable from questions of quantity. Two paradigmatic examples of this kind of research are Goethe's investigation of color and Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees. A holistic approach recognizes the impossibility of separating the world into an objective, scientific, quantifiable part and a subjective, artistic, qualifiable part.

Next, and this is not denied by the author, I should point out that the loupe is actually incidental to the program as a whole; there is no reason one cannot (and most of us do, to a certain extent) develop skills in observation and theorizing without intensive use of a loupe or any other magnifying instrument. The loupe is presented, however, as a tool that shuts out the world beyond the specimen examined, presenting an extraordinary and intimate view of common phenomena: seeds, insects, barnacles, feathers, a goldfish cracker, and on and on.

As my own children demonstrated quickly and as Kerry Ruef emphasizes, the magnified image alone is not enough to captivate the imagination and industry of students. By asking questions, however, particularly by asking for analogies with what is seen, by drawing pictures of it, and by hypothesizing about its structure and function, students' interest may be maintained while they explore the world in a manner simultaneously scientific and artistic.

"Looking closely, thinking by analogy, changing scale and theorizing," the four skills or "tools" *The Private Eye* claims to develop, are taken to be hallmarks of all creative work, from that of a scientist to that of a humorist. It doesn't seem essential to investigate here whether the claims for these abilities are true, but rather to decide if the project develops them as it says it does. In general, the strengths of the program lie in its abilities to "generate" thinking by analogy and to lead students to change scale in their thinking; to perceive, for example, that the cracks in a dried cracker are similar to the cracks in a dry lake bed.

The first and last "tools," however, bear a closer look. "Looking closely," although it is absolutely essential to the project as a whole (and to anyone's vision of science or art, I would imagine), is somewhat taken for granted here. As a teacher of both art and science, I know from experience how difficult it is to get students to observe phenomena that are right in front of them. *The Private Eye*, although it emphasizes looking closely, actually begins the formal process with the question: "What *else* does this thing look like?" (emphasis in original) I argue, however, that I cannot know what *else* it looks like if I haven't seen it clearly to begin with. "What do I actually see?" is the mundane but necessary first question. The concrete results of this leap to analogy in *The Private Eye*, for example, are pictures of students' fingerprints done in unnatural colors, pictures that seem often to miss essential or obvious details of the fingertip, the exact way it presents a patterned labyrinth, for example. Part of the difficulty, here and elsewhere in the book is the "conventionality" of the drawings which rely on outlines, abstractions from what we actually see, to portray delicate and seamless phenomena. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964) pointed out in "Eye and Mind," "... there are no lines visible in themselves.... neither the contour of the apple nor the border between field and meadow is in *this* place or that" (emphasis in original). Obviously, the use of *The Private Eye* here, as in almost all aspects, relies in large part on the teacher. How well can she lead her students to draw what they see, not what they believe they see, not what convention would have them see?

Furthermore, to see analogies as useful for writing poems or conducting scientific investigations, but not in genuinely relating quantity to quality, is to indulge in a nonholistic "two-realm" theory of truth. From this point of view, quantity and quality or science and art are equally coherent and valid investigations into natural phenomena, but they are in no way commensurable. We may, taking a fork in the road of research, look into one or the other but not both simultaneously. This dualistic view of nature is exactly what holistic education aims to overturn, I believe. Unfortunately, despite some claims to the contrary, almost all of the projects suggested by *The Private Eye* do not attempt to overcome this dichotomy. Here again, the onus lies on the teacher to present projects that strive toward holism. The key to a synthesis of these realms is to unite the students' own human experiences with more "objective" phenomena. Perception of color, for example, is not primarily a "colorless" process involving particle waves and photons that impinges on the passive human retina, but an active synthetic process involving both the psychological "subjective" intention of the viewer and the more "objective" physical phenomena.

The final "tool," theorizing, also is problematic. By pushing beyond analogy to hypotheses regarding, for example, the hexagonal close-packing of the cells of a beehive, teachers must beware of the deadening possibilities of taking only a structural or functional approach to scientific understanding, the approach most advocated by *The Private Eye*. Although it is almost certainly true that structures and functions have a rationality that we can appreciate, in no way does any answer to a structural or functional question close the question "Why?" More importantly, structural and functional approaches to natural phenomena have lead to control over nature rather than to a recognition of the mutual interdependence of human beings and other natural phenomena. To end an investigation with "theories of use" is to risk closing a child's mind. The danger here is that *The Private Eye*, rather than fulfilling its promise of awakening wonder, will serve only to make more palatable a conventional and ultimately fractured view of the world.

Two other concerns I have with *The Private Eye* are more easily addressed, and I will mention them in passing.

The book seems to condone killing bugs and otherwise "taking parts" of the world to examine (it does not present alternatives, such as finding dead bees at the front of a hive, or flies on a windowsill). Any teacher who has difficulty with this, as I do, can simply stress a different approach to his or her students.

The awkward subtitle of the guide, *(5x) Looking/Thinking By Analogy*, for example, represents one aspect of the program that needs to be improved, regardless of its merits: its presentation. I appreciate the author's efforts to make the book engaging and to present the material more creatively than do most generic textbooks, but the result is somewhat coy and difficult to read. The design is chock-full of different typefaces, little graphics, and quotations, and the text is simply awkward: "As you collect you'll loupe-analogy look." Also, it is difficult to separate the substance of the book from promotions for the program in general. I soon tired of the book telling me how wonderful the program is; I would like to be the judge of that myself.

*The Private Eye*, despite my criticisms, is well worth looking into. Direct observation through the loupe is far better than observation of flat, immovable photographs in textbooks. An investigation that values art and poetry on par with science is more humanizing than one that does not. Finally, any holistic synthesis of a student's experience and the natural world must include the teacher as a catalyst. *The Private Eye* provides a wealth of ideas for projects that can become a springboard toward such a synthesis.

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