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ARTICLES

DEPARTMENTS

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

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EDITORIAL

The Unicorn: A Vision of Hope

In so many ways, it is frightening to be alive at this point in history. Industrial civilization is destroying the ecosystem of the planet; nuclear wastes and toxic materials despoil our air, water, soil, and food. Genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, "Star Wars," and other technologies portend ominous human and political consequences. Decisions affecting the life and health of our communities are increasingly dictated by government bureaucracies and megacorporations. War, repression, racism, crime, and terrorism haunt every continent on the planet. Millions of people are dispirited and hopeless.

Are we, who seek to educate our children for a future of peace and fulfillment, engaged in a lost cause? At times I find myself on the brink of despair. At times I am ready to give up all of these pretentious ideas about human potentials and a world at peace, and go open a bakery; there, at least, I would find a tangible sense of achievement, and enjoy the simple pleasures of life until the planet collapses.

A few months ago, I hit this point of despair after hearing a talk by Daniel Sheehan, head of the public-interest law firm, the Christic Institute. For months, Sheehan and his associates have been investigating the sordid details of the "Iran-Contra Affair," and the story he told that evening was astounding. It appears that the national security establishment — the CIA and its secret networks — conducts a vast global operation of violence, corruption, and illegal activities, including drug smuggling. If the Christic Institute's research is accurate, there are deep and disturbing connections between the arming of mercenary forces in central America, the invasion of Panama, the drug trade, and even the savings-and-loan scandal! If this research is accurate, then the President of the United States is not only a muscle-flexing Rambo (we know this from the Persian Gulf), but also literally a *criminal* who was involved up to his eyeballs in CIA intrigue. Sheehan asserted that the mainstream press and the judicial system are preventing the facts from coming to light.

The point is this: *On top of* the devastation of the Earth and the disintegration of our community life, the most powerful government in the world is riddled with corruption. The nation that was founded as a guiding beacon of democracy and justice in 1776 has become an empire every bit as decadent and evil as the old monarchies of Europe — and vastly more dangerous. I went to bed that night, after hearing Daniel Sheehan's talk, filled with sadness for the vision that has been lost, and filled with fear over what might be in store for the future. Even running a bakery seemed pointless.

Illustration by Lahri Bond, Wendell, MA

And then, during the night, I had the most powerful dream of my life. In this dream, I was in my home, going about my affairs, when I opened the front door. Standing in front of me, glowing with an ethereal white light, was a unicorn — a large, magnificent horse-like animal that was pure white, with a single horn pointing from its forehead. I was scared and closed the door. When I looked out the window, it was still there, quietly standing. Suddenly I realized why it was there: *This is a symbol of hope. There is hope for the world.*

The interesting thing about this dream is that I had never before paid much attention to unicorns. I knew that many of my fellow romantics and idealists thought highly of the mythical animal, but I never cared to find out why; the animal did not mean anything special to me. But its appearance in this dream was breathtaking; it was very clear to me that this was no ordinary dream, but a vital message from some very deep level of the unconscious, if not from the spiritual world itself. I had to know more about this archetype and what it symbolized.

What I learned was even more amazing than I could have imagined. For many centuries, in many cultures around the world, the unicorn has been interpreted as a symbol of redemption, purification, and hope! In ancient China, one legend held that a unicorn would appear every once in a long while to herald the coming of a redeemer, a savior. In medieval Europe, the unicorn was often associated with Christ himself! This not only confirmed my own intuition about the meaning of the symbol, but also gave the dream a profound significance far beyond my own personal sense of despair. I believe that I was being told, by some transcendent power, that *the spirit of love will in the end prevail, if we will remain true to it.* Whatever appears to be evil, and corrupt, and wrong with the world today, we are called to answer with love, with compassion, with nonviolence, with understanding, with peace. If we hold fast to these ideals, then the forces of darkness will be dispersed.

This does not mean that our task will be easy. Social and political institutions, ideologies, and cultures are the last things to respond to the transforming power of love. What is required first is a profound shift of *consciousness.* Materialism and greed must be transformed into simplicity and caring. Prejudice and fear must be transformed into compassion. Competition into justice. The unrelenting pursuit of gratification and entertainment into a search for truth. Dominion over the Earth and its species into partnership with all life. Self-righteous patriotism into planetary responsibility. Self-interest into reverence for the miracle of life. The goal of education, conceived holistically, is to achieve these transformations in our own hearts and in the hearts of our students — one by one, small community by small community. We may not soon remove the criminals and Rambos from their positions of power, but slowly, quietly we can dissolve the power that feeds their positions.

In Chip Wood's article in this issue is a statement that expresses so well what we in this alternative education movement are about: "In a time of corruption, to nurture is a revolutionary act." To nurture life is to hold destruction at bay. To nurture creativity is to regain our vitality. To nurture truth is to dispel the propaganda of public relations. To nurture compassion is to rebuild our communities. To nurture a child's emerging life is to declare our faith in the inherent goodness, beauty, and meaning of the universe.

This is our task, my friends, and the unicorn assures us that we might ultimately succeed.

– Ron Miller

Maternal Teaching

Revolution of Kindness

by Chip Wood

In a time of corruption, to nurture is a revolutionary act.
–George Wolfe[1]

You've probably heard it all before:

- One of every four children under age six in America is living in poverty. Every 53 minutes, one of these children dies because of this poverty.
- Every eight seconds of the school day, an American child drops out. In many places, only one of every two children will finish high school. Nearly half our nation is barely literate.
- Today, 135,000 children will bring a gun to school.
- One out of every ten American teenagers attempts suicide. Six will succeed today.
- 28 million children live in alcoholic homes.
- Today alone, 437 children will be arrested for drinking or drunken driving; 211 for drug abuse, not to mention those not arrested.[2]

The roots of many problems in education are in the patriarchical, ethical system upon which it is built. Teaching needs to be infused with maternal values — caring, compassion, relationship, and collaboration. This would transform the hierarchical structure of school administration and the authoritarian structure of the traditional classroom.

There are endless statistics of despair. We've read and seen and lived with the facts for so long we have become numb to their reality. It is the same with all the national reports on the state of education. We have been "Carnegie-d" to death. We know how bad things are, but it is hard for us to listen anymore because we are, frankly, not sure what to do. We feel overwhelmed by the numbers. The remedies proposed by all the experts are global and "far-reaching," but somehow they do not reach quite far enough; they do not really reach into our classrooms.

I want to suggest that there is an entirely different way to see and listen and deal with the problems that confront us as teachers of the young. That way is "maternal teaching."

It is time for the voice of the mother to be heard in education.
–Nel Noddings[3]

These words are not my words, they are a mother's words, a woman's words, a teacher's words. I have just been putting two and two together. What these words mean for us in the classroom and what they have to do with reshaping elementary education, is the subject of this article.

I have been an educator for over twenty years. For most of

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this time I have taught with women, shared schools with women, tried to change the elementary curriculum with women. Of course, where decisions were made — in administrative councils, in business offices, in superintendents' offices, in board rooms — it was there that I would be in the company of men; a preponderance of men. Gradually, the light has been dawning on me that at least some of what is wrong with our schools has to do with the fact that we have never focused on school reform as a woman's issue.

The fact that I am a man trying to articulate and draw attention to this point of view at first made me uncomfortable, but the more I have spoken with my colleagues and other teachers in the field, the less I find myself apologizing, because in the end, "maternal teaching" extends far beyond gender to ways any of us, male or female, approach our classroom teaching, our relationships with school authority, our relationships with our colleagues, and how we approach our professional priorities.

I am indebted to many women and "a few good men" for leading me over such a long period of time to what now seems like such an obvious approach to our educational difficulties. The work of Carol Gilligan has been of particular inspiration. Her research has broken ground that will ultimately change much of psychological, educational, and developmental theory. There is a "woman's way of knowing," as the title of Mary Belenky's book suggests.[4] Carol Gilligan has articulated that "different voice," as have a growing number of female researchers.[5] My colleagues, especially Marlynn Clayton, Ruth Charney, and Deborah Porter, with whom I have worked the longest, but also all the teachers with whom I have taught, have been demonstrating the meaning of maternal teaching in their classes for years. I feel I am just at the beginning of the task of putting our teaching practices and this new ethical framework together and that I have much more to learn about "maternal thinking" as Sara Ruddick defines it. However, this is an important start.

The classic works of Piaget, Erikson, and Gesell, rather than being diminished, have taken on added value in actual classroom application as a result of this new vision. Matthew Fox, Robert Coles, and Ron Miller are among contemporary male theorists who have influenced my thinking about these matters and who also support a nurturing perspective for our educational and societal problems.[6]

The ethic of caring

But this maternal perspective probably would not have become real to me had it not been for a personal experience in the summer of 1990. Attending a week-long seminar in Boston at the Wheelock Center for Parenting Studies, I found myself as the only male participant in a group of 25 educational leaders. As the week unfolded, I became increasingly aware that this group seemed to behave differently from any group of which I had ever been a part. People listened to each other respectfully, sought to help each other find solutions to personal problems they were encountering during the week, and were caring and careful with differing opinions, seeking understanding. There was little attempt to gain the upper hand, to win arguments, to impress with knowledge. I certainly had been in mixed professional groups where women were competitive, argumentative, and positional. What was at work here? I raised my observations at the end of the week. Was I a party to the driving ethic of caring that Carol Gilligan describes so eloquently? It seemed so. Allowing my own nurturing side to keep me uncharacteristically quiet and cooperative during the week, I had disappeared into the woodwork and become a participant observer of women at work within their dominant ethical perspective. It was a humbling and gratifying experience: one I have been reflecting on ever since.[7]

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Returning to my work in teacher training, I was profoundly struck at how the ethic of caring was not so obviously evident in women's work in the schools, nor, particularly, in professional seminars or workshops at which I would speak. Instead, I would continue to experience more passive complaints against the "system" in which women found themselves. There was certainly much these teachers did not like about the way their schools were functioning, the family living conditions of children they were teaching, and the requirements of their jobs. But, when asked what could be done about these conditions, there were few positive possibilities offered and many reasons given as to why change couldn't occur. Now, I do not want to characterize all teachers similarly. Surely, many are taking bold steps toward empowerment and change, but see if these remarks are not familiar:

- "*They* expect us to be parents for these kids."
- "How can *they* expect us to teach when the children come to school with all these problems."
- "You can't concentrate on your reading if you haven't eaten, or watched a fight at home, or if you've been beaten. *They* just don't understand."
- "All *they* care about are test scores and covering the curriculum. I really feel that pressure in my job every day, but I'm not sure it's what the kids really need."
- "*They* want us to teach a million different subjects. There just isn't time to cover it all."

Ninety percent of the teachers who voice these concerns are women and

ninety percent of the *they* being referred to are men.

Our elementary and secondary educational system continues to be heavily male dominated and governed by patriarchal rules and approaches to learning. Typically male values of individual achievement, competitive success, self-enhancement and fulfillment, and an ethic of justice through equality and fair play are mirrored in the dominant educational practices of today. Academic excellence, tracking, academic retention, competitive grading, selective admission to gifted programs, I.Q. and achievement testing, and the predominant emphasis on competitive athletics — all these serve to foster and promote a reliance on left-brain activity, analytical and logical-mathematical thinking: a Greek conception of knowledge built on the relationships between mind and form. Self-reliance, individual responsibility, and a sense of identity built through one's own ability, skills, and accomplishments are the primary valued goals of the educational process.

As I listen to the concerns of teachers, I do hear worry about these dominant values, but often with that worry there is the fear that nothing can be done to change things. The teacher who says, "They expect me to be the parents for these kids," feels immense pressure to be everything *but* parental with her students. After all, she must teach them math, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, social studies, science, art, music, computers, heath, safety, and more. Often what she is really saying is, "How can I take care of these children and, at the same time, teach them all these things the system (the male-value-driven system) expects me to teach them?"

Recent studies of the ethical concerns of women which I have referred to, (Gilligan, Belenky et al., Ruddick, and others),[8] clearly delineate a different set of values motivating women's thinking. With women, there is a dominant ethic of care through non-violence, wherein it is more important that no one be hurt than that everyone be treated the same. Here there is a context of attachment and affiliation, with value given to relationships, interdependence, collaboration, cooperation, and generosity. Identity is built through interconnection, leading to a biblical conception of knowledge: knowledge that comes from personal interaction. But where in the educational system are these values honored? Where are these values allowed to emerge in instructional practice? Interestingly, these values foster other ways of knowing — through art, creativity, crafts, poetry, drama, choral reading, singing, dancing, and playing. These ways of knowing require children to work together, to care about how others are doing. These values put the well-being of the children before academic accountability.

Here there is a context of attachment and affiliation, with value given to relationships, interdependence, collaboration, cooperation, generosity.

Both male and female values certainly are of importance to our society and to education, but they are seriously out of balance. It is time for teachers to change the fundamental focus of their classrooms with the assurance that a maternal ethic is needed if all the children are to be taken care of. *Maternal teaching*, then, is an ethical perspective, yes, but it also does come with a set of directions — a few essential classroom practices that can help build a strong and vibrant and new reality in schools.

There are four components to establishing such a program:

1. Listening to the children. Changing our daily schedules and teaching methods to give children the time to talk, giving ourselves the time to listen. This means changing the pace of the school day. Acquiring the developmental knowledge base required so that we can know what we are hearing when we do listen.

2. Ethical literacy. Putting "ethical literacy" ahead of all other forms of literacy that we teach. What good does it do us to increase student skills if we do not teach students to care for each other, to be nonviolent, to share? This means what it says — we must elevate "ethical literacy" to the top of the curriculum list. We must give more time and attention to behavior and attitudes than to reading and math. We must come to understand that the social curriculum is ultimately more important than the academic. This sounds radical and revolutionary, but without a revolution of kindness, what will our schools be like in the next century? This perspective is not without a sound research base. Several, well-respected studies of adult development point to the undeniable fact that scholastic aptitude and school success do not have a direct bearing on predicting later life success but that indices of sound psychological development do.[9]

3. Structure for choice and meaning. "Youth desire and deserve to know their lives are not trivial and not lacking in adventure" (Matthew Fox).[10] Rote learning, textbook instruction, ditto-sheet recall — all have their place in education, but not to the extent that they deprive children of a sense that what they are doing has any meaning or that they have some control over their learning. Much of what is proposed as developmentally appropriate education, including cooperative learning, is designed to help us be able to provide a structure for choice and meaning for children. However, we must be cautious that these approaches are not merely folded into the patriarchal pattern of productivity, accountability, and skills acquisition. Educational reform has failed us in the past because the reform has been *within* the dominant ethical system rather than *of* the dominant ethical system. Cooperative learning, for example, is not a panacea. It runs the risk of being just another educational fad coming down the pike. It may only teach children to be better drones in the hive, different kinds of workers in the factory. It may

allow us to build better cars and we may be enamored by the efficiency and equanimity observed in this cooperative process. However, we must do better than that. We need to teach children through cooperative learning that there is a meaning to their lives, a purpose in what they are doing. We must show them that we take them seriously, that we listen to and value their ideas, that we believe in their creative potential, that we are willing to provide resources to allow them to unlock and release their creativity so that we might learn from them new insights and directions for our troubled world.

4. Changing the work place. Finally, maternal teaching must change the basic center of ethical gravity in our schools. This will require new structures for administration as well as instruction; new ways of assessment and evaluation; new ways of meeting and talking and working together as professionals; time for working with parents; new rituals, ceremonies, rites of passage, and traditions.

Let me now address each of these four components in detail.

Listening to the children

How can we find the time to listen to what the children have to tell us? The pace of our school days allows for little of what the Greek word for school (*scholeri*) actually means: *leisure.* Instead it's, "Hurry up, children, it's time to go to gym; hurry, children, it's time for math; hurry up, children, and finish your lunch." Ten years ago, a kindergarten teacher in New York State said she knew she'd had enough when she heard herself say, "Hurry up, children, it's time to rest."

Children have a different sense of time. Their dawdling is a psychological defense against a hurry-up world. Their absorption in a dandelion, or a Lego construction, or a tea party, or even a Barbie doll is part of the innocence and holiness of children. We are forever interrupting.

Children also have a different sense of what's important. I am reminded of the five-year-old, who after a busy morning of worksheets in his kindergarten, marched up to the teacher's desk, put his hands on his hips and announced, "You don't seem to understand, teacher, I just came here to eat and play!"

If you are involved in "Writing Process" and the daily, individual conferencing this entails, you are dramatically aware of how much the children have to tell us, how rich and diverse, original and creative, their inner lives are. A five-minute conference when we are really listening builds a relationship with that individual child worth hours of instruction. A five-minute, individual talk with a child can help unravel a learning style, a potential learning problem, a gift, a surprise. As Lucy Calkins so aptly put it, "The point of contact comes when we allow the children to teach us how they learn."[1] We must create the opportunities for our active listening to individual children.

There should also be time for group listening and sharing, far beyond Show and Tell. We should provide at least an hour of group sharing time in the course of the school day — not all at once, of course, but in three 20-minute or two 30-minute blocks depending on the age of the children involved. These must not be times when children listen to the teacher, but rather times when they listen to each other. Children need to be taught to do this consciously. They do not come to school with this ability; and it is a skill that has to be re-taught each year at every grade level. There is a process to teaching children to listen to each other that begins with the underlying assumption that we care about what *others* have to say, not just what *we* have to say. This is the feminine ethic, the ethic of caring. It means, for instance, that we don't sit in a circle with our hands raised, or worse, with our hands waving and the familiar "ooh, ooh" singing of the children, which says, "My idea is more important than your idea, so shut-up so I can talk!" It also means that when the teacher speaks in a group, it is with a respectful question, a reminder, or response that models for the other children how to acknowledge that you have heard what another has said and that you appreciate it.

Educational reform has failed us in the past because the reform has been* within *the dominant ethical system rather than* of *the dominant ethical system.

To listen to the children *is* difficult, because of the pace of the school day *and* the number of children in our rooms *and* the diverse and sometimes overwhelming needs. As we see the neediness of the children grow, shouldn't we extend the time to listen to them? Insert a half hour of quiet time in the middle of your day when children color, draw, read, or nap and take that time for listening. What will you eliminate to make that possible? One day, a story; one day, spelling; one day, a portion of your reading program; one day, a portion of your math program. Take your breath away? It should. Such reform is required if we are going to teach our children properly. Maternal teaching requires that we listen.

During the course of the day we must also observe what our children are doing. Ask yourself how much time you spend instructing and how much observing. Both are essential teaching practices, but if you spend more than ten minutes a day strictly observing, you are the exception. One year, while teaching pre-first grade, I laminated an "Observer" sign on red construction paper, hung it around my neck with some yarn. When I wore the sign, the children couldn't bother me, because I told them it was part of the teacher's job to watch how they learn.

When I watch and listen, I expect to be surprised and delighted by what children do and say. I expect to learn something each day I never knew

before, and to see some new potential in a child I never knew was there. This doesn't happen every day, certainly not on the days when for some reason or other, I just can't seem to pay attention. But it happens more and more when it is a priority, when it is as important as anything else I do in my teaching. What happens when the children are listened to? They feel noticed; they feel they have a voice that matters; they come to understand the importance of noticing others; they come to understand that other people matter. They take pride in their work because it is noticed. They take time with their work because they don't feel so rushed and hassled. They even start to notice and listen to their teachers!

There is another aspect to listening to the children from the perspective of maternal teaching and it has to do with understanding *what* we are hearing *when* we are listening. Maternal teaching is grounded in the theories of child development that give credence to stages of growth unfolding in predictable, yet variable, patterns. When we listen to a child's writing, for instance, we can now know the stage of writing development that child is in through the research of people like Charles Temple, Donald Graves, and Lucy Calkins.[12] When we hear children arguing about a moral dilemma, we can know the stage of their moral development through the research of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Gilligan.[13] When we listen to children talk about the rules, we can know the stage of their psychosocial struggles by reading the work of Erikson and Gilligan.[14] When we watch children grasp a pencil, write their numbers, draw, or complete other neuromotor activities, we can estimate their developmental level because of our understanding of the work of Gesell, DiLeo, and others.[15]

Levels of cognitive growth can also be observed by listening to children's language responses and logic and comparing them to the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky, Piaget, Montessori, or Steiner.[16] In short, maternal teaching is based on a rich and varied and ever-growing body of scientific data, which we do well to learn. Here is the meaning of the term *developmentally appropriate programs*. We must not design, or set up, or run our classrooms in a certain way just because some new catchword has become fashionable. Rather, we should learn to listen and respond to the children because of deep knowledge and renewed conviction in an ethic of caring. When we listen and respond in this way, the children will show us how to set up our rooms and what to teach.

Ethical literacy

Maternal teaching requires us to put the social curriculum ahead of the academic curriculum. Don't get me wrong, I do not advocate doing away with the academic curriculum. I am not even saying diminish the academic curriculum. In fact, my experience in the classroom leads me to believe that when we put social concerns first, academic growth increases, even if the time devoted to academics is somewhat less. Douglas Sloan of Teachers College, Columbia University, has said it better than I: "A major concern of education," he wrote, "ought to be to create a climate of trust in which radical questioning can take place without fear."[17] If our classrooms become such environments, then both the social and academic needs of our children will be met.

What does it mean to be "ethically literate?" Simply put, it means to be able to distinguish between right and wrong, to be compassionate and caring in your interactions with others, to follow the Golden Rule. One educator, John Taylor Gatto, in a brilliant speech to the New York State Senate, explained that "The children I teach are cruel to each other, they lack compassion for misfortune, they laugh at weakness, they have contempt for people whose need for help shows too plainly." He also enumerated several other contemporary issues that compound the ethical illiteracy in our schools. "The children I teach," he noted, "are indifferent to the adult world. This defies the experience of thousands of years. A close study of what big people were up to was always the most exciting occupation of youth, but nobody wants us to grow up these days and who can blame them? Toys are us."[18]

How can we promote "ethical literacy" in our classrooms and schools? First, of course, we can build on the foundation of *listening* already described. Second, we can generate our classroom and school rules *with* the children, with conscious attention to the ethic of caring through nonviolence. We can learn to structure activities that value cooperation, affiliation, and attachment. We can de-emphasize competition without eliminating it. My colleague Ruth Charney has written a detailed book of the management practices, techniques, and approaches that can create the "climate of trust" we seek. It will be published in the next year, likely under the title, *Ethical Literacy*. It is based on the works of Dreikurs, Adler, Nelson, and others, as well as on her more than twenty years in elementary classrooms. The thrust of the manuscript is that there are precise and careful strategies to be used when teaching from an ethic of caring. Here are a few concrete suggestions, some from Charney's book, some from our combined experiences in schools:

1. Post rules in obvious places, framed in positive language.
2. Develop a routine of morning meeting that involves greetings, shar-

When I watch and listen, I expect to be surprised and delighted by what children do and say. I expect to learn something each day I never knew before, and to see some new potential in a child I never knew was there.

ing, and cooperation. Children should greet each other by name, as should their teacher. Some schools have greeters at the front door of the school to say good morning.

3. Figure out a way to teach recess and lunch. These are two of the most important times of the day (just ask the kids) and, in most schools, teachers are not present because of contracts and because in elementary school we seldom are awarded prep periods. This reality notwithstanding, there is another reality: Children do not know how to eat and play together and we do very little to teach them. Here is the perfect example of the need to put the social curriculum before the academic. Here is an hour of the school day now often devoted to bedlam. Then, when the children come in from recess, the teacher often can spend another half hour of instructional time sorting out the hurt feelings and hurt bodies and hurt stories she wasn't even there to see or hear. It is important to take the time to teach children to eat and play. It should be a mandatory component of the social studies curriculum for the first six weeks of school in grades K-8. We *can* teach children manners, dining room conversation, politeness. We *can* train paraprofessionals to model appropriate behavior and to deal with misbehavior appropriately. We *can* reward a quiet and orderly school "restaurant" with occasional flowers, tablecloths, and extra desserts. We *can* lengthen the time for lunch "waves" so children are not forced to eat like animals. We *can* train children as mediators on the playground and in the lunchroom. We *can* teach children cooperative games and wonderful rules for competitive games like "Tagger's Choice" where the person doing the tagging is always right (the implications of this rule are far reaching). There are endless strategies for making our schools peaceable queendoms/kingdoms, but only if we let maternal teaching become our priority.

4. Increase contact with parents in any way you can and tell them you are putting a big emphasis on ethical literacy. The response will be enormous. Bring your message to parent councils; create parenting groups whenever possible to teach parenting skills; keep your parents informed. Value the cultural diversity within your school family and honor that diversity with festivals, displays, assemblies, and informal recognition during the daily routine.

5. Build a sense of "All School" ownership for behavior and conduct. Be sure that it is known that any teacher can speak to, and, if necessary, discipline any child. If your school is too large, break it down into manageable family units where, say, five teachers are responsible for 100 to 125 children. Give these family units time to meet together, to work together, to celebrate together.

When children choose what it is they will do, even within carefully designed teacher parameters, they exercise great intellectual prowess and creativity.

By teaching ethical literacy we will create a climate of caring, a nurturing climate in our classrooms and schools. Through the process of maternal teaching we can forge new relationships and ways of working together for children and teachers. As Gilligan has explained, "By changing the lens of developmental observation from individual achievement to relationships of care, women depict ongoing attachment as the path that leads to maturity."[19] With more "ongoing attachment" in our schools, more trust will exist, more learning will blossom.

Structure for choice and meaning

None of our lofty goals can occur without a carefully thought-out structure. I believe that the structure of schools and of our individual classrooms should be designed to create choice and meaning for children. For the past eighteen years, I have joined with my colleagues to evolve such a structure for elementary school. Choice is the intellectual power which makes learning meaningful for children. When children do things for the teacher, or because someone tells them to in a book, there is no power, only passive acceptance — the "what the teacher wants" mentality of so much of high school thinking. When children choose what it is they will do, even within carefully designed teacher parameters, they exercise great intellectual prowess and creativity. They make innumerable mistakes when given a choice, and out of these mistakes comes the greatest learning of all — that practice and revision are valuable and can lead to learning and products of which one can be immensely proud. Choice also is a key ingredient in ethical literacy. "The essence of the moral decision," to quote Gilligan again, "is the exercise of choice and the willingness to accept responsibility for that choice."[20] This is our goal in providing choice in the classroom. From a maternal teaching perspective, choices should involve a wide spectrum of the curriculum and each should be seen as equally valuable for children to make. Painting a picture should be seen as just as important as reading a book. Playing a math game should have equal value with completing a math paper. So often I come across the ethic that says, "When you finish your work, then you can paint a picture; when you finish your math, then you can play a math game."

There are many ways to structure choice. To begin, it might be a half-hour choice time in your school day. Generate a list of choices with the children, whether they are in kindergarten or sixth grade. Find out what they would like to do and add in some of the things you would like them to do. If you are not comfortable with card playing in the classroom, for example, don't put it on the final list as a choice. You do have veto power. If it sounds all right to you or, if you think cribbage would be great because it does teach so many math skills, then leave it on the list and try not to be ambivalent when children choose it

over and over again during choice time.

Another way to structure a great deal of choice is through integrated theme teaching. Much is available in the literature on this subject. For six weeks, once, we studied "Board Games" like Monopoly and Parchessi in one 4th-5th grade class I taught. Groups of students had to create their own board games from scratch; there was no choice of the assignment, but within the assignment there were endless daily choices to be made: What kind of game to invent? What would the rules be? What would the board look like? Who would make the game pieces? What would the box look like? What age level would the game be for? How would it all be completed before the deadline? How would it be field tested? This project involved reading, writing, art, math —every day, in varied ways. Six weeks later we had a "Game Tournament," inviting other classes to come play "Dungeonville," "Unicorns and Rainbows," and other such latency-minded creations. There was not only choice in these six weeks, but meaning too as children took the stuff of their world and created an expressive representation of their understanding.

Theme teaching is rewarding at all levels from kindergarten through eighth grade and can reflect the deep-seated developmental interests of children at these various ages. It also often moves children out of the school and into the greater community.

The structure of our school day can also allow for much more choice if we so wish. Children are capable of deciding not only what they will do, but when they will do it. Young children can decide or plan for one or two work periods a day, but older children in 3rd and 4th grade are capable of scheduling their entire day and making meaningful choices about how they will spend their time. Careful systems elaborating such a process have been developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Michigan and by our own Northeast Foundation for Children in Massachusetts, as well as by other progressive educators.

Any structure that is consciously attempting to build more student initiation into the curriculum must subjects and activities. Choices need not be from a list of left-brain, analytical activity. Art, drama, music, crafts, dance and movement, and community service must be equal opportunities for children alongside reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. We should allow children as much time to create as we do to reconstruct what we think they need to learn. We can structure meaning into the lives of school children by making them feel useful each and every day. Maternal teaching values most highly the ethic of caring. This can be taught and expressed by giving children real jobs to do. Middle-grade students make superior tutors for younger children. They can read to them, teach them to paint, practice math facts with them, put on their snowsuits, eat lunch with them. Younger children can have their own classroom jobs, of course, and sometimes help out with school jobs,

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like recycling. Our eighth graders each work one hour a day, helping in a classroom, the office, or in school maintenance. They are terrific teachers! In Hanover, New Hampshire, middle-school students spend every Wednesday afternoon in community service, at nursing homes, and with a myriad of other community service agencies. What better use to make of all that adolescent energy?

Changing the work place

Finally, maternal teaching requires that, over time, the very structures of our schools change to reflect the ethic of caring in our administrations, collegial relationships — in our daily school life as professionals. The current movement of school restructuring represents, in my view, stirrings in the right direction. It always, however, runs the risk of being merely another rearrangement of the dominant patriarchal system. If we are to truly change the work place, I believe there is a first step we must take together. Women and like-minded men must join hands and take concrete action to dramatically change grading and evaluation systems — systems that constantly tell children in subtle and not so subtle ways that they are better or worse than each other. A second step is to increase the number of maternal thinking and teaching adults in positions of administration. All administrators should be required to teach children for at least some small part of their work week. Think how that would change the work place.

Finally, we must take the most difficult step of all: We must let the children lead us. The dangers of sentimentalism and infantilization lurk on this path. To say, "A little child shall lead them," has been spoken by more than one idealist. But I am not talking about some romantic view of children, nor about totally child-centered education, nor about home schooling, or new-ageism. Such views have created, largely in the upper middle class, a culture of permissiveness, indulgence, and anarchy — a generation of parents who are afraid of their children and who largely do not know how to take care of them, parents who are led around by their children's whining demands, not by their vision and innocence. No, to be led by our children means to become as accepting as children in our worldview and in our daily treatment of each other. It means true mutual respect for our ideas and actions. It means not making fun of each other. It means avoiding sarcasm and cynicism at all costs and confronting people who use it to stop using it. Sarcasm, in our work place especially, discourages and defeats us and the children. Honest language should replace clever wit and biting criticism aimed at others, used at the expense of others' feelings. Ultimately, we need to feel safe in each other's presence.

Alice Miller perhaps said it best, "Someday, we will regard our children not as creatures to manipulate or to change, but rather as messengers from a world we once deeply knew, but which we have long since forgotten."[21] As teachers, to regard children in this way is to understand our nurturing role. It is to pay careful attention to the language we use and the way we use it; it is to think, also, about the looks and the hugs that we give. For children to feel safe in our presence and to maintain some innocence and wonder in their world requires our complete maternal attention.

These are difficult times. George Wolfe said, "In a time of corruption, to nurture is a revolutionary act." In the end, I believe our ultimate classroom task is to reclaim maternal responsibility for our young. I urge you to join in this work.

Notes

1. G. Wolfe, interviewed in *The New York Times*, 2 December 1990, p. H5.

2. Statistics from *Children 1990* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund), pp. 3-4; and other sources.

3. N. Noddings, *Caring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

4. C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); also C. Gilligan, *Stages Theories of Cognitive and Moral Development: Criticisms and Application* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 52-89.

5. C. Belenky et al., *Women's Way of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

6. See M. Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); R. Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990); and R. Miller, *What Are Schools For?* (Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press, 1990).

7. My thanks to Phyllis Sonnenschein, who led the group at Wheelock and who was an inspirational facilitator.

8. See also S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York: Ballantine, 1989); and M. Lewis, "Interrupting Patriarchy: Politics, Resistance, and Transformation in the Feminist Classroom," *Harvard Educational Review*, November 1990, pp. 467-488.

9. See N. Sprinthall and L. Theis-Sprinthall, "The Need for Theoretical Frameworks in Educating Teachers," in *The Education of Teachers: A Look Ahead*, edited by Howey and Gardner (New York: Longman, 1983).

10. Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, p. 24.

11. L. Calkins, *Lessons from a Child* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1983).

12. L. Calkins, *Lessons from a Child*; also L. Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1983); D. Graves, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1983); and C. Temple et al., *The Beginning of Writing* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982).

13. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*; J. Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1932; rev. ed., New York: Free Press, 1965); and L. Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); and other works.

14. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*; and E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, (New York: Norton, 1950).

15. A. Gesell and F. Ilg, *Child Development* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), among many other titles; and J. DiLeo, *Young Children and their Drawings* (New York: Bruner/Mazel, 1970).

16. M. Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood* (1936; rev. ed., New York: Ballantine, 1966); R. Steiner, *Education as a Social Problem* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1967); and L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); and many other titles by all three authors.

17. D. Slogan, *Insight/Imagination* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), p. 146.

18. From a speech delivered 31 January 1990 to accept the New York State Senate's "New York City Teacher of the Year" award.

19. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p. 170.

20. Ibid., p. 58.

21. A. Miller, *Thou Shall Not Be Aware* (New York: New American Library, 1986).

Crossing the Great Stream

Educating the Evolving Self

by Jonathan Zap

Jonathan Zap has been teaching at the East Meadow Alternative School on Long Island since 1986. Previously he taught English and was a dean at Samuel Gompers Vocational Technical High School in the South Bronx for six years. He has been involved in a number of programs that involve youth in wilderness experiences. He is particularly interested in contemporary myths and has written extensively on their relation to social changes. He also writes fiction, much of it intended for young people, that attempts to articulate these myths in a positive way.

Education in our society has become profoundly alienated from the guided evolution of the self provided by many traditional cultures. Although the symptoms of the stunted selves struggling to grow in the toxic soil of our culture disturb and frighten us, we continue to attack problems with the pesticides and industrial techniques that poisoned the soil in the first place. Just as Western medicine is often criticized for its preoccupation with pathology, much of the pseudo-science of education is preoccupied with fragmented, superficial attacks on the presumed incompetence, disability, and apathy of students. And just as so much of the pathology that Western medicine discovers is caused by the toxic effects of the industrialization of which it is a part, so too, much of the ample pathology of students is rooted in the same shallow, toxic soil that gives rise to industrial methods of remediation.

The students teachers must reach today live in a spiritually impoverished world of narcissistic fantasies and shadowy images and are often tragically displaced from a meaningful connection to life. The mechanistic systems of methods and techniques offered by learning "experts" only increase their alienation.

The psychology underpinning much instructional material available today is the highly reductive, mechanistic variety that predominates in the colleges and universities of this country. The background of reductive psychology places at least three essential assumptions at the core of much learning theory being sold to teachers:

1. Human beings are born *tabula rasa.*
2. The human mind is analogous to a machine.
3. The technology of language is utilitarian, and individuals can be programmed in its use with the correct instruction manual.

The diminishment of the individual and the retreat from the classical model of broad-spectrum education have led to what Carl Jung considered one of the great blights of the twentieth century — the rise of "the expert." If the mind is essentially a machine, entering life as a blank slate, then in computer jargon it need only be "booted up" with the correct program. Teachers are essentially programmers who can, by following the correct instruction manual, written by the correct expert, produce competent students, every one of whom can score above average on objective tests.

Frank Smith has been one of the strongest voices against the

reliance on soulless experts and manuals. In his incisive book, *Essays into Literacy*, Smith decries the modern tendency to model teaching after industrial production and computer programming; he rejects the assumption that

> children and teachers can be programmed in the same way that computers are programmed, with all goals and activities specified in advance and procedures provided for every decision to be made. Unprogrammed decisions made by computers are regarded as random behavior likely to divert or derail the entire program, and the same attitude is taken in the programming of teachers and children. At least one commercial reading program specifically admonishes teachers not to answer questions asked by children which the program has not anticipated. Some programs are explicitly "teacher-proof"; others merely warn teachers not to improvise or to tamper with their procedures.[1]

We have a society in which we consult experts and read instruction manuals on every conceivable subject, including how to make love and raise our children; therefore, it should not surprise us that many teachers passively accept that experts should tell them how to teach. As our culture has become more shallow, we have learned to disregard the great universal truths of human existence in favor of narrow expertise. Great thinkers, by contrast, often have a humbling awareness that significant insights into human nature inevitably have deep roots and long histories of development. Sigmund Freud, for example, began a lecture by stating, "I have nothing new to say; Shakespeare and the Greeks have said it all." It is hard to imagine one of the practitioners ("experts") of the new reductive models of the human psyche making such an admission.

In the old-world paradigm, "man" was made in the image of God, the Creator. This worldview provided at least the basis for understanding humankind and the way we use language as a creative enterprise; the human — the animal that thinks in words — is a creator of worlds.

Alternative high school students in community service: Aiding victims of Hurricane Hugo in South Carolina.

In the disembodied world of reductive psychology, however, humanity is made in the image not of God, but of the machine. This is the ultimate extension of the industrial revolution, and it does to the human spirit and growing child what strip-mining does to the Earth. The machine is not a creator, it is a reproducer. Much educational material is designed to make children good reproducers — that is, machines. Since human beings are notoriously inefficient machines, what they often reproduce are illiterate, degraded personalities.

Critique of the mechanistic paradigm

The tendency to view the human psyche as a machine is not just a metaphor, it is actually a literal and pervasive paradigm. Many scientists have struggled to create models for the human mind based on the workings of digital computers. But two seminal books published within weeks of each other vividly demonstrate the inadequacy of mechanistic models of human consciousness. Roger Penrose, one of our greatest living physicists, demonstrates the poor science behind the reductive models of human consciousness in his book *The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds, and the Laws of Physics*.[2] Physicist Danah Zohar, in her fascinating book *The Quantum Self*, theorizes that the mechanistic paradigm of human consciousness, based on obsolete Newtonian physics, may be one of the deepest sources of the wasteland culture of alienation that surrounds us.[3] Zohar and Penrose theorize a quantum physical model for human consciousness that restores the human psyche to the place of power and possibilities suggested by mystics and artists.

I am convinced that Zohar is right, that we have profoundly degraded our children by educating them not as if they were "little lower than the angels," but instead as if they were little better than computers. Are children made in the image of God or of the cosmos, worthy of being guided on a spiritual journey; or are they made imperfectly in the image of a machine that is faulty, misprogrammed, and in need of behavior modification?

The criticism that I have leveled at reductive approaches to learning is not meant to imply that quality work isn't being done in the field by sincere, intelligent people. My purpose is to point out that narrowly defined expertise can readily ignore the larger, organic picture.

Even the most important technical material on learning is worthless if we do not see the whole child or adolescent. A reading specialist, for example, cannot look at a child's reading the way an orthodontist can look at just the teeth to determine if they need braces. For every child who has a specialized reading problem such as dyslexia, there must be 50 whose reading problems are embedded in their whole relation to life. Language and consciousness are inseparable. A child who is disinterested in reading might best be described as having a deficit in consciousness, or even in being or selfhood or soul. I have a hunch that a stronger correlation exists between "reading problems" and the ability or desire to reflect on experience in the abstract than with "tracking" problems.

Teaching a child means seeing the whole child, not just the tonsils, teeth, or reading problem. Seeing a child means seeing an individual that is neither a blank slate nor a machine. But seeing the individual should not be at the expense of seeing the collective context of individuals' lives.

Individuals are formed out of the whole history of humanity and are embedded inextricably in their culture. Many people feel that the twentieth century has been characterized by the loss of power of the individual self in favor of a collective psyche largely formed by the industrial aims and media of modern culture. Jung, in particular, feared the rise of the "mass man" that he observed in Nazi Germany, and in more quiescent forms elsewhere.[4] Seeing beyond the apparent paradox of individuality and collectively is often difficult because of the distorted assumptions about personality development that prevail in our society. We have been taught to recognize the powerful effects of parenting styles and education, but often we fail to recognize the potentially more powerful influence of culture.

The force of culture

Everyone is an agent of culture. Culture provides us with the language that forms our deepest, most personal thoughts and perceptions. Teachers recognize that their influence on children is mediated (for better or worse) by parental influences, but they may not always recognize the enormity of cultural influence. And teachers are in the front lines with kids; they see a lot. Purveyors of teaching techniques, however, often grossly overestimate the power of techniques to influence symptomatically defined problems that have deep roots. The force vectors that press upon children are so awesome that a teacher with the best techniques and 40 minutes per day can be like a six-inch tugboat trying to change the course of an ocean liner.

If the mind is essentially a machine, entering life as a blank slate, then in computer jargon it need only be "booted up" with the correct program.

Educators need to be conscious of the dynamic forces that press upon and form children, in order to help to direct the pressure. Teaching must be a process of continuous adaptation, second by second, to the living entities that make up the student body. Artistry, intuition, perspective, flexibility, and quick emotional and intellectual reflexes are what help teachers to survive — not rigid adherence to a particular set of techniques.

Educators need to be aware that the personality type of the age is changing. Culture affects personality organization yet the profound implications of the prevalent narcissistic personality type on teaching are almost completely ignored in educational literature.

Narcissism is a complex phenomenon, elusive of reductive explanation. Surveying some of the work on the subject, one finds a wise avoidance of conclusive definitions. Narcissism cannot be understood in purely clinical terms. Clinical reports on human personalities are simply, as author E.L. Doctorow once pointed out, "the industrialized form of story telling."[5] So what follows is not meant to be a conclusive description, but merely my version, with some help from others, of the story of Narcissus.[6]

Narcissism is a state of being that occurs when one is cut off from a deeper connection with the self. A deeper connection with the self involves an awareness of a spiritual or meaningful dimension to life. It creates a center from which we can experience individuality as well as be part of the whole or unity of things. It allows us to see that others are also individuals and part of a world that is not our own inner theater, but a larger stage on which we are just one more player. Lacking this deeper connection, the narcissist does not fully perceive his or her own reality, but rather identifies self with the exterior face or costume that he or she presents to the world — the *persona*. The narcissist lives in the magical, omnipotent universe of the infant where the world is an audience to his or her starring performance.

In place of true relatedness, the narcissist craves the recognition and admiration of others. Although the narcissist desperately seeks the attention of others, he or she lacks any real empathy or understanding of their complexity. On the deepest level, the narcissist may not be convinced that others exist autonomously. The narcissist may have a hostile, exploitive attitude toward a world that frustrates with its unresponsiveness to his or her feelings of omnipotence. Particularly, the narcissist feels deep envy and resentment toward those who have things that the narcissist desires or those who simply have a meaningful life.

Alternatively the narcissist may seek a blissful, mystical reunion with the world (womb) through drugs, psyche-

delic experiences, or an idealized fantasy love object. The narcissist's feelings tend to be undifferentiated, typically alternating between a state of global rage and a depotentiated state of lethargy.

The narcissist may not have received the sort of love and nurturing necessary to develop or maintain a deeper connection to the self. The prevalence of disintegrated families with immature and distracted parents, often quite narcissistic themselves, and the whole "culture of narcissism," contribute to this problem. On the deepest level, our culture is deficient in those meaningful experiences that suggest to the psyche the larger dimensions of life. Instead our culture abounds in fantasies of rage and omnipotence and is preoccupied with surfaces and appearance.

The power of this narcissistic culture upon children is immense. Technological changes mean that children can use Walkman headphones, televisions, VCRs, and video games to immerse themselves in culture in a way never before possible. Thousands of advertisements, designed by experts in human motivation far more clever than reading experts, bombard children daily. Children passively absorb the values implicit in these advertisements, and the influence extends into their sexuality and their perception of the world, time, and themselves.

Making deeper sense of life

Human beings are in a perpetual state of learning from everything that surrounds them. Children learn and form vast areas of their perception of the world from culture expressed through electronic media. There is no question that they learn from it; the question is, *what* do they learn? What is the *quality* of what they learn? Do they learn deep truths, falsehoods, or temptations and illusions?

A human being needs to learn living, universal truths — archetypes or myths. To become a whole person through the cycles of human life, one needs the perspective and enrichment of living contact with the great, overarching patterns of meaning. A person truly educated in the Bible, the Koran, or Shakespeare, for example, has contact with these patterns. Such a person has the basis for a deep understanding of human psychology and existence. A person raised in a great religion, mythology, or literature has a psyche that is filled with the classical, universal patterns necessary to have a chance at making deeper sense of life.

But how has a child in our culture been enriched? The child has learned, through millions of advertisements, that if you buy something you become happier; that appearance and money are the two great forces in the universe; that objects and pills remedy problems of being; that the really important people are celebrities they don't know; and that most people are better looking, richer, happier, and living more exciting lives than they are.

Traditional cultures offer very different messages about the world. The great mythologies, religions, literatures and tribal cultures all contain classical hero cycles, for example. The hero is an archetype who embodies essential truths that are particularly important for children and adolescents. In our culture, filling the place in their psyche for universal patterns are sick, distorted archetypes that are the products of commercial industry rather than artistry or inspiration. Instead of Odysseus or Moses, they have "He-Man, Master of the Universe" or Rambo. When our psyches are imprinted with a hero cycle in which the hero never has to go into his or her personal darkness, or discover the limits of his or her power, we learn something that disorients us from the reality of life, and which does not reveal the overarching patterns of our own heroic struggles.

I don't mean to suggest that all popular culture is this distorted. The *Star Wars* trilogy, for example, created by George Lucas (who studied Jung and consulted Joseph Campbell), contains many of the classic elements of the hero cycle and other archetypes. But as a society we no longer have a healthy mythology. Arnold Toynbee defined a civilization in decline as one that does not have a ruling myth. Our culture does not seem to have what is necessary to aid young people in binding to life. Instead, many of them live in a confused twilight world of shadowy images, power-related fantasies, and materialistic illusions.

The media of the culture, as well as the messages, are disorienting and distorted. Rock music videos present a rapid succession of often unrelated surreal images. New York acting teacher and musicologist Ron Clairmont, in a wide-ranging lecture, suggested that the surreality of these images, and their alienation from real time with their explosive, rock beat pace, may cause the unconscious to read them as if they were dreams or mythical visions.[7] The psyche opens itself to them as if it were receiving secret messages about essential truths, when in fact it is being filled with poisonous images of violence, and sex as a metaphor for power.

Joseph Chilton Pearce, elaborating the work of Jean Piaget, makes a convincing case that active fantasy play is an essential developmental phase for children.[8] When a child takes a matchbox or a pebble and imagines it as a boat, the child is participating in creation, bending the hard sensory reality to meet his or her inner world. But there is an obvious corollary to this theory. When the objects are already fully formed, as they are with television, images and mass-produced toys, this process may be short-circuited and development stunted. Industry now produces television cartoon series that are marketed around toys designed to be interactive with the passive fantasy of television. The child is drawn into a fantasy world that is completely programmed and preformed by commercial designers. I suspect that children brought up on this type of passive fantasy play are stunted in their imaginative abilities as compared with children involved in active fantasy play. This seems an important, but difficult, area for experimental research.

An adolescent culture

Our culture has another particular danger for the young. All cultures have hooks to catch the archetypal projections of individuals and fill them with their particular imprints. Our culture, however, because it is an adolescent culture, is in some ways even more powerfully determining and able to imbed these imprints in our young. The culture of our society in its supposedly adult, mature form is

about adolescence in its most extreme forms. What, for example, does the celebrity gossip of a *People* magazine resemble so much as high school popularity games written on a national scale?

When adolescents in most traditional societies perceive the adult culture, they find it standing on the other side of the great stream and representing a more mature relation to life beckoning them to cross over. Adolescents in our society find an adult culture that embodies the most extreme and bizarre aspects of the adolescent psyche. Narcissistic fantasies of power, violence, omnipotence, and promiscuity abound everywhere in the popular culture. Instead of discovering through the higher impressions of a mature culture that there is another quieter, calmer, more centered way of life than the feverish hormonal jungle of their own psyche, they learn that no, this is the way the world really is for everybody. The culture hooks right into their shadowy narcissistic worldview and confirms it, exaggerates it, and bonds the cultural imprints ever deeper, until individual personality is shaped almost completely by the degraded culture of the collective.

Are children made in the image of God or of the Cosmos, worthy of being guided on a spiritual journey; or are they made imperfectly in the image of a machine that is faulty, misprogrammed, and in need of behavior modification?

And the adults who are the agents and representatives of culture are not inviting, mature figures beckoning from the other side of the great stream; they are often aging, unloving, narcissistic adolescents themselves, competing with children in their worship of the most destructive aspects of youth.

Traditional cultures with mature mythologies and adults realize that still more is needed for youth to evolve out of the seductive imprints and psychological configurations of youth. These cultures use awesomely powerful rites of initiation and passage to shock the ever-complacent human psyche into change. But what chance for transformation do we offer our young? — forty minutes in a classroom with a programmed workbook or a three-minute rock music video.

The poverty of meaning in the lives of young people today is closely reflected by their language. I have always been amazed at how the most casual remarks can reveal the depths of a psyche more accurately than a whole textbook of jargon. I will never forget the comment made by a young man in the vocational high school in the South Bronx where I taught for six years. I told him that he had to leave the hallway where he was making a disturbance outside my classroom. He replied defiantly, "I ain't gotta do nothing but die." In the suburbs I've noticed that the most common and cutting putdown young people throw at each other is, "Get a life!" I even have heard that one on television and in movies, and for good reason: It cuts right to the core of their suffering — most of them don't have an authentic, meaningful life, and they're unable to bond to the synthetic, fragmented life they do have.

The poverty of being that one can observe in young people is not exclusive to those who are financially impoverished. Eleven years ago, while I was working in private industry — six months before I unexpectedly ran into an opportunity to be a public school teacher — I had a dream about teaching. In the dream I was being taken to work in a ghetto high school. The school was dark and oppressive, like an old boiler factory. Inside the school were enormous, dark, industrial shapes that dwarfed the students, who appeared as small, shadowy, fugitive figures. When I left the school, I looked back over my shoulder and saw that there was a large sign, like a movie marquee, in front of the school that said, "Tomorrow's Children Today." It wasn't until I left the South Bronx and began teaching in a comfortably middle-class suburb that I understood the prophesy of the dream. Surfaces were more cheerful and prosperous, but underneath was the same impoverishment of being. The ghetto kids of today stand in the place of the suburban kids of tomorrow. Ghetto youth pioneer the trails into the wasteland that their affluent cousins soon follow.

Nourishing the whole person

The whole child that appears before a teacher today, whether from the ghetto or from the suburbs, is typically in a state of severe psychic malnourishment. He or she is starved for meaning and tragically deficient in the capacity to make deeper sense out of life. The teacher who is able to help such a child is the one who, supported by a creative, flexible learning environment, is able to convince the child that learning can help one to fulfill some of his or her deepest needs.

Children are starved for the nourishment of higher impressions that resonate with their unconscious. In my six years of teaching in the South Bronx, I never met a child who wasn't fascinated by Greek myths. Researchers have discovered that the most reluctant readers can be willing to spend hours a day reading complex instructions to play fantasy games of the "Dungeons and Dragons" sort, especially on interactive computer programs.[9] The mythological aesthetic of these games attracts the deep hunger of the students for archetypal patterns, and demonstrates how that hunger can motivate them to read, but unfortunately the games feed them with junk food. Not only do these games contain distorted versions of the archetypes, but the way these games work often creates a dangerous condition of identification, bordering on possession, with the fantasy characters that the player invents. This powerful identification feeds right

into the narcissist's dangerous tendency toward omnipotent fantasies in relation to the contents of the unconscious. The point here is that we must do more than motivate. The real masters of motivation are in advertising. We must motivate from a center of self-actualization.

These problems in teaching may seem insurmountable. But the teacher who knows how to use the forces that press upon children, rather than ignoring them, can do significant things. Creative teaching is best done in a creative environment, such as in the alternative school where I am fortunate to work. The traditional classroom does provide many limitations, but it is still possible to reach students creatively.

For example, when I was teaching an eleventh-grade English class in the regular high school I discovered that the novel *Ethan Frome* was on the required reading list. My ordinary, but personal, awareness of my students told me they were thinking about boyfriends, girlfriends, clothing, haircuts, issues of their own identity, sexuality, and relationships — and that the repressed world of the New England winter in *Ethan Frome* probably would seem as remote from their lifestyle on Long Island as a treatise on medieval tapestries.

I knew, however, that they had deep anxious and enthusiastic feelings and thoughts about relationships, as well as pleasurable and painful experiences. I engaged them in a talk about infatuation and discovered that all of them seemed to know someone who was obsessed with some other person. Calling on their personal knowledge of human psychology, we discovered classic patterns of idealization and disillusionment. Their personal experiences were acknowledged and related to the collective experience. Then we considered the character Ethan Frome and his obsession with Mattie from our awareness of the classic patterns of infatuation.

Teaching one another in cooperative groups, my students found that they had a wealth of self-knowledge and psychological observations that enabled them to understand what this otherwise remote literary character was experiencing. They learned that something happening in a novel about a different culture could parallel, confirm, organize, and expand their self-knowledge and understanding of others.

Nurturing self-esteem

In the more flexible and creative environment of the East Meadow (Long Island) Alternative School, where I now work, much more is possible. In addition to teaching a core curriculum and creating a personal, caring environment, we are able to step out of the traditional limits of the classroom to address the deeper needs of our students. A while ago the staff had a series of brainstorming sessions on what we could do about the chronic low self-esteem of our students. Someone mentioned the theory that low self-esteem in modern industrial society is related to the fact that children have become an economic luxury or burden, whereas in agricultural societies children are an economic necessity. Accepting this premise, we wondered how we could increase their sense of value to the group. We already had in place a system of volunteer jobs and community efforts, but we wanted something that would be an intense, total immersion experience. Our chairperson, Louis Balbo, came up with the idea of taking a volunteer group of students down to South Carolina to work with impoverished victims of Hurricane Hugo.

The identity building, accomplishment, and fulfillment that we all got from assisting hurricane-devastated families was something that could be seen and felt. The effect of such an experience on a young life that has been centered on television, family problems, substance abuse, and heavy metal is hard to imagine. The only comparable experiences, for me, have been in the total immersion, cooperative environments of Outward Bound and other youth wilderness programs.

These are just a couple of personal examples of how teaching can address some of the deeper problems. Teachers need much more than techniques to reach students on a deeper level. They need to have, themselves, a living connection with myths, great literature, and the overarching patterns and meanings of life. Teachers, regardless of subject, need broad-spectrum education, not "expertise." Teachers teach more by who they are than by what they say.

The students we must reach today come to us tragically uprooted from deeper meaning. They seek light and find it eclipsed by illusion, greed, and the assembly line. A teacher who is standing on the other side of that great stream, or better yet is struggling to cross it, will find a lot of needy kids moving with him or her.

Notes

1. Frank Smith, *Essays into Literacy* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 109.

2. Roger Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds, and the Laws of Physics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

3. Danah Zohar, *The Quantum Self* (New York: Morrow, 1990).

4. Carl Jung, *Civilization in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 177-243.

5. E.L. Doctorow, *Essays and Conversations* (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1983), p. 26.

6. See Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1975), pp. 228-291; Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1978); Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self* (New York: Norton, 1984); and Nathan Schwartz-Salant, *Narcissism and Character Transformation: The Psychology of Narcissistic Character Disorders* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1982).

7. Ron Clairmont suggested this theory about rock music videos during a workshop loosely based on the work of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, held in New York City in 1986.

8. Joseph Chilton Pearce, *Magical Child* (Toronto: Bantam, 1980), pp. 162-171.

9. David F. Lancy and Bernard C. Hayes, "Interactive Fiction and the Reluctant Reader," *English Journal* (November 1988).

Whole Thinking and the Process of Human Development

by Aostre Johnson

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The predominant current conception of development suggests growth, progress, and evolution. According to one writer, this is a decidedly modern and Western view: "The very existence of the word modern is probably linked to a doctrine of progress."[1] In contrast, ancient philosophers viewed development as proceeding backward and downward, or in a circle —as well as forward and upward.

Developmentalism has been called "the cultural symbolic of our time."[2] The modern meaning of development implies not only progress, but also evolution through predictable stages. "Organic systems evolve," said Robert Kegan, through eras according to regular principles of stability and change."[3] Applied to human beings, this idea implies evolution from birth through predictable stages.

Looking beyond psychoanalytical and cognitive theories of development, we encounter a rich variety of alternative approaches. In this light, the growing child is not merely an immature adult, but rather a meaning-seeking and meaning-creating organism endowed from birth with intuitive ways of knowing.

Main schools of human development

Two distinct approaches currently dominate the field of human development: the psychoanalytical and the cognitive developmental. The *psychoanalytical approach* to personality development, which once reigned supreme, in recent years has lost much of its power in popular and academic circles. The most prominent psychoanalytical developmentalists have been Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson.

Freud's developmental theory is based on the concept of a biological energy (*libido*), present at birth in a fixed amount and moving to different areas of the body — mouth, anus, genitals — in a predetermined timing that fixes the psychological stages of the human being. Intense emotions arise at any given stage from the relationship of the libidinal energy to the human beings in close proximity. Freud regarded thought as largely subject to this emotional experience. The massive unconscious content of the adult mind that Freud postulated results largely from the repression of infantile thoughts co-mingling with overpowering emotion.

Erikson retained the concepts of libido and the dominance of

emotion but viewed social experience as more important than biology in determining the course of development. Erikson's stages are determined by the outcome of the psycho-social issue dominating the preceding period of development. For example, in the first stage the infant struggles to attain "basic trust" of the world. Whether the outcome is trust or mistrust depends on the infant's social experiences.

For Freud, Erikson, and other psychoanalytical theorists, emotion is the critical force in the developing human being. The mind is subservient to emotion as the organizing energy.

The other major approach to human development, the *cognitive developmental approach*, asserts that the mind is the major organizing force in the developmental process. Jean Piaget, the dominant theorist of this approach, charted stages of mental growth resulting from the interaction between the internal structure of the mind at any given time and the outer environment. Piaget believed that thinking develops in stages through the dialectic between the inquiring human mind and unresolved questions in the environment.

When Piaget theorized that thinking is the organizing and developing force in all human experience, he was referring to logical thinking, or what I will call *quantitative thinking*: the ability to abstract reality into symbols; to analyze it into smaller component parts; to delineate it into objects, properties, distinct names, relationships, and so on. Piaget viewed this type of thinking as leading and controlling emotional growth, social growth, and moral growth — and the developing human being as a basically rational philosopher or scientist.

Many psychologists have followed in Piaget's footsteps, building corollary theories on his stages of development. For example, Lawrence Kohlberg theorized about moral development; James Fowler wrote about the development of faith; and Howard Gardner addressed aesthetic development. In these theories, cognition leads and all else follows. The development of morality, faith, or aesthetic ability in any person can proceed no further than that person's ability level in logical or quantitative thinking.

The hierarchical nature of developmental theory

The cognitive developmental perspective is a hierarchical one, in which development proceeds through sequential, ordered, increasingly complex stages. As Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer have explained, "The educational goal is the eventual attainment of a higher level or stage of development in adulthood, not merely the healthy functioning of the child at the present level.... A more developed psychological state is more valuable or adequate than a less developed state."[4] The child's view of the world becomes more accurate, in a scientific sense, as development proceeds.

If the ultimate criterion for judging the objective truth and thus the validity of any mental, moral, religious, or aesthetic experience is its place on the cognitive hierarchy, then childhood experience is always subtly denigrated. This remains true despite the great contribution of cognitive psychology in demonstrating the uniqueness of each stage of development. A child does not come into the world knowing how to quantify it. The child's increasingly complex ability to do so, in many different forms, is evidence of mastery of critical developmental tasks. However, if a certain level of quantifying ability is taken as the "entrance requirement" for a more valuable and adequate cognitive, moral, religious, aesthetic experience, then the experience of childhood will never be viewed as complete.

Psychoanalytical stage theories of development are also hierarchical. If the intended outcomes occur, then the intense libido-powered emotions of infancy and early childhood come increasingly under the control of the ego and superego. Desires are tamed in the service of society, although the danger for regression to the intense emotional desires of infancy is never completely vanquished. In psychoanalytical developmental theory, as well as cognitive developmental theory, we have the capacity to become "better" as we proceed toward adulthood.

But this idea follows from the modern meaning of development as progress. In this sense, development is inherently hierarchical.

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Relevant alternative theories of development

There are alternative theories of human development that attempt to come to terms with human knowing in a broader sense than the dominant ones described above. Many of these cast a different light on the hierarchical nature of human development. I will briefly discuss some of the most relevant.

Robert Kegan has presented a theory of the psychology of human development that integrates the Piagetian cognitive perspective with the Freudian psychoanalytical perspective; in Kegan's terms, it integrates personal meaning-making as thought, viewed from the outside, with personal meaning-making as feeling, felt from the inside. Kegan notes that no psychology has ever integrated these two components successfully. He certainly has begun the process: "Psychoanalytic theory is sometimes thought of as a theory about affect, and cognitive-developmental theory as a theory about cognition; but in truth each is a theory of both, and each

makes one dimension the master of personality and the other the slave."[5]

Kegan views "person" as synonymous with creative activity, "an ever progressive motion engaged in giving itself a new form."[6] He quotes Hegel: "The spirit is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressive motion, in giving itself a new form."[7] It is this motion about which Kegan writes, the activity inherent in humanness. A human being is inherently a maker of meaning, an active creator of self and world.

Kegan views neither emotion nor thought as dominant over the other, but both as subject to a prior experience of meaning-making. "There is thus no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning-making context in which it becomes a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception, because we are the meaning-making context."[8]

Thomas Armstrong has presented a dual theory of child development that integrates traditional psychological frameworks with religious and spiritual perspectives:

> According to Geoffrey Hodson, an esoteric philosopher, "the child, like all human beings, is primarily dual: an immortal spiritual being in a mortal spiritual body." Within this context, I can begin to speak of two different dimensions or lines of development within the child. One line describes the growth of the child ultimately in biological/material terms. This strand has been very well explored and documented by contemporary developmental psychology. I call this line the development of the child from the body up.
>
> I would claim that there is a second line of development which parallels, interacts with, and may even ultimately support the development of the first line of growth. This hidden line of development I call the growth of the child from the spirit down.[9]

Armstrong's spirit-down development has its roots in some realm of existence beyond explanation, a realm of spirit postulated by various religious and mystical traditions. This way of looking at development changes its hierarchical nature. In one respect, infants are more evolved than adults, because of their link with the roots of spirit or "heaven." Armstrong's imagery of development proceeding in two directions, "top down" and "bottom up" is more akin to that of ancient than modern philosophers: Development proceeds in both directions, or possibly in a circle.

Although many religious and spiritual teachers have theorized about the process of human development, three of them have written most extensively, and their works contain remarkable similarities. These are the Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan; Rudolf Steiner, a German Christian; and Aurobindo Ghose, a Hindu. David Marshak has examined and compared the theories of these men:

> Despite all the distinctions that draw the visions of human nature of Steiner, Aurobindo, and Inayat Khan apart, their common center holds fast. This commonality articulates a vision of human nature in which each of us consists of at least four separate yet integral sub-systems: a physical being, a life-force being, a mental being, and a spiritual being. Each of these sub-systems exists primarily though not exclusively on its own plane of being, each of which is composed of vibrations that grow higher and finer from the material to the life-force, from the life-force to the mental, and from the mental to the spiritual. Finally, this common center describes the true self within each of us as the spiritual being. This true self is a spark of divinity that seeks to emerge into consciousness, for such an emergence is the next step in the evolution of our species.[10]

Marshak notes that the discoveries of all of these teachers are in congru-

Julie Nimnicht, Manzanita School, Tucson, AZ. © Joel Brown

ence with those of Piaget and other cognitive developmental psychologists, but they go beyond them. Of the four beings postulated by these three theorists — physical, mental, life-force (which roughly corresponds to the emotional), and spiritual — contemporary developmental theories deal only with the first three.

Psychologist Ken Wilber has spent many years writing about the integration of modern views of human development with views of human development from the world's contemplative religious traditions. He has summarized his nine-stage system, based on structures of consciousness that include the body, the mind, the emotions, and the spirit. The ultimate stage of his system is the fundamental ground of being: "Strictly speaking, the ultimate is not one level among others, but the reality, condition, or suchness of all levels."[11]

Wilber's first five levels of consciousness correspond directly to Piaget's. The last four are higher levels of knowing that include the most advanced levels of spiritual understanding. Wilber's system is completely hierarchical. Infants begin by developing the rational mind, then attain "higher" modes of consciousness.

Wilber explicitly denies that infants and young children are capable of true spiritual experience. He rejects the idea that the infant's feelings of connectedness have any spiritual basis. Infantile unity is based on fusion with the mother due to the lack of development of a separate sense of self. This maternal union is "the lowest possible unity of all — there is nothing metaphysically 'high' about it."[12]

One of Wilber's best-known concepts, the "pre/trans fallacy," occurs in two directions: The first by mistakenly reducing authentic adult spiritual experience to a lower infantile level.[13] The classical psychoanalytical position on mystical experience as infantile narcissistic regression illustrates this. The second direction is to elevate the infantile maternal unity consciousness to the level of genuine religious experience.

I have found the pre/trans fallacy to be useful in critiquing certain theoretical formulations, but I feel that it lacks completeness because of its linear nature. In Armstrong's terms, Wilber recognizes only the "body up" and not the "top down" line of development. Although he places "ultimate ground of being" at the top of his system, he admits that in reality it is the condition of all levels. Then must it not somehow be accessible from all of the levels?

James Macdonald has critiqued technical, rational, hierarchical thinking as an outdated way of viewing our contemporary world. He believes that an understanding of quantum physics calls for a new interpretation of the physical universe and new understanding of modes of knowing. Although the cognitive developmental perspective explains the linear rationality underlying mechanistic physics, Macdonald's new developmental perspective, called *transcendental,* can account for the wave properties underlying quantum physics.

Transcendental development is based on intuitive, tacit, personal modes of knowing. Macdonald asserts that "a transcendental ideology would shift the predominant rationality toward the aesthetic, intuitive, and spontaneous in the mutual process of centering."[14] Knowledge gained through centering is rooted in an ultimate "ground of being": "the possibilities of accessibility to knowledge from 'hidden' inner sources operating on a casual, or integrative, or serial or synchronistic basis point directly toward the awareness of another ground of knowledge in human beings."[15]

According to Macdonald, knowledge occurs through a "dual dialectic." The first dialectic is the same as Piaget's — between outer world and rational mind. The second dialectic is between the inner self, the ground of being, and the rational mind. These two dialectics result in an expanded understanding of knowledge: "Thus, knowledge is not simply things and relationships that are real in the outer world and waiting to be discovered, but it is a process of personalizing the outer world through the inner potential of the human being as it interacts with outer reality."[16]

Edward Robinson has suggested that "the original vision of childhood" is a form of knowing that is indispensable to later adult knowing. He quotes from Edwin Muir:

> A child has a picture of human existence peculiar to himself, which he probably never remembers after he has lost it: the original vision of the world. I think of this picture or vision as that of a state in which the earth, the houses of the earth, and the life of every human being are related to the sky overarching them; as if the sky fitted the earth and the earth the sky. Certain dreams convince me that a child has this vision, in which there is a completer harmony of all things with each other than he will ever know again.[17]

Robinson suggests that childhood be seen as a dimension of life, rather than as a chronological period. It is only as adults, exploring our childhood memories, that we can become fully conscious of the meaning of this dimension. Robinson's data is from an Oxford University study of religious experience in which 4,000 adults who "felt that their lives had in any way been affected by some power beyond themselves" wrote accounts of the experiences and the effects that they had on their lives.[18] About 15% of these people offered experiences from their early childhood years. Studying these accounts led Robinson to believe that developmental psychologists, notably Piaget, typically underrate childhood capacities for insight and understanding.

Studying these accounts led Robinson to believe that developmental psychologists, notably Piaget, typically underrate childhood capacities for insight and understanding.

Robinson writes: "The starting point for all Piaget's thought about childhood is the incapacity of children to see the world as adults see it.... Piaget is in fact continually setting children an exam in a subject that adults are good at and children bad. Predictably, the children fail."[19]

Robinson associates the unitive vision of childhood with the adult process of inductive reasoning. Both synthesize, see relationships between the parts that form the whole. However, the first does not depend on logic (it is immediate and holistic), and the second is logical; Robinson is not sure about the relationship between them.

Robinson concludes that a childhood faculty for knowing exists in us throughout our lives, an organic unity that can be symbolized as an unchanging circle. We can return to this original knowing at any time in our adult lives.

Whole thinking and human development

I would like to propose an understanding of thinking that provides a context for all of the above theories and leads to a nonhierarchical understanding of human development that can embrace, but does not require, a belief in a spiritual dimension. I am drawing on the philosopher John Dewey, who contrasted two types of thinking, *qualitative* and *quantitative.* The basic duality described by these terms, in the way I will define them, significantly overlaps with a number of other metaphors and theories proposed to explain an apparent duality in human thinking. These include mystical thought and rational thought, intuition and logic, Paul Tillich's ontological thought and rational thought, Polyani's tacit knowing and explicit knowing, and the Buddhist concept of conditioned and unconditioned mind.

I propose that there is a mode of knowing that is experientially and developmentally prior to logical, intellectual, cognitive thought processes. This mode of knowing is our most direct experience of reality, whether that reality is seen as "ultimate" reality, personal reality, or some combination of both. It may be labeled religious, spiritual, mystical, or aesthetic, but it does not have to be called any of these. It is essentially a unitive understanding of the relationship between all things, the meaningfulness of life, corresponding to Kegan's meaning-making context. I call this mode of knowing *qualitative thinking,* because it has to do with character or nature rather than with quantity.

I propose that there is a mode of knowing that is experientially and developmentally prior to logical, intellectual, cognitive thought processes. This mode of knowing is our most direct experience of reality.

Qualitative thinking is experienced as emotion or intuition. It precedes and makes possible logical or rational thought (quantitative thought). Every explicit thought derives from prior feeling-intuition.

Qualitative thought has a shaping and integrating power that provides the meaningful context for quantitative thought. Qualitative thought energizes and guides quantitative thought along lines that allow us to make explicit sense of our experience. Just as in quantum physics, where particles are meaningless as isolated entities and have meaning only when seen against the framework of interconnected waves, quantitative thought has meaning only when seen against the background of qualitative thought.

Quantitative thought is the secondary thought process that gives us indirect knowledge about our experience. This information is necessary for complete understanding. Quantitative thought defines and delineates, or measures experience, by dividing it into distinct objects, properties, names, and relationships.

We cannot fully understand self and world without quantitative thought, just as we cannot make meaning of quantitative information without the underlying qualitative thought. This is analagous to the complementary principle of physics: The nature of reality is such that several different but complementary descriptions of it are necessary for a full understanding.

Qualitative thought and quantitative thought can be understood as a duality, but they are experienced in unity, as whole thinking. Both allow for a full and creative experiencing of the world.

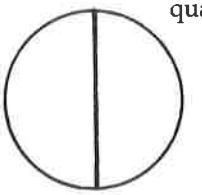
When qualitative knowing is seen as the context for quantitative knowing, we can approach the hierarchical nature of development in another way. The development of quantitative knowing clearly is hierarchical in nature, and Piaget and other cognitive theorists have insightfully charted the stages of its development. When quantitative knowing is seen as an aspect of thinking, this theory is extremely useful; but it becomes misleading when qualitative thinking is omitted. I maintain that qualitative knowing is a given from our birth; it is an aspect of the nature of humanness.

From this perspective, infants come into the world with the ability to think qualitatively already fully in place. In other words, infants experience reality through feeling-intuition in a direct, unmediated way. This qualitative knowing also provides the motivating, shaping, and integrating power that guide the infant's subsequent explorations of the quantitative aspects of the world. Qualitative thought is our most basic experience of ourselves as meaning-making context and underlies all other knowledge and skill acquisition.

The power of qualitative knowing gives infants and young children access to a kind of wisdom that connects them with all things and beings and drives them to explore the world with wonder, curiosity, love, and hope. Children do not have to grow up for their understanding of the world to be real and valid. Each stage

of development offers a unique perspective, resulting from various mixtures of qualitative and quantitative knowing. At every age and stage, we are capable of a different type of "whole thinking."

I suggest that the symbol of the circle represents qualitative thinking and a line across its diameter stands for quantitative thinking.



We begin with the circle; the line develops as we mature, but the circle contains the line.

Notes

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3. Ibid., p. 8.
4. Lawrence Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer, "Development as the Aim of Education," in *Curriculum*, edited by James Gress and David Purpel (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1978), p. 62.
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6. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
7. Ibid., p. 1.
8. Ibid., p. 11.
9. Thomas Armstrong, *The Radiant Child* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Press, 1985), p. 5.
10. David Marshak, "Educating for Wholeness" (Unpublished thesis, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1985), p. 296.
11. Ken Wilber, "The Spectrum of Development," in *Transformations of Consciousness* (Boston: New Science Library, 1986), p. 7.
12. Ken Wilber, *The Atman Project* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Press, 1980), p. x.
13. Ken Wilber, "The Pre/Trans Fallacy," in *Eye to Eye* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 201-246.
14. James Macdonald, "A Transcendental Development Ideology of Education," in *Curriculum*, edited by James Gress and David Purpel (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1978), p. 121.
15. Ibid., p. 112.
16. Ibid., p. 109.
17. Edwin Muir, quoted in Edward Robinson, *The Original Vision* (New York: Seabury, 1983), frontispiece.
18. Edward Robinson, *Original Vision*, p. 11.
19. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Touching the Spirit

Maria Montessori's Powerful Vision

by Elizabeth Caspari as told to Sharon R. Bard

Editor's Introduction

This is an unusual article. It is based on a conversation with a remarkable woman, Dr. Elizabeth Caspari, as she reflects on her experiences in Montessori education over the past half century. Unlike most of the essays written for Holistic Education Review, *these reflections range over many diverse topics. At times I am uncomfortable with Dr. Caspari's assertions — especially her insistence that the Montessori method is complete and perfect in its established form, and that those who adopt the Montessori perspective have God on their side. This is contrary to the spirit of cooperation and openness to other perspectives that the* Review *is trying to encourage among diverse educational movements. Nevertheless, Dr. Caspari's reflections are insightful and provocative, as her wealth of experience is rare.*

-R.M.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) had a powerful vision. I consider her a great mother of humanity. She was the first Italian woman to receive a degree in medicine. After exercising her profession for a few years, she returned to the university for a degree in psychology (still a very growing science in the 1800s); then she went back for a degree in philosophy. Finally we found her as a professor of anthropology at the University of Rome. So she had a very brilliant mind. But before that, a very great heart. The great innovator that she was, she would say that education began nine months before children are born. It interested me that she could speak about this prenatal period like nobody in the scientific community had before her. Montessori was always beautifully dressed and had magnificent jewels, yet, as all great people, she was very modest, saying "Don't speak about me. I am always pointing my finger to the child. I observe them, I sense their needs, I try to fulfill them. They call that the Montessori method." So this was her whole life's work. And you know, in addition to her method, she brought a message, expressing all along her method. It was a message that could change the world if well understood and faithfully applied.

Montessori's material is scientific; she called it didactic, self-teaching material, not because we manipulate the child, but because the child gains concepts of his or her own by manipulating the scientific material. Montessori visited asylums and teachers of special children at the University of Rome. When these children took exams with normal children, some of them did as well and some better than the normal children, so she thought, now what are we doing for the normal child? At last she got the opportunity when a builder in Rome asked if she would take care of the children in a poor section of the city. There were bandits defacing things as quickly as they were being built, and Montessori was asked to come and help them. This, at last, was her chance to work with normal children. After a year, the results were such that the world came to see. Eventually educator Dorothy Canfield Fisher, hearing of the Montessori children in Italy said, "Let me see if there is something for the children of America." She thought she was going for a week but stayed a year.

Montessori's passion was mind in the making. What can we do to help? And then that is what she did. You know, there are many ways to define the Montessori method, and they are all valid. Some people say it's self-teaching. Well, it is, because before you're three years old you can speak any language. Who taught these children? The "absorbent mind," which takes in everything that is in the environment. During the time of the absorbent mind, the child is like a sponge, ready to pick up what is out there. Absorbing. These young beings come into this Earth connected to Spirit. The embryo is there, yet not fully formed; she called it a spiritual embryo. It is potential. Everything is there. It's the idea of life before birth and reincarnation when we

Dr. Elizabeth Caspari, one of the foremost experts in presenting the Montessori method, is the last living instructor trained by the late Maria Montessori, whom she met over 50 years ago in India. Dr. Caspari, a native of Switzerland, has lived and traveled in many countries throughout the world teaching the Montessori method to students and teachers. She has degrees in music and pedagogy, and founded and directed a music school well recognized throughout Europe. At 91, she is currently the director of education for the Pan American Montessori Society, which trains instructors in the Montessori method throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Now residing in Santa Rosa, California, she maintains a rigorous schedule of instructor training as well as an inspiring vision about the future of humanity made possible through this education. She may be reached at 1240 Carr Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

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return here to Earth as our school until we have learned our lessons and can move on. Maria Montessori, of course, must have believed in reincarnation. Who is intelligent and doesn't? How do you explain life?

Anyway, the child comes in and has recollections from previous experiences, at a certain level. The child was brought here because of his or her experiences, yet comes as a new page. What are we going to inscribe into that child to help? There are earlier pages, and memory, going back hundreds and thousands of years. It's a long story. A long story of the soul. Yet the child usually doesn't recall why he or she is back here. It is a white page. The child is at a certain level because of previous experience but is just there as a new being. Some have a recollection, if you take a little boy like Mozart who writes pieces of music at night; these are recollections of other lives, but in general the recollection is pretty late, I think.

Montessori understood all of this because, spiritually speaking, she was a very advanced person. She felt that a sound teaching system must go beyond the intellect, which judges and divides, and on to the realm of spirit, which unites. Yet she was pragmatic and able to find a method for life on Earth because the child has to learn to read and to write and to count — which corresponds to the very way that the child's brain is made. After she devised the material she said, "I tried many more things than what I leave you now, but what made me choose what you see on the shelf is first what the child chose by himself more than other things and then what brought him the greatest result." It is on the shoulders of all educators to allow the mind to unfold. So self-teaching is a valid way to talk about it.

Until the age of seven, the child has an absorbent mind. Montessori said that this age will become lower and lower, that what she taught the child of seven, others will teach the child of five. And I found this very true — that the age of absorbent mind is coming earlier. We might be awakened much more quickly than in my time.

After age seven, although the absorbent mind continues to function, the reasoning mind begins to make choices utilizing all that the child has absorbed. This is where we come in, to help direct the energies. At any age, however, there is still the connection, the wanting to learn, wanting to experience and know. To fulfill our divine destiny and have the guidance to do it.

Educating through the senses

While many define Montessori teaching as self-teaching, other people say it is education through the senses. The child sees what he or she hears, especially what he or she touches. Montessori said that movement is the law of their being. Yet look at what adults do all day long, which is useless; we say, "Don't touch," "Keep seated." Montessori was the first to speak about the inner teacher of the child, who guides and tells the child to touch in order to learn. We must favor the child's own movements rather than tell him or her what to do. "Look," she said, "you prepare an environment where he has the freedom to choose what his inner teacher is directing and give precise lessons on the way to use the materials." She didn't call us teachers, she called us *directrices,* directors, We direct the God-given energies of the child before us, who is filled with gifts and talents. Montessori could be very, very sarcastic about the way we insult the child who comes already knowing so much. She pointed out how adults think they are doing the child a great favor by teaching the alphabet, when the child already knows thousands of words. Yet, the child doesn't know life on Earth; he or she comes from other realms. Montessori said, "We don't know where the child comes from." We do know that it is our place to provide a good education and group manners to be a well-adapted person to live on this planet.

Besides self-teaching and education through the senses, Montessori's program may also be considered materialization of the abstract, particularly when people visit our schools and see all of the concrete scientific material displayed on the shelves. Montessori defined her method as "Help to Life."

You know, we are accused of killing creativity: "Oh, these Montessori teachers, they are too rigid, too authoritative; they don't let the children play with the material." No. Each piece of the material is designed to create a concept — clear, direct, simple. Montessori had the answer to everything. She said, "You must have other things for the child to work with so he can use his own creativity without any restrictions at any time." In one of her classes she said, "Can you tell me what is the most uncommon sense on our planet?" She got many answers; there were many people from all nations there as usual. Some of them were very bright and gave all kinds of answers. Her answer was, "The most uncommon sense on our planet is common sense."

A great master that we met explained that we have twelve senses. Every sense has its replica in the spiritual world. These are the senses from within that we have to educate. And the child comes fully equipped. For example, with hearing, you have regular hearing and then you have a spiritual sense of hearing, the inner teacher. So that is the world of education. You do not really reach anything with the intellect. The proof is that transmission of knowledge does not do the work. We have to touch Spirit. That reveals.

Montessori developed a method that exposed four avenues. First, she believed in motor education. Children come into the world not in control of

Montessori felt that a sound teaching system must go beyond the intellect, which judges and divides, and on to the realm of Spirit, which unites.

their movements. Montessori said, "Many of their tantrums are due to the fact that their body does not obey what their mind orders." And we say, "Oh, look at these naughty children!" Control of movement through the exercises of motor education is what the two-and-a-half-year-old needs most. But he or she also needs motor education through the exercises of practical life. The humble tasks of everyday living are what the child observes you doing, and the child is a mimic who will do as you do. Practical life is what the child chooses on his or her own and brings the greatest results.

Sensorial education is needed to refine the senses. There is also the avenue of language and early preparation of the mathematical mind. Montessori said, "I leave with you all the material needed for the child to unfold according to the divine design." She leaves us with the minimum of materials and the maximum, because less would not create for the child the concepts needed for life on Earth, and more would be a confusion to mind in the making.

If you want Montessori results, you have do it all the way — not complicate things. The mind of the child is very, very simple. But very logical. Your child who sees an older child do something also wants to do it right now. The little child knows only one word: "now."

This is why the environment has to be created the right way, the way the child travels, which too often is not observed. It is full of a lot of other stuff. And then you tell the child, of course I will give you a lesson so you can do what your friend is doing. But look, first we have to do this, and this, and this. And the child has a logical mind. He or she accepts it. You can't tell the child, "No, you can't have a lesson now." I say, "Of course, I will do yours. But look, first we must do it as it is placed on the shelf." And that's it! The child accepts what you say.

Dr. Elizabeth Caspari

Montessori said:

> Teach teaching, not correcting. The child makes millions of mistakes. So many things are happening and all day long that's all we hear: "Don't, don't, don't."

A mother said to me, "Oh, we just bought a television and my child knows where the controls are." I said, "Put it a little higher, that he cannot reach the buttons." "Oh, but he wants it so much." I said, "If you were on a bridge and the child sees the river and he wants to plunge, will you say yes? He is so eager to do it. You are here to direct his energies!"

There was an article in the *Reader's Digest* entitled, "Say no to your children." Parents don't know how to say no. Let me tell you a story of Barbara. I was invited to a friend's house with little Barbara, who came with me that day. And Barbara, I don't know for what reason, found a hammer and began to hack at the base of a lovely little table, with the feet of a deer. And my friend said, "Barbara, you must stop that immediately!" Barbara, like a little rooster, said, "Don't talk to me like that. My mother said it represses my personality." And my friend said, "Barbara, it represses my personality that you destroy my table. And you stop immediately." So Barbara turned to me, thinking I was going to help her, and I said, "Barbara, she's right, you stop immediately!" And there's a whole school of psychology saying "Don't say no" to your children. That is the most diabolical trick of the fallen ones.

Montessori said, "If we understood our roles, if only mothers knew...." Tell me, who teaches the science of life among all of the courses in catalogues? Who teaches mothers the science of life? They always say, "If

only I knew." Why don't they know? Why is it not known?

Mothers have given up their authority to someone else, a book or a teacher, rather than trusting intuition, or their higher self. God gives to each mother special insights for her child. But instead of that, they read all kinds of books. And who writes the books? Men. And what do they know about it? Many mothers who read that you should do this and this at such and such a time have thought their child retarded because he or she didn't do those things. And little boys generally mature much more slowly than little girls. "Give them time," says Montessori. Imagine the weight of this negative stuff for the mother, her fear: Is my child exceptional?

There are many messages that teach us not to trust our own feelings. This discounts the impression of the child. Montessori said that mothers do not listen enough to their own inner teacher. Let me tell you a story that really impressed me. I was invited to a four-year-old's birthday. A sweet little Kathy who, in the middle of eating a piece of cake, put her fork down and looked at her mother with so much tenderness and said, "Mommie, did I have to hunt and hunt until I found you!"

If mothers could follow their own insight! Understand that there is a revelation telling them what to do for this very special child. The child who chose them is in their hands until the age of three. "If mothers knew," Montessori said, "we would never have a need for exceptional schools." That is why it's time for her message; it has come, more than ever.

Educating for a better world

Sri Rabindranath Tagore, the fine artist and writer of India, said other birds will fly further. These little ones are the other birds who come from very advanced levels of consciousness to make a better world. They are looking for the right parents. And we teachers are the next in line. Unfortunately, we often stop them at our own level. This has to change. Look at the world, the mess we are in. Look at what we do with the world, the superb nature God gave us — we destroy it. So it's time, I tell you. That's why education is here to do it. But, where are the teachers? An elementary teacher is the rarest word in America. Where are they? That's what teachers who understand the Montessori message as well as method try to do: educate. Montessori said, "Parents and teachers can only help the great work that is being done. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the rising of a New Man who will not be the victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society." Schools are the answer. Parents and teachers are the main elements. When the home and the school are together is when I see the greatest results. Because if the home destroys what we do at school, then there is not much hope. It helps here at school, but we have to be together, and it is one of our greatest missions to have the parents with us. With large numbers of very qualified teachers, and cooperative parents, you indeed change the world.

It is one of our greatest missions to have the parents with us. With large numbers of very qualified teachers, and cooperative parents, you indeed change the world.

There's been much resistance to Montessori's message and method. Some teachers put the blocks one way and others put them another way, and there is not enough continuity to bring the greatest results. A great Montessorian once said, "Well, you know, these little differences, the child does not have to know this way or that way, it takes away from his desire to learn." Yet, I have visited many schools because of my profession and I hear people say, "Oh yes, we use Montessori modified." I say, "Yes, and you get modified results."

I am called the Montessori Gypsy, and I deserve the name because I have been in so many countries where the work is in demand. I find it's the same, rich or poor. Montessori gave us a pass of learning, and on this voyage we find the gallopers who go fast, and you'd better be a step ahead of them. The average child goes sweetly at his or her own pace. And there are the crawlers. I love the crawlers because they get there, too. They take a little more time, but every child gets it, even the most deviated ones.

A school superintendent in Florida, concerned that many students in his district had poor reading skills, asked me, "What has Montessori to offer to our discussion on curriculum?" I replied, "A structure. A perfect structure." You don't speak of the thousands before you start on the units. Units first, and then the tens and the hundreds. And then you come to the thousands. And this is a logical structure. And that's the way Montessori does it in all subjects. And also, it works.

Montessori education is cost prohibitive for many families. What I suffer is this: She started with the poorest of the poor. And gave her message for humanity. And the only ones who get it now are these people whose parents have money to send them to school. We have no help. Why, instead of making bombs and nuclear arms, why doesn't the government prepare a proper environment and educate people who will be able to make wise decisions? Everything has to do with education. "Educare," she said. Transmitting knowledge doesn't work. It's wasting words. Get to the inner power of the child, who comes to reveal a better way. Montessori wrote,

> When we begin to understand the processes of development of the human mind we see that there is an inner teacher who labors in joy and happiness, following a precise timetable, at the work of constructing that great marvel of the Universe: the human being.

> I believe that the work of the educator consists primarily in protecting the powers and directing them without disturbing them in their expansion and in the bringing of man into contact with the spirit which is within him and which should operate through him.

If you want to put your child in a Montessori school, then you evidently have read the books or know something about the method. Go and visit the school. We have nothing to hide and want visitors. We only ask for appointments so there are not too many adults in the classroom at the same time. But visit and compare.

When a child has early Montessori education and then is sent into a regular school there is no challenge. The child reads and gets other children to learn the alphabet. Then the child is bored stiff. A mother came to me and said, "I sent a bright little boy to the first grade, and they sent me back a dull boy." That's what the mind does when it is not challenged. I once asked several public school teachers, "Now, how do you find our children?" And some of the first grade teachers told me, "Oh, we like them because they help us with the slow ones." So at least they do something useful. But what about their own development?"

With Montessori programs we educate the children at three or even two-and-a-half years of age and, unfortunately, too often they leave us at the time of the harvest, which has had careful preparation. It would be so much better to have the children all the way through the end of junior high. That's what the training school that I now work toward will be about. And I will tell you what I see coming. Montessori said that adolescence is the critical stage. It's a new birth, a very difficult time for these young people where their energies are mainly taken up by their physical changes. And yet this is a time when we pile up intellectual duties, although it is not the right time.

Training Montessori teachers

I give the course as she did. I don't change a thing. The first half is philosophy and psychology, and the second half is a demonstration of the exercises. It works. That's all I want to do. People are successful who use it unmodified. I don't put extraneous material in the classroom, so I am able to keep the simplicity she wished for us to establish. But I do not want American children to be deprived of beautiful, contemporary material that can reinforce the concepts they have discovered in manipulation of the Montessori material. So I keep in my office other shelves with excellent material that reinforces the basic work. What I don't understand is that in many Montessori schools the layout is not the way she set it out, the way the child travels. And it's full of other stuff, which only causes for confusion. Keep in mind, her work is the result of 65 years of an experimental, scientific mind. It is effective. Her training methods are established from ages two-and-a-half through junior high. In high school there is not much published yet except for the short pamphlet *Erdkinder,* or *Earthchildren,* outlining her plan. She said, "These young people have to know how to plant the wheat, cut the wheat, make the flour, make the bread, and how to sell the bread. That is education for real life." This education was to take place on a farm.

She also envisioned a ship on which teenagers would travel and man the ship with the expert sailors who would teach them navigational skills. And on the ship would be the greatest minds and professors to teach them while they were on the sea about the community where they were going to go and live for at least three months. They would learn about the geography, their history, language, art — the way of life of these people. She said, "Then these young people will find that man is the brother of man, and there will be no more wars."

Montessori, in her lifetime, was not able to see her dream of the ship become a reality. But it's inevitably coming. There are people I know, here in America, who have resources and would give to a project like this. It will be presented to them, no doubt about it. I'm still thinking of a name for the ship. It is coming. You see, Montessori's work was constantly interrupted by wars. She never saw a child progress from two-and-a-half years through adolescence, because Mussolini and Hitler of course closed her schools. No dictator wants schools to create thinking people. They prefer to send students off to war. All our work was constantly stopped. During the four years I was with her, she spoke daily about peace through education. And, in 1947, she wrote a letter to the governments of many nations (See inset). Her message is as true now as current world events prove to us every day.

I will be 91 in September, and I'm more active than ever because I burn with this desire to assist these little ones in their effort to manifest a wonderful harvest. They come to make a better world. Let's understand what we can do to help. Montessori gave us so many keys. Music is one of them, because music is the language of the soul. Music is also very mathematical. You have to know what the mind can take. The child has to know how to direct his or her fingers, what the keyboard is and what all the signs mean. If you give everything all at once, then the child becomes so confused that he or she will not do it. Use the great dictum of the Montessori message, "Isolate the difficulties, then everything becomes clear and easy to understand and use." Otherwise it's like having a beautiful library without knowing the letters. For me it is the consciousness directing the fingers. From the fingers, that's not the music. It's the other way around. It's the way it has to be. So it's a slower process, but you have the results. My children composed their own songs. They are in touch with their inner teacher. I'll tell you, one of my students, at the end of the course, said exactly what it is: "I see what the fallen ones are doing. They complicate everything. Truth is always simple." The children already have that connection with Spirit, yet too often it is extinguished by unconscious adults.

I give many courses in the community. Many of our students who have earned high degrees have still not touched that child within them. I want them to take the Montessori course so that they touch that child. Montessori said, "How many of you give a thought to the little child who made you who you are today?" Do we?

In Miami, a good half of the students who took my courses were public school teachers disgusted with

what they were told to do, which did not work. They would say, "Let's go and find out about this Montessori method." Many trained to become administrators in public relations. They have opened schools and are already very successful. I have heard of more than twenty good schools because of these teachers who immediately saw the truth of the Montessori method. And many of them taking the course went back with a lot of good ideas. I recommend that teachers who are frustrated with the system take a Montessori course and open a school. It takes one year for the preschool. Then you take another year, for ages six through nine, and another one for the nine- to twelve-year-olds. If you want to be an elementary teacher, you have to be an encyclopedia to know all of the subjects in the world to date. Montessori said you cannot make a teacher. You are born a teacher. A Montessorian needs faith, the faith in a child who is not yet there, but will appear as a result of intelligent work given to him or her by dedicated teachers.

My husband and I came to this country after ten years of missionary work. We had a very small bank account, but we did have faith and the will to work. God came to my help with many wonderful people. I started with three little children, offered many scholarships, and had three classrooms and 90 students when I left. So it's the mustard seed. It becomes the dream. We need both meditation and action. The two together help us become the things God intended us to be. That's why I am very grateful for my passage through India. I am a Westerner, but I understand that we have to take time to get insights. It takes time to be holy. Meditation under a palm tree is not enough. We need to put feet under our prayers. You have to make the time and not be so taken by action that you have no time to receive the revelation and guidance. This brings a perfect balance.

When we came here in 1948, our worst enemies were the universities. They didn't want anything to do with Montessori. Montessori was very much accused and criticized of pushing children — they said that she wanted them to go farther, quicker and faster. But it's the last thing she desired. She said, "I only use their inner potential; that's the secret of my success." But you see, you have to touch the spirit. This is higher than the intelligence. Remember, it is not knowledge that is the key. Love is the key. That's the difference.

Challenges of the future

Slowly, things are changing. I have designed an information course that anybody may take — parents and professors who want to know. People who have to decide about education. And future teachers. My goal is to pass on the torch so that the fire continues to burn. I have found in Susan Bakel-Cohn[1] a teacher who understands both the method and the message that this great mother of humanity, Dr. Montessori, brought to our world.

These are dark times. As Sri Auroibindo, the great sage of India said, "Where there's the greatest light there is the deepest shadow." The dark forces do not want God's vision of humanity to be established. They bring opposition that has to be surmounted by a great determination. But these black horses know very well that it is their last kick. We are coming to meet them, though they are trying their hardest to destroy. They say it is the law of physics. But remember one thing, we will succeed, because God is on our side. Montessori based everything she believed in on principles. They are eternal. They were right before her, for

Letter to Governments
–Maria Montessori

My life has been spent in the research of truth. Through the study of children I have scrutinised human nature at its origin both in the East and the West, and although it is 40 years now since I began my work, childhood still seems to me an inexhaustible source of revelations and — let me say — of hope.

Childhood has shown me that all humanity is one. All children talk, no matter what their race or their circumstances or their family, more or less at the same age; they walk, change their teeth, etc. at certain fixed periods of their life. In other aspects also, especially in the psychical field, they are just as similar, just as susceptible.

Children are the constructors of men whom they build, taking from the environment language, religion, customs and the peculiarities not only of the race, not only of the nation, but even of a special district in which they develop.

Childhood constructs with what it finds. If the material is poor, the construction is also poor. As far as civilisation is concerned, the child is at the level of the food-gatherers.

In order to build himself, he has to take by chance, whatever he finds in the environment.

The child is the forgotten citizen, and yet, if statesmen and educationists once came to realise the terrific force that is in childhood for good or for evil, I feel they would give it priority above everything else.

All problems of humanity depend on man himself; if man is disregarded in his construction, the problems will never be solved.

No child is a Bolshevist or a Fascist or a Democrat; they all become what circumstances or the environment make them.

In our days when in spite of the terrible lessons of two world wars, the times ahead loom as dark as ever before, I feel strongly that another field has to be explored, besides those of economics and ideology. It is the study of man — not of adult man on whom every appeal is wasted. He, economically insecure, remains bewildered in the maelstrom of conflicting ideas and throws himself now on this side, now on that. Man must be cultivated from the beginning of life when the great powers of nature are at work. It is then that one can hope to plan for a better international understanding.

her, and right for the children of tomorrow. Now there is a great need for a training center. I cannot wait twenty years. And so I have to keep myself patient, which is not my cardinal virtue.

Education must wake up, or else it will be like an old civilization that dies out. I have great hope for the world, but we need great understanding of the inner power of the child. As Montessori said, "We are not the beings God intended us to be because the little child does not get the help he needs when he needs it." Everything is in our hands. Educare, a release from within. The light that lighteth every man coming into the world. It is here. Let's know it. Let's use it.

Maria Montessori was optimistic about humankind's ability to solve the political and ecological problems of this century. She gave her life to this concept. She believed that changing child-rearing methods could, by itself, change social order and the course of history. It is hard today, because both parents work and the mother often isn't even home. Television has become the babysitter of America. Do they think this is real life? Triangle marriages, vulgarity? With television, there is a great potential to educate, but what is it you want children to learn? They will give you what they see, passively, instead of being the intelligent, active little beings they are meant to be. The absorbent mind will take it in. And they will give you back what they fill their being with until they are seven years old.

The first university to establish a laboratory school based on the principles of Montessori method will change the course of this nation and the world. The world *can* change. This is what we are created for. Each one of us. You know, I always liked the idea of the garden. You have red flowers, yellow flowers, blue flowers. They don't say, "I am the one." They get together to make a beautiful bouquet to the glory of God. I am sure that it will happen here, in America. I believe the ship will sail from these shores as well. You have the vision as well as the means and the determination. Remember that you are among the youngest of nations. Anyone who is born on the other side of the Atlantic knows that the divine destiny of the United States is to lead the world. That's why I'm here. That's why instead of returning to Europe as many insist, I remain here. It's here that things will happen. It has to happen. The time has come. So you see that I am an optimist. In spite of all I hear and all I see, I am tremendously enthusiastic, for I have now found younger hands to pass on this torch.

Note

1. Susan Bakel-Cohn is the directress of Montessori Vision School in Santa Rosa, which she opened in 1983 after teaching ten years in the California public school system. Montessori Visions, currently serving three- to nine-year-olds, will be moving in September to a larger facility to incorporate an upper elementary program of nine-to twelve-year-olds. In addition, a 40-acre site in a farm setting is being developed for a high school program. Susan Bakel-Cohn may be reached at Montessori Visions, 1625 Franklin Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Susan Cohn on Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori wanted to see an end to all war, and she outlined her plan through "cosmic education." If you show children how to cooperate with their classmates in all situations (on the playground and off), your efforts will be successful. It takes just a little more effort but it is so worth it! The children must experience how good it feels to enjoy another person's pleasure. If they don't have the experience of a joyful heart, they will never know its pleasure.

We are dedicated to Montessori's vision and grateful that she left us her message. We have seen it work here at Montessori Visions School for the past eleven years. Some of our former students, now in high school, return to us periodically to recall the peaceful moments they spent with us. My sixteen-year-old recalls very vividly his constant joy in learning through the Montessori apparatus. He recently wrote his "I search" paper in tenth grade on the Montessori experience. What strikes me the most is that these children are the same children as when they were five. They are not part of the high school cliques, but seem to revolve in all circles. They are confident and contented.

Montessori gave us the key for the unfolding of the inner child. This key is through understanding and observation. This demands that we experience our inner child as well. That is the beauty of it; while helping others you are helping yourself, and it is truly a rewarding experience. So, with simplicity and truth we move forward in evolution with ease and great joy.

The Montessori principles are based in natural laws, so they will be as right today as they were then. The child can become a well-adapted individual, conscious of time, space, and group — fulfilling his or her function in life by performing duties — if we give the child the opportunity to succeed in the unfolding. The Montessori method does this. Montessori was divinely inspired; she listened to her "higher self," which guided her towards her goal in her lifetime. How happy she must have been in her work!

We hope for a brighter future, working with all educators in realization of the basic principle of human life — to better the world.

Montessori and Steiner

A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries

by Dee Joy Coulter

Dr. Dee Joy Coulter is a nationally recognized neuroscience educator with a background of twelve years as a special education teacher and program director, including an alternative school for dropouts. She teaches courses on education and the brain at the college level, serves on the faculty of the Naropa Institute, evaluates problem learners, works as a consultant, and gives lectures and workshops. This past year Dr. Coulter also taught special education at a public junior high school. She holds a master's degree in special education from the University of Michigan and a doctorate in neurological studies and holistic education from the University of Northern Colorado. Many of her lectures are available on tape; for information, contact her at Kindling Touch Publications, 4850 Niwot Road, Longmont, CO 80503.

An educator intimately familiar with the educational work of both Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner asserts that the two approaches are not in opposition to each other, but represent two aspects of a vital dialectical relationship. Each educator's work must be understood as a response to the specific needs of a particular culture and historical period.

What a pleasure it was to read the open and tender dialogue between four wonderful Montessori and Waldorf educators (*Holistic Education Review*, Winter 1990). I have cherished both movements for years. I helped to found the Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado, and have worked with the Montessori movement during the past five years as well: keynoting conferences, holding workshops, and serving as guest lecturer this past summer at two Montessori training institutes. It has been a delicate business, straddling the fence with these two dear friends. Each kindly granted me an exemption, agreeing to overlook that I was also befriending the other in my spare time. Nonetheless, I rarely saw openings for sharing the wonders of one movement with the other.

For a long time I held each movement in separate compartments in my heart and my head, considering the paradox of how they could both be so sound, so "right" — and so different. Then, one day, I was attending a lecture on education at the Naropa Institute, a Buddhist-inspired college in Boulder that is my third dear friend and where I love most to teach. Dr. Jeremy Hayward commented that the Buddhists regard wisdom (basic goodness) and skillful means (right action) as the two wings of the dove. All of the Eastern parallels tumbled through my mind then — the feminine and masculine principles, the yin and the yang, and the way each contains the other in seed form.

In that state of mind I thought again about my paradox: How could it be that Montessori and Steiner made sense, not as mere halves of what could be a good system if only put together, but as wholes themselves? Suddenly I saw these two inspired leaders and their movements as a pattern of reverse symmetries. I would like to describe some of these patterns here.

Rudolf Steiner began his spiritual activities with the Theosophical Society, eventually breaking away to form his own spiritual movement, which he called anthroposophy. But the connections he had made as head of the German Theosophical Society gave him the publishing connections to further his own

teachings later.

Whereas Steiner's affiliation with theosophy occurred early in his life, Maria Montessori's happened late in hers. She was visiting in India when World War II broke out and prevented her from returning to Italy. She was interned in Adyar, India, for six years and forced to slow her busy life to the tempo of that Indian city — which just happened to house the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society. Montessori was inspired to write her most overtly spiritual books during those years, and the books were then published by Adyar Press, the international theosophical publishing house. It was also this war experience that drew Montessori to press for peace education above all else.

War played a vital role in drawing forth Steiner's vision, too, although it was the aftermath of World War I in his case. Steiner was asked by Emil Molt, the owner of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, to devise an approach to education that could serve both the children of the workers and the management, and work toward reuniting a culture torn by war and class differences.

War brought about Steiner's initial invitation to participate in the formation of an educational philosophy, and it brought to Montessori a deeper spiritualization of work already well underway. Her work in education had begun with children in the Italian ghettos, children who would have been destined to find no niches in society without her dramatic interventions.

There are other reverse symmetries as well. Steiner, a male in a masculine country at the end of the very masculine act of war, was asked to instill the feminine principle of honoring the basic goodness and inner wisdom of the child by reintroducing the arts and reawakening the heart forces. In contrast, Montessori, a female in a feminine country already infused with the arts, offered disenfranchised children the masculine service of enculturation, apprising them of the environmental niches in society and building up skillful means in them so that they could take their place in that society. Whereas Steiner worked to rekindle the imaginations of overly hardened children, Montessori worked to diminish the excessive imaginative life of children who used that realm as an escape from a reality they couldn't grasp. She strove to "normalize" them, to bring their practical activities and their imaginations into proper balance.

Inside a Montessori classroom.

Symmetries in curriculum

Many curricular elements of the two approaches have the same reasonable oppositions as well. Montessori would first introduce the manifested forms of the greatest mathematicians to the children — Platonic solids, Pythagorean geometric forms — and later introduce biographies and the ideas behind the forms. Steiner would ask his teachers to introduce the wonder of sacred number principles, the biographies of the mathematicians, and the spiritual quests of their day before introducing the forms. Waldorf education reintroduces the questions so that the child can personally generate the spiritual quests that led to the answers, and then shows them what the culture has developed. Montessori education invites the child to reverence the answers first, the wonders of human cultural deeds, and then to progress to the seed elements of the finest of our manifested works.

Montessori would have the children discover geographical spaces and their spatial relationships early, to see how geography reveals our cultural interconnectedness. It is not uncommon for Montessori children in the early grades to raise money to preserve Brazilian rain forests, for example. Steiner, on the other hand, would start with the local environment and gradually work outward in a spiral to reach astronomy by grade 12, but he would reverse the spiral for history. In history, the child would begin with fairy tales, legends, and myths, then work on through Biblical and ancient recorded history to current events in grade 12. Steiner would pace this historical journey to match the unfolding consciousness of the developing child. The Golden Age of Greece, for example, would be addressed during grade 5, when children are their most sensitive about fairness, and newly able to become a democratic society themselves.

This thread of masculine and feminine voices also arose in the interview

in *Holistic Education Review*. The Montessori voices spoke more of materials, environment, structure, building, play exercises, concepts, specificity, order, and practicality. These words are used to describe our formed world, and to construct our world. The Waldorf voices spoke of delicate processes, essence, aspects, rhythm, feeling elements, context, imagination, and beauty. These words are used to describe our inner life and the artistic nuances of the world as it is. However, each movement is more than a polarity, for each holds the other at its core. Montessori offers the enculturating gesture with the ultimate hope that children so nourished will then go forth able to bring about peace in the world. This is a very feminine goal, calling for inner transformations. Steiner proposed his inner approach with the ultimate hope that the children so nourished would then go forth in freedom to contribute to the further development of the culture. In recent history, this has been largely a masculine activity.

Both of these paths are brilliant, full of compassion, and honoring of the child. And each path has the same obligation that faces every individual in these times. We can no longer afford, nor accept, a gender-based constraint on our ways of service; we must work to bring ourselves into balance in life. Both of these paths are at their best when their practitioners strive to explore the seed qualities within their movement. Montessori spoke eloquently of the spiritual embryo of the child and the spiritual preparation of the teacher. Those teachers would do well to study her later works and include within the clear forms a bit more of the mystery that Maria Montessori also saw. Conversely, Steiner sought teachers who had rich practical life experiences, to model for children ways to be in the world. Those teachers would do well to step out into the world more often — to see what other schools are doing, what children in other settings are like, how faculties elsewhere work with conflict, and how today's outer science could and would support their spiritual insights.

These actions would be so nourishing for the teachers themselves. When I am with Waldorf teachers, I witness their feeling of isolation and inner exhaustion. For them, a sense of context in the world would be a good tonic. When I am with Montessori teachers, I witness their feeling of overwhelmed compassion for the chaotic conditions of the world. For them, a sense of inner spiritual renewal would be an equally good tonic. One thing is very clear: The children need them both. Each brings a high level of love and caring and a path through childhood vitally needed by children today.

A Critical Look at Holism

The following articles address key questions in the formulation of holistic educational philosophy: What is holism? Is holistic education best characterized as a "paradigm" or something else? What are the relationships between holism and science, and between holistic education and social change? We hope that these essays will stimulate readers to think about the assumptions and values underlying their own educational practice, and, as always, we invite and encourage responses.

–R.M.

How Whole Is Holistic Education?

by David E. Purpel and Ron Miller

This is a time of both despair and hope in education, and of course, in the larger society and culture. The despair is rooted in the mindlessness and meanness reflected in the so-called education reform movement with its renewed emphasis on competition, conformity, accountability, testing, and competence-based curriculum. The hope emerges from the vitality and imagination of educators who provide both penetrating criticisms and creative alternatives to the dreary and oppressive regimen of cultural conservatives and educational technocrats.

One can see the hope and despair simultaneously when one becomes aware of the incredible gap between the dominant educational practices and policies of our time, and the ideas being proposed by today's educational visionaries. We believe that current practice in the schools, by and large, represents retrogression: a reversal of the slow but real historical progress toward offering humane, sensitive, and creative education for our children. At the same time, we also believe that, light years away from most practice, there is now emerging a new brilliance in educational/curriculum theory.

However, as is often the case, there is at best a lack of communication and awareness among these visionaries and at worst a great deal of distrust and divisiveness. Obviously, strong differences of viewpoint are inevitable, stimulating, and useful. But if this alternative educational movement is to emerge as a potent force, then its advocates will need to reduce unnecessary divisiveness and, more important, encourage the various differing groups and individuals to learn from and with one another. This paper is written in that spirit, with the belief that it is important to address these issues directly in order to shed greater light on the common core purposes of our efforts.

More particularly, we wish to examine some of the important differences of opinion between those educators who might generally be categorized as "human potential" or spiritually oriented, and those who might be categorized as being con-

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cerned primarily with political and social issues. It is the first group that usually adopts the label of "holistic," while the second group is more commonly known as "critical theory" or "reconceptualist." There are important differences both within and between these groups, and their reconcilability ranges from quite possible to nearly inconceivable. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that *all* educators who seek fundamental changes in the current decadent system must engage in a serious effort to understand one another and allow themselves to be open to the possibility of enriching and extending their own orientations through this dialogue. The stakes are too high for us to waste our efforts fighting one another, instead of fighting the deeply entrenched monolithic system.

Human development through social change

Our major premise is that a genuinely *holistic* educational theory — a holism that is truly whole — must draw upon a well-defined human development/spiritual orientation *as well as* a critical social and political perspective. To us, holistic education is a strong critique of modern society that is grounded in a moral and spiritual conception of the meaning of human life. Holistic education is both a critical perspective on present social institutions and a positive prescription for a more democratic, life-affirming culture. In other words, it impels us to provide a rational, carefully considered analysis of present conditions as well as the passion, courage, and commitment to work toward a vision that transcends this culture's limitations.

If we consider the Chicago Statement of 1990,[1] both dimensions — the critical and the prescriptive — are evident. As criticism, the Chicago Statement helps us to recognize the failure of many educators to take a number of very important elements of human activity into consideration. These elements include the moral and spiritual realms, the diversity and depth of human potential, and other ways of knowing that include the intuitive and the aesthetic. Most important, the Chicago Statement reminds us of the significance of the contextual and relational nature of knowledge and human experience.

However, the Chicago Statement goes beyond merely urging us to keep such matters in perspective and to attend to them seriously. It also reflects a broad though clearly definable cultural, political, and moral orientation, if not ideology. The Chicago Statement speaks to the centrality of "open human relationships"; to the affirmation of individuality, creativity, and diversity; to the importance of "respect for the global community of humankind," and of "creating a sustainable, just, and peaceful society in harmony with the earth and its life." These values may well provide a bridge to other groups — who previously have not been considered "holistic" — working for a transformation of education. However, in order to construct this bridge adequately, educators interested in human potentials and spirituality need to be more aware of the political dimensions of their work, while critical theorists need to be more open to the sensibilities and perspectives of "holistic" educators.

One major difference between these groups lies in different emphases on the relationship between the individual and society. Although there probably is agreement among most educational theorists that there is a dialectical and vital relationship between self and society, in reality theorists tend to emphasize either a psychological orientation or a social one. For example, it is clear that the Chicago Statement has a far greater emphasis in matters relating to the personal and the individual, with special attention to the inner life of the person. A key sentence reads, "Holism seeks to expand the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world by celebrating our innate human potentials — the intuitive, emotional, physical, imaginative, and creative, as well as the rational, logical, and verbal." This is not to say that sensitivity to the importance of culture and society is absent, but that it is muted, almost perfunctory.

Now, on one hand, this emphasis on the individual and self, on the inner life of the person, is an important reminder to those with a social and political orientation. For the most part, critical pedagogy has failed to develop a psychological analysis that parallels its social analysis in depth and sophistication; and the spiritual grounding of holism — its insistent concern for deeper human potentials — offers this. But we believe that those working in the holistic tradition have too often neglected the enormous significance of cultural, political, and social contexts and their impact on our lives. By definition, *holism* must recognize that both psychological and social forces are powerful and that the insights of sociology *and* psychology, history *and* personal experience, anthropology *and* phenomenology can all contribute to deeper understanding. Indeed, the holistic perspective is *essentially* the recognition that these elements are all interrelated and can be understood only in that way. It is possible, therefore, within the broad framework of holism, for various groups to offer correctives to one another, constantly reminding themselves to be more aware of dimensions neglected, slighted, or forgotten. In fact, this is not only possible, it is holism's special mission.

However, sometimes a corrective is more than a corrective, serving the function not of balance but of choice and commitment. For example, the Chicago Statement, unlike the mission statements of other educational reformers, falls far short of an explicit and forceful commitment to democracy or, for that matter, to any clearly defined social/political vision. Is this omission a function of something that is taken for granted (as in, "Well, of course we affirm democracy; this commitment is implicit in what we say and do!")? Or is it, in some degree, a function of frustration with, and avoidance of, social and political structures? It is one thing to be critically aware of moral, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts (as the Chicago Statement declares), and quite another thing to decide what to make of the heightened awareness.

What every educator must necessarily do is to confront the social/cultural/political context in which an educational program is situated; all education is, at least implicitly, an expression of moral, social, and politi-

cal values; and in our case, these are seriously at odds with the dominant culture. What are we to do about this? The most serious problem facing holistic education is its failure to address these essential, fundamental and — whether we like it or not — very real dimensions of human life. Every educator must address the questions of what kind of political and social structure is most desirable, and of what kind of society will facilitate (or at least not inhibit) our highest personal and cultural expectations and dreams.

Insight and rationality

The failure of holistic educators to address economic, social, and political issues adequately is related to other important differences with other radical educators. One difference is over the nature of human experience and the sources of knowledge. Holistic educators may tend to side-step political issues because they see social institutions as at best irrelevant and at worst inimical to the unfolding of human experience. For many holistic educators, it would seem that the inner, spiritual life *replaces* culture and history as the broad source of experience, knowledge, and power. Intuitive, aesthetic, and kinesthetic ways of knowing are frequently emphasized far more than language, culture, and codified knowledge. As a *corrective* to the overly analytical, reductionistic thinking of modern culture, holism's emphasis on intuition and spirituality is extremely valuable; it restores a vital part of our inner life that materialistic culture has blunted, if not amputated. But too often, with this emphasis comes considerable suspicion of critical rationality and analysis as being intrinsically narrow, constricted, and limiting.

Many holistic thinkers seem to view critical rationality as serving only to divide artificially, to deny the validity of other modes of knowledge, and to drain emotion and passion from the human enterprise. This is a self-defeating view. By avoiding critical analysis and, in particular, social and moral criticism, the overemphasis on spirituality and intuition becomes naively optimistic about the prospects for cultural transformation. It is felt that if everyone individually — or at least a so-called critical mass — were to reconnect with their spiritual core, then an entirely new civilization based on love, compassion, and cooperation would inevitably blossom. This is an inspiring and possibly true vision — but it rests on a stubbornly elusive "if"! Critical social theory is directed precisely at those external and ideological conditions that effectively *prevent* the large majority of people from discovering their inner voice. Until we make ourselves aware of the cultural barriers to our spiritual unfolding, we will continue to be frustrated by them.

Interestingly enough, educational radicals working within critical traditions have come to see the possibility that there is such a thing as overreliance on critical rationality. Therefore, on an optimistic note, here would seem to be another real possibility for narrowing the differences between these positions by starting from a point where at least most of us could agree that *critical analysis is a necessary though not sufficient tool* for a deeper understanding of our selves, our institutions, and our problems and their solutions.

A genuinely* holistic *educational theory — a holism that is truly whole — must draw upon a well-defined human development / spiritual orientation* as well as *a critical social and political perspective.

However, there is a more troubling, perhaps deeper, and certainly more problematic aspect to this issue. Some elements of the holistic movement seem to involve a strong preoccupation with the inner life, the intuitive, and the intensely personal — leading toward an insensitivity to social and political realities. There is much in our society and culture that makes such narcissism and solipsism a palpable threat. If we do not confront the rugged individualism and consumerism that are such essential strands of modern American culture, then they may easily infect every aspect of our lives, including our spiritual search. Then, the only thing that is real to us is our own pain, our own longing for wholeness; the outer world becomes merely a stage for our own neuroses. The suffering we might read about or see on television is not experienced as fully real. This position becomes even more attractive and compelling when it is joined with a spirituality and a cosmology that put far greater emphasis on the ultimate meaning and destiny of the universe than on immediate human striving and suffering.

In our appropriate dismay of existing human institutions, we must not despair of humanity; in our horror of political institutions, we must not fantasize a life without politics; in our deep yearning for harmony, we must not blind ourselves to the inevitability and ameliorability of human conflict. In other words, holistic educators should not emphasize the spiritual at the expense of the moral; more accurately, we should not search for solace in a cosmology in which concrete moral issues are at best marginal or incidental to ultimate spiritual salvation.

Again, the holistic education movement can serve as an extremely vital corrective to the more politically oriented educational reform movements that are weakened by their failure to ground their ideas in an enduring and emerging vision. Critical pedagogy, for example, has made an enormous contribution in its brilliant and courageous critique of education, culture, and society. Furthermore, its vision of an education devoted to empowerment through critical reflection of students' lived experiences renews a dream of meaningful educa-

tion with fresh power. Yet, so far it has failed to reach that place within the human spirit where the primordial energy for transcendence and transformation is located.

However, holistic educators must be clearer in their commitment not only to ultimate salvation, but to what Cornel West calls "penultimate liberation."[2] West's point is that religion (in his case, Christianity) ought to respond to the basic existential fear of sin and death. This offers us not only the possibility of salvation but also the energy and faith to meet our current, human, immediate responsibilities of eliminating unnecessary human suffering — hunger, malnutrition, oppression, war, disease, ignorance.

It is not enough to say that we must simply attend to the spiritual. We must also choose our spiritualities and our cosmologies, for they are numerous and differ in their implications for human endeavors in general and for education in particular. We need to affirm religious traditions and spiritual sensibilities that make vital and compelling connections to concerns of moral principle and action. For example, Matthew Fox has been able to brilliantly articulate an orientation in which the mystical, the political, the economic, the aesthetic, and the moral are integral to one another.[3]

We can all quote and agree with Alfred North Whitehead's adage that education is religious in nature; and we can enrich that adage by thinking of education as also being political, social, economic, and, above all, *moral* in nature. An education that is truly holistic engages us with the world and calls upon us to respond to it, in all of its complexity.

Notes

1. The Chicago Statement was issued by a conference of holistic educators in Chicago in June 1990. It has been published in several places, including *Holistic Education Review* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1990).
2. Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).
3. See, for example, Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979, 1990).

Not Necessarily the New Paradigm
Holism and the Future

by Steven Gelb

Steven Gelb is Director of the Manchester Family Child Development Center and Assistant Professor in the School of Education, both at the University of San Diego. Previously he was a preschool teacher, child life therapist, elementary school counselor, and parent discussion group leader. Recently, after a long search, he found a spiritual home in San Diego's Jewish Reconstructionist synagogue, **Dor Hadash** *(New Generation).*

Readers of *Holistic Education Review* are familiar with the claim that a "holistic paradigm" of science and culture is emerging to supplant the "reductionistic, mechanistic" paradigm that has dominated the Western mind since the early 1700s. It is said that the mechanistic worldview — with its separation of mind from body, subject from object, and part from whole — is responsible for the fractured state of contemporary society, including our dehumanizing education system, as well as the ecological peril that is faced by the planet Earth. The intellectual architects of the current state of affairs are said to have been Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, and Isaac Newton.[1] The holists leading us toward a new way of seeing include Fritjof Capra, Marilyn Ferguson, David Bohm, and others.[2] Holism, with its "unifying grasp of reality," is described as bringing about a new age of connectedness, harmony, and peace.[3]

Although I share many of the aims of educators who describe themselves as holists, as well as their critique of the present educational system, I cannot accept the claims about paradigms, society, and change that often accompany holistic prescriptions for education. I believe that the paradigm shift claim paradoxically positions holists within the dominant scientific discourse from which they want to escape. In this paper I want to show that the "paradigmism" which characterizes the discourse of some holistic educators — the insistence that their program for education is part of a transformative response to the inexorable disintegration of a dominant paradigm — is not only unsupportable, but an unfortunate product of many of the tendencies that holists oppose. I aim to demonstrate that "new paradigm" discourse (a) contributes to, rather than dissolves, the idol worship of science, (b) is itself reductionistic, and (c) is not a helpful way to build a better future.

The lure of science

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein viewed the "worship of science" and scientific progress as a widespread contemporary affliction. The scientific method is wholly inappropriate for aesthetics and spirituality, for example, but we sometimes assume that science can answer any question that is put to it.[4] Although science is not the same as religion, it has, in our age, assumed some of the same authority that religion commanded in earlier periods.

Some holists, despite their alertness to the abuses of science, contribute to scientific idol worship by describing science and

the scientific worldview as the root and substance of our current difficulties. The same idol worship inheres in related appeals to the authority of "holistic" science — the physics of subatomic particles, for example — which will supposedly liberate us from the chains of mechanistic science.

Perhaps it is necessary in the age of science to speak with the imprimatur of science if one expects to be taken seriously. But how can holistic educators who ground the legitimacy of their aims for education in the authority of science make a claim to represent a vision and an age that is genuinely new? They are in the position, on the one hand, of seeking emancipation from the natural science model that has guided much educational research and thinking and, on the other, of justifying that release with the findings of ... physics and chemistry![5]

Those who tell us that our world has been despoiled by the scientific worldview also tell us that new science can save us. For example:

> In short, the way children learn to talk is characterized not by a mechanistic, reductionistic, technological model of learning, but by a transactional model that reflects not classical science, but the paradigm offered by quantum physics, the "new" paradigm emerging in a variety of disciplines.[6]
>
> Today, at a very deep level, we are beginning to unmask creation's web, where all has purpose and all has meaning.... During the last hundred years, scientific discoveries have provided the rest of us with a view of life that has the potential to transform our understanding of humanity's relationship to the whole.[7]
>
> Our discoveries about the startling nature of reality are a major force for change, undermining common-sense ideas and old institutional philosophies. "The 1980's will be a revolutionary time," said physicist Fritjof Capra, "because the whole structure of our society does not correspond with the worldview of emerging scientific thought." The agenda of the coming decade is to act on this new scientific knowledge....[8]
>
> Yet just as we can take advantage of great technological developments of our civilization, like the transistor, our lives can be liberated by the new worldview of radical science, whether we understand the technicalities or not.[9]
>
> This new vision of reality emerged in physics at the beginning of the century and is now surfacing in various other fields. It consists not only of new concepts but also of a new value system, and it is reflected in new forms of social organization and new institutions. It is being formulated largely outside our academic institutions, which remain too closely tied to the Cartesian framework to appreciate the new ideas.[10]

These holists are trapped within the authority of science, even as they attempt to dismantle it. Paradigmism implies that our problem is the use of the wrong kind of science and that the right kind can help us to choose between competing visions of education or serve to build an ecological and peaceful world. But surely science should not be the oracle to which we bring questions such as what the aims of education should be, whether or not life is sacred, or how we should treat one another.

To be sure, the "new paradigm" is supposed to encompass more than science — it is said to include nonrational ways of knowing as well — and holistic science is supposed to be compatible with mystical and artistic visions. Yet, as the above quotations show, some are in the position of justifying nonscientific ways of knowing by reference to science. That is, they maintain that nonrational perspectives are now legitimate because science has shown them to be so. It is precisely that use of science, to prove or disprove matters of the spirit, that Wittgenstein characterized as idol worship.

In this regard, the use of the terms *paradigm* and *paradigm shift* is telling. *Paradigm shift*, of course, comes from the work of Thomas Kuhn, the historian of science who argued that scientific work is characterized by periods of normal, business-as-usual science punctuated by revolutionary shifts that develop as a response to perceived crises in normative models. The classic example is the sixteenth-century Copernican revolution in astronomy in which the model for understanding the solar system shifted from being Earth-centered to being sun-centered.[11]

When holistic educators adopt these terms and this model of intellectual change, they court the authority of science via the inference that their program for education and society is intellectually valid in ways that approaches based on the discredited "dominant" paradigm are not. They argue that the "holistic" paradigm is a more adequate account of reality than the "mechanistic" paradigm. But more adequate according to what criteria? That holism is the only rational response to the crisis caused by mechanistic science? Or that it more closely represents reality as disclosed by recent discoveries in physics and chemistry? Both arguments appeal to the heart of the darkness that holists say they want to dissolve.[12]

But surely science should not be the oracle to which we bring questions such as what the aims of education should be, whether or not life is sacred, or how we should treat one another.

Moreover, the belief that our present problems stem from the legacy of Bacon, Descartes, and Newton is not only science worship, but also simplistic. It is said that these scientists' fractured worldview — created via Bacon's emphasis on knowing through observation, Descartes' positing the mind/body duality, and Newton's invention of classical, mechanistic physics — led to Western society's "disenchantment" of the world. Because we view the world as a machine rather than as a living whole, we have created a society that fosters interpersonal and ethnic violence, and which tragically and short-sightedly is engaged in the destruction of the Earth. As society

embraces the new holistic paradigm, and sees the interconnectedness of all things, these problems will be eliminated.

Can such a simple cause and remedy for our problems be taken seriously? And how can such an explanation, which ignores the complex determinants of human behavior, and history itself, be advanced as a nonreductionistic alternative to current psychologies? No golden age of peace and connectedness preceded the development of the modern scientific worldview in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Crusades and pogroms of the Middle Ages, the human sacrifices of the Aztec civilization, the slave trade of the Roman Empire, and the ethnic intolerance and violence that have characterized diverse societies throughout human history, cannot be blamed on Bacon, Descartes, and Newton. I do not deny the historical and current importance of the modern scientific worldview, but I want to point out that the primacy accorded it by Capra, Ferguson, and others who cite them is not defensible, and is in fact reductionistic.

What's more, the scientific worldview is not as deeply embedded in the consciousness of human beings as the argument claims. Scientists complain that most people neither understand science nor think like scientists, and it is widely believed that there is a national crisis in science education in the United States. Surveys of Americans consistently point out that a large percentage of them believe in extrasensory perception, telepathy, and life after death. The ubiquity of newspaper astrology columns, our cultural emphasis on romantic love, the superstitious absence of a thirteenth floor in many of our high-rise buildings, and the popularity of Chinese fortune cookies make it clear that personal consciousness is not entirely dominated by Cartesian/Newtonian mechanism, nor has it been at any time in the past few centuries.

Waiting for the new paradigm

Nor, unfortunately, is there evidence that a new post-mechanistic consciousness will rescue us from our current dismal state. In 1991, Americans are confronted by a growing domestic neo-fascist movement, along with increased homelessness and poverty that is accompanied by apparent governmental apathy toward these signs of social disintegration.[13] Moreover, as I write this, we are in a state of war.

No golden age of peace and connectedness preceded the development of the modern scientific worldview in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Elsewhere, there is no clear evidence that an age of peace is descending upon us. Ethnic violence in India is worse today than it has been at any time since that country gained its independence 43 years ago.[14] And the German Green Party, which espouses many values associated with the "emerging paradigm" performed dismally in the recent election of that newly unified country and has been judged likely to disappear from the Bundestag completely in the next federal election.[15] Of course, there are positive things taking place in the world as well. But I do not believe we are thinking critically when we claim that we are on the edge of an age of harmony.

Although increasing chaos may indicate that significant change is possible or even likely, we delude ourselves if we believe that the change will inexorably be for the better. Historians reject the notion of inevitability, and, in any case, there are many competing visions of what a new age would and should look like. We should recall a statement made in the 1930s: "We are now at the end of the Age of Reason. The intellect has grown autocratic, and has become a disease of life.... A new age of Magic interpretation of the world is coming, of interpretation in terms of the Will and not the intelligence."[16] The speaker was Adolf Hitler.

Holists may believe that their vision is now ascendant, but they should reflect on the fact that postmodernism, the antithesis of holism, is presently a larger, far more influential intellectual movement. Postmodernists reject the very idea of human progress that is embedded within the vision of an emerging holistic paradigm. They deny the possibility of a universal state of consciousness and argue that its pursuit will always lead to new forms of oppression.

Surely the notion of a rapid emergent change that will cleanse the ills of our time has an urgent appeal, especially to those who are deeply frustrated with the world as it is. But this idea is not as radical as it is said to be. Ron Miller has pointed out that advocates for a new consciousness often fail to address the social problems that critical theorists raise. In my view this is no accident. The invitation to shift consciousness is strangely compatible with the empty consumerism that the advocates for the "new paradigm" believe they will uproot:

> Promoted as a means of empowering the self, of restoring to individuals their grip on the world, the typical New Age philosophy is an invitation for the self to dissolve away until it, too, becomes a "process," part of the endless flow of the cosmos.... In the consumption universe, "endless flow" is provided by the stream of product images, each an invitation to become a better, happier, richer, more glamorous person.... The pursuit of one's "potential" outside of existing social structures is the perfect formula for a consumer culture, which profits from the seasonal turnover in conceptions of self, the model for which is fashion.[17]

Instead of a new soap or brand of beer, a simple shift in consciousness promises to eliminate the anxiety and emptiness of our corporate dominated, de-individualized age.[18]

The poverty of paradigmism

Dualism appeals to those with absolutist ways of thinking, and dualism is inescapably linked to paradigmism. As Stephanie Shea pointed out, in the

Kuhnian sense, "Not only are competing paradigms incompatible but incommensurable. They are incompatible in the sense that one individual cannot accept both at the same time. One cannot subscribe simultaneously to a geocentric and heliocentric view of the universe. The scientist must make an either/or decision."[19] Now this is precisely the sense in which holists view the "old mechanistic, reductionistic" paradigm and the "new holistic" one. The problem is that the Kuhnian situation does not apply neatly to issues in education, and the belief that it does creates a tendency to engage in either/or thinking.

Holists may believe that their vision is now ascendant, but they should reflect on the fact that postmodernism, the antithesis of holism, is presently a larger, far more influential intellectual movement.

The result is the misperception that educational methods, ideas, or models may be categorized neatly as belonging to one paradigm or the other. Such thinking led a previous colleague of mine to assign teachers the task of keeping a log of their activities during the course of a work day and then to sort each recorded activity into either the "mechanistic" paradigm or the "holistic" paradigm. This type of dichotomy seems especially dangerous when it is assumed, as it often seems to be, that everything associated with the "new paradigm" is good, and everything associated with the "dominant paradigm" is bad.

The familiar process/product dichotomy is an example of such thinking. It is asserted that the emerging holistic paradigm in education is process-oriented, while the dominant paradigm is product-oriented. Hence, focusing on process is assumed to be good, and focusing on product is assumed to be bad. But the products on which schools typically now focus are objectionable, not because products in themselves are bad, but because those chosen are intellectually trivial, narrowly conceived, owned by teachers or administrators rather than by students, and not linked to any meaningful, exciting, involving process of learning. The ubiquitous worksheet is an example of such a product.

Yet products may be selected that nourish process rather than vitiate it. When elementary children in a whole language program create a newspaper with the aim that it will be seriously read by peers, teachers, parents, and others, they are deeply involved in creating such a product. The process of meaningful learning leads naturally to such activities. Learners want to make real things — products — as they explore and grow in understanding and ability. Process conceived without product is impoverished, just as is product without process. The same is true of context and content and synthesis and analysis, which also are frequently dichotomized.

Paradigmism, by positing a clean break between the old and the new, leads us to inflate the importance of our ideas. It justifies the egocentric belief that the present is unique and that the changes of our lifetime are precipitously new, different from anything that has occurred before, and that they chart an entirely new direction for the future. We might reflect that many generations in the past few hundred years have believed themselves to be living in a similar moment.

And we might take note of some of the tired company now jumping on the new paradigm bandwagon. For example, a White House aide recently claimed that the "New Paradigm" describes the "overarching idea, the signature" of the Bush administration.[20] University presidents say that they seek a "new paradigm" for their institutions, when their quite modest proposals for reform include "introducing new criteria for the promotion and tenure of faculty members to creating more effective teaching methods and adopting new approaches for managing and obtaining funds."[21]

The changes that holists recommend for education and society, though dramatic ones, do not represent a clean break with the past, but an evolutionary response to it. Although holists criticize the worship of rationalism, they do not wish to eliminate rational thought altogether; rather, they wish to integrate it with other ways of experiencing and describing the world. Although they reject the mechanistic view of human beings that they associate with the Age of Enlightenment, they embrace that same period's emancipatory universal goals, its belief in human progress, and its romantic, positive view of human nature. Paradigmism leads us away from the vital connections that often exist between ideas that we like and those we dislike, and it produces a demonized vision of the past along with an idealized view of the future. It prevents us from seeing that Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Thoreau, Tolstoy, and other "holistic" figures of the past, were products of the same social context that generated classical, mechanistic science.[22]

The rigidity that leads to false dichotomies stems, I believe, from paradigmism itself, which begins with the idea of conflict. Paradigms — by definition — establish normative ways of viewing and studying intellectual problems. Such parameters necessarily exclude other ways of understanding and foster an intolerance for non-paradigmatic views. As David Bohm and F. David Peat point out, "Paradigms, especially after they have been established for some time, hold the consensual mind in a 'rut' requiring a revolution to escape from."[23] And a new paradigm, *any* new paradigm, re-creates the problem by substituting a new rigidity for an old one.

This insight goes far toward explaining, in my view, the sometimes contradictory behavior of previously excluded adherents of "liberating" perspectives after their position is accepted. An "us" versus "them" mentality frequently leads to intoler-

ance of divergent positions. A colleague, trained in whole language and entirely in agreement with its stance regarding literacy development, was recently dismayed at a whole language gathering to find that some movement leaders and followers were hostile to thought-provoking questions or divergent positions.

The most trying two years of my own professional life occurred in a setting that described itself as "holistic." The degree of orthodoxy, intolerance, and general hostility toward differing views that I encountered there surpassed anything that I have before or since witnessed in "dominant paradigm" settings.

In sharing this experience, which sparked my interest in writing this piece, I do not wish to imply (nor do I believe) that such attitudes are characteristic of holists, generally. I present it to illustrate that the potential for arrogance and intolerance, for becoming a "dominant paradigm," with all of the psychological violence that that implies, is embedded in paradigmism.

If the rigidity and inhuman values of current settings are troubling to us, then we should not posit a competing paradigm as the path to a more humane future. That is a competitive concept that unwittingly supports the accumulation of power — to overturn the "old paradigm" — and the stifling of criticism. Claiming that the "emerging paradigm" would be tolerant of diversity does not rescue paradigmism. If such were the case, then the "new paradigm" would not be a paradigm at all, but rather an end to paradigms. Only an *end* to paradigms would allow, in Bohm and Peat's words, "for a plurality of basic concepts, with a constant movement that is aimed at establishing unity between them."[24] Paradigmism cannot accept plurality, and therefore it can never be holistic. A paradigm is always a fragment.

Beyond paradigmism

We live in a world of injustice and inequity, a world of armed greed, and a world in which schools routinely disempower and dehumanize children. Although I agree that transformation is necessary, I view the promotion of an emerging paradigm as escapist.

It is comforting to believe that revolutionary change can be accomplished easily and without conflict. But if we truly seek to integrate the political and the personal, then we need to focus on the world as well as on ourselves. The infamous EST "Hunger Project," which sought donations and signatures to raise individual consciousness about the problem of hunger — but did nothing about hunger itself — is an example of the futility of a purely consciousness-shifting approach. Hunger is caused by structural inequities in the ownership and allocation of land and other resources. A billion signatories to a petition to end hunger will not rearrange these unjust social relations. Any serious program for change must acknowledge that the present arrangement of our society — inequities, dehumanizing schools, and all — serves particular social interests that are not likely to abandon their privilege easily.

In place of paradigmism I would like to promote intellectual humility united with social activism. I believe that the most promising aspect of postmodern thought is its insistence that diverse voices, especially those that previously have been silenced by the "universal" voice of rational modernistic progress, be heard. We can no longer afford to speak for others, let alone for the universe. Perhaps many of our problems are due to the strength with which we hold our ideas, and the resulting psychological and physical violence we wreak on others in promoting them. It seems that we require a holism that is inclusive, not exclusive, one that promotes dialogue and humility about knowledge, experience, and feelings, rather than conflict, certainty, and arrogance.

Finally, I believe that human activists who join hands with others to work for justice are still our only hope for building a better world. Martin Luther King was an example of such an activist. Marian Wright Edelman is another; through her work with the Children's Defense Fund she has helped focus national attention on the recent deterioration of American children's lives. But her work does not just inform. It confronts, creates alternative visions, and pushes people with power to make better decisions for children. Each year the Children's Defense Fund produces and disseminates an alternative federal budget based on the radical assumption that human beings matter. Recently it lobbied successfully for the passage of national childcare legislation and increased funds for Head Start.

Such small successes may not seem like much when placed beside the vision of a newly transformed world order. But they are real, and the new order is not. We have no recourse but to accept and deal with the world we live in: "The end is not over there, not on the other side of the wall; the beginning and the end are here."[25]

The problem is that the Kuhnian situation does not apply neatly to issues in education, and the belief that it does creates a tendency to engage in either/or thinking.

Notes

1. Phil Gang, "The Global-Ecocentric Paradigm in Education," *Holistic Education Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 13.

2. Many more names could be included here. I have chosen these three because they are widely cited authorities for the "holistic paradigm."

3. Philip S. Gang, "Holistic Education for a New Age," *Holistic Education Review*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 1988), p. 13.

4. Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 404.

5. More specifically, holists justify their positions with reference to quantum mechanics and chemical work on dissipative structures.

6. Constance Weaver, "Reading as a Whole: Why Basal Reading Series Are Not the Answer," *Holistic Education Review* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1988), p. 10.

7. Gang, "The Global-Ecocentric Paradigm," p. 11.

8. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in Our Time* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), p. 145.

9. Ibid, p. 148.

10. Fritjof Capra, "The Turning Point: A New Vision of Reality," *The Futurist* (December 1982), p. 21.

11. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

12. I am well aware that the "new paradigm" is against the authority of rationalism. This does not change the fact that its proponents describe it as the only rational response to the current world crisis.

13. Elinor Langer, "The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today," *The Nation* (July 1990) pp. 82-86, 87-90, 92-99, 102-107.

14. Mark Fineman, "India's Religious Warfare Worst Since Independence," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 1990, p. 1.

15. Timothy Garton Ash, "Germany at the Frontier," *New York Review of Books*, 17 January 1991, p. 21.

16. Adolf Hitler, quoted in Dusty Sklar, *The Nazis and the Occult* (New York: Dorset, 1977), p. 57.

17. Jay Rosen, "Optimism and Dread: T.V. and the New Age," in *Not Necessarily the New Age*, edited by Robert Basil (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus), pp. 277-279. I hope readers will not be put off by the term "New Age" in this quotation, which I have taken pains to avoid elsewhere in this article. Rosen uses it in the context of his critique of Marilyn Ferguson's idea of paradigm shift.

18. Ron Miller, *What Are Schools For?* (Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press, 1990) foresees the possibility of violence and resistance before the new paradigm is accepted. To my knowledge, he is the only person promoting the emerging paradigm position who presents this more complex view.

19. Stephanie B. Shea, "Paradigms Reconsidered," *Educational Foundations* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1990), p. 64.

20. Lance Morrow, "Old Paradigm, New Paradigm," *Time* (14 January 1991), p. 66.

21. Karen Grassmuck, "Some Research Universities Contemplate Sweeping Changes, Ranging from Management and Tenure to Teaching Methods," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 37, no. 2 (12 September 1990), p. 1.

22. Ron Miller describes the educational contributions of many of these figures in *What Are Schools For?*

23. David Bohm and F. David Peat, *Science, Order and Creativity* (Toronto: Bantam, 1987), p. 61.

24. Ibid, p. 61.

25. Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The Urgency of Change* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 20.

Holism: Implications of the New Paradigm
Response to Purpel & Miller and Gelb

by Edward T. Clark, Jr.

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Perhaps the greatest challenge facing holistic educators — and other holistic professionals, such as holistic health-care workers — is the challenge to *think and act* holistically. We have been programmed for so long to think and act in accordance with the "either/or" requirements of linear, dualistic logic that it is exceedingly difficult for us to understand the "both/and" requirements of holistic, systemic logic. Most of us can understand systemic logic as it is expressed in ecological systems. We recognize the absurdity of attempting to interbreed the diverse species residing in an ecological community in order to correct or improve them. We don't expect monkeys to fly or birds to swing from branch to branch. Yet we become downright uncomfortable when faced with the multiplicity of divergent beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, and courses of action that appear in any social system or movement. In order to minimize our differences, we have developed a variety of convergent strategies — sometimes called "correctives" — designed to narrow the gap between us and other groups. That this tendency is equally prevalent among holistic educators is evident in each of the preceding articles.

Clearly, David Purpel and Ron Miller are intent on constructing a bridge of understanding between two "species" in the holistic education community — identified as the "human potential" group and the "critical theorists." Their concern is twofold: First, each of these groups is at times perceived as behaving as though it were the only species in the forest. Second, to pursue the ecological analogy, it is believed that each species needs "correctives" to make them more alike. In words strangely reminiscent of Professor Henry Higgins' lament, "Why can't a woman be like a man?" Purpel and Miller seem to believe that holistic educators should be more socially conscious and critical theorists should be more sensitive to latent human potential. It is as though they want to add wings to monkeys and long tails to birds.

Although Purpel and Miller obviously recognize and at times applaud the value of diverse perspectives, Steven Gelb seems decidedly uncomfortable with diversity. Although he claims to honor "postmodern thought [and] its insistence that diverse voices, *especially those that previously have been silenced by the universal voice of rational modernistic progress* be heard" (emphasis added), at least one of those voices — "paradigmism" —

apparently is not worthy of such honor. Although he acknowledges, "We require a holism that is inclusive, not exclusive, one that promotes dialogue and humility about knowledge, experience, and feelings, rather than conflict, certainty, and arrogance," his brand of holism seems to exclude those who believe that "a simple shift in consciousness promises to eliminate the anxiety and emptiness of our corporate-dominated, de-individualized age." Although Gelb wishes to promote "intellectual humility," he dismisses as "simplistic" and "escapist" those who believe that "the 'holistic' paradigm is a more adequate account of reality than the 'mechanistic' paradigm." On the basis of this article, his position appears to be contradictory, exclusive, and arrogant.

Caricatures of holism

In each case, it seems that these authors have created caricatures in order to make their points. Purpel and Miller address the critical theorists who "failed to develop a psychological analysis that parallels [their] social analysis in depth and sophistication," but their strongest volleys are reserved for "holistic educators [who] tend to side-step political issues because they see social institutions as at best irrelevant and at worst inimical to the unfolding of human experience...." The authors seem decidedly uncomfortable with those "for [whom] the inner, spiritual life *replaces* culture and history as the broad source of experience, knowledge, and power."

Purpel and Miller acknowledge concern about "politically oriented educational reform movements which are weakened by their failure to ground their ideas in an enduring and emerging vision ... [and that] have failed to reach that place within the human spirit where the primordial energy for transcendence and transformation is located." Yet their primary purpose in writing seems to be to propose "correctives" to "those elements of the holistic movement [that] seem to involve a strong preoccupation with the inner life, the intuitive, and the intensely personal — leading to an insensitivity to social and political realities." Their most passionate language is reserved for those who "fantasize a life without politics ... [and] blind [themselves] to the inevitability and ameliorability of human conflict."

Gelb's caricature emerges from "the most trying two years of my own professional life... in a setting that described itself as 'holistic.'" Characterized by "orthodoxy, intolerance, and general hostility toward different views," this experience seems to have increased his own hostility and intolerance for anything "holistic." Thus arises his caricature of the new paradigm as a "worship of science" that is "strangely compatible with the empty consumerism that the advocates for the new paradigm believe they will uproot."

I use the term *caricature* for these characterizations of holistic educators because I don't know anyone who fits any of these descriptions. Now I am sure that such people do exist — apparently Gelb worked with some. But the spiritually oriented holistic educators whom I know are deeply and profoundly concerned about political, social, economic, and ecological issues. Although they many not "man the barricades," they are, more than most, aware of and responsive to the larger cultural context that shapes educational policy and practice. In short, they are not innocent flower children who presume to change the world by chanting, "Make love, not war." To suggest, as Gelb does, that "human activists who join hands with others to work for justice are still *our only hope* for building a better world" (emphasis added), discounts the integrity and intention of holistic educators who would not by any measure be considered political activists but who go about their daily tasks in ways that may transform the lives of those with whom they work. For Purpel and Miller to offer "correctives" to "naively optimistic" holistic educators who "emphasize the spiritual at the expense of the moral" and perceive "concrete moral issues as marginal or incidental to ultimate spiritual salvation," depreciates those unsung, dedicated educators whose commitment to educational transformation is grounded in deeply held, personal, spiritual insights and expressed in the often humdrum routines of daily existence. In short, their sweeping generalizations suggest that the perspective of the "average, run-of-the-mill" holistic educator isn't adequate because she or he isn't "all things to all men — or women."

Of course the purpose of caricatures is to make a point by overstatement. Knowing and having read both Ron Miller and David Purpel, I suspect this is the case. Although I recognize that in my reactions to their ideas I may be creating my own caricature, the strong implication in Miller and Purpel's article is the existence of a single, all-encompassing, "correct" brand of holism to which we should all subscribe. This apparently would include more balanced amounts of spiritual insight and social involvement. Gelb seems to reject much that is holistic, and he implies that there is a "correct" way of thinking and acting, although exactly what this includes is far from clear. In my view, neither of these positions is acceptable.

Unity, diversity, interdependence

I believe that there are three fundamental principles or assumptions that holistic thinking in any form must embrace. The first, what I consider to be the starting point of holistic thinking, is the assumption of the fundamental unity of the universe — expressed in its simplest form as "everything is connected to everything else." For me the principle of unity represents the essence of what Gelb refers to as the "holistic paradigm." I have discussed this assumption in more detail in an earlier article[1] and will not attempt to recap that discussion here. Suffice it to say that this is the fundamental assumption upon which the study of ecology is based, and, although Gelb may not agree, it seems woefully clear that this assumption provides a far more "realistic" paradigm — both for understanding the nature and extent of our global ecological crises and for creating viable solutions — than the fragmented, reductionist assumptions that have led to these crises.

The other two principles of holistic thinking are complementary with and dependent upon the unity principle. Like the principle of unity, the other two principles emerge from our

understanding of ecological systems that, because of their universal relevance, provide us with functional models for portraying the holistic paradigm. One of these is the *principle of diversity*. It is a basic ecological precept that the stability of any system — natural or social — is contingent upon the degree of diversity within that system. If monkeys were to become more like birds, then the ecological system would be less stable. A monoculture (e.g., a cornfield) is inherently unstable, and, though it may experience rapid growth, its lifespan will be brief. On the other hand, a climax forest, characterized by wide diversity at all levels, is inherently stable and can maintain itself apart from outside interference indefinitely. In short, systemic logic suggests that there are "reasons" why species don't tend to become more like each other and why diverse communities continue and monocultures are short lived. I believe that the same holds true in education, and the holistic education movement is increasingly systemic in its makeup.

I hasten to add that I fully agree with the major premise proposed by Purpel and Miller: "that a genuinely *holistic* educational theory — a holism that is truly whole — must draw upon a well-defined human development/spiritual orientation *as well as* a critical social and political perspective." These perspectives provide two of the diverse viewpoints that are necessary if holistic education is to be a stable, effective, and sustained movement. However, I strongly disagree with the suggestion that the groups representing these perspectives should become more alike.

This leads to the third ecological principle that characterizes holistic thinking — the *principle of interdependence*, or what ecologist/theologian Thomas Berry refers to as "interpenetration"[2] and what physicist Peter Russell calls "connectivity."[3] It is interesting to note that each of the three words used to describe this principle carries a slightly different connotation and reflects a different aspect of the relationship. Berry's term, "interpenetration," focuses on the interactive nature of the relationship. Russell's phrase, "connectivity," focuses on the relationship itself. My word, "interdependence," defines the nature of the relationship — a relationship in which the success of the system as a whole is dependent on the success of each separate "niche" and, at the same time, the success of each "niche" is dependent upon the success of the system as a whole. Regardless of the words used to describe it, the essence of this principle is the complex interconnectedness, communication, cooperation, interchange, and organization that is necessary among the diverse parts of any viable system. Today's growing emphasis on "networking" reflects our increasing awareness of this crucial principle in human systems. On the basis of this principle, it seems clear that holistic educators need to bridge the communication gap, not convert the skeptics. Each group needs to be listened to rather than merely tolerated; to be appreciated rather than argued with; to be accepted as filling a legitimate "niche" in the holistic community rather than "corrected" to make it something other than what it is; to cooperate rather than compete; to be honored rather than dismissed.

Systemic logic suggests that there are "reasons" why species don't tend to become more like each other and why diverse communities continue and monocultures are short lived.

The stability and strength of the holistic movement will depend upon the rich diversity of perspectives, ideas, insights, and actions available to it. Ironically, Gelb says it well: "We require a holism that is inclusive ... one that promotes dialogue and humility about knowledge, experience, and feelings...." The holistic movement needs activists who button-hole politicians and aggressively challenge by a variety of deeds the tired dogmas of a culture that no longer works. But the movement also needs philosophers who sit in their ivory towers creating holistic visions and designing holistic paradigms. We need women and men who are struggling with their own ego development as well as those who share themselves selflessly in a classroom or among the poor and homeless. To draw from our Judeo-Christian tradition, we need the prophetic voices whose outrage challenges those in authority, and we need the pietistic voices whose personal relationship with the ultimate in life flavors their every thought and action. As Gelb suggests, we need the cultural heroes such as Martin Luther King and Marian Wright Edelman. But we also need the anonymous heroes — each of the thousands of holistic thinkers who is busy quietly doing her or his own thing. To suggest that their "thing" is not adequate or needs some sort of corrective in order to be "holistic" is patently arrogant. To suggest that the movement itself requires the dynamic balance that results from the interplay among a complex diversity of perspectives is another matter entirely. Unfortunately, I hear more of the first than the second in these articles.

Diversity is a difficult concept for many of us to embrace. For a long time I personally believed that the world really would be a better place if everyone perceived everything as I did and agreed with me on every issue. At times this perspective is still tempting, but I now know that diversity is not only the spice of life but also the source of creativity and generativity, characteristics that seem to be in short order today — both in education and in our culture.

Toward a holistic mindset

In order to move beyond generalities and address some of the specifics identified in these articles, I will share my personal understanding and experience of "holistic thought," or what Gelb calls the "holistic paradigm."

Although my perspective on holism may differ in relatively minor ways from that spelled out by Miller and Purpel, it differs radically from the perspective described by Gelb. Indeed, I would hardly have recognized the target of his charges had he not identified it as the "holistic paradigm." Given his evident misunderstanding about the holistic paradigm, I will try to identify the hallmark of "holistic thought," using some of the particulars identified in these articles.

I believe that holistic education, like any human activity, begins with the individual human experience and radiates to every arena of life. Every action has roots in what I call our individual "mindsets" or what the Chicago Statement refers to as "the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world." The reason holism "seeks to expand the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world by celebrating our innate human potentials" is precisely because it is "the way we look at ourselves and the world" that shapes our perception of "reality" and thus determines our response to the world. Because all human knowledge and experience is, at its most fundamental level, subjective in nature, one's profoundly personal experience of "reality" is the primary filter through which one views and evaluates everything that happens. In short, all of our actions are based on the perceptions that emerge from this mindset.

I think it is clear that Gelb would consider the above too simplistic to be taken seriously because it "ignores the complex determinants of human behavior, and history itself...." Apparently, he stands firmly in the behaviorist camp, which assumes that the major determinants of human behavior are outside the human organism. The behaviorist tradition overlooks a patently obvious truth: It is not what happens to me that shapes my behavior, but rather how I interpret and thus respond to what happens to me. One simple illustration will suffice: Two children, twins, are punished for stealing cookies. One responds by thinking, "Mother doesn't like me because I'm a bad person." The other responds by thinking, "There are some things that I had better not do if I don't want to be punished." Although they shared the same experience, the twins had radically different interpretations of it. If these differences in perception were to continue over time, chances are that the twins would develop significantly different mindsets, self-concepts, and patterns for coping with the world.[4]

I submit that it is precisely this internal frame of reference that is highlighted in the Chicago Statement's reference to "the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world." The Chicago Statement gives what Miller and Purpel consider "special attention to the inner life of the person" precisely because this inner life is the primary factor in shaping behavior. It is only when I perceive myself as a responsible human being who can make a difference in the world that I begin to live and act in ways that will eventually transform social, political, and economic systems. As long as I feel powerless, I can't and won't make a difference. As Henry Ford was fond of saying, "Those who believe they can do something and those who believe they can't do something are both right." This truth reflects a fundamental spiritual insight: what is outside what Alan Watts called "the skin encapsulated ego" always reflects that which is inside us.[5] There can be no peace in the world until there is peace within. When I am at peace with myself, I will live in peace and radiate peace, enabling and encouraging others to live likewise. This was Martin Luther King's message, a message that is lost on those "realists" who insist on "fighting fire with fire" (e.g., using violence in demonstrations for peace). I have no argument with Purpel and Miller's desire to expand the Chicago Statement so that it speaks more directly to the cultural context of education, but their suggestion that the document's "sensitivity to the importance of culture and society ... is muted, almost perfunctory," shows a lack of understanding of the relationship between the way we think and the way we act in the world.

Their misunderstanding of this relationship is also reflected in their reference to Alfred North Whitehead's "adage that education is religious in nature." In order to support their point "that an education which is truly holistic engages us with the world and calls upon us to respond to it, in all its complexity," Purpel and Miller seek to "enrich" Whitehead's statement. They suggest that, in addition to being religious, education should be thought of "as also being political, social, economic, and, above all, *moral* in nature." Ironically, the point that they make is precisely Whitehead's point in his elaboration of this so-called adage. In the conclusion of this oft-quoted address, "The Aims of Education," Whitehead affirmed the dual nature of what he calls "religious education."

> The *essence* of education is that it be religious.... A religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events.... And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity [emphasis added].[6]

Whitehead's belief that "the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence" seems to reflect his conviction concerning the subjective nature of all knowledge and experience. It is out of this intensely "here and now" experience that *duty* in the daily course of events emerges. I think that Whitehead would agree that such duty is always "*moral* in nature." Education is religious precisely because it incorporates — to use another of Whitehead's phrases — "life in all its manifestations." Although Miller and Purpel feel it necessary to make explicit what is implicit, it is important to note that Whitehead recognized the "both/and" nature of "religious education."

Science and holism

An even more significant lack of understanding is evident in Gelb's article. For example, he suggests that the holistic movement rejects science, yet uses science to justify its position. First, none of the leading thinkers of the holistic paradigm seek to "dismantle" science, nor are they antirational, as Gelb suggests. What distinguishes the holistic paradigm from the mechanistic paradigm is their differing sets of scientific assumptions

concerning the nature of reality. Willis Harman sums up this distinction succinctly when he refers to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science as "a science of the parts" and the emerging late-twentieth-century science as "science of whole systems."[7] Since a "science of the parts" is by its very nature reductionist, the worldview that emerged resembles an assortment of jigsaw puzzles pieces with no picture to explain what they mean. Since a "science of whole systems" is by nature systemic, the now-emerging worldview is integrative and holistic. Whereas the Newtonian/Cartesian "science of the parts" gives almost exclusive precedence to rationality, the emerging "science of whole systems" gives equal credence to the rational and the intuitive, to the cognitive and the experiential.

Characteristic of the holistic perspective is a recognition that it is the whole which gives meaning to the parts. For this reason the holistic paradigm seems a more adequate perspective on reality than the mechanistic paradigm. As I have already suggested, the efficacy of the holistic worldview vis-à-vis the mechanistic worldview seems evident when we begin to address the many, diverse global environmental problems. The mechanistic worldview perceives trees and water, air and land, grizzlies and spotted owls, as separate, unrelated "entities" — objects "out there" to be acted upon by humans. This way of thinking has created problems for which the solutions can be found only within the context of an integrated worldview that recognizes how each of these — including humans — represents one diverse component of a single, complex, integrated, global, life-support system. In such a system, any one change affects the entire system, an insight that is absent from the linear causality of mechanistic thinking.

That Gelb does not understand the nature of the "mechanistic paradigm" is also evident when he equates "the scientific worldview" with a knowledge and understanding of science. The scientific worldview tacitly assumes that the world actually is the way science has described it — "made up of separate entities, things, having their own separate existence and identity and only accidently related to other 'things'."[8] One certainly doesn't have to be knowledgeable about science to hold such a worldview. In characterizing the holistic paradigm as "the worship of science," Gelb does disservice both to the holistic paradigm and to philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Precisely because it is systemic and integrative, the holistic paradigm acknowledges both scientific and spiritual insights — hardly "the worship of science." Such a characterization should be reserved for a science that claims to be the absolute arbiter of truth to the exclusion of personal intuition and experience — precisely Wittgenstein's point. Both Miller and Purpel recognize that the holistic experience reflects a spiritual experience.

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Other illustrations of Gelb's lack of understanding of "paradigmism" in general and the holistic paradigm specifically include the following statements:

Item: "Paradigmism, by positing a clean break between the old and the new, leads us to inflate the importance of our ideas.... There is no clear evidence that an age of peace is descending upon us ... [that] we are on the edge of an age of harmony ... that the change will inexorably be for the better."

Comment: I know of no major thinkers or participants in the holistic movement who believe that there is or can be such a thing as "a clean break between the old and the new." Nor do I know of any who believe that a paradigm shift, per se, will suddenly and inexorably bring a world of peace and harmony. This is another example of Gelb's penchant for creating a straw man to attack.

Item: "Paradigmism cannot accept plurality, and therefore it can never be holistic. A paradigm is always a fragment."

Comment: This is an example of regressive thinking where Gelb creates his own definition and then argues from that point. To support his argument, he has twice quoted physicists David Bohm and F. David Peat out of context, adding his own conclusion to their comments about the nature and source of creativity.[9] I quite agree that any paradigm is always a fragment, but it is clear that one paradigm may be more inclusive than another (i.e., that it is a larger fragment).

Item: "Nor ... is there evidence that a new post-mechanistic consciousness will rescue us from our current dismal state."

Comment: To claim that a phenomenon such as "paradigmism" or the "paradigm shift" doesn't exist because of a lack of empirical evidence is to misunderstand the nature of evo-

lutionary, cultural change. Because at present "there is no clear evidence that an age of peace is descending upon us," Gelb assumes that there is no such new paradigm. One could argue with equal validity that there is no evidence that a new post-mechanistic consciousness *won't save us* from our present condition. The difficulty in any such interpretation derives from the fact that in order to understand a paradigm other than one's own, it is necessary first to embrace the new perspective. To claim that a phenomenon doesn't exist because it doesn't conform to one's subjective criteria or to commonly held objective criteria is intellectual arrogance. Indeed, it is the insistence on empirical evidence as the sole criterion for truth that marks the "worship of science" targeted by Wittgenstein. Such a claim is like denying someone else's "near-death experience" or religious conversion because it is contrary to your criteria for evidence. Philosophers call this tendency to use inappropriate criteria for verification a "category error," and history is replete with the consequences of such thinking. To use a more prosaic example, Gelb's claims are not unlike those of a blind person denying the multi-colored splendor of a sunset to one who is sighted.

The essence of any paradigm shift is subjective. It involves a new perspective — a shift in consciousness — which emerges when one realizes that once-held fundamental assumptions concerning the nature of reality are no longer adequate. When it comes right down to the bottom line, I suspect that it was just such a shift in consciousness that motivated and empowered Martin Luther King, Marian Wright Edelman, and all other heroes, both famous and anonymous. Indeed, without this internal shift, little positive change has ever taken place. The experience may be gradual or sudden, but it is very real. To deny this reality because it doesn't fit the empirical parameters of the old paradigm is pointless. To assume that if the new paradigm were "real" then the world would be transformed overnight is to misunderstand both the nature of paradigms and the nature of change.

A vision of wholeness

It would have been helpful if Gelb had identified, in the beginning, the assumptions upon which he based his arguments — apparently those of "postmodernism." At one point he seems to associate himself with "postmodernism, the antithesis of holism." He informs us, "Postmodernists reject the very idea of human progress that is embedded within the vision of an emerging holistic paradigm. They deny the possibility of the development of a universal state of consciousness and argue that its pursuit will always lead to new forms of oppression." Yet, ironically, Gelb suggests that "the most promising aspect of postmodern thought is its insistence that diverse voices ... be heard." If the above contradictions are examples of postmodern thought, then perhaps the confusion evident in Gelb's article reflects a similar confusion and conflict in the assumptions underlying postmodernism.

Gelb seems also to be confused as to the nature and value of vision. Although he apparently accepts the idea of vision, he does not seem to understand that the purpose of any vision is to point the way to something new. Although he applauds Marian Wright Edelman for "creating alternative visions," he rejects any "vision of a newly transformed world order" because the new order is not yet real.

The essence of the holistic paradigm is the holistic vision that empowers those who have embraced it. It is the deep, intuitive knowing — a knowing reinforced by the insights of quantum physics — that "we are all one" and, at the same time, each of us is separate and unique. It is the emerging relationships among the parts, and between the parts and the whole, that provide one of the great challenges of the new paradigm, and not so incidentally, of the global community. This does not mean that the day of the specialist is over. Indeed, even greater specialization will be required as we move into the increasing complexity of the global arena. What it does mean is that the specialist must always operate within the context of the whole, because *it is the whole that ultimately gives meaning to the parts.*

Thus, the historian is not required to become a scientist, nor the critical theorist a human potential specialist. The postmodernist need not embrace the holistic paradigm nor must the visionary become a pragmatist. Power and energy are evident when each recognizes that her or his particular piece of the jigsaw puzzle has no meaning as long as it stands alone, but is inherently meaning-full when experienced in the context of the larger whole. Just as the whole gives meaning to the parts, the parts provide meaning for the whole. As someone wisely noted, the most important piece of any jigsaw puzzle is the last piece! Any corrective, if one is required, is provided by the vision of the whole, not by the various parts challenging the validity of other parts. This leaves each of us free to fulfill her or his own niche in the broader community — a community made stronger by the dynamic tension that sustains and is dependent upon a rich, complex, and profound diversity. To me this is a much more "realistic" vision of the future and of human potential than the "realism" of a postmodern worldview, circumscribed by the "complex determinants of history." Marilyn Ferguson reminds us, "Our past is not our potential. Where we are going is more important than where we have come from."[10]

Notes

1. Edward Clark, "Holistic Education: A Search for Wholeness," *Holistic Education Review* 3, no. 2 (summer 1990).

2. Reported from a personal conversation between Thomas Berry and Phil Gang.

3. Peter Russell, *The Global Brain* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1983).

4. This illustration is not original with me. Unfortunately I cannot remember where I first read it.

5. Quoted in Russell, *Global Brain.*

6. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Free Press, 1967).

7. Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change* (Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems, 1988).

8. Jeremy W. Hayward, *Shifting Worlds, Changing Minds* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987).

9. David Bohm and F. David Peat, *Science, Order and Creativity* (Toronto: Bantam, 1987), p. 61.

10. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1980).

Some Reflections on this Discussion...

by Ron Miller

By its very nature, holism contains an intellectual and psychological tension between two styles of interpretation. One style emphasizes consciousness, individuality, vision, and spiritual transformation as the primary sources of human experience and cultural reality. The other style is more sensitive to concrete historical, social, political, ideological, and economic forces. We see this divergence not only in holistic education, but in the Green movement and other contemporary efforts to build a new society. The differences between these styles are consequential, and they threaten our coherence as a movement. It is a major challenge to holistic thinkers to work through this tension.

I would like to step back, take a deep breath, and evaluate what is going on in the discussion on the preceding pages. That Steven Gelb was so disturbed by the "holism" he has encountered on several occasions, and that Ed Clark responded so forcefully to Gelb's complaints, is a clear sign that we are dealing with a touchy situation! What can we learn from it?

Basically, Gelb offers five criticisms of the concept of "holistic paradigm," and I think his points are worth considering; indeed, David Purpel and I make some of the same points. Gelb, like Purpel and I, raises questions, from a concrete/historical interpretative style, about core assumptions underlying the consciousness/personal style. Clark — an able spokesman for the consciousness/personal approach in holistic education — may be correct that Gelb misunderstands various aspects of holistic thinking or gives quotes out of context, but I think Gelb's five key challenges to the consciousness/personal viewpoint remain valid. They are as follows:

1. To view educational and social ideas in terms of "paradigm" (or what Clark calls "mindset") — that is, as a set of perceptions and assumptions in the mind of the beholder — is to lose sight of their moral significance. Paradigms and their sudden shifts apply in science, which defines how we conceive the world — how we *know* it. But in the areas of values, ethics, morality, or power, something more than knowledge is involved, which science cannot provide. When we are called to act upon our knowledge, to build or rebuild a society, we must draw upon wisdom, moral courage, a commitment to certain values over others — all of which certainly draw upon, but then transcend, our perceptions, assumptions, and knowledge.

As Gelb puts it, "the Kuhnian situation [i.e., the ruling influence of paradigms] does not apply neatly to issues in education." This is because educational and social questions are moral issues, not simply knowledge issues. Science cannot make value judgments, so even a holistic science is not, *by itself*, a source of social or educational renewal. I agree with Clark that most holistic thinkers do not "worship" science — Gelb overstates his position here — but there is a real danger in holism seeking a direct route from quantum physics, or brain research, to the transformation of society. A serious moral commitment is required to translate a holistic mindset into a holistic society, as the next three points explain.

2. To lay the problems of the modern age at the feet of the Newtonian worldview is simplistic. The sources of these problems are far deeper than a "reductionistic paradigm." The social ecologist Murray Bookchin, for example, argues that human domination over nature is the *result*, not the cause, of exploitation within society. Racism, sexism, militarism, imperialism, colonialism, class inequality, and other forms of oppression and violence are deeply rooted in our culture; our abuse of nature, though conducted via the mindset of mechanistic science, reflects these engrained cultural patterns. Consequently, a holistic mindset, although grounded in the elegant ecological principles which Clark so well describes, does not adequately confront these deeper *cultural* sources of violence and suffering.

3. Thus, an exclusively consciousness/personal approach does not provide an effective vehicle for making the changes that are needed in the world. Clark strongly articulates the classic view that "individual human experience" is the fountain of social progress. He observes that spiritually oriented holistic educators "are deeply and profoundly concerned about political, social, economic, and ecological issues." Indeed they are. Yet Purpel and I hold, "It is one thing to be critically aware of moral, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts ... and quite another thing to decide what to make of the heightened awareness." This again emphasizes the need for moral action.

Gelb's use of Marian Wright Edelman and Martin Luther King as examples of effective social activists is not intended to *dismiss* the importance of consciousness or vision, just as Purpel and I do not disparage mystical spirituality. But we argue that social and educational issues involve the maldistribution and abuse of *power*, and though we must *begin* with a personal vision of a different world, we must then decide how to collectively *enact* that vision, how to *confront* the abuse of power. This is the point Gelb makes with his "Hunger Project" example. The point is not that all educators should "man the barricades," but it is vitally important for those with a consciousness/personal orientation to take the concrete moral and social situation into account as they articulate their vision. Otherwise, their vision may easily be absorbed, watered down, and co-opted by the established power structure in society.

4. Furthermore, to rely on a shift of consciousness for social change is an ahistorical perspective. Gelb reminds us that we tend to believe "that the

present is unique and that the changes of our lifetime are precipitously new...." But history compels us to see that vast cultural, economic, and political forces are at work in social life, and so we are not easily able to create the desirable world we envision. There is a certain inertia in history; there are certain inexorable patterns and cycles. Clark calls Gelb a "behaviorist" for thus apparently denying the self-transforming power of individuals. But this is not the case. Rather, the concrete/historical perspective calls on the consciousness/personal perspective to temper its idealism with a more sober recognition of the cultural barriers that almost always interfere with our spiritual aspirations. It also reminds us that our idealist vision needs to be *grounded* in ongoing historical processes in order to be actualized at all.

For instance, Jesus offered the most profound "paradigm shift" in Western history, but 2,000 years later the expected transformation still seems a long way off. Now, this is not an excuse for despair; rather, it suggests to me that our perpetual struggles for healing may be a necessary element of our spiritual evolution. Perhaps it is our *engagement* with suffering and injustice, not simply our ability to envision a world without them, that ultimately purifies our souls.

5. Gelb asserts that "paradigmism" involves a dualistic, intolerant "us versus them" mentality, which he has experienced firsthand on more than one occasion. Clark attributes this habit to the reductionistic paradigm and asserts that holism — when faithfully practiced — would heal it. He admits that even a holistic paradigm is still only a fragment of the whole, but says that it is a far more inclusive fragment than the reductionistic paradigm.

I think both views are correct. A holistic paradigm is more generous, inclusive, and healing than a reductionistic one, but we must not rest content with it: So long as we continue to think in terms of "paradigms" there will always be an impulse either to defend or to attack our interpretations. A holistic paradigm must point beyond itself; it must be seen as only a step toward an even deeper understanding that transcends all paradigms. We're probably not ready for that yet, but it should be our goal. In my own work, I have often made use of the concept of "holistic paradigm" because I think it provides a more comprehensive analysis of our cultural situation than other interpretive approaches. (I find postmodernism dreadfully sterile and antispiritual.) But I do often stop to wonder how much value there really is in wielding the concept of "holistic paradigm" as an intellectual weapon, when what I am really trying to describe is love, wholeness, and connection. I think this is what all holistic educators — including both Gelb and Clark — are trying to get at, too. The question is which *intellectual* tools will help us to attain an understanding that surpasses mere intellect. This is a tricky task, which is why we need discussions like this to sort things out.

Diversity and wholeness

I want to address Clark's response to the other paper, by Purpel and myself. His main complaint is that we do not value diversity within the holistic education movement, and he wittily compares us to Henry Higgins wondering why a woman can't be more like a man. He draws an analogy between the natural environment, which thrives on diversity, and holism as a movement. But I wonder how appropriate this analogy really is. Of course we would not expect birds to grow long tails, because birds are simply birds — they have their ecological niche clearly demarcated, and they best serve the ecosystem by filling that niche. But the human being is gifted with the power to conceptualize, and therefore each of us — each individual human being, not just the community as a whole — is potentially a microcosm of the entire cosmos. Each one of us is the universe becoming conscious of itself. Thus, none of us has a sharply defined niche — *unless it is imposed by cultural and social constraints.* We best serve our spiritual ecosystem (now that's an original name for God!) by developing as full and unlimited an understanding of the whole as we possibly can. Hence, holism.

To be sure, the consciousness/personal viewpoint is right to assert that such spiritual development is a process of inner growth, a search for heightened consciousness. Each person must follow his or her own individual path toward wisdom and wholeness. But every great spiritual tradition seeks to integrate wisdom with service, understanding with right action. Genuine wholeness involves not only personal enlightenment, but also a responsiveness to conditions around us. Thus Matthew Fox emphasizes a spirituality of compassion; for him, as for many others, a full expression of our human possibilities requires piety *and* prophecy, spiritual growth *and* moral engagement. This is a major point in David Purpel's writings.

Holistic thinkers, by and large, tend to be more familiar and more comfortable with the consciousness/personal style than with the concrete/historical. This is the reason why Gelb, Purpel, and I feel it necessary to suggest "correctives" from the concrete/historical side. For holism to be truly whole, it must embrace both styles, and we feel that its weakest aspect is its treatment of social/political/historical realities. Personally, I find tremendous inspiration in the spirituality that underlies holistic thinking and have acknowledged this many times. I would like nothing better than to offer the consciousness/personal emphasis — just as Clark articulates it — to critical theorists, postmodern thinkers, and other hard-core materialists, as a much-needed corrective. But that would be a hard sell, for they do not call themselves "holistic" and have little interest in the realm of the spirit. It is we, who consider ourselves to be *holistic,* who need to struggle with the tension between personal consciousness and cultural forces, between vision and power, between enlightenment and moral engagement. We cannot resolve the differences between the two realities, but it is our unique calling to dwell in the tension caused by these differences.

The Children's Declaration for Peace

by Nina Lynn

Dr. Nina Lynn is the founder and director of Heart's Bend Camp and World Children's Center in Newfane, Vermont. She has participated in global networking and conferences on education, environmental issues, and citizen diplomacy and is on the steering committee of the Global Alliance for Transforming Education. She has coordinated numerous student exchange programs.

Last September, 32 young people from 21 nations held a Children's World Seminar in Newfane, Vermont. Sponsored by Peaceways at Heart's Bend World Children's Center, the seminar brought together a remarkable group of youths — ages twelve through seventeen — dedicated to creating world peace. Participants were recruited through peace and youth groups, schools, and even a televised announcement. They were selected, in part, on the basis of essays they wrote about the plight of humanity: the ravages of war, starvation, and poverty. In their writings, these youths championed the intrinsic right of all life to harmonious sustainability through world cooperation. They had already begun to see themselves as spokespersons for the human community, and they expressed willingness to commit their lives to the fulfillment of a better tomorrow.

The children arrived on Friday, September 14, in New York City. Some had been traveling alone for over 40 hours, away from their home villages for the first time in their lives. Appropriately, these international delegates spent their first night together in sleeping bags on the floor of the United Nations International School. After breakfast the next day, they were brought to the United Nations itself, where they were allowed to sit in the seats of the General Assembly delegates of their homelands. Standing together in the United Nations, the children felt an air of anticipation, realizing that the work they had come to do was a dynamic component of something greater that was happening in the world.

The group then traveled to Heart's Bend World Children's Center in southeastern Vermont and got down to work. They began with imagery and attunement activities; visions of the future were seen internally and expressed through group verbal statements and art. Then, in an afternoon of sharing, the children acknowledged their diversity and honored their differences. All experienced deep pleasure in learning from one another, as each child described his or her homeland and customary way of life, exchanging mementos brought for that purpose. There was continuously growing respect for individual participants throughout the process.

The group was soon ready to address the major task of creating the Children's Declaration for Peace. Despite heated discussions, differing opinions, and strong emotions, they were always willing to listen to one another. Working from 9 in the morning until 9 at night with hardly an interruption, the children insisted on hearing thoroughly from every participant, and eventually the 32 became one voice. This process was neither consensual nor democratic; rather, the group understood that when truth was defined, it would be naturally accepted by all.

There was always unanimity and simultaneous recognition of such truth. Thus the Children's Declaration was birthed.

Many of the children insisted that the Children's Declaration was only a part of their task. The reality of putting their words into action had to be addressed. They began making plans, either individually or in small groups, to design projects that they then could initiate in their respective home environments. Some of these plans included specific efforts to remedy or prevent environmental degradation, producing original music with peace lyrics, having children as teachers and peer counselors for other students and street children, forming coalitions with the United Nations of Youth, organizing international exchange programs, translating and disseminating the Children's Declaration itself, and staying in touch and supporting one another through a newsletter.

Other activities

During breaks, the children visited elementary and high schools in nearby towns. Rural Vermont children listened to children from Czechoslovakia talk about their "tender revolution." They

The Children's Declaration for Peace

In the name of love, unity and harmony, we, the children of the world, declare that now is the time for peace. As creators of a better tomorrow, we envision social and environmental equilibrium, individual and international co-operation and the fulfillment of human potential as global goals.

To achieve equilibrium, education must be available to all. This education should include not only academic, but also personal, moral and spiritual development. With this education, we can increase our awareness of global problems and develop our ability to solve them. The freedom accorded to all people through education shall be accompanied by the responsibility that will serve to bridge the gaps between economic, religious, material, political and cultural extremes.

As part of the earth's living system, our harmonious co-existence with nature is essential for the sustainability of humanity.

We pledge our support to the United Nations. However, we also stress the need for a more equitable distribution of power to all countries to encourage the evolution of peace. We desire self-determination for all people and hope that the emerging leaders guide, rather than govern.

We, the children, as one of the world's greatest untapped resources, accept the responsibility to further the love, unity, and harmony, which exist in peace.

Stephanie Amirault, U.S.A.
Mainak Banerjee, India
Surajit Banerjee, India
Marcus Caldeira, Brazil
Yolonda Coleman, U.S.A.
Jennifer Ebert, U.S.A.
Mireille Ferrari, Philippines
Jason Hlady, Canada
Tenzin Jimpa, Tibet
Umi-Aisha Kabba, W. Africa
Vandy Kanyako, W. Africa
Reazul Karim, Bangladesh
Omar Kitanov, U.S.S.R.
Zhaohua Luo, China
Kopano Makgabo, S. Africa
Thomas Juel-Nielsen, Denmark
Christa Maver, U.S.A.
Sinead McMullan, Ireland
Annilese Miskimmon, N. Ireland
Victor Mokhosoev, U.S.S.R.
Namrata Natraj, India
Magda Pokorna, Czechoslovakia
Bodie Pulido, Philippines
Stepanka Reichova, Czechoslovakia
Sunny Rush, U.S.A.
Emma Salerno, Australia
Milan Soldan, Czechoslovakia
Erica Schmitz, Costa Rica
Rachelle Sylvain, Haiti
Ana Paula Mizrahi, Peru
Ruth Willcocks, England
Marek Smykal, Czechoslovakia
Brendan Woithe, Australia

We are in support of these children:

Ellen Brogren, U.S.A.
Lorye Keats Hopper, England
Nina Lynn, U.S.A.
James Salerno, Australia
Margaret Stearns, U.S.A.
Jean VanDilla, U.S.A.

heard children from Latin and South America describe the pain of violence in their countries. They were able to see *perestroika* through the eyes of their Soviet counterparts. They saw bonding develop in the delegates from conflicting neighbors such as north and south Ireland, and Tibet and China. They rose and applauded the voice of Africa demanding that it be recognized in spite of color differences.

The evening prior to the group's departure, they presented a talent show to one another. The creative presentations reflected their individuality as well as their cultures, through dance, violin playing, poetry, magic tricks, dramatic monologues, and song. Then there was a final ceremony for the signing of the Children's Declaration. The torch from the "First Earth Run" was used. This torch, originally lighted at the United Nations, had been carried completely around the world, being passed from child to child, finally back to the United Nations. It is the symbolic fire of hope for a better future for the children of the world. Standing in a ceremonial circle, each seminar participant held this torch, stepped forward, and made a vow to the world before signing the Children's Declaration.

In the darkness of very early morning on September 21, the children prepared to depart. Tears reflected the joy that they had experienced together and the sadness at disengaging from one another. Someone said "We are global family"; these children recognized themselves to be the inspiration necessary for initiating an age of peace.

Upon their return to the New York area, they had been invited to meet with His Holiness, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, for a formal presentation of the group's document. Instead, the meeting became a jubilant, poetic exchange of laughter, tears, and fruit. The Dalai Lama reflected the spirit of the children; he recognized their achievement and commented that they are the Earth's "unpolluted, untapped resources." The children left this encounter and returned to their homes, feeling deeply that their dedication to world service had been recognized and strengthened by the presence of the Dalai Lama.

The seminar was part of a sequence of events that represent an important shifting of human consciousness — the realization that children are creative and active members of the human community, capable of making unique contributions to any global issue. Concern for children's welfare has become a global priority. Immediately before the seminar there was a U.N. nongovernmental organization conference called "A World Safe for Children." After the seminar, 2,800 organizations around the world lighted candles to brighten the future for children. Finally, the United Nations itself hosted the World Summit for Children at which 75 countries, represented by 34 presidents, 27 prime ministers, a king, and other leaders came together to ratify an agreement for cooperation in resolving the problems of children around the world.

A new era has begun, and the voice of the children has been acknowledged. The agreement signed at the World Summit states that one of the next steps is to turn to the children themselves and appeal to them for participation in this worldwide project. The leaders are now prepared to make available the resources needed to meet these commitments as part of their national priorities. They have determined that there is no nobler task than giving every child a better future.

A sequel to the Children's World Seminar will be held September 18 to 25, 1991, at Heart's Bend World Children's Center in Newfane, Vermont. For more information contact Dr. Nina Lynn, P.O. Box 217, Newfane, VT 05345.

Empowerment and Conflict in Alternative Organizations

by Jerry Mintz

In the Fall 1990 issue of *Changing Schools*, Mary Anne Raywid, a professor at Hofstra University and an expert on public alternative schools, wrote in detail about the conflict within the International Affiliation of Alternative Schools and Personnel. It is essentially a conflict between advocates of "choice" schools (public alternatives open to all students) and "at risk" schools and programs (primarily for children with social or educational problems). At a meeting of the participants in the National Alternative Education Conference at Stanford University in July 1990, there was strong disagreement, even about supporting a national alternative education day, based on differing definitions of alternative education. The "choice" advocates feel that a program cannot be called alternative if the students do not have significant decision-making power. The "at risk" advocates feel that a program is alternative if it exists as another approach available for a student having difficulties, even if there is no decision-making power within the program. The following letter was written to *Changing Schools* in response to the Raywid article, and it is reprinted here with the permission of Mary Ellen Sweeney, editor of *Changing Schools*.

Applause to Mary Anne Raywid for writing and Mary Ellen Sweeney for publishing the story of the philosophical conflict within the International Affiliation of Alternative Schools and Personnel (IAASAP). Ever since Dave Lehman proposed that a national organization be created in 1985, this has been an area of controversy. In other organizations, internal conflicts are covered up or swept under the rug while decisions are made by a central few. Raywid's article gives the readers of *Changing Schools* and the participants in the IAASAP a chance to analyze the situation and perhaps to come up with some creative solutions.

It is clear that the IAASAP is one of the most unorganized organizations one could ever encounter. By design it has no funds, spokesperson, office, staff, or journal. It is even difficult to remember the name. However, if one compares this group to others involved with countercultural ideas, it may be faring pretty well. For the fact is, many of these groups seem to be in disarray — fighting among themselves, shooting down anyone who dares to lead them, and losing track of their mission.

This was well documented in a recent story about the U.S. Green movement by Mark Satin in his publication, *New Options* (#70). He was so shaken by the anger and internal destructiveness that he witnessed at the Green gathering in Colorado that he ended up questioning the whole direction of his life. "Their life choices are my life choices ... to accept that the Greens are never going to make it is tantamount to accepting that my life choices were not so smart." This kind of internal destructiveness has also been the experience of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS), the Association for Humanistic Psychology, the homeschooling movement, and others.

It seems crucial, then, to ask the obvious question: What is the cause of this phenomenon? Here is a theory:

All of these organizations generally consist of people who did not grow up in freedom, or as products of the alternative and liberating philosophies the members often espouse. In fact, the people involved with them often created their alternative and liberating schools and programs in *reaction* to having been repressed and oppressed themselves. Furthermore, the success of many of these programs has been a direct result of their own stubborn, sometimes charismatic, democratic leadership. In a society that has been pushing punctuality, conformity, dependence, and discouragement of creativity, it seems to take an individual who has the almost angry ability to re-empower people to make such a program work. This has worked well for the individual programs, truly empowering the students in them.

However, when these same people form an adult organization, that mutual empowerment seems to open up a lot of the unresolved, residual anger, with conflicting strong personalities, and subsequent destructiveness. Authoritarian organizations seem to reach their goals far more efficiently. Ironically, these open and democratic ones seem to go nowhere, not even modeling the sensitivity and humanity that they promote.

Jerry Mintz was the founder-director of Shaker Mountain School in Vermont and was the executive director of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools. He is currently an educational consultant and director of the Alternative Education Resource Organization and editor of AERO-GRAMME, *a newsletter providing networking information from a spectrum of educational alternatives. He is offering* Holistic Education Review *readers a discounted subscription of $10 per year. Send to AERO, 417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Hts, NY 11577.*

At the NCACS conferences of the past few years, there were more student participants than there were adult participants. In essence, the students created their own sub-conference, establishing connections, arranging exchanges, and sharing information, without conflict. Meanwhile, many of the adults, particularly those with decision-making power, were in continuous turmoil.

Even historically, in his book about anarchist educators, *The Modern School Movement*, Paul Avrich describes how the Modern School Association came apart through political and philosophical in-fighting in the 1940s. The movement was started in 1910 and was dissolved in the 1950s. Yet the *graduates* of the Modern School continue to meet every year, and most of them are now in their 70s and 80s!

Perhaps if our organizations consisted of members who grew up with real freedom and empowerment, things would work differently. One rare example of this is Zoe Neill Redhead, daughter of A.S. Neill, who grew up at Summerhill and is now its head. Under her quiet direction, Summerhill is running smoothly and reaching out internationally to other educational alternatives. (Her father never would have done that.)

So what is the solution? Run these organizations in a more authoritarian way? Have no leadership or structure at all? Find a charismatic democratic leader? Forget about organizations and coalitions and just work independently? Or turn everything over to the students? There are no easy answers. But perhaps, if this has shed some light on the problems of the past, we may be better at avoiding them in the future.

Book Reviews

Schooling for Tomorrow: Directing Reforms to Issues That Count

Edited by Thomas J. Sergiovanni and John H. Moore
Published by Allyn & Bacon (160 Gould Street, Needham Heights, MA 02194)
1989; 400 pages; hardcover

Reviewed by Ron Miller

Schooling for Tomorrow is comprised of seventeen papers presented by twenty leading scholars and researchers at a conference on educational reform that was held at Trinity University in Texas in 1987. These authors clearly are dedicated to making positive changes in public education; they have given a great deal of thought to the problems of today's schools; and they represent a perspective that is broadly liberal and democratic, highly influenced by the critical work of John Dewey. The pervading theme of the book is that educational "restructuring" cannot succeed unless it tackles the entrenched bureaucratic structure of public schooling. Education, these authors argue, takes place in local contexts, in individual buildings and classrooms; therefore, reforms cannot be imposed successfully by national and state bureaucracies.

In several passages scattered throughout the book, there are seeds of holistic thinking and brief glimpses of a truly person-centered understanding of education. Donald A. Schön's paper on reflective practice and Roland S. Barth's discussion of school leadership stand out; and Judith E. Lanier and Michael W. Sedlak's paper on "teacher efficacy," although based on some troubling assumptions I will discuss below, contains many solid critical observations.

But aside from these few bright spots, I found this book to be profoundly disappointing — it fails to live up to its promising title. Like previous generations of mainstream educational reformers, these well-connected scholars seek to ameliorate (i.e., tinker around with) some of the more egregious problems in public schooling, without addressing or even raising the most essential, foundational questions underlying modern education. Reading their essays, I was reminded of a story told by Abraham Maslow to illustrate the failure of reductionistic psychology, about a man who comes upon a drunk walking in circles under a street lamp. The man asks the drunk what he is doing. "I'm looking for my keys," the drunk replies. Seeing that he obviously isn't finding them, the man asks if he is sure that he lost them in that spot. "No, I didn't," replies the drunk, "but the light's better here."

The keys that these authors seek — the keys to a genuinely humane, democratic, and liberating education — have to do with the inner, creative, spontaneous energies of the human spirit, with the quality of relationships between human beings, and with the complete transformation of our materialist, hierarchical culture. They will not — cannot — be found under the street lamp of the established educational system, no matter how hard we look. But the editors announce right at the beginning that this book has a "pragmatic bent"; in other words, the authors are looking at what is practical, given the dominant culture and structure of education, not at what is truly necessary. None of these scholars wishes to rock the educational boat too vigorously. Arthur E. Wise, who calls his approach a "new paradigm," nevertheless states, "It is wrong to think that restructuring means a totally different school structure" (p. 308).

The essays in this volume fail to consider the foundational assumptions upon which modern education stands. Indeed, many of the authors explicitly voice these assumptions themselves! It is the task of a *holistic* educational critique to define these assumptions and to point out their insidious effects. So, what twenty leading scholars failed to do in 400 pages, it is necessary to do here in a more condensed space. This will be a lengthy book review because the issues are crucial. This book illustrates what is so deeply wrong with the mainstream education reform movement.

Assumption 1: *Education is primarily a political matter.* Because it is a state institution, public education must inherently embody the values and ideals of the community at large. "Within our political system," writes editor Thomas J. Sergiovanni, "the 'whats' [the content of the curriculum] are appropriately decided by the policy process in response to the wishes of the people, directly and through government" (p. 6). Wise concurs: "It is, of course, a legitimate expectation that schools and teachers be accountable to the public. After all, schools are a public enterprise, publicly financed and serving public purposes. The public has a right to demand accountability in schools..." (p. 303).

This assumption, universally taken for granted, appears almost self-evident. But (as Rudolf Steiner long ago recognized), treating education as a *political* task rather than as a *pedagogical* one is at the very core of most problems in modern education. If education is to involve the development of our human potentials and the nurturing of our latent possibilities, then this requires a sustained and focused concern for the needs of the unfolding person. Clearly, this is *not* what "education" means in the modern age. Instead, schooling is seen as an instrument for inculcating the established beliefs, values, and prejudices of a given community in the new generation, *en masse.* This is a fundamentally constraining process rather than a liberating one. It necessarily makes education an agent of control rather than an aid to growth, and it riddles the delicate art of education with the crude demands of politics. Who is "the public," anyway? What gets passed down in schooling is not what *everyone* wants for their children, but what the most influential or powerful segments of the community succeed in forcing into the curriculum. As legal scholar Stephen Arons has demonstrated, public education will always reflect conflicts within the community over whose values are to be established.[1]

This conflict is even recognized by some of the authors in this volume. Lanier and Sedlak observe that schools "serve many different purposes for many different people....

Schools have conflicting, competing goals..." (p. 141). Likewise, Larry Cuban recognizes that "the public" is actually comprised of various factions who "compete for their versions of how tax dollars should be spent for the children of the community" (p. 253). Given this conflict, education cannot be designed fully according to *pedagogical* concerns, but requires *political* savvy: "The key to the changes that I recommend will be the creation and sustenance of an influential political constituency," admits Michael W. Kirst (p. 87). The twenty authors in this book, assuming that education is necessarily a political matter, fail to consider whether it can *ever* be possible to design a truly humane, nurturing education so long as schooling remains an instrument of the state. This failure is most unfortunate, because all of the further assumptions about education are related to the assumption that education is essentially political.

Assumption 2: *Education should serve the interests of the nation.* Reflecting the dominant motivation of the entire school reform movement of the 1980s, editor John H. Moore states, "Perhaps never before in the history of the republic has the success of this nation and people been linked so inextricably to the quality of education available to young people in the nation's elementary and secondary schools" (p. 394). But of what does "national success" consist? Does it mean a society in which all people are leading meaningful, satisfying lives in healthy communities, in which all people have their basic needs met and their spiritual needs seriously addressed? Or does "national success" mean military power projected around the globe, economic domination over less developed nations, and the opportunity to consume a grotesquely disproportionate share of the Earth's resources? It is obvious which vision of "national success" predominates in this culture. But, although there are thousands of parents and citizens who dissent from this vision, and seek a more just, ecologically balanced culture instead, none of the authors in this volume addresses this question. The implicit assumption is that the nation has goals and interests under which we all should be united, and that it is a primary task of schooling to get us marching in step.

Assumption 3: *Education should serve the interests of the corporate economy.* Secretary of Education (then governor) Lamar Alexander is quoted as a major spokesman for the education reform movement: "To meet stiff competition from workers in the rest of the world, we must educate ourselves and our children as we never have before" (p. 23). As Kirst puts it, politicians such as Alexander "are concerned about economic competition, and state legislatures have therefore felt compelled to step in and preempt local discretion. State actions have been directed at the heart of the instructional process in order to upgrade the qualifications of the basic U.S. labor force" (p. 65). This is a chilling statement, which captures the gross reductionism of the 1980s reform movement. Our children are not to be educated as human beings, with feelings, ideals, dreams, and unknown spiritual resources; they are to be reduced to a "labor force" that will work intelligently and diligently enough to keep their corporate employers competitive.

It is no secret that corporate elites have played a major role in the education reform movement. (Indeed, the conference at which this book's chapters were presented was underwritten by Southwestern Bell and called the "Bell Conference.") If education is in fact a political process, then we do not need to look far to see who exerts the most pressure and power in determining its course. The educational restructuring movement is obsessed with economic issues, with competitiveness, with the preparation of a productive work force. The reformers — including this book's authors — never ask what kind of society, what kind of economic system, what kinds of cultural values would best bring out the talents and productiveness of people; they assume that the hierarchical corporate economy is here to stay (they have a vested interest in assuming this), and so the only question is how to prepare obedient workers for that economy.

Assumption 4: *Public education was designed to further America's democratic values and traditions.* The authors all seem deeply committed to democratic values. But the discussion of democracy in this book is consistently abstract, academic, and far removed from the realities of American life. In none of the 400 pages is there serious recognition of the very real and severe limitations to democracy that have been perpetrated according to race, class, gender, ethnic heritage, and other human differences. There is no discussion of the myriad ways in which educational policies have, for a century and a half, served the interests of economic and political elites at the expense of local communities, people of color, the working class, and ethnic subcultures.

For example, in an essentially technocratic analysis, Douglas E. Mitchell attempts to describe the "legitimate interests" that vie for political influence over schooling. (Yes, we're back to assumption 1; we have never left it.) He lists these "stakeholders" as students, families, teachers, school administrators, local-school-district citizens, state governments, "the national civic community" (assumption 2), and "corporations, universities and the military" (pp. 55-56). Most of these are abstract sociological categories that completely overlook the very diverse interests among students (such as different learning styles, or different life goals), families (religious or ethnic values), and many others. *Who is to determine which of these are "legitimate" interests?* Mitchell argues that so long as all stakeholders "have a reasonable chance" to influence educational policy, then the system is democratic. But having a "reasonable chance" does not mean that different individuals and communities will get what they need out of their education, or what they desire! It means that whoever can obtain 51% of the vote gets to impose their vision of schooling on all the rest. And with policy-making becoming more concentrated at higher governmental levels, it is increasingly difficult for families or local communities to obtain that majority, and increasingly easy for more powerful entities — "corporations, universities and the military."

In another revealing passage, Lee S. Shulman argues that teachers should not be "empowered" without care-

fully defining their roles. "Societies," he declares, "should not grant power to those who do not have the intellectual commitments and moral capacities to wield it justly" (p. 169). He does not apply this standard to people like Ronald Reagan, Oliver North, Ed Meese, savings and loan executives, or corporate raiders who put thousands of people out of work; apparently it is important to hold the nation's elite to the same standard. Perhaps this is not what Shulman means, but his omission is very serious, and it is characteristic of Shulman means, but his omission is very serious, and it is characteristic of the entire book. Public education embodies America's *antidemocratic* shadow side as much as it expresses democratic ideals, and to tinker around with the system as it stands is to leave the shadow side dangerously intact. We must stop pretending that this shadow is not present.

Assumption 5: *Teachers are professionals; students are their clients.* A large portion of the book is devoted to the topic of professionalism. In these sections, the authors are sincerely interested in freeing teachers from excessive control by bureaucratic superiors; they see educators as important moral leaders in society, not merely as technicians. But as the concept of "professionalism" is developed in these essays, a hierarchical, role-bound relationship between teacher and learner is firmly established. None of the chapters adequately addresses questions of pedagogical approach, the design of the learning environment, or the human relationship between adult and child; instead, several authors assert that teachers-as-professionals will simply *know* what is best for their students, and therefore should have the autonomy and authority to implement their knowledge.

But "professionals" are not immune from the political and cultural pressures on schooling, nor from the common tendency in modern culture to maximize their own professional power. Karl E. Weick and Reuben R. McDaniel, Jr., explicitly recognize that professional values — as opposed to personal values — "are 'owned' by and supportive of the larger society" (p. 334). According to Weick and McDaniel, professionals ought to "participate in the dominant coalition" that makes the political decisions about schooling. They explicitly refer to decision-making bodies as "these elites." In the "nonroutine" daily life of the classroom, teachers may be tempted to "apply personal rather than professional values" but must not do so because "outsiders" will view such decisions as "arbitrary" and "capricious" (p. 338). Here again is assumption 1: Education is a political task, not a human interaction.

In short, the professionalism advocated here is highly elitist. Weick and McDaniel define professionals as "those who through special training and socialization have gained a unique set of understandings that set them apart from nonprofessionals.... The power of the professionals is, in part, a function of their special knowledge and skills. If these are eroded and the mystery surrounding the professionals' work disappears, then the power of the professional is reduced." (p. 333). Arthur E. Wise similarly asserts, "Knowledgeable professionals must make decisions on behalf of less knowledgeable clients" (p. 304). But should the human relationship between teacher and learner be shrouded in the "mystery" of the teacher's presumably special knowledge? Should the teacher hold special "power" in the educational encounter? Are these appropriate models for a humane, democratic education? These are crucial questions, which none of the authors in this volume even bothers to ask.

On the contrary, Judith E. Lanier and Michael W. Sedlak put forth a concept of "teacher efficacy," which they define as "the power one has to bring about a desired effect" — in this case, "the desired student learning" (p. 131). The professional teacher needs to "manage both the social relations of the classroom and the cognitive development of students" (p. 137). Nearly every author in *Schooling for Tomorrow* takes these definitions for granted, as the very essence of good teaching. They fail to realize that they are advocating a pedagogy of control, a "banking" conception of education, as Paulo Freire calls it, in which the adult is seen as the authority, the source of knowledge, and the final judge of success — while the students are seen as empty vessels needing to be filled with the adults' superior wisdom.

The alternative to this assumption of teacher control is not pedagogical chaos. The alternative is a recognition that every human being has an inner, spiritual essence that unfolds according to organized, meaningful patterns. Obviously, children do not know as much about the world as do most adults. But neither are they empty vessels! Learning is a meaningful engagement between the unfolding person and the vastly complex world, a personal encounter, which a teacher may facilitate but not "manage." The only author in this book who even remotely recognizes that there are inherent patterns in child development that ought to be followed is Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner (of "multiple intelligence" fame). His chapter offers some welcome relief from the adult-controlled pedagogy advocated elsewhere in the book. Yet even he ultimately supports such a conception of education; in a curious statement he says, "Education has always been a struggle against human finitudes," such as limited mental capacities or lack of motivation (p. 163). But only a society trying to inculcate its preferred beliefs into presumably empty vessels — thus going against the grain of human development — would see education in this way. From a holistic perspective, *our human identity* — with all of its needs and potentials — *is the irreducible starting point*, and education then becomes a struggle against cultural prejudices and repression.

A number of insightful psychologists, philosophers, and educators have made this criticism of mainstream education over the past two centuries. From Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Emerson, through Montessori, Steiner, Jung, Rogers, and Maslow, to recent radical educators Paul Goodman, John Holt, George Dennison, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, and many others, the holistic tradition has strongly emphasized the root meaning of education — to nurture and *draw forth* the intellectual, moral, social, and aesthetic qualities that reside in the human spirit. Yet none of these people — *none of them* — is considered by the authors of this book to have anything relevant to say about

"directing reforms to issues that count." The underlying reason for this is found in their last assumption.

Assumption 6: *The only valid knowledge is empirical, analytical, intellectual, and utilitarian.* Almost every author draws upon research studies in the social sciences to support his or her claims. Good education, as conceived in *Schooling for Tomorrow* and by the leaders of the restructuring movement, is not defined by its moral value, its vision of human potentials and a desirable society, but by the measurable results it produces in scientifically controlled tests. One contributor, Kenneth A. Sirotnik, does launch a good critique against reductionistic science and offers a credible phenomenological approach instead. But, as if to reassure his professional, scholarly audience that phenomenological research is kosher, he contrasts empirical knowledge with "divine inspiration and mystical intervention" and insists that he relies only on empirical knowledge (p. 91).

It is easy to ridicule "mystical intervention" while safely tucked in the materialist worldview of the modern age. It is easy to dismiss the "romantics" who talk about the child's spiritual essence, to consider them simply irrelevant. It is easy, but it is wrong. The modern worldview has sliced off a vital part of our human identity by relegating spirituality, intuition, imagination, and creativity to the out-of-bounds realm of "romanticism" and "mysticism." The authors in this book do absolutely nothing to reclaim this vital part of the human spirit. Not only do they limit their own approaches to empirical models, but their conception of education is decidedly rational and intellectual. There is virtually nothing in these pages about the arts, music, theatre, dance, or playfulness — nothing about imagery or meditation, about the complementary functions of the left and right hemispheres of the human brain. Schooling is to be concerned with "constructive mental action" (Lanier and Sedlak, p. 119) — with instrumental and utilitarian uses of reason, with problem solving and higher order thinking skills. That the human being is a complex, integrated *whole*, involving physical, emotional, transpersonal, and social as well as intellectual aspects of experience, is nowhere recognized in *Schooling for Tomorrow.*

Conclusion. I would claim that it is not the "romantics" who are irrelevant to the true reconstruction of education — it is the materialist worldview shared by the scholars who produced this book. The planet faces severe economic, ecological, and cultural challenges over the next few decades. We are being forced to recognize that the reign of materialism, nationalism, and corporate control over resources must eventually come to an end. The schools of tomorrow need to be grounded in a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life on the planet. They need to be based on a profound understanding of human potentials — including the spiritual essence that links all people of all countries and cultures together. The schools of tomorrow need to hold a clear vision of an ecologically healthy and economically just world, a world in which conflict and competition are replaced by cooperation in pursuit of our common survival.

What is described in this book is not "schooling for tomorrow" but schooling from the past, stubbornly imposed on the future. This book does not direct reforms "to issues that count" but *away* from the issues that count most: true human fulfillment, genuine community, justice, peace, and ecological sensibility. The educational reform movement that has occupied our attention for the past decade is actually a tremendous barrier to a genuine and desperately needed transformation of education. It is time to go beyond it.

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Note

1. Stephen Arons, *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

Holistic Learning: A Teacher's Guide to Integrated Studies

by John P. Miller, J.R. Bruce Cassie, and Susan M. Drake
Published by Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press (252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6)
1990; 126 pages, $22.50 (Canadian), paperback

Reviewed by Ron Miller

Since publishing his groundbreaking book *The Holistic Curriculum* in 1988 (also by OISE Press), John Miller has been working with his colleagues to put holistic approaches into practice in Canadian public schools. (One report of their work — "Implementing a Holistic Curriculum" — appeared in *Holistic Education Review* 3, no. 3, Fall 1990). This new book, *Holistic Learning,* provides a further elaboration of holistic theory and then a good bit of practical guidance for creating an integrated, person-centered learning environment. The book is not equally relevant for all educators, though; its practical material largely pertains to junior and senior high school, and only to a few specific topics at that.

For Miller, Cassie, and Drake, holistic education involves "a broadening of visions and perspectives. We move from the more restrictive scope of an atomistic perspective to a more inclusive view that witnesses the connections between ourselves and many levels of experience and knowledge" (p. 6).

A large section of the book is devoted to "discovering our life story

education in action — young people enjoying autonomy, responsibility, and respect; teachers working resourcefully as a team; parents and staff struggling together through many difficulties to keep their experiments alive in a hostile educational environment.

Korn advocates strongly for open education, and she draws upon both anecdotal and experimental evidence (including the long-neglected Eight Year Study) to argue for its effectiveness. She is careful to point out, though, that alternative educators are more concerned with the quality of school life than with achievement scores or other standardized measures, more concerned with integrated experience than fragmented subject matter. The book conveys the cooperative and nourishing *quality* of these school communities.

The author addresses issues such as curriculum, discipline, finances, evaluation, and school governance. In each case, she avoids theory and is concerned with practical applications in the context of the seven schools she knows well. To sum up, I would say that this book can serve a valuable purpose if it attracts new parents and teachers to alternative education. Yet I find myself saying, once again, that we *still* need more books that explore the deeper philosophical sources of open/alternative/holistic education. Important issues remain unexamined: For example, Korn never makes it clear just *why* these open schools are so fiercely resisted by the educational establishment. Why should young people's free, joyful, natural learning be perceived as a threat? To us, the value of holistic education is self-evident. To most others, for cultural and political reasons, it clearly is not, and we need to address this discrepancy. This issue holds important implications for the ultimate success of the alternative/holistic education movement.

Letters to the Review

Dear Editor:

We very much enjoyed reading the dialogue between Waldorf and Montessori educators in your Winter 1990 issue. In your Postscript you concluded holistically that those of us who "hold a higher vision of human possibilities need to transcend our differences and join together to transform this culture."

It's hard to argue with that. Yet, some thinkers might say if we do not nurture our intellectual and philosophical differences, we may run the risk of becoming another "mainstream" system, substantially weakened by the effort to meet all needs.

Perhaps the middle ground on this issue can be reached simply by remembering the emphasis which Maria Montessori placed on "grace and courtesy." We can be respectful of each other's differences, such as the different meanings given by Steiner and Montessori regarding the planes of development, but not necessarily be committed to joining together so much as walking side by side. There is a difference.

Bretta Weiss, National Director
American Montessori Society
New York, NY

Editor's response: Our task here — and it is not an easy one — is to define precisely what we mean by "joining together." I did not mean to imply that all alternative educators should form one huge organization that would "meet all needs"; as you point out, this would be impossible without diluting our diverse and deeply held beliefs to the point of banality. One primary fact about the holistic education movement is that it is a grass-roots effort that welcomes variety, individuality, creativity, and spontaneity. This is in direct contrast to the mainstream "restructuring" movement of recent years, dictated in top-down fashion by political and corporate elites. Holism thrives on differences, because no single perspective gives the total and ultimate truth about education or anything else.

But we need to ask ourselves what values we do hold in common. What core beliefs transcend our differences and set us apart, as "alternative" educators, from the mainstream? In guarding our distinctiveness, we have altogether failed to identify our commonalities, and that is the task before us now. By "joining together," I do not mean that one organization can meet all needs; I mean that we must be willing to talk with one another to discover which of our needs are fundamental, irreducible, and common to us all. I suggest that when we talk about core values such as love, compassion, peace, justice, and fulfillment of human potentials, we will find very few significant differences among us — just as these values identify us as alternative to the competitive, materialist, violent, hedonistic culture that surrounds us.

The important point is that we need to start working with one another in a serious and passionate way. We certainly should practice "grace and courtesy" — but this does not mean that we should politely ignore one another, as we have done for so many years.

Dear Editor:

Here's a question for you! Your journal proposes many cutting-edge ideas for making education more holistic and effective. In particular, my favorite article is Lynn Stoddard's "Educating for Human Greatness" (Spring 1990). Yes, learning should be for personal liberation into our individual greatness.

My question is, instead of just substituting different processes in the classroom, why aren't we questioning the notion of* school *itself?

It seems to me inhibiting of human greatness to spend day after day in an institution in which order must be kept by standing in lines, keeping to a fixed, pre-ordained schedule, relating primarily to one's own age group, and having the majority (at least) of the curriculum, even if it is progressive, also predetermined. I think that the physical and social structure of schools, as we conceive them today, regardless of content, perpetrate many of the deep problems that holistic education is trying to address. Where are the arguments of Ivan Illich, John Holt, and Joseph Chilton Pearce, and where do you see them fitting into a holistic, sustainable society?

Kris Price
Sanibel, FL

Editor's response: Good question! As I see it, the problem is not *school* as such, but schooling as defined by modern, industrial society. Most schools are rigid, repressive institutions because they serve a social and economic system that demands conformity and regulation. But it is possible to have a school that is a genuine *community of learning* rather than a factory for producing future employee/citizens. I have visited dozens of alternative, holistic schools — most are independent, but some exist as public alternative schools — where children's individuality, creativity, and growth are truly nourished.

Illich, Holt, and Pearce are important critics of modern educational practice; they have influenced the thinking of many radical educators, including myself. As I understand them, they are rejecting the *artificiality* of the learning environment in conventional schooling; they argue that true learning occurs only in natural, honest encounters between persons. Surely this happens outside school, in the home, and out in the world. What I call "holistic education" is not limited to school learning, but rather means nurturing the child's natural, healthy development in any environment. But genuine encounter *can* take place in a school setting, too, and often does.

If and when our culture changes significantly, so that we once again live in closely knit communities and villages in which we know and trust one another, then the need for schools may be diminished. But so long as we live as nuclear and fragmented families, secreted into the privacy of our homes and sedated by television and VCRs, the school is a

vital place for personal and social contact. It is a place for experiencing community — *if* it is a school organized to serve humane purposes rather than merely economic ones.

Dear Editor:

I continue to be inspired by the content and by the very existence of **Holistic Education Review.** *I am finally stimulated to respond to the excellent article, "Educing an Ecological Consciousness" by Robert Sidwell (3 no. 4, Winter 1990). In so doing I cannot forget the efforts of Ron Miller to clarify the relationship between "spirituality" and holistic education.*

It seems as though Dr. Sidwell, having very clearly described the modern worldview ("the peeces paradigm") advocates a return to the neolithic worldview. I cannot agree that the ecological consciousness we seek to create will be "a return to our long-neglected roots."

Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny: The development of the individual mirrors the evolution of the species. The development of the individual is physical, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, and finally, we hope, the integration of all these aspects into a mature, healthy, whole human being.

In terms of brain development, this implies reptilian brain, mammalian brain, right hemisphere, left hemisphere, followed by integration and full utilization of all parts. In terms of the history of human evolution, this indicates the development from reptile to mammal to human (only humans, and other primates in a lesser developed form, have the cerebellum, the left and right hemispheres of the brain). It seems that neolithic consciousness was essentially right-brain consciousness: mythic, aesthetic, spontaneous, cyclic time. Civilization developed the untapped potential of the left brain: logic, quantitative, sequential time. The full development of the potential of the left-brain consciousness, which is science and technology, was achieved at the expense of the suppression of right-brain consciousness.

As with the individual, so now with the whole of civilized humanity, the task is to integrate all the aspects of human potential. In its apotheosis humanity would then be fulfilling the potential of the universe itself as matter/energy/consciousness.

As far as I am concerned, holistic education plays a central role in this very necessary evolutionary leap. Traditional education, including the oral traditions of neolithic cultures, is the handing down of culture from generation to generation. This worked well in perpetuating the variety of cultural forms adapted to their ecosystems. But in a changing world it is useless because the cultural form handed down is maladapted, out of date. Holistic education which implies a dialogue between generations and self-directed inquiry represents a fundamental and unprecedented change in the nature of culture into an adaptive mode.

It is intensely bittersweet that evolution occurs only in response to a crisis. By refusing to deny the context of danger we can focus on the opportunity of evolution which is inherent in the ecological crisis. We do need to rediscover our connectedness, but we must not reject our ability to separate ourselves, which is essential to being human.

Edward Butterworth
Hornby Island,
British Columbia

Classified Ads

Home Education Magazine — A common sense perspective on home schooling since 1983! May/June issue features: Who are The Four Pillars of Homeschooling? Opera, Anyone? Environmental Education. Excerpt from *The Homeschool Sourcebook*, and much more. Current issue, $4.50; one year (six issues), $24.00. Home Education Press, Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855.

This fall, **Home Education Press** is publishing a completely revised edition of *Alternatives in Education*. This 1987 title was on the Library Top 40 listing several times, selected for inclusion by over a dozen book catalogs, and was a book club featured alternate. We are still interested in additional submissions. For consideration of material, please contact us by July 1. Open to all forms of alternative and holistic education. Home Education Press, Attn: Jim McFee, Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855.

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