TEACHING FOR WISDOM

ENCOUNTER: EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. VOL. 14(2) 2001 (3-16).

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Educational practice and policy has remained focused on the accumulation of facts and the development of basic skills. However, in a world flooded with information and increasing in complexity what may be required for fulfillment and even survival is not simply acquisition of more information or skills but the ability to use this knowledge wisely. In the expanding sea of information how do we cultivate the capacity to see what is of importance and apply that knowledge in ethical and meaningful ways? Acquisition of information, mastery of skills, and the power of the intellect give us tools to navigate, change, even destroy the world, but the capacity of wisdom is required if we are to grow the soul of world and our own soul along with it. This paper will explore the nature of wisdom and how educational practice can nurture it.

What is Wisdom?

We recognize it, we talk of it, it is described in all of the worlds sacred traditions, yet wisdom remains difficult to define precisely. Thomas Aquinas, the 16th century theologian, gives us an image to consider when he writes that "wisdom differs from science in looking at things from a greater height." (in Gilby, 1967, p. 364). He said that it involves *gnome*, or the ability to see through things.

Wisdom does not come from amassing bits of information, it is not a thing that's accumulated, not an *entity*. Instead it is an *activity* of knowing. We don't possess wisdom as if it were an object, instead we act wisely.

Ralph Waldo Emerson describes wisdom as a blend of the perception of what is true with the moral sentiment of what is right (Sealts, 1992, p. 257). As is the case with moral decisions, wise action moves beyond mere self-interest. Jesus was said to have turned over the tables of the money changers who were doing business in a holy temple; Martin Luther King, Jr., organized a sit-in at a lunch counter in Montgomery, Alabama in an attempt to challenge segregation; Gandhi's radical non-violence directly confronted the authority of the British Empire. We would not say that these actions were "smart," but they were wise. In this sense, wisdom does not simply serve individual growth but growth in general. The actions of Jesus, King, and Gandhi not only helped to define their own lives but helped human society to grow. Lawson (1961) concludes that "wisdom lies in human action which possesses both intellectual and ethical orientation; and the promotion of such wisdom is the task of education" (p. vii).

We know people who are brilliant intellectually but far from wise. Smart people sometimes act unwisely, falling prey to fallacies of invincibility or omnipotence or to narcissism. Some individuals may be able to navigate with "success" in the world. Such "fundamental pragmatics of life" are certainly valuable and have even been described as a component of wisdom (Baltes and Smith, 1990, p. 87), but they do not necessarily see things "from a greater height," integrate the heart, and see beyond self-interest; consequently, lives guided only by such pragmatics seem to be wanting in some very central way. Orwoll and Perlmutter (1990) recognize this missing dimension as a level of personality development that is necessary to transcend narcissism, personal needs, thoughts, and feelings. Without adequate development, people may see how to gain from the world but miss the opportunity to develop the world at the same time.

On the other hand, we know people who are not intellectually brilliant but who are able to use their intelligence and their understanding to act wisely. We say they have character, virtue, and insight. They can see what is important and what is less so, and they act from this knowledge. They recognize both forests and trees and can discern the relative balance and the integration of each perspective. At times, they may tap into a vein of wise simplicity in the midst of perplexity. In fact, while knowledge and intelligence are often equated with complexity, wisdom often emerges as elegantly simple. This is not a simplicity born of ignorance but a simplicity that is close to what is essential in life; it cuts to the chase; it sees through the cloud of complexity.

Wisdom is distinguished from bare intellect especially by its integration of the heart. While modern conceptions locate the most essential knowing in the head, sacred traditions identify it with the heart. For example, the Chinese word *hsin* is often translated as mind but includes both mind and heart. This emphasis on the heart has been referred to as the eye of the soul for Plato, the eye of the Tao (Smith, 1993), South on the Native American medicine wheel (Storm, 1972). In the Christian bible both Matthew and Luke speak of a single eye which lights the whole body like a lamp and without which "how great is the darkness" (Smith, 1993, p. 18). We might even think of wisdom as the power of the mind to honor the insight of the heart.

Wisdom cuts to what is of importance but not through calculations or shrewdness. The deepest insights, the authentic revelation, the healing vision, often come more directly, as an intuition. Such insight is described as an inner experience or inner knowing to indicate that we intimately embody this knowing within ourselves. The sacred traditions suggest various means such as prayer, meditation, service, and contemplation to awaken this inner knowing. But

wisdom can not be trained or acquired directly. We can not say, "memorize this and you will be wise." It is brought forth more subtly. But it can be nurtured by our practices and priorities in the classroom.

Entering Mystery

It is difficult to find any genuine consideration of wisdom in education. Why is wisdom so absent from educational aims and practice? Rorty (1979) suggests that the Cartesian shift marked the "triumph of the quest for certainty over the quest for wisdom" (p. 61). The goal thus became rigor, prediction, and control rather than wisdom or peace of mind. But this quest for certainty is a futile or delusional task since "what is really 'in' experience extends much further than that which at any time is *known*" (Dewey, 1929/1958, p. 21). To express it in another way, we simply can not control or know it all; if we try to, our tight and focused grasping does not leave space enough for wisdom. This intolerance and fear of ambiguity and the unknown contributes to the sterilization and commodification of knowledge, where single correct answers, fear of making mistakes, and multiple-choice exams are the gatekeepers of certainty. Wisdom allows space for ambiguity. For teachers and especially administrators and elected officials, there is security in certainty; we can name it, measure it, write reports with graphs about it, and hold others accountable to it. When we stretch away from certainty, we make ourselves (and the material) vulnerable. Few of us get past our personal need for control and predictability to risk the unknown and intentionally put our own vulnerability or that of the material in plain view. And yet vulnerability seems essential for our growth:

> And all the while, deep inside, I know what I have always known: that the knowledge will never be enough. This is the secret we keep from ourselves. And the moment it is revealed, we become aware of a need for something else; for the wisdom to live with

what we do not know, what we cannot control, what is painful–and still choose life. (Dreamer, 1999, p. 45)

The space, flow, and vitality of a classroom change when conscious vulnerability is present in the teacher. By moving out from behind the protection of certainty, curriculum, and role, the teacher invites the student to do the same. Vulnerability does not mean becoming passive or giving power away; it means being open to possibility, which opens the wisdom space. Vulnerability means tackling our fears head on. Ambiguity and vulnerability are allies of wisdom.

Not every learning situation is appropriate for increasing ambiguity. When we ask for the correct answer to a basic mathematics problem, we want a particular answer. When we ask students to engage deductive reasoning to draw a straightforward logical inference, we are looking for less ambiguity, not more. In these examples we are using the tools of intelligence. But with most topics, there is an opportunity to create the dynamic tension of ambiguity and, in turn, open the wisdom space to engage the student at a very deep level. We do this when we lead off the lesson with an honest question that has no simple preset answer. We ask "What are the causes of violence in our culture and in our school?" instead of truncating the wisdom space with "What are the five causes of violence that our text discusses?" Of course we want the student to know the text, but if our questions merely dead-end there, we have missed an opportunity for the growth of wisdom through ambiguity, vulnerability, and mystery. The text should be drawn on as part of a dialogue rather than as a diatribe.

Instead of grasping for certainty, wisdom rides the question, lives the question. "The wise person views himself and others as engaged in an unending dialectic with each other and the world" (Sternberg, 1990, p. 150). An unending dialectic is an activity that raises anxiety in the

one-right-answer world of most contemporary schooling. When a question is treated primarily as a problem to be solved with certainty, the question is set up in opposition to the questioner. From the start, the question becomes something to beat, to conquer. This may be playful or deadly serious and represents the best of intelligent engagement. Wisdom treats the question differently. It *seeks* questions, as if looking for the best fruit on the tree. It then bites into the question, living it, allowing it to fulfill its purpose as nourishment. Whereas intelligence will cut, dismantle, and reconstruct the question in order to work toward certainty, wisdom rides the question to see where it goes and what it turns into. Rilke (1993) offers this advice:

> Be patient toward all that is unresolved in your heart. . . . Try to love the questions themselves. . . . Do not now seek the answers, which can not be given because you would not be able to live them–and the point is to live everything. (p. 35)

Wisdom seeks and creates questions. Arlin (1990) describes "problem finding," identifying the most salient problems, as being closely associated with wisdom. Problem finding allows us to move beyond conceptual limits (i.e., the problem as given) in order to reframe and synthesize. We can encourage questions as much as answers in the classroom by making a small but significant turn in what we ask for and reward. For example, in an exam or in a class discussion, simply asking for the questions that the students would ask about the topic, what they are curious about, what they really want to know but have been afraid to ask, serves to open up the wisdom space. Physicist David Bohm (1981) explains that "questioning is … not an end in itself, nor is its main purpose to give rise to answers. Rather, what is essential here is the whole flowing movement of life, which can be harmonious only when there is ceaseless questioning" (p. 25). Pablo Neruda's *The Book of Questions* (1991) provides a poetic and playful hint of this "whole flowing movement" through the art of questioning:

Is 4 the same 4 for everybody?

Are all sevens equal?

When the convict ponders the light

is it the same light that shines on you? (p. 24)

In addition to attending to the question as posed, we are also conditioned to answer a question as soon as it is asked. This too reinforces the answer and leaves the question behind. There may be hardly a breath between the question and our eagerness to answer it. But it is from this gap, breath, or moment of silence that wisdom emerges. One simple exercise invites students to generate questions instead of answers about a particular event or idea (e.g., a Civil War battle, a science demonstration, a story). These remarks can include students own reactions and associations such as, "What does this have to do with my life? or statements such as, "Something about this really excites (or bothers) me, I wonder what it is." In one variation of this exercise, students can anonymously write the questions on an index card to be shared out loud with the class by a designated reader. These are not immediately to be answered but just to be heard. We may place a "question chair" in the middle of the classroom and when there are questions we speak the question to the chair rather than to the teacher or another student. No one is allowed to answer the question directly; it is simply allowed to sit and simmer. Other questions may follow. Initially this is awkward and students fall back onto habits of looking to the teacher, forgetting to talk to the chair, or providing a quick response to the question. But with just a few reminders, space opens up in this situation because the emphasis is on welcoming questions without tidy answers. The feeling of competition or resistance in the typical one-right-answer classroom opens up into mystery: we don't know what will come, and I am always surprised by the deepening quality of questions and perspectives that I had not previously considered. The

process is less like an assembly line and more like an artist's studio, the atmosphere gradually shifts, and I imagine that the space inside the student shifts and opens as well.

The Quaker tradition provides a powerful method of clarifying decisions called a "clearness committee" (see Livsey and Palmer, 1999, pp. 43-48). A member of the community can simply call upon other members of his or her choosing to sit together and ask questions about a concern or choice that is being faced (e.g., "Should I take this job?" "I am considering marrying this person." "What should I do with my life?"). The committee is not there to offer opinions or advice but simply to pose honest questions and listen. The point is to help one listen to one's inner knowing. We can use the spirit of the clearness committee when students are instructed to present, to a small group in the classroom or to the class as a whole, their topic for their term paper, or their understanding of some concept that they have been studying. I often have small groups serve as mini-clearness committees. Given only minimal reminders about sticking to open and honest questions and acting in goodwill, the receiver of the questions regularly experiences an opening or clearing of awareness.

Wisdom asks questions about questions, not so much to close in and trap the answer but to see what the question has to tell us about ourselves and our world. "What is the lesson here?" "What is the big picture?" "What can this teach me?" In this way, the question (as well as the universe) serves as a mirror and as a looking glass. Our reaction to the question, our feelings of superiority or inferiority, and our solutions themselves reveal the limits or edges of our seeing or insight. Often statements are embedded within questions. Sharing questions helps to expose those statements about who "I" am, what "my" perspective and projection is, and what "I" want. Wisdom acknowledges that we don't know, or at least that we know incompletely; once this is accepted, it frees us for true learning. In this way, "ambiguity potentiates learning" (Bateson,

1999, p. 137). Once we stop fighting the question and the situation and give up our quest for domination and certainty, we are really free to see what they have to offer. This is as true in meeting a person as it in meeting a question.

As we welcome ambiguity, attempt to balance an "unending dialectic," and "live everything," we open up, not to domination of the question, but to insight born of awe. In his study of the ancient prophets, Heschel (1972) concludes that wisdom comes through awe and reverence:

> The loss of awe is the great block to insight. A return to reverence is the first prerequisite for a revival of wisdom.… Wisdom comes from awe rather than from shrewdness. It is evoked not in moments of calculation but in moments of being in rapport with the mystery of reality. The greatest insights happen to us in moments of awe. (p. 78)

Awe, wonder, reverence, and epiphany are drawn forth not by a quest for control, domination, or certainty, but by an appreciative and open-ended engagement with the questions: this is why such qualities as the ability to listen, empathize, and comfort with ambiguity (Sternberg, 1990) are associated with wisdom.

We come to wonder, and in turn to awe and wisdom, though our vulnerability and openness. As we open up questions, a space is created, the wisdom space. And from this space we can enter the mystery: "Mystery sucks at our breath like a wind tunnel. Invites us into it. Let us pray and enter" (Richards, 1989, p. 8).

Defining Oneself Authentically and Spontaneously

Teaching for wisdom constantly asks who we are and who we are becoming. This unfolding revelation is a movement toward an authentic life. Thomas Merton (1979) writes,

> The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to the world–not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself. (p. 3)

When the inner life is attended to on a daily basis, it does not breed narcissistic preoccupation or indulgence but instead the opportunity for a deep meeting at the intersection of inside and outside. All the mystics and sages affirm the Delphic oracle's admonition, "Know thyself," and live true to your authentic nature. Inward awareness is not only important to provide a kind centerpoint but also because it reveals the intersection of our individual depth with a more universal depth. The universe lies not only about us but also within us; the outside can reveal the inside and vice versa. Emerson (1837/1968) tells us that

> yourself is the law of all nature. . . in yourself slumbers the whole of reason; it is for you to know all ; it is for you to dare all. . . Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is but a small ocean. A man is related to all nature. (p. 47, 46)

The inside is completely bound to the outside in a dialectic of its own. With respect to perception, the inside co-constructs the outside. As outside and inside meet in awareness we begin to recognize our embeddedness in the physical, social, political, environmental, and linguistic worlds. For example, Socrates said, ideas never come out of him; they always came from the person he was talking with. "Nothing creates 'in and by itself.' When people and things interact, they are in a process of becoming 'for each other'" (McNiff, 1992, p. 37).

In addition, the inside-outside dichotomy is a false one, that is, a relative one. If our openness and connection are deep enough, our inside (i.e., consciousness, body, etc.) may no longer be distinct from the outside. When our consciousness opens and experiences deep interconnection, we do not experience the other as separate from us; experience arises without a distinct origin.

There is no need or no way to force this process of self-discovery. We open gradually through the small steps of authenticity, through being truly honest with ourselves. Polonius, Hamlet's intended father-in-law, offers the formula for wise transformation: "This above all, to thine own self be true." Authenticity begins as a courtship with our interior and ends as communion with the world. Martin Buber (1975) recounts an old Hasidic tale that captures the central importance of being true to oneself. As an old man, Rabbi Zusya said, "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'" (p. 251).

One of the ways we discover who we are is by asking: "What do we love?" "What brings joy and wholeness?" In this way each student's emerging self is the curriculum (Hopkins, 1970). Krishnamurti (1974) says, "Right education is to help you to find out for yourself what you really, with all your heart, love to do.… Then you are really efficient, without becoming brutal" (p. 76). This provides inspiration, as Patanjali (1989) has called it. To define themselves authentically children (and adults) must listen not only to the voices of parent and teacher and text, but especially to those of their own hearts, their own inner voice.

The educator's role includes helping to find the song that sings in the student and helping him or her learn to sing it. This may come through questions in the spirit of: "Who are you?" "What have you come to learn and to teach?" "What is your offering, your gift, your work?" And

foremost: “What do you love?” Instead, we often do not ask and so the child has trouble knowing what to ask himself or herself. Mostly we say: “Here is what you are to know; it is the truth; be prepared to be tested on it.” With such an orientation, one’s own knowing is, at best, subordinate to prepackaged knowledge; at its worst, it is entirely dismissed. This squelches spontaneous and intuitive response to experience and thereby squelches the person, demanding that the person define himself or herself inauthentically, off center. The “Gospel according to St. Thomas” warns us that the consequences of this are dire:

> If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you. (in Pagels, 1979, p. 126)

However, when our insides are welcomed, the educational orientation changes: “Here is what you need to join the dance of culture; here are some tools. Now what will you bring to the dance? What questions and knowing have you to add?”

Asking what we think or feel about something is the same as asking who we are. When students share perspectives with one another, they have an opportunity to see who they are in relation to others. Self-reflection can be evoked very simply, as when we ask eighth-graders to draw and/or write about what they are like on the inside and what they are like on the outside. In addition, our values reflect our interiors. So questions such as “What would you die for?” “What would you have done if you were in the situation offered by today’s lesson?” “What would your hero have done?” provide a chance for values to rise to the surface. A simple exercise such as “Sit quietly, write down five adjectives or words that describe you, share one at a time with a partner including explanations” sets a tone of self-reflection, community, and intimacy in a class. We can add another level of reflection in the same exercise by asking, “What feelings and

thoughts popped up during the exercise?" "How much did you hold back?" "How risky or honest were you?" "How has your impression or sense of the person you spoke with changed due to your conversation?" I sometimes ask class members to write a poem that is intended to hint at some class lesson or experience, or write a Haiku that captures an instant of existence. And nearly always, for every age, drawing or other art is a direct route to express the inner life, giving the artist and the observer something tangible, a point of contact, to meet over.

Asking about who we are can also come from asking what we hate, fear, or love in another person. We project our shadow, those aspects that we have not incorporated or owned, onto others. These are often revealed by our strong feelings or abject avoidance toward someone or something. When we fall deeply in love, we may be recognizing part of our shadow and projecting it on the other person. As Robert Johnson (1998) says, we unconsciously ask the other person to hold our "alchemical gold," those special and sacred parts that we have trouble owning within ourselves. We may also demonize another to hold those "negative" parts that we can not own.

Wisdom can involve insight and epiphany, as James Joyce called it. One student described a moment of epiphany brought forth through a teacher's simple and genuine question:

> My teacher asked me what I thought, what was important to me; he actually thought this was important, that I was important. And after years of getting the message that what they thought was all that was important … I began to trust and listen to myself. It was like being reintroduced to someone I forgot was there all along.

Perceiving that another person values us sets off a profound ripple through our being, one that invites us to encounter ourselves more deeply.

Our youngest students gain self-knowledge especially through their free play or experimentation with the world. Froebel (1887), the creator of the kindergarten, emphasized that play is the "self-active representation of the inner [nature]" (p. 55). For Froebel the purpose of the kindergarten is not to give the child a head start in information acquisition, although it has sometimes been co-opted to serve just this end. Instead, experimentation and play is an opportunity to bring out the inner nature, helping the student find and define himself or herself accordingly. Without sufficient free space, especially psychological space, it becomes difficult to play out our inner natures. Without such experimentation, the self tends to be overly shaped from the outside, rather than drawn forth from within. Play and experimentation may reveal a sense of one's character and calling. Hillman (1996) takes up this question of calling in his exploration of the lives of many famous individuals, from Ella Fitzgerald to Eleanor Roosevelt, who seemed to demonstrate their calling from a very early age. Their genius or daimon pushed itself into embodiment. In this sense, "growing up" is actually better described as "growing down," bringing one's calling and character into the world. So self-discovery and definition are not merely a task of adolescence and adulthood, but they begin with the play of the youngest and extend to every age and level, even (and maybe especially) to the teacher. What is our calling as teachers? How do we define ourselves authentically and spontaneously?

Self-knowledge thrives when we are invited to listen to ourselves. When I was a first semester graduate student, I walked into my professor's office one day. The professor's name was Gunner and at some level I expected my ideas to be gunned down. I was sharing some half-baked idea and instead of correcting me or saying "Yes, but," he seemed to listen deeply and really try to understand what I meant. He asked probing but not attacking questions, reflected back his understanding, and shared some of his own ideas, not in a correction but in a mutual

dialogue. I began to see my ideas in a new, less defensive way; even more significantly, I saw myself differently. I can not fully describe the impact this has had on my life. I felt like a new person; I was heard and validated. All those years of trying to conform to someone else's "right answer" or way of being had been internalized into a very loud self-critic who drowned my own knowing to the point at which I did not trust or listen to myself. Previously, most of my schooling had been drudgery. After this conversation, my motivation exploded; something was freed in that moment. I remember reading more in the one course I had with him that semester than I had in my previous four years of college, and I loved it.

As I became a therapist and a teacher I discovered that this moment in Gunner's office shaped my approach to working with others probably more than any other event. Specifically, I saw my most sacred task as opening and holding a space for myself and the other to meet in. When we genuinely invite the other's perspective and establish a trusting and respectful relationship, a space is created. Even the space that is created by the configuration of our classroom furniture may symbolize openings and limits, private and public spaces, and direct the flow in one way or another.

Some time later, I discovered that a similar revelation had occurred in Gunner's own education many years earlier. As a high school student, he was a troubled, talented underachiever who, along with a group of others, was periodically taken by bus to visit the nearby Princeton University campus for presentations by distinguished physicists of the day, Einstein among them. One day, after a long, dry talk by one of the physicists, a young girl raised her hand and wryly asked these men of science what they thought of ghosts. Two of the physicists quickly and precisely dismissed the possibility, citing a lack of hard scientific evidence. When they were finished, Robert Oppenheimer, who was instrumental in the

development of the atomic bomb and later a staunch critic of its use, paused and offered a different response. He said, “That’s a fascinating question. I accept the possibility of all things,” and suggested that “it is necessary to find one’s own required evidence” before accepting or rejecting a possibility. For Gunner, this was a revelation. Instead of closing down and accepting the world as prepackaged, Oppenheimer’s perspective opened it back up to mystery, to the possibility of all things, and to one’s responsibility to discover it for oneself. Gunner’s “way of being” began to shift as he came to define himself from the center of his own direct experience. More than fifty years later, he remembers Oppenheimer’s response as clearly as I remember Gunner’s generous and genuine reply to me in his office some twenty years ago. Since then I think have tried to stay open and honor mystery and possibility, listen, and seek my own required evidence. Essentially, these encounters opened us simultaneously to the depths of ourselves and the world.

By the way, this is often how teaching goes; we pay back and pass along the gifts given to us mostly by living them out honorably, wisely. For all of us who teach in one form or another, who were those teachers (formal or informal) who made a difference? What were those moments that opened the world up? What do we still hold dear from those epiphanies? And how well do we live and teach from the heart of those lessons learned?

Dancing with Authority

Defining oneself authentically involves rejecting authority. On the surface this, of course, appears to be a basic threat to the teacher, text, and the assistant principal. This is not to be misunderstood as thwarting the basic rules of community, established for safety, efficiency, and harmony. Instead, it means turning inward to rely on our own knowing rather than on someone

else's. Remember Oppenheimer's invocation to Gunner: "Find your own required evidence." He said essentially, "Do not rely on these experts before you to find your truth. Use them, but find it yourself." This does not discard theories and experts, information and ideology; instead it dialogues them. The locus of evaluation moves inward, toward our center. It is easier to make the case for this internal movement with older students, but I suggest that we develop the capacity for ethical and intelligent choices and wise action when we ask students at every age to overcome the intimidation of authority in order to dialogue and dance with it.

There have been meaningful challenges to institutionalized authority. We have come to recognize the disproportional influences of power-knowledge-economic-discursive amalgams on our ideas (e.g., Foucault, 1980). Yet in education, we have not overcome the habit of looking primarily outside for authority, to the teachers, texts, sciences, leaders, and so forth. Unless children are weaned from this suckling on external authority, their internal decision making and skills of discernment do not mature. We teach obedience at the cost of insight and wisdom. "Being as little children" (the Christian requirement for entering Christ Consciousness, a wisdom space) comes to mean compliance rather than openness to experience. When educational practice perpetuates this over-dependence on external authority, students (and teachers) remain developmentally delayed in their abilities to form ethical choices, evaluate information, and understand themselves. The evaluative capacity becomes undernourished from lack of stimulation and practice; and instead of developing a capacity for discernment, we may become skilled at imposing beliefs or judgments on others because this is what has been modeled for us.

A culprit in our contemporary moral difficulties is not the lack of moral guidance (good ideas abound; God is in the bookstore) or the over-stimulation of the information age. It is, instead, in part, our habit of relying on external moral or intellectual authority which has caused

us to retard our children's skill in actively discerning value and virtue. The flood of options and images, diversity and dialogue, that comes with the postmodern era has not caused this difficulty but has exposed our weakness. Some have tried to stop the world by anchoring themselves in some doctrinal solutions and imposing layers of doctrine and rules upon others. Such solutions provide, at best, a moral sunscreen, a superficial response, but one that does not address the underlying difficulty, the cause of the hole in the moral ozone.

It is ironic that in a society that prizes democratic values and self-determination, we have not developed a democratic-experiential approach to values in schools. The calls from our leaders are most often for imperialistic solutions driven by fear (and sometimes mere political opportunism) instead of insight. The imposition of Truth becomes an act of imperialism that, in time, breeds repression and revolution of one sort or another. It is not that the information is damaging, it is just that it inevitably incomplete and its imposition as truth or fact is oppressive. We practice authenticity through changing the way we make choices. Teaching a people how to make centered choices, like teaching people to fish instead of just giving them fish, makes ethical decision making an ongoing growth process. When we rely on the authority of some form, theory, or person, we give away the intimate experience and responsibility of choosing. When we are forced to swallow ideas whole, without question, we end up doing just that, or spitting them out entirely. When this occurs, the rift between the "moral" and the "amoral," us and them, the smart and the dumb, the obedient and the troublemakers, will grow wider.

Since the 1930s, Alfred Korzybski's dictum, "The map is not the territory," has cautioned us about relying on "maps" by themselves. However, as our ability to make all kinds of maps improved and our faith in an objective, scientifically knowable world grew, we came to rely increasingly on maps or theories as our guiding truths and became less inclined to create our own

views through direct experience. The concept or map was elevated, from its position as mediator or representation of experience, to the experience itself. We became enamored with our concepts and discounted direct experience, and in so doing lost the sensitivity to and trust in experience as a valid way of knowing.

As the process of reliance on external authority becomes personally internalized, it takes the form of a dependence on theories or doctrine as opposed to dynamic experience, accepting the authority of form rather than the authority of experience. We learn to look for one right answer rather than to ask good questions, and we develop a habit of attaching ourselves to and depending on theories or externally generated forms that then shape our perceptions and experiences. The trouble comes when we replace our openness to experience with these maps or theories, falling to encounter the other in a way that keeps our maps open-ended and dynamic. Contact with the other is instead used to reinforce our theory, and "dogmatism ensues where hypothesis hardens into ideology" (Thurman, 1991, p. 59). When our theory becomes preeminent, we lose the chance to experience diversity and consequently prejudge individuals and ideas.

Meacham (1990) suggests that the most significant feature of wisdom is "to hold an attitude that knowledge is fallible and to strive for a balance between knowing and doubting" (p. 181). We help students find their own wisdom by helping them develop the art of dialoguing with authority. This can be approached through a balance of critical analysis and radical openness. Critical analysis and questioning accepts nothing at face value. It's starting point is a kind of rejection of the surface proposition. This allows us to bounce perspectives around to see how they respond. The opposite and balance to critical questioning is what W. B. Yeats called "radical innocence." At times, in order to really understand the other (i.e., idea, person), we may

need to suspend our disbelief, take a leap of faith, and uncritically steep ourselves in the other. The is the Beginner's Mind of Zen Buddhism and the instruction from Jesus that one must be as little children in order to enter the Kingdom.

But neither radical openness nor critical analysis is a final resting place for wisdom; "truth" is worked out in the dialogue between them. As we hold the tension of that dialectic often another way of seeing emerges. Judgment is the skilled use of the analytic mind to evaluate the relative merits of one thing over another. It draws largely from analysis of the present situation in light of past experiences. As valuable as this is, it remains only a partial way of knowing. Another "eye" of knowing comes more directly and quietly. The sages and mystics described it as an inner knowing, inner voice, inner guidance, the contemplative eye as St. Bonaventure called it (Wilber, 1989). Discernment involves a shift from being guided primarily by logical analysis of past experiences and by one's senses to allowing "inner guidance" to enter the dialogue. Discernment uses analysis but also includes this inner, more intuitive source. This goes beyond categories and systems of thinking to take into account the dynamic morality of the heart.

MindScience

Henry David Thoreau said that he would give first prize to the person who could live one day deliberately. Living deliberately means being "so centered that one becomes ultimately fascinated, ravished, and overwhelmed by the mystery that permeates and suffuses all nature, all people, all reality" (McNamara, 1990, p. 108). Thoreau's offer suggests how difficult such living really is. The deliberateness he refers to implies moving beyond habits of thought, perception, and deed to be fully centered and awake throughout the day. Education for wisdom is not about

simply being taught but about *waking up*. Waking up requires a certain kind of energy, certain capacities for taking the world into our consciousness: "wisdom is not the product of mental effort. Wisdom is a state of the total being" (Richards, 1989, p. 15).

The dominant western approach to knowledge for the last several hundred years has been largely a quest for control, predictability, and comprehension of the external and material worlds, from the atom to the atmosphere. But for some, the quest for knowledge went internal and delved into consciousness (i.e., exploring subjective experience). These researchers have developed maps and "inner technologies," what the Dalai Lama calls "MindScience," a technology for using the mind rather than being driven by it (see Goleman & Thurman, 1991). Through such approaches, we come to possess our thoughts, rather than being possessed by them.

Wisdom is cultivated by learning to use the mind rather than being used by it. Feelings fluctuate, passions rise and fall, moods come and go, thoughts flow in and out. The challenge is not to be overwhelmed or distracted but to recognize the inevitable fluctuations of the mind and to develop the capacity for self-discipline (not reacting to every impulse), self-mastery (intentionally directing or opening to states of mind such as focusing attention or relaxing). This develops first and foremost by witnessing the contents of consciousness–self-awareness. The process of awareness "begin[s] to sense and interrupt automatic patterns of conditioned thinking, sensation and behavior" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 122);

> the practices involved in the development of mindfulness/awareness are virtually never described as the training of meditative virtuosity (and certainly not as the development of a higher, more evolved spirituality) but rather as the letting go of habits of mindlessness, as an unlearning rather than a learning" (p. 29).

This involves “keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality” (Nhat Hanh, 1975, p. 11). This is accomplished by what Tich Nhat Hanh calls “pure recognition,” which is recognition without judgment. That is, we can welcome equally all thoughts and feelings that arise by simply recognizing the presence of these things without judgment or attempts to chase them away. The result does not disengage the mind from the world; it enables the mind to be more present within the world. The point is “not to avoid action but to become fully present in one’s action” (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 122). In addition, we do not replace the receding ground of the environment with the ground of the mind. That is, cognition is not reduced to being molded and shaped by an independent environment or to merely the internal generation of mind; it is instead the result of interaction, “enacted” in a dialogue, a constant interplay that does not posit an absolute ground in either the environment or the self.

As awareness develops, something else happens. The new degree of openness to experience not only encompasses one’s own immediate sphere of perception but also enables one to appreciate others. An open heart, awareness of suffering, and deep compassion are regularly described as arising naturally out of the process. As we simply and honestly observe and tolerate our own reactions, we may also gain a tolerance for others. Gebser (1991) says, “Anyone with a sense of detachment from himself also gains a detachment from the world, including a sense of tolerance” (p. 531). This is not a distant kind of objectivism but is instead a witnessing presence, one that Meister Eckhart (1958) also refers to as “detachment.”

There is a Sikh chant consisting of these lines: “I am here. Let me be fully here.” Such presence is encouraged when we simply welcome and witness our being. When we fight or resist part of us, we spend time suffering and struggling to keep part of us at bay. Tarthang Tulku (1977) describes the practice of being “relentlessly honest” with ourselves as the basis of

bringing our center to the here and now. M. C. Richards (1989) reminds us that this act of awareness toward wisdom is not one of exclusion but of inclusion.

> We are transformed, not by adopting attitudes toward ourselves but by bringing into center all the elements of our sensation and our thinking and our emotions and our will: all the realities of our bodies and our souls. All the dark void in us of our undiscovered selves, all the small light of our discovered being. All the drive of our hungers, and our fairest and blackest dreams. All, all the elements come into center, into union with all other elements. And in such a state they become quite different in function than when they are separated and segregated and discriminated between or against. (p. 36)

The actual activity of awareness is quite simple. One simply calms and quiets the mind (this is why anything from vacations to prayer, jogging to meditation, art to journal writing serves as a way in); we may notice our own breath rising and falling and then simply witness the activity generated by the mind. In and of itself, this practice develops "witness consciousness." As we become mindful, we are able "to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one's mind" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 23). We might notice how, for example, the roots that a choice may stem from (e.g., longing, grasping, insecurity, fear, etc.) and untangle our choices from those roots so they may be more fully conscious and more fully ours. And while the young child may not have the ability to conceptualize these roots precisely, he or she does have the capacity to develop the skills of awareness that can grow into transparency. When we ask the child to identify a feeling or to find the location of a feeling or thought in his or her body, or simply to relax and allow the mind to wander and describe the content of the journey, we are fostering awareness. This is the place that sees how upset we are or how much we enjoyed something or simply notices the stream of our thoughts.

Eugene Gendlin's (1988) Focusing technique is another method for cultivating the witnessing awareness. Very briefly, his fundamental exercise begins by asking us to create a "space" and bring our awareness to our body in order to locate a "felt sense" of an issue or concern. We might ask "What is the thing for me right now?" Rather than entering into it, we are to stand back from this "thing" in order to get a sense of what all of the problem feels like. Then we are to find a "quality-word" (e.g., sticky, murky, hard) and go back and forth between the word or image, and our felt sense of it; we are looking for a fit, and allowing either the word or the felt sense to change in order to find the best fit. Then we might ask: "What makes this problem so sticky, hard, and so forth (whatever one's quality-word is)?" Finally, we are invited to receive whatever comes our way, allowing our awareness to stay present. These simple instructions provide an effective way to practice awareness.

Developing awareness through meditation, journaling, contemplation, prayer, focusing, or other means allows us to witness the contents of our consciousness. This provides power to recognize and interrupt habitual patterns of mind and action. Ultimately, it enables us to be more fully present in the world and present to our heart.

The Heart of Understanding

Finally and perhaps foremost, wisdom is cultivated as we nourish the heart. As mentioned previously, the wisdom traditions locate the most essential knowing not in the head but in the heart. Morality, caring, and understanding are seen as the bedrock for wise action. This is the revelation of Jesus' love and Buddha's compassion. Teilhard de Chardin (1975) hints at the power of the awakened heart.

The day will come when, after harnessing the ether, the winds, the waves, the tides, gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And, on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire. (p. 86-87)

The fire of the heart (compassion and love) does propel us beyond mere self-interest into concerns of depth and meaning, social justice and caring–a life of the soul. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1961) tells us that "love is freedom: it gives us that fullness of existence which saves us from paying with our soul for objects that are immensely cheap" (p. 57). This fullness of existence does not come only from a "great act" on the scale of, say, a Ghandi or Mother Theresa. All expressions of love are maximal, from caring for the classroom bunny, to helping a fellow student at a nearby desk. An ethic of caring, collaboration, and community (to complement playful competition) fosters attitudes of concern for one another in a classroom.

The way we know effects what we see. As Antoine De Saint-Exupery's (1943/1971) Little Prince tells us "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: it is only with the heart that one can see right; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (p. 87). Seeing through the heart requires a fundamental shift in the way curriculum is typically offered in schools. While conventional schooling is often dominated by assumptions of objectivism (see Hart , 2001), a more intimate meeting based on a principle of understanding (which literally means to stand among as opposed to apart from) is required. As Buber (1923/1958) says, "all real living is meeting" (p.11), and understanding of the sort I am describing comes in the activity of meeting. Buber describes this shift as a movement from an "I-It" relationship" toward one of "I and Thou." Understanding comes when we empathize with the other, lean into the other, and suspend our distant self-separateness for a moment. As we do so, a recognition of interconnection may emerge. And when we see ourselves as interconnected, it is much more difficult to perpetrate

violence upon the other (whether a person or the natural world). This empathic meeting has been described as the basis of moral development (Hoffman, 1990), and it may even be the trait that makes us most human (Azar, 1997).

This way of knowing is as useful in science as it is in human relationships. Nobel laureate Barbara McClintock described a less detached empiricism, one in which she gained "a feeling for the organism." In her explorations of genetics through her work with corn plants, she described the fundamental relationship as one of "openness to let it come to you" (in Keller, 1983, p. 198). The other is no longer separate but becomes part of our world and ourselves in a profoundly intimate way.

The heart of understanding is cultivated through empathy, appreciation, openness, accommodation, service, listening, and loving presence. At its core, heartfulness involves a quite literal shift in our being. In the midst of a conflict or frustration, in the middle of a hurried day, or as a regular "tune-in," most of us can get a taste of our heart by simply sitting quietly for a few minutes, taking a deep breath, and gently bringing awareness to the area of the chest. There is often a felt shift involving a sense of tenderness, spaciousness, slowing down, and settling in. Taking a few moments during the busy day to help students "breathe into their hearts" provides a practice of slowing down and opening that wisdom space within.

In a classroom a simple attitude of appreciation and an attempt at understanding or meeting the other on its own terms can serve as another practice of heartfulness. This requires a suspension of manipulation, of trying to get something out of it, and of pre-judgment. This may even lead to a sense of awe. Heschel (1972) writes,

> Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the

simple; to feel the rush of the passing of the stillness of the eternal.… The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe. (p. 75, 74)

One very direct way to experiment with empathy and understanding is through service. Service is important not just to fill the needs of the culture, or because it is the moral or good thing to do, but because it actually opens our consciousness, our ways of knowing. Service is a way of knowing our connection with a reality much larger than ourselves (see Deikman, 2000). Often our own heart opens through freely given service.

When a child takes the classroom bunny home for the weekend, it is primarily a lesson in service and responsibility to the bunny and to the class. When young children have plants to care for, they are learning the lessons of service to the community of nature. When an older student helps a younger one, a bond is usually formed as the two come into relationship with one another and then with the material at hand. A sense of pleasure and pride in the accomplishments of one another often emerge if the meeting deepens. This relationship develops between students of any ages. Third-graders help out in the kindergarten; eleventh-graders help with eight-grade math; many of my university students volunteer as tutors throughout the primary and secondary grades.

Assisting one another inside and outside the classroom develops the principle of "leaving no one out." This is an experiential curriculum of social justice, one in which *understanding* and shared responsibility guides decisions about human affairs. This fosters an ecology of interconnection and a practice of compassion.

Understanding is an inclusive activity. When we understand, it is difficult to marginalize or otherwise exclude the other. In a classroom and in a school, children quickly notice who is on the outside and who is on the inside. Friendships develop,

cliques form, and some students become outcasts because of their ability, their attitudes, their actions, their looks or family, or intangibles that are harder to name (e.g., cooties). Marginalization and scapegoating serve a purpose with social Darwinism as the backdrop. They reduce our own anxiety and allow us to demonize the other in order to make ourselves feel more right and righteous, or at least part of the in-group. Can we develop a classroom culture in which no one is left out or left behind academically or otherwise, one in which we share responsibility for the members of our group, in which the *modus operandi* is something other than social Darwinism? If we can not do this in the classroom, we most certainly can not expect to do it in the world outside.

When we center on understanding, our attitudes and actions achieve an organizing principle that transcends purely individual accomplishment and recognition as the goal. Community, cooperation, and even communion can join with appropriate competition and necessary individuality.

And ultimately, as teachers and administrators, we teach who we are. If we demonstrate compassion and love, and our ability to meet one another and our lessons with appreciation, we help children cultivate their own heart and ultimately their own wisdom.

Portions of this article have been excerpted from the book *From Information to Transformation: Education for the Evolution of Consciousness* by Tobin Hart (Peter Lang, 2001). Used by permission of Peter Lang Publishing.

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