



9-1-1986

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Recommended Citation

Carini, Patricia F. (1986) "Reflections on Childhood and Change," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/tl-journal/vol1/iss1/3>

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Reflections on Childhood and Change

by
Patricia F. Carini

I am going to open these reflections on childhood and change by identifying what I believe to be a central--maybe the central--task confronting us as the 20th century enters its final decades. I am going to do that by referring to an insight provided by the thinker whose thought and works may fairly be said to have had the most dramatic impact on our particular lives and times--I refer, of course, to Albert Einstein, the theory of relativity and the splitting of the atom.

The insight offered by him in response to his own work, and to which I refer, is the often quoted statement that when we split the atom, everything changed--except our ways of thinking. And that I believe places our task before us and with some urgency: the need to change our ways of thinking. I believe that to commence that task requires that we consider the power of thought itself to make changes in the actual world, as Einstein's thought did, and to take seriously the responsibilities our capacity for thinking confers upon us. And further, I believe that we need to explore what it means that we all do think--and not just some of us; that is, I am suggesting we need the widest and most inclusive thought possible about thinking, not as a specialist study, but as activity in which we are all, regardless of era, age, or culture, engaged and for which we are all responsible.

The approach I am going to offer as fruitful for this reconsideration of thinking--and it is doubtless only one among many--is "works." By "works" I mean not only major or seminal ones like Einstein's or those of other recognized scientists, artists, and philosophers, but also the more ordinary kinds of "works"--letters and diaries, handwork, household constructions--projects of all kinds done by all kinds of people. In fact, I am entertaining, and asking you to entertain, as "works"

*"When we
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anything that bears the imprint of human hand and mind.

I want to stress, too, that since the purpose of such a study is to understand thinking as a human activity, it cannot be undertaken only through the specialized disciplines to which a "work" might ordinarily be assigned--as Einstein's would be to physics. Rather, this study must be undertaken by all of us in a common effort to learn more about ourselves and the workings of the human mind and consciousness. Here I treat "works," small or large, as artifacts attesting to the human impulse to make, to build and to narrate our lives--from time immemorial to the present moment.

There, I will try through this talk to illustrate,

- how we might approach "works" broadly as the workings of the human mind;
- how works arouse further thoughts and thinking and, therefore, how thought builds on thought;

and most importantly,

- how the access to "works" provides a common ground from which to re-think together our powers of thought.

"This study must be undertaken by all of us in a common effort to learn more about ourselves and the workings of the human mind and consciousness."

I am going to do this by exploring some "works." I have alluded to Einstein's only to suggest how his response to his own works points a direction for our thought: to re-think thinking. I will explore next in some detail a small "work" written by a ten-year-old girl called (Iris), the parentheses indicating a pseudonym; a poetic dialogue that itself addresses change, time, and thinking. My next step will be to describe how this "work" prompted me to think of other works; in this instance, works of adult poets also addressed to these same issues. I will conclude, in light of these considerations, with some thoughts on education.

Now to the task. It is not accidental that I choose first to approach the issue of change and changes in thinking through a child's work. First of all, I want to be sure that when I later lay out ideas on thinking and changes in thinking that it is quite clear that I am not talking about some specialized intellectual activity which only some people do or understand. Starting with a piece of writing by a ten-year-old girl is helpful in this respect.

Then, too, the piece I have chosen, called "The conversation between Now and Past," is especially apt

for our purposes because it brings the ideas of change and time to bear on events and issues in the real world that have very real effects on our lives: war and threat of ultimate destruction. This is useful since I do want also to talk in actual terms about how our thinking might change with respect to these threats.

Now I am aware that (Iris') dialogue, and especially the response that I will make to it, does require further introduction, but I want first to read the piece aloud, then following that reading I will talk a little about the writer, the circumstances surrounding the dialogue's composition, and the approach I will use in responding to this work.

(This is the piece.)

The conversation between Now and Past [Erased and rewritten to fit on one line]

"Hello, Now," said Past. ["Past" was first written "then"; it was erased and "Past" was substituted.]

"Hello, Then," said Now.

"I wish that I had such great inventions like you," said Past.

"Well, my People have made something to destroy both of us. So...I wish my People were like your People."

"Well, what is this something."

"This something is a nuclear bomb."

"How much power does this bomb have."

"Enough to blow up half the world and kill what is left of it and also kill us."

"How can we stop this."

"I'm afraid we can't."

"Are you sure."

"Yes. I am."

"You mean the only way for this to stop is for the People to not want war."

"Yes."

"That's not fair."

"I know, but there is nothing for us to do."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Now, while you are mulling that over, I will describe the writer a little and say a few words about the setting in which the piece was written. As mentioned earlier, the writer was ten years old when she wrote this piece. She attends the Prospect School in North Bennington, Vermont; a school founded two years ago by several like-minded persons, including me. Neither the dialogue form nor the subject-matter was assigned. However, the piece was most probably written during a regularly scheduled writing period. It has not been edited; that is, the typescript is faithful to the form, punctuation, and spelling used by the writer. The school is for children from all walks of life; (Iris') circumstances and her aptitudes are, of course, unique as are the circumstances and aptitudes of each of us. She is not, however, according to some scale of measurement or other external criterion, what is referred to these days as "gifted"; nor does she, by her teachers' observations, stand out among her peers. She is, as the poetic dialogue evidences, a capable person, and a person capable of thought.

The dialogue came to my attention in the context of a total collection of (Iris') writing and art works that numbers approximately 1200 pieces and spans, to date, six years of her school life. This also is not unusual in that the school has made a practice of saving any works produced by the children that are not taken home. As a staff we give attention on a regular basis to individual works and collections in order to better understand children's particular interests and the larger categories of thought to which these interests refer.

Now, in terms of my response to the piece, let me say first what I won't do. I will not, for example, attempt to address what (Iris) intended or what she would say if you asked her what she meant or point to any external set of experiences which might appear to explain her choice of subject matter or the context in which it appears. Neither will I speak of this work as an extension of her psyche, whether as morbid preoccupation or as the workings of youthful genius. And, finally, I won't dismiss the thought expressed as not really being there because a child wrote the piece.

Now, I want to extend that last comment a bit. Of course, like you, I can distinguish a mature work from a child's--or at least, usually I can, and am in general persuaded that I am able to do so. However, acknowledging that distinction, I am also persuaded that the child's voice deserves to be heard for the perspective it offers with the same attentiveness as we hear an adult; not because the perspectives are wholly coincidental, but precisely because the difference is instructive.

To offer a brief illustration of that difference, I would point out that the child, among other things, has the advantage of a relative freedom from preconceptions and piousness that often strikes to the heart of the matter; such as the pointed observation that the emperor has no clothes. Alternatively, the adult, among other things, has the advantage of knowledge and articulated frameworks of thought that allow the flexible entertainment of possibilities that can lead to reasoned and responsible judgments. While acknowledging that these perspectives are distinguishable, and in important ways, I want also to stress a larger and prior condition of our human consciousness which unites them: We are each and all, child or adult, constrained to make some sense and order of what we call "life"; here, there are no exceptions, and in this, if we are attentive, we are all, regardless of age, status or culture, understandable to each other. But more than that, because of the differences among us, we have interesting and instructive things to say to each other.

*"The child's voice
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adult."*

Therefore, and here I turn to what I will do, my response to the piece will treat it as a serious work; that is, a working of the human mind and thus an access to thought. In a manner of speaking, I will treat the piece itself as a mind that will, given the attention of another mind--my own--disclose a few of the thoughts it is thinking. What I will do in practice is to think aloud to the dialogue and invite you to entertain my thoughts in company with its and with your own. In this way, I hope by a concrete example to illustrate how importantly and interestingly "works" bring us to think, individually and collectively. More incidentally, and largely by allusion, I will refer to a method of reflection for entering into and describing "works." However, since that reflective-descriptive process, which has been developed at the Prospect Center since about 1974, will be carried out and demonstrated in the workshops following this talk, I will not attempt to explicate it in the abstract.

Now, there are many emphases that might be given in a response to this poetic dialogue--and several

pretty bleak ones. For example, the notion of killing time--"...to blow up half the world and kill what is left of it and also kill us."--is certainly grim enough. Contributing to that emphasis, the solution proffered by Past to this possibility in the form of a question (but not punctuated as such) is phrased in the negative: "You mean the way for this to stop is for the People to not want war."

Continuing in this vein, the solution is prefaced by Now's assertion that they--Now and Past--are powerless; that is, by implication neither the knowledge possessed in the immediate present, nor recourse to memory and history can save the day. In effect, time has run out. If this line of thought is pursued to the conclusion of the poem, that is, in a manner of speaking, precisely what occurs: Past and Now bid each other farewell and, like the gods of yore, exit--leaving the matter at hand to "the People."

That is one emphasis, and it calls attention to the content and a few of its possible connotations. There are, of course, other emphases that might be given. For example, this piece is just what the title says it is: a conversation. It is all voice. The dialogue alternates with precision and clarity between time personified, but personified as larger than life powers who possess both people and possessions. That suggestion of separate domains, occupied by Past and Now as geographic locations or principalities, underscores the indifference to the spatial location in which this dialogue is taking place. It could be occurring anywhere or nowhere.

Staying with its vocal character, the tone of the discourse is distinctly conversational, every day, matter-of-fact--even casual; somewhat akin to the tone and quality of exchange when acquaintances meet on the street. There is, for example, to my ear a pleasantly familiar or informal twist to the greeting: "Hello, Now"/"Hello, Then." Past commences the exchange, as if he (or she?) has been noting and mulling over the wonders of a time that has passed him by. Past speaks wishfully and also admiringly or even enviously of Now's "great inventions." Now's response is also wishful, and in part, a disclaimer. While Past attributes the inventions to Now, Now attributes them to "my People." Because what the people have now made can destroy present and past and the world, Now wishes that "my People" were like Past's People. In spite of that wish, we are left in no doubt that the power to control these events has passed irrevocably from the saving grace of time into the people's hands. Times have changed--and so has time itself.

When Past protests against this change--this irrevocable turning point in the affairs of time--it is in the idiom of childish protest: "That's not fair." That is, it's not fair that the rules changed in this game. It's not fair that I am not treated with the consideration that I deserve or given a voice in this decision. The child voice echoing through this phrase addressed as it is to solemn and monumental events over which the child, no more than time itself, has control, moves me. It also lends validity to the piece by its trueness to the child's own voice and experience.

But then there are other implications and emphases. There is the formal and yet musical tempo of the piece that is a function of variation in line length and inflection within lines. In counterpoint to that melodic structure, there is the unrelenting logic of Now's argument, stated as it is, flatly and matter-of-factly. Matter-of-factness is underscored by the "mistaken" punctuation of questions so that they read as declarative sentences; a mistake that is just a trifle surprising in a piece that demonstrates quite a sophisticated grasp of these conventions. Witness, for example, that ellipsis notation in line 6.

There is, further, a conciseness to the piece and sense of placement or fit that is aesthetically pleasing. The style is also spare; adjectives are minimal and the speakers once introduced speak in their own recognizable voices without such further conventions of written dialogue as "Past asked," "Now replied..." However, emphasis is given to certain words by the use of capitals in other than conventional places--notably, and consistently, the noun "People."

Then there are choices of words. For example, in the original, as annotated in the typescript, the opening line was first written as "Hello, Now/Said Then." To my ear, there is an asymmetrical rightness to the writer's correction which substitutes Past for Then in this line and so saves the passage from the formality of a perfectly parallel structure. The variation also highlights the familiar ring of Now and Then, with its connotations of "every once in awhile we get together or chance to meet on the street and pause for a moment to catch up on the news."

Interestingly enough, present is never substituted for Now as "then" is on one occasion for Past. I note that Now is wholly unambiguous and carries a greater immediacy than Present since it focuses it to this minute--right now. In a manner of speaking, Now has all the facts, knows all the answers, holds all the cards. However, even allowing for the temporal ambiguity of "Then" in its single appearance, the future is not personified as Past and Now are, nor is it directly addressed in any other way. It is as if Past and Now have no claim on it. The only path or way still open, and opening toward the future depends on "the People." The future is theirs.

Here I return to the negative construction--"for the People to not want war." It is apt here and more than that: for it is here, in this phrase, that the piece takes, for me, a strange or unfamiliar turn, and begins to do as the poet Howard Nemerov suggests that a poem sometimes does, to think deeply. There is no glib recourse to "wanting peace" with its easy overtones of rest and quiet; no cute writing about flowers and rainbows. Instead, there is that austere negative, suggesting an austere discipline: to not want war, to actively not prefer it. If I were here to follow through on the next step that Nemerov

suggests for conversing with a poem, we would in fact stop at this point, to think that phrase--and I stress to think, not about it, but to think it: that is, to let the phrase sink in on us as we sink in on it in order that it might raise up its own images and meanings. I'm not going to do that or elaborate on it, but only suggest that sometime we might each take say two or three minutes to try that: to think "for the People to not want war." Here I touch on this notion briefly to suggest the use of a phrase--this or others--as a divining rod to mind that reveals it to be quite a lot more than the sum of its analytic powers.

Now you may with justification chide me for over-reading this piece, and of hanging heavy philosophical wash on a slender poetic line. Or even, with this last suggestion, of playing fast and loose with reason. I am mindful of these dangers. I do want, therefore, to point out that whatever emphases my responses have given to the piece and however erroneously, its meaning remains open and altogether ambiguous, just as the writer's intentions remain mysterious. That it stirs and evokes not only my interest and intellect but my feelings and imagination is all that is incontrovertible--and in that respect, the work stands on its own merits: A work, a product of the human imagination that moves other humans. But let me insist, too, that by the very fact that it evokes my attention and responses, the piece also invites yours, and that marks it as understandable among us--not explainable, perhaps, but altogether meaningful: a datum of human experience, something to think about, discuss and consider. Something then that provokes thought and mind.

If time and format allowed, we could indeed do together with this piece what a group of us, in fact, did do--describe it carefully and collectively to determine the coincidence of meaning it evoked among us and to disclose the patterns of content and structure that lead to and support that coalescence of meaning. We might even try Nemerov's exercise of thinking that phrase. Given even more time, we could look at this one piece as it stands in relation to the body of works, some 1200 pieces, produced by (Iris) since her entry into the school at age five.

We cannot do that, neither can I take the time to myself place before you some of the relationships of this piece to the larger body of work, although I do call your attention to the brief statement of context which appears on the back of the typescript. Here you will note among other things that while time and the unknown are recurrent themes, the motif of nuclear war is not frequently employed in their exploration, nor does it come up with any degree of frequency in other contexts.

II

Now what I hoped to illustrate by thinking aloud in response to (Iris') dialogue is this: that thought invites thought and so resists isolation; it travels, and sometimes in unexpected directions. Not surprisingly then, the thoughts being thought in (Iris') piece started in me a train of thought, this time not directly related back to it--although that phrase "for the People to not want war" continues to haunt me--but leading on from it.

And here I ask your indulgence and company as I pursue the train of thought it evoked for me. It began with the strong sense that I had read (or seen?) in some adult work, thoughts or meanings that were remarkably similar. Because what

I was sensing as related is, in fact, a poem I know quite well, Conrad Aiken's "A Letter from Li Po," a passage from it crossed my mind quite soon after reading (Iris') piece. It was not the specific passage that was being awakened in my memory by (Iris') writing, but it was close enough to send me back to the book. There I found not only the passage that was teasing me just beyond mental reach, but as often happens, others. One of these, one that I had read many times, speaks as (Iris) does of Past and Now, but here the future, so minimally entertained by her, completes a cycle in which nature's seasons are intertwined with poetry and music.

*The timelessness of time takes form in rhyme:
the locust and the lotus tree rehearse
a four-form song, the quatrain of the year:
not in the clock's chime only do we hear
the passing into the future of the now:
but in the alteration of the bough
time becomes visible, becomes audible,
becomes the poem and the music too:
time becomes still, time becomes time, in rhyme. (1; 909)*

It seems unthinkable that a cycle so full in its sweep, so encompassing of our lives and works could be broken. Yet the passage that I was seeking, the one (Iris) reminded me of, thinks that thought of breaking, and thinks it through the very interwovenness of thought and mind with world and time:

*The landscape and the language are the same.
And we ourselves are language and are land,
together grew with Sheepfold Hill, rock, and hand,
and mind, all taking substance in a thought
wrought out of mystery: birdflight air
predestined from the first to be a pair:
as in the atom, the living rhyme
invented her divisions, which in time,
and in the terms of time, would make and break
the text, the texture, and then all remake.
This powerful mind that can by thinking take
the order of the world and all remake,
will it, for joy in breaking, break instead
its own deep thought that thought itself be dead?*

I am going to read the last bit again.

*This powerful mind that can by thinking take
the order of the world and all remake
will it, for joy in breaking, break instead
its own deep thought that thought itself be dead? (1; 913)*

That thought--the power of thinking that can all remake--brings me back to the observation from Einstein in the introduction to these remarks: that when we split the atom everything changed--except our ways of thinking.

In that observation, he puts his finger on what is at the root of all this talk about time--a feeling, a strong sense that things are changing. Or maybe, and this is a deeper intuition, that everything did change in some ultimate way

at some moment when we had our backs turned--except us, who were left behind in the dust. Here (Iris') conversation echoes back through these adult reflections --the gods have left, time has run out, and it's up to us, the people now, to change our thinking; or, as she says, "for the People to not want war."

Now, that's an interesting way to put it, to place the emphasis on wanting-- that is, on desire, or if I might put it in these terms, to direct our attention to preference and valuing rather than to action or to a problem-solving intelligence. And, indeed, it can be persuasively argued that we have used our talents for action and invention to their utmost limits--and perhaps beyond. Who could not be dazzled by our "great inventions?" Something in this thought seemed headed in the right direction. It seemed useful at least to ask how thinking can include valuing, not as a system of codified values nor as vague sentiments, but as a positive and active force. It has occurred to me as I have grown older that wishes all too often do come true--not necessarily in the ways expected, but nonetheless recognizably. That observation made me wonder about the seemingly negative solution offered by Past: maybe to not want war passionately enough, to actively not prefer it, is not as futile as it might, at first glance, appear. It would certainly lead one, in any event, to look very hard at the something one didn't prefer, the something that one abhorred.

As I was pondering these thoughts, it happened that another set of circumstances led me to re-read Howard Nemerov's three lectures, titled "What Was Modern Poetry?" It had not been lost on me in previous readings of these remarkable essays that the burden of the thought is addressed to Change, and particularly the one Nemerov refers to as the Great Change. The change referred to by this phrase is the Scientific Revolution wrought by Galileo's enormous imaginative leap and consolidated by the mighty company of thinkers--Kepler, Giordano Bruno, Newton--who refashioned our view of the physical universe and by this changed interpretation laid the foundation for the "great inventions"--and for other changes. In the essay, other big changes--the departure of legend and myth as active forces in thought, the Renaissance, and the Great War--are each discussed with the aid of some singularly beautiful poems in the light of the Great Change and in order to understand their implications for poetry and the writing of it.

Now the influences that affect the writing of poetry in our times may not appear to be altogether earthshaking for those of us who don't write it, and who, if we read it, may not altogether trust our grasp of the poems--let alone the intellectual and critical pyro-technics that flare in their wake. But for several reasons I found Nemerov's reflections on change coalescing inwardly with my thoughts on (Iris') conversation, on Aiken's poem, and with acute specificity on Einstein's implied exhortation: that if everything has changed then we must change, too--and change by changing our thinking: not what we think about but the very ways we do it. What leapt out at me in this re-reading of the essays was not the impeccable and balanced description of the alterations in human experience gradually felt as alterations of world view as the Scientific Revolution took its historical place in consciousness; nor was it the brilliant and moving account of the utter discontinuity of Western experience rendered by the cataclysm of the Great War. This time, with other thoughts of change of mind, it was a statement that for Nemerov is rather dry and abstract, that caught my attention: it is this,

The Great Change is not historical only, but primarily metaphysical and psychological; something we have a certain experience of under today's historical conditions, and yesterday's, but also something we should have experienced, though in other terms perhaps, whenever and wherever we lived, a change that can become historical, in fact, only because it is first the experience of every individual at all times. (6; 190, emphasis mine)

The phrasing, dry in abstraction from the context, was filled with significance as I read it following as it did from a sensitive rendering of Richard Wilbur's poem, "Merlin Enthralled," in which, as Merlin is lulled into a last sleep, the enchantments fade, the world changes, and Arthur's legendary strength fades. Nemerov describes it thus:

And as he (Merlin) ceased from dreaming into deeper and simple sleep, we are to understand, a certain great reality departed from the world because he no longer had the world in mind. The poem ends with Arthur's being made aware that this is so, though not of why it is so.

Here, Nemerov quotes the final eight lines:

*Fate would be fated; dreams desire to sleep.
This the forsaken will not understand.
Arthur upon the road began to weep
And said to Gawen Remember when this hand*

*Once haled a sword from stone; now no less strong
It cannot dream of such a thing to do.
Their mail grew quaint as they clopped along.
The sky became a still and woven blue. (6; 189)*

I am going to take the time to read Nemerov's interpretation of this loss, this change, but before I do I want to add to the setting of Wilbur's poem in legend, the setting of Aiken's poem in landscape and rhyme, the setting of (Iris') conversation in voice and time, and the setting of Einstein's observation in the splitting atom; all these were present in my mind as I read these lines:

In Wilbur's poem the magic that Merlin did is seen to be imagination, relating to will, to dream, to spirit, with their incredible power of overcoming the visible and natural world as it were by poetizing it full of spirits. When Merlin fades from the world, the supernatural entities fade also, leaving bewilderment behind. For these supernatural entities may be easily derided and mocked into nonexistence by the skeptical under their traditional names, such names as Jehovah, Lucifer, Michael, Ahriman and so on; but at some peril to all of us, for if those names are fictitious names, and they are, they nevertheless name perfectly real forces able to produce perfectly real and spectacular results in what we call the real world. The names presently given to such beings--mind, spirit, will, soul, imagination, intellectual light--are also under the attack of a skeptical reasoning power minded to daylight alone and entire; (6; 190)

What I want to underscore here is the bold assertion that thought conceived to include mind, spirit, will, soul, imagination, and intellectual light can have effects--"real and spectacular results in what we call the real world." Bold, because we have routed our powers. Steeped in a climate of skepticism, we have grown accustomed to the reduction of thought to cognition, memory to recall, feeling to affect, will to motivation, imagination to inventiveness, and aspiration to ambition.

While a reduced vision would have it so, I share Nemerov's belief in the force and efficacy of thought, and the powers of mind that are ours to reclaim; just as I believe that (Iris') intuition that "to not want war" can be a step toward that reclamation of the power of mind that "can by thinking take/the order of the world and all remake." Indeed, that is what Einstein did do--and not, I note, by invention--but by a leap of imagination. To all remake by thought. That is power indeed, and Nemerov quoting another man of letters, Erich Heller, cautions us thus about the use of such power: "Be careful how you interpret the world; it is that way." (5; 205)

Having got this far in my musings, I found I had no trouble going along with this general line of thought. In fact, many other thinkers who put forward views very close to these began to crowd to mind; some like Nemerov and Aiken are poets or artists, but others are philosophers, scientists and mathematicians (Whitehead, Eddington, Lewis Thomas).

Back to Einstein. How then, if this is our dilemma, do we change thinking--our ways of doing it? How do we, in response to the changes wrought by the "great inventions," themselves the product of our minds, re-think mind? Clearly, there are risks in this undertaking. If I were to rephrase Erich Heller's warning, it might be to add this, "Be careful how you interpret mind. It is that way." According to this reasoning, if we conceive mind, and believe it to be, a calculator or computer, in short, a machine, it will be, effectively, that--a self-fulfilling model of the machines it originated. And there is plenty of evidence that we have traveled a long way toward confirming this picture of mind and thought--and that it is effectively coloring our views of ourselves. Indeed, I would hold that this self-fulfillment is instrumental in the reduction Nemerov calls to our attention which renders memory to be synonymous with a data bank and intellect or thinking to be synonyms for logical analysis and problem-solving. But this is happily only the case with important qualifications--else there would be no Nemerov or Aiken or Wilbur writing poetry and calling our attention to the light of intellect and the power of thought that can all things remake, including thought itself. And even more importantly, there would be no vocabulary or thought for a ten year old (Iris) to draw upon to call our attention to the starting point of these ruminations--to the power of preference and value: "for the People to not want war."

Let it suffice to say that something in us does not accept the limitations that we ourselves seek to impose on our own powers. There is, it seems to me, always a saving grace--a muchness of thought that breaks through whatever boundaries it sets upon itself. And it may be, that in the re-thinking of thinking, that this surplus, this vague intuition of moreness is as good a place to start that process as any. The more so, because it brings us face to face with a habit of mind that reduces the world by dividing it cleanly into opposites. It is the habit aptly identified by Paul Fussell as gross dichotomizing, a dichotomizing that obliterates the gray areas, the ambiguities, that is the enemy, to

borrow a phrase from G. M. Hopkins, of all things "pied and dappled." Fussell attributes that potency of dichotomies in our perceptions and thoughts to the Great War.

What we can call gross dichotomizing is a persisting imaginative habit of modern times, traceable, it would seem, to the actualities of the Great War. "We" are all here on this side; "the enemy" is over there. "We" are individuals with names and personal identities; "he" is a mere collective entity. We are visible; he is invisible. We are normal; he is grotesque ... (4; 75)

Fussell continues to this implication,

The physical confrontation between "us" and "them" is an obvious figure of gross dichotomy. But less predictably the mode of gross dichotomy came to dominate perception and expression elsewhere, encouraging finally what we can call the modern versus habit: one thing opposed to another, not with some Hegelian hope of synthesis involving a dissolution of both extremes (that would suggest "a negotiated peace," which is anathema), but with a sense that one of the poles embodies so wicked a deficiency or flaw or perversion that its total submission is called for. (4; 79)

Surely, this destroying thought is one worth re-thinking--the thought of some utterly other, not human as we are, but a stranger to the human affections and woes that we so unquestioningly assume to be the condition of our own lives. And, let this one habit be recognized for all it carries in its train: racism, isolationism, apartheid, classism, civil war, holy wars, and, indeed, every act and thought that is guided by a single vision, that over clarifies, that chooses affirmation of its own existence and influence by the path of destruction and obliteration.

That singleness of outlook lurks in every action and thought that says in whatever terms, you are not and may not be in order that I and mine may flourish; that is, in every action and thought which denies that common earthbound ground of our humanity which dictates that for each of us without exception there is a personal world. A personal world--that is, a world woven of desire and aspiration, articulated in vivid moments, variegated by accomplishment, punctuated by loss, muted by grief, and oriented ever and always by the lodestar of relationships with others--those others experienced intimately and those remote in time and space, whose stories and lives, by virtue of the light they may shed, are blended textually and texturally with our own. In short, a common ground, within which differences among us invite an adventure of the mind and spirit, in which nuance spices and complements, and in which the wholly unfamiliar, the strange, demands of us the open-ness, the trust, and active effort to embrace it that is the crown of our imagination and our only claim to freedom.

But breaking a habit is not achieved by bare decision--nor even by recognizing and acknowledging its evil effects upon us. Habits serve us well and fulfill very real needs, the more so as they offer--or appear to offer--an element of certainty in an uncertain world. As Owen Barfield observes, "...habit has a will of its own...(and) just willing yourself to get rid of it by behaving differently will not work." (2; 75-76) He suggests that "the only effective way is deliberately to form a new habit at variance with the old one." (2; 75)

I choose to emphasize for my purposes the words "at variance with"; that is, not "in opposition to." To break the habit of dividing the world into opposing forces, let us actively think, effortfully think its complimentary thought: the world and humanity in its manifold multiplicity, a unity that everywhere and through all time showers us with the wonders of its novelty, its variations, its diverse effects. Let us reclaim that wonder, that richness of diverse expressiveness that is human-ness, that thought "that can all remake," in full consciousness of its cumulative power--not only its dividing power.

III

An act of reclamation. An act of imagination. An act of memory. Let us consider our task to be the re-making of mind to gather within it its many categories, its many visions. Let us qualify the partial vision of mind and humanity as ascending or progressing, progressing upward in steady steps or cubits, with a complementary vision of width and reach--an encompassing whole. Let us consider change not as measured intervals only but as blends and variations and also immeasurable leaps. What changes has its own slowness and constancy and also its soaring moments, in which, at the moment--between blinks of the eye as it were--all is transformed and shines in a new light. The transforming leap--a leap-like Galileo's or Einstein's--occurs as it does and when it does and not from design. But however mysteriously, the leap is from the ground, a prepared ground, and not from out of the blue.

And now I reach to the heart of it, the innermost place to which (Iris') conversation led me: "for the People to not want war"...for the People to change ...for the People to extend beyond their cleverness and inventiveness...for the People to become conscious of their preferences; or rather, of the choice and power inherent in wanting, in preferring.

Here my thoughts turn to Whitehead and his understanding that the original and fundamental datum of human experience, universally experienced, is not fact, or sensation, or thing, or concept, but a value-experience, a sense of worth or enjoyment. He says in this respect,

Our enjoyment of actuality is a value-experience. Its basic expression is--Have a care, here is something that matters! Yes--that is the best phrase--the primary glimmering of consciousness reveals, Something that matters...Instead of fixing attention on the bodily digestion of vegetable food, it catches the gleam of the sunlight as it falls on the foliage. It nurtures poetry. Men are the children of the Universe, with foolish enterprises and irrational hopes. A tree sticks to its business of mere survival; as does an oyster with some minor divergencies. In this way, the lifeaim at survival is modified into the human aim at survival for diversified worth-while experience. (8; 159, 42-43)

By this inversion, which places worth or importance at the base of human experience rather than sensation or object properties, Whitehead points to the impulse to value as that which extends us beyond ourselves and underlies our predisposition for a communal mode of life. My pain is my own as are my digestive processes. But my experience of worth, what catches my eye, what arouses caring, sympathy and attention calls me into a world which is peculiarly human. Human in that it is shaped by aspirations, and ideals, and is not then merely

subject to the laws of cause and effect but, to its peril and its glory, lends itself to purposes, convictions, and passionate beliefs.

This inversion, then, has far reaching implications for what it means to be human, to be a subject interpreting and affecting events. Objectivity is concentration on the "facts" to the exclusion of their evocative value. Science seeks causes in the physical realm and strives for understanding of large average effects. In the human world, the subjective or personal element is the unity of the world through which value, importance and purpose is understood. These are the binding elements. Every "fact" has here to be grasped as a process amidst processes. We, as humans, contribute history and religious impulse to the world factors. We do that. There is no history, little novelty and no unity of ideals without us.

I think, going a little further with this, that it may be fair to say that purpose is to history as cause is to science. Purposes are large and visible through enactment in the actuality of the world. Unlike private motives or intentions, which I understand to give emphasis to the individuality of experience and thought, purpose is shareable, communal and social.

Thus, purposes inspired by ideals and values, unite people in common efforts and are beacons that shine across generations and epochs. Moses' purpose to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt was not merely a private intention, personally motivated, it was a social act that united a people; this can also be said of Martin Luther King or Gandhi. That, of course, doesn't mean that purposes are "good" or their outcomes predictable. Nevertheless, purposes, unlike motives, always extend beyond themselves. They aim at effects on a larger social context, whether that context is political, religious, or artistic.

Another way to say this is to say that purposes have value-intensity. It is, it seems to me, the essence of human-ness that we are teleological: aiming at ideals, aspiring to be what we are not, and so tragic and also comic. We are never what we might be and yet always more than what we are taken to be in any account that reduces us to our behaviors or our motives. As I see it, we are always value-embodied, and never more so than when we deny to value its existence and efficacy. According to this line of thought, the acme and heart of subjectivity is a refined, attuned and differentiated apprehension of value, purposes and ideals, especially as these are made available through human "works." In the sense in which I am using this term "works" are large, social, and common to all phases and conditions of life.

As I understand it, the shareableness of "works" among us--Einstein's, Aiken's, Nemerov's or (Iris)--our understanding of them and the joy and edification they bring is only possible through the broadly human impulse to seek worth and novelty. By your works, I participate in your vision, not because it is my own, but because I have also a vision, aslant of yours, but comparable to it in this: I, like you, strive to make sense and meaning of experience and so to achieve a degree of certainty, permanence, and control with respect to the rush and flow of events, and of equal importance, to add to those events as given, a shape and an interpretation that is peculiarly my own by impressing my value-imprint upon them. It is thus that we enhance, qualify and enlarge each other--and actuality itself.

And so to a conclusion: that the impulse to value, to prefer, to seek worth is educable and so capable of change. That is, because we are capable of valuing, we are able, and more than that, impelled to go beyond the immediacies of our sense experiences and mere survival to seek, as Whitehead suggests, a diversified worth-while experience. In other words, the anatomy of valuing reveals an essentially outward impulse that opens us to the world, both in what it arouses and what it sets in motion. My point is this: whatever the particular that evokes it, that something calls us from beyond ourselves and simultaneously points beyond itself. Something shines through the event and awakens the spirit, the imagination of the viewer--be it the play of sunlight on the leaves, or a bridge spanning in one courageous arc a mighty river, or the harmonic intricacies of a fugue.

Most fundamentally then, valuing is a boundary-breaker, offering a connection with something wider than ourselves and enlarging to ourselves. In childhood, the impulse to value is emblemized by wonder, in youth by aspiration, and in adulthood by the sense of high purpose. When wonder, aspiration or purposes release us and set us in motion, we are called to seek and to search. Whether that seeking entails physical action or an inward journey of thought, it is an adventure of the human mind in its pursuit of the coherence, meaning and unity of experience. Thus, through its expression in wonder, aspiration and purpose, valuing leads us to create order, to make sense of experience, and, in effect, to create a humanly habitable world.

In the education of the affections and impulse to value, it is no small thing then to know what arouses the child's wonder, the youth's aspirations or the adult's sense of purpose for these are trustworthy guides to preference, to what is cared for and what arouses devotion. And, where caring is, there is also--and not incidentally--the impulse to make, to build, to create "works," to contribute. These thoughts begin to define the educational task.

But there is another side. Valuing because it breaks boundaries and leads beyond ourselves also leaves us peculiarly vulnerable to influences--and so, as noted, educable. But it means, too, that we are open to unhospitable influences or destructive ones. For example, wonder can be titillated or diverted by sheer novelty or sated and dulled by "entertainment." Similarly, aspiration can be blocked from expression, leading on the one hand to self-paralysis and depression or on the other, to a restlessness that seeks an outlet in excitement, speed and thrill-seeking of all kinds. In the same vein, a sense of high purpose which finds no avenues for fulfillment can be reduced to a narrowly-defined self interest which finds expression in a fiercely competitive spirit or in a craving for fame. These thoughts, too, point to dimensions of the educational task; not least of all, it raises the question of what would be demanded of a society which genuinely sought and made room for the contributions of all its members.

It is interesting to note in this respect Whitehead's observation that "The vigour of civilized societies is preserved by the widespread sense that high aims are worthwhile." (7; 288) He then goes on to characterize a vigorous society as possessing a "certain extravagance of objectives;" (7; 288) or, phrased another way, an abundance of possibilities. In a time like ours, when scarcity and the shortage of possibilities are bywords of the society, this observation deserves more than passing attention.

However, what I need to underscore here is that while the kind of education that would address valuing may not be consonant with dominant interests abroad in our society, it is undertakeable and doable. In fact, there are many classrooms here in Philadelphia in which, in spite of almost overwhelming obstacles, teaching responsive to children as bearers of value is a reality. It must, of course, also be acknowledged that, while do-able, such an education is subtle in that it requires a close attentiveness to the child's preferences and aversions as these are visible in wonder and play; to the young person's aspirations and dreams as these are visible in hopes and fears of the future, in friendships and memberships, and in projects freely chosen and conceived; and to the adult's commitments and purposes as these are reflected in vocation, relationships and works.

In another context*, I have sketched the requirements for conducting such an education and posed questions as guides to its implementation. In that sketch I address education to valuing, meaning, choice, purpose and commitment, and caring and affection. I entertain its outcomes according to a wholeness and unity in knowledge--but a unity that is inclusive of the manifold of its diverse expressions and of a subjective experience on the part of the learner. In that experience, discernment, taste, appreciation and discipline are emphasized. As noted in the summary of requirements of such a plan, time is a constant and a major consideration:

- For example, to let valuing occur requires time and the possibility for wonder, recognition and mystery and the opportunity to explore meaning;
- To let meaning occur requires time and possibility for the rich and varied relationships among things to become evident, and for difference to be understood in the light of that relatedness;
- To let choice occur requires time and the possibility for discernment, taste, and perspective to occur;
- To sustain purpose and commitment requires time and the possibility for discipline to occur;
- To facilitate caring and affection requires time and the possibility for appreciation to occur.

To implement this education requires a focus on the person as a valuer, and as a valuer in the world context of things and people. To focus attention in that direction, I would propose as a starting point that we might raise to ourselves as parents and teachers questions of the following order:

- How does this child make his or her presence felt and how does gesture express the child's meaning and feelings?

* Documentation of the 13th Summer Institutes: (Chapter I) "Values in Education & the Child's Impulse to Value"; Patricia F. Carini; The Prospect Center: 1983.

- How is this child disposed toward the world and other people? What does the child care about deeply and how is that caring expressed? What arouses anger, coldness, embarrassment, hurt?
- What situations and circumstances evoke the child's will and allow the child to exercise discipline and care--or, conversely, interrupt the child's energy and will?
- What stories, ideas, and events are remembered, savored, and enacted by the child? What larger "world imagery" is referred to in these memories and enacted in play, writing or drawing?

The specific questions are illustrative, and most likely, others more powerful in their implications can be conceived. However, speaking more broadly now, an education conceived along these lines emphasizes reflection rather than acquisition; evocation, rather than mastery over; purpose and aspiration rather than achievement of narrowly-defined goals; and contribution and productivity rather than excellence. I feel these emphases are important to stress because they have been neglected; they are not, however, to be construed as oppositional to, or a dismissal of, such educational aims as achievement or mastery. By this emphasis, I and other like-minded educators, seek to restore a rightful balance between intellect and spirit.

The aim here is to educate persons to be contributors to society and culture and to be, in Whitehead's term "impressers of value"--in order that we shall not ourselves fall victims to the excesses of our own mental powers: As Edith Cobb points out,

More than anything else, love of nature and love of the child have taught humankind to cultivate mind as well as the garden, to domesticate landscape as well as home and personality. But this thinking belongs to simpler biocultural levels than are allowed for in the present hypnotic attraction for mechanized motion and the conquest of nature. As the environment crumbles and steel and concrete take the place of earth, the spirit may crumble as well. Without the element of spirit, man becomes sheer animal while retaining the cunning of intellect. (3; 74)

Here, I find myself returning for a last time to (Iris') conversation. It was the word "want" in the phrase "to not want war" that directed attention to a re-thinking of thought that would restore the sharp dualities and clean cleavages achieved with such elegance by a problem solving intelligence to the embracing wholeness of mind; a mind inclusive of spirit, memory, will and imagination--and most especially, of that impulse to value which leads us to seek worth and meaning in experience. That re-thinking led us on to a consideration of the broad outlines of an education that would address itself to value, through attention to wonder, aspiration, and purpose. These re-thinkings would seem to open up productive avenues for further discussion.

Nevertheless, I cannot conclude these remarks without one more glance at that deep thought: "for the People to not want war." This, too, points a direction. I believe with the deepest conviction that as much as we must oppose ourselves, politically and morally and with unwavering vigilance, to the waging of war, we must also practice the austere discipline to not want it. That may

seem easy, since we may be inclined to say that to want war is unthinkable, and in a certain sense it is. But to construe the world and its manifold potentials according to a single vision and grossly dichotomous oppositions has to my mind certainly proved itself all too thinkable. And, surely, this habit of thought is more than tangentially related to a war-like, combative posture. As an aside, I would only ask what else is being thought when there is a proclamation of a "war to end wars," or an exhortation "to fight for peace," or when a phrase like "ours is a litigious society," is, even though altogether unpronounceable, a rather common-place phrase? So discipline is needed: to not want war. To break that habit, I have suggested that we must with equal vigor, and by affirmation of faith in ourselves as capable of thought, re-think our human-ness according to its fullest potential. For herein I believe lies the hope of the people: to take full responsibility for the development of a mind which by unifying the light of intellect with spirit, memory, will, imagination, and feeling, can all remake.

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