Neohumanist Educational Futures: Liberating the Pedagogical Intellect

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Tamkang University Press

First published 2006 by Tamkang University in association with Gurukula Press and Metafuture.org.
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Gurukula Press, P. O. Box 879, Maleny, Qld., 4552, Australia. gkpress@gurukul.edu
Metafuture.org, info@metafuture.org, www.metafuture.org.

1. Inayatullah, Sohail, 1958 –. II. Marcus Bussey. III. Ivana Milojević.

ISBN: 986-7385-63-2

Cover illustration: Detail *Kundalini*, 2004, by Marjorie Bussey (mbussey@ozemail.com.au)

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info@metafuture.org, gkpress@gurukul.edu and future@mail.tku.edu.tw

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Introducing Neohumanism

While the roots of neohumanism are certainly based on the spiritual practice of Tantra (from the broader Indic episteme), neohumanism and neohumanistic education is situated best as a transcivilizational global pedagogy.

Neohumanism has both a linear dimension, continuing the progressive evolution of rights that the Enlightenment has given us, and a cyclical dimension, embracing our ancient spiritual traditions, creating thus a turn of the spiral, transcending and including past and present.

Neohumanism thus aims to relocate the self from ego (and the pursuit of individual maximisation), from family (and the pride of genealogy), from geo-sentiments (attachments to land and nation), from socio-sentiments (attachments to class, race and religious community), from humanism (the human being as the centre of the universe) to neohumanism (love and devotion for all, inanimate and animate, beings of the universe).

The chapters

The book itself is divided into five parts.

Chapters by Marcus Bussey, Acharya Vedaprajiananda, Ivana Milojević and Sohail Inayatullah theorize neohumanist education. In these chapters, educational process is set within the context of globalisation and the theoretical domains of critical theory and social futures.

The second part is focused on the spiritual in education. Chapters by Tobin Hart and Marcus Anthony explore the genealogical and epistemic traditions that have defined the spiritual in education and with which neohumanist theory dialogues. A further chapter by Ivana Milojević offers insights into how neohumanism is situated in the discourse of collective violence pedagogy, with specific reference to the relationship of transformative educational practice to both 'hard' and 'soft' versions of religion and constructions of the spiritual.

The third section of the book focuses on particular issues in educational futures. Included are chapters on partnership education by Riane Eisler, social cohesion by Marlene de Beer, speciesism by Helene Pederson, indicators of alternative education by Vachel Miller, the teaching of neohumanist history by Marcus Bussey and Sohail Inayatullah, and finally Peter Hayward and Joseph Voros' role-playing game that provides an experiential sense of the implications of neohumanism for leadership.

Part Four presents two examples of neohumanist education in practice, with a case study by Ivana Milojević of a neohumanistic school and Mahajyoti Glassman's thoughts on how to teach neohumanism.

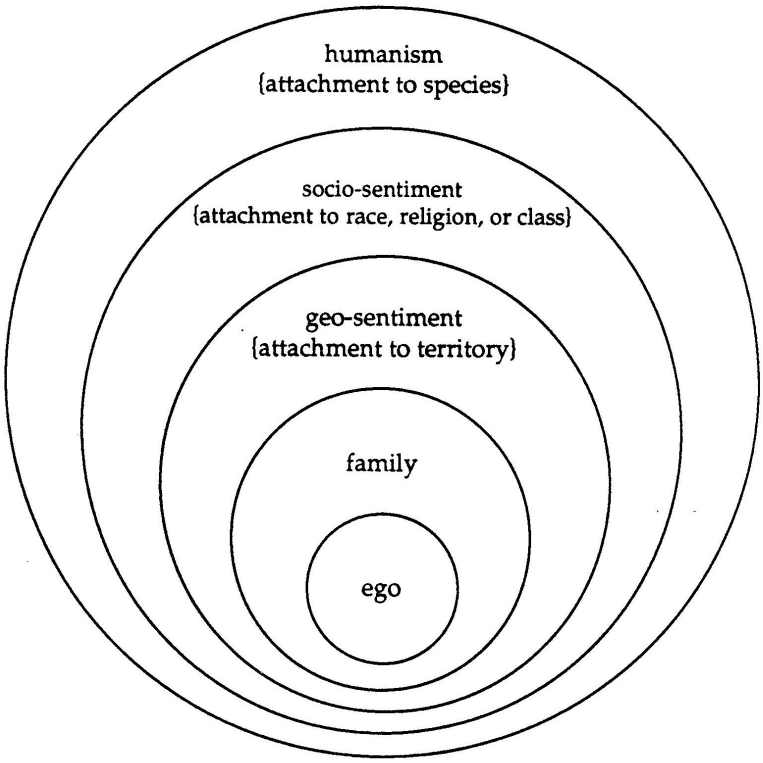
The book concludes on a futures note with an exploration of neohumanist educational scenarios by Sohail Inayatullah.

Interspersed in these parts are short Perspectives by Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, Acharya Shambushivananda, and Acharya Maheshvarananda (interviewing Paulo Freire) and the book concludes with a short set of appendices.

We hope that this book will engage the intellect; however, our intention is that this process of engagement leads to its liberation. As Sarkar wrote many years ago: "*Sa' vidya' ya' vimuktaye*" or "Education is that which liberates". Thank you for joining us on this journey.

neo-humanism

{love and respect for all beings, animate and inanimate, in the universe}



Sarkar's neohumanism: the liberation of the intellect

Chapter 1 Mapping Neohumanist Futures in Education

Marcus Bussey

> *Problems of the future can no longer be ignored: they are part of the present.* Ervin Laszlo
>
> *Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.* Eugène Ionesco
>
> *The body, mind, and self of every individual have the potential for limitless expansion and development. This potentiality has to be harnessed and brought to fruition.* Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar
>
> *… the underlying struggle for our future is not between the conventional polarities of right and left, religion and secularism, or capitalism and communism. Rather, it is between a mounting grassroots partnership resurgence that transcends these classifications and the entrenched, often unconscious, dominator resistance to it.* Riane Eisler[1]

These four quotations, from individuals occupying different cultural spaces, challenge us to live and act reflectively and with a sense of purpose. Each writer represents something significant in the thinking and culture of the twentieth century. Each points to specific concerns that orient our thinking at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Essentially, we are faced with huge issues relating to the environmental, social, economic, and political contexts arising from the human domination of this planet. Neohumanist futures education offers a practical and ethical process to facilitate our engagement as a species seeking transformative skills to educate for tomorrow, today.

Neohumanist futures work

To think about the future is important as it gets us to think about ourselves, our hopes and fears, and the plans we have. As cultures we have a similar relationship with the future. The dreams of the past in many ways inhabit the present:[2] take for example space travel and

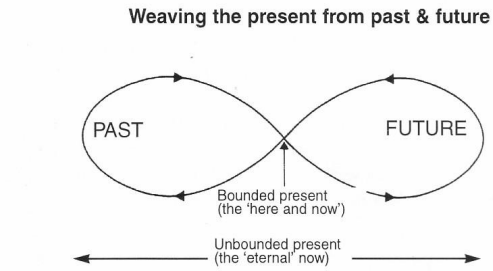
telecommunications. Once such things were the subjects of speculations and imaginative literature, today they are a reality.

Futures is a form of thinking that questions the future in order to help us better see the present.[3] When we do this we come to appreciate our role in the creation of the future, and with this understanding to also actively work towards creating futures that we would wish for future generations. In this way neohumanist futures work *anticipates* through the application of foresight; *critiques* in order to unpack the assumptions and beliefs civilizations and individuals have that implicitly create the future; and *participates* in the emerging reality by engaging with the social and personal dimensions that stamp the future with form and potential.

For those engaged in educational policy, or social policy in general, and also those establishing or working in neohumanist schools, neohumanist futures is about understanding that we have a choice about which future we will live and which future we will bequeath to future generations. With choice, of course, comes responsibility. Also some choices are more illusory than real; we have inherited conditions that require direct action today. The indebtedness of the human condition is such that when we are aware of it and the implications of the atemporal and impersonal relationship that this implies we can only, in good faith, act for the betterment of the human and planetary condition.

To walk the earth lightly, internalising the principal of non-harm, to live gratitude and to work always in the knowledge of our relationship to the physical, organic and human worlds is the heart of neohumanist ethics and underpins all such futures work. Such an ethic is based on the recognition that the human condition is no longer simply the province of human beings. It is, in the strict sense, a neohumanist condition that incorporates past, present and future, and also the planetary context. It opens up educational contexts in which speciesism can be addressed along with other cultural habits arising from the human tendency to view the world as a resource. In sum, the human condition is a spiritual Gaian phenomena.

Figure 1 offers an overview of neohumanist ethics as a basis for futures work in education.

Temporal Context: The atemporality of the human condition			
Neohumanist Ethics	Non-harm	Gratitude	Relationship
Condition	Caring	Indebtedness	Participation

Source: Image from R. Slaughter with M. Bussey[4]

Figure 1: Neohumanist ethics

What empowers and activates this neohumanist sensibility is the cultivation of an impartial love that registers as a spiritual resource rather than as partial or possessive expression of 'natural love'.[5] Love and the spiritual practices that sustain it are central to neohumanist futures work yet they remain in the background, because they are inner personal processes that cannot be legislated. This inner dimension of the human is easily overlooked but is at the heart of an alternative vision of communicative action,[6] one that rests on the intrapersonal, that builds on silence as a valid process and thus embraces as equal all non-linguistic activity rather than privileging intellect and language as the central measure of sentience and consciousness.

Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar sums this up clearly:

> *Neohumanism includes within its scope not only human beings and animate creatures, such as plants and animals, but also all inanimate entities as well, for the scope on neohumanism extends down to the smallest particles of sub-atomic matter…Why should the love and affection of developed human minds be restricted to human beings only?*[7]

The roots of neohumanism

The neohumanist worldview is the result of a fusion of traditions that are rooted in historically different civilisational processes. This fusion has the potential to revitalize the intellectual and ethical orientations inherent in

each of these civilizations, leading in turn to the emergence of a qualitatively new orientation to the social, cultural and ethical dimensions that define meaning and the purpose of human existence.[8]

Neohumanism as a concept was developed to give form to the recognition that we needed a new narrative to provide the inspiration and the tools to transform our selves and our future. It offers a clear methodology that hinges on an activated critical spirituality that complements the critical method that underpins the most proactive and vibrant areas of futures research.

Rooted in a distinctive fusion of Western humanism, and its derivative traditions of Romanticism, socialism and Enlightenment empiricism, with the ancient Indic episteme of Tantra[9] it proposes an holistic view of life that is philosophical in nature but practical in effect. One cannot be a neohumanist just by espousing the philosophy, because at heart neohumanism is an ethical system that actively situates one in the thick of life.

This civilisational fusion brings to neohumanism a flexibility that is well suited to poststructural concerns that acknowledge both depth and discourse as the epistemological underpinnings of human agency and that these concerns are central to any consideration of consciousness. Thus the methodology of neohumanism is scientific in nature but deeply metaphysical in origin, offering as Sohail Inayatullah puts it, "an integration of the rational and the intuitive".[10]

Education for liberation

Neohumanism is best understood in the context of a holistic or spiritual critical pedagogy. Its Tantric roots invoke the Sanskrit motto: *Sa vidya Ya Vimuktaye:* "*Education is that which liberates*". This motto refers to the physical, intellectual and spiritual domains of human life. The mythic world of Tantra, the world of Shiva, Krishna and the battlefield of the Kurukshetra, is a ceaseless flow of energy moving between stagnancy and transformation; liberation in this context is a process as much as a goal and calls upon all to wage a struggle against physical, social and spiritual impediments to the realisation of a just world which fosters both collective and individual potential.

Seen in this light, we but need to change our theoretical and civilisational lens in order to see neohumanist educational theory and practice following in the footsteps of the critical pedagogical tradition. This point can easily be established with reference to the central themes of social justice,

reflective action and a commitment to practical, not theoretical engagement with the real-life issues of teaching *in situ* found in the heart of critical pedagogy.[11]

It is important to realize that a name tells a story and that in the context of critical pedagogy the word 'critical' does not mean to criticize. It means to look beneath the surface of the taken for granted, to question assumptions and to ask the telling questions: 'Who benefits from things as they are?', and of course, 'Who looses?'. As a way of approaching the world it is characterised broadly by its commitments to social justice and universal ethics.[12] As such, the term can only be loosely defined. I like the descriptive definition given by Symes and Preston here:

> *[Critical pedagogy] is an orientation, not a closed paradigm; it is a way of addressing problems, not a set of answers; it is ready to be amended at any time; it is therefore somewhat resistant to precise statement of how it is to be implemented; it is truly 'educational' in the etymological sense of the word, leading out to new and revised forms… Critical pedagogy is committed to engaging social realities (the pragmatic impulse) but it is not to be bound by them, just as it sees no reason to apologize for a visionary dimension (the romantic impulse). Indeed, in the quest to distil from contemporary social theory an adequate basis for education policy and practice, the emphasis on utopian praxis is essential.*[13]

Applied neohumanism

Neohumanism shares this utopian dimension; it is a form of what critical pedagogue Henry Giroux calls "concrete utopianism".[14] Such a vision serves as a catalyst for engagement (praxis), generating the momentum for developing the visionary energy to describe and strive for the 'good life' well lived. Yet critical pedagogy is not the only stream that converges in the neohumanist tradition. There is also a healthy dose of postcolonial critique in which the privileges and oversights of a Eurocentric academic and theoretical tradition are challenged.[15] The fingerprints of feminism can also be seen here as we find the gendered and partial narratives of patriarchy overthrown and new models of thought and action proposed.[16] There is also a poststructural sensibility present that allows the aspiring neohumanist to challenge narrative, seeing it as layered and causal in nature. And beyond the poststructural lies the indigenous sensibility of an ecological and mystical kind. Tantra here is the most potent strand, in the hands of P. R Sarkar it functions almost as an anti-narrative that merges

vidya and *avidya* (knowledge that leads to liberation versus knowledge that leads back into bondage) in a transcendent social theory that weaves human struggle and consciousness into an ever unfolding cosmic drama.

Thus we find that neohumanism is both critical and spiritual, analytic and synthetic, merging as it does the scientific rigor of the West with the integrative embrace of the East. To step beyond the theoretical maelstrom, we find the neohumanist individual bringing together an ethical sensibility, a desire to serve, with a deep awareness of belonging. It is difficult to know if there is an order of appearance, I suspect that they emerge differently according to an individual's personality. What is clear however is that there are different processes available to us that help establish us in the neohumanist way.

There is no doubt that *sadhana*, the Sanskrit term for the 'struggle' associated with the good fight, or a contemplative practice of some kind is essential. Life-style folds into this and becomes a method of its own. Awareness grows out of theoretical immersion in the pool of neohumanist specific material and also in a broadening awareness of the theoretical and historical context of the neohumanist philosophy. Beyond this there is the labour of love, applied neohumanism as service, which instils in us an awareness of body, working with mind and with soul towards a worthy end. The utopic stance of an end worth striving for inspires and generates hope in the hearts of those engaged in developing a neohumanist orientation to life and teaching. Work in itself can be a creative expression but singing, painting and artistic expression of all kinds kindle joy and, when shared with a community of kindred souls, quickens the joy and commitment to go ever deeper.

The critical domain of neohumanism focuses on unpacking the structures that confine and limit us. It does so against a backdrop of universal humanism that challenges the authority of culture, tribe class and nation–state. Neohumanism offers consciousness as an absolute to which we are all working, in the same way as the cultural critic John Ralston Saul described 'practical humanism' as "the voyage towards equilibrium without the expectation of actually arriving there".[17] This journey becomes both the defining feature of our humanity and the driving force behind all ethical activity. In this sense human activity is an ongoing struggle to become more conscious, to go ever beyond the confines of self and custom by a rigorous application of the ethical principals of neohumanism. This self-referentiality, what Iris Murdoch calls "the circular nature of metaphysical argument",[18] may seem dubious until it is placed within the

context of a scientific methodology which saves it from becoming a mere dogma.

In this context, life itself becomes a laboratory in which we test our ethics and, because neohumanism is imbued with the spirit of both West and East, we find in it scope to allow for the extroversial energy of enacted living, the inherent dynamism of the West to explore and question, and the introversial quest, the East's drive to penetrate to the heart of things through a reflective and meditative empiricism, which perpetually seeks to expand human consciousness through inner reflection and the identification of self with a universal stance while putting to the test all received truths through an interior processing of reality in which the body/mind acts as the microcosm of the world.

Mapping the Western roots of neohumanist education

Having established the Tantric context of neohumanism, it is time to turn to the Western traditions with which it can be associated. All traditions are sources of power. This power has shaped and continues to shape human lives—the physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical and spiritual geographies of their existences—all over this planet. Essentially this power rests on its right to define the 'real'. Neohumanist futures stress the importance of understanding and engaging with the metaphors and values that shape traditions. It is these metaphors and values that open or close societies and individuals to change, allowing or disallowing transformation in different areas.

No personal or social 'event' occurs in a vacuum. How schools respond to futures issues, concerns, methods and values depends on where they are situated within the history of ideas. When we look at schooling systems from this perspective we discover a number of traditions. Some are more politically and economically favoured than others both because they support the *status quo* and because they make sense within the context of late capitalist society. This sense making is important because some systems are almost invisible as a result of the dominance of a specific worldview.

Each paradigm hinges on how we define humanity, the purpose of education, and the role of schooling within society. It is important to recognize also that all traditions emerge from recognition of an inherent and powerful defining characteristic of humanity. **Table 1** outlines the major educational traditions that have shaped Western educational discourse.

Table 1: The major educational traditions in Western educational discourse

	Humanist	*Utilitarian*	*Romantic*	*Democratic*	*Green*	*Spiritual*
Form	Liberal	Vocational	Individual	Social	Ecological	Holistic
Metaphor	Mind	Hand	Culture	Contract	System	Spirit
Verb	Imagine	Make	Create	Consent	Connect	Relate
Core Value	Justice	Order	Passion	Freedom	Sustainability	Transcend

The first two columns set the context for the dominant understanding of education in the West. Humanists, who focus on the high culture of civilisations, emphasise the intellectual engagement with products of culture deemed of value: books, music, art, philosophy, mathematics, etc. The interest here is profound but more abstract than practical. Advocates of a utilitarian education on the other hand, claim that we should learn to become effective members of the adult world; and that this effectiveness is measured by our productive capacity in the workforce. The emphasis here is on practical skills and competency in the sciences and mathematics. Much of the intellectual engagement with pure ideas that is honoured by humanists is devalued in this tradition. Within utilitarianism the dignity of labour is often affirmed but in the capitalist context it is usually the economic value of labour that is esteemed. Recent developments in education have witnessed a battle between these two traditions with the utilitarians at the moment gaining the upper hand.

What is clear is that each tradition listed in the table has a different understanding of the child and where authority lies. Each tradition identifies certain human truths and draws on specific histories that have lead us, as a globalizing civilisation, to where we are today. In this sense, each tradition tells an important story: a story that neohumanist educational futures needs to listen to in order to fully engage the human potential.

The question of authority

Looking at authority, where it lies and how it is expressed, helps us understand why education systems function as they do, why there is so much resistance in schools and why concepts such as failure and accountability are so pervasive at present. **Table 2** takes the traditions and identifies sites of authority that determine the context and limit of

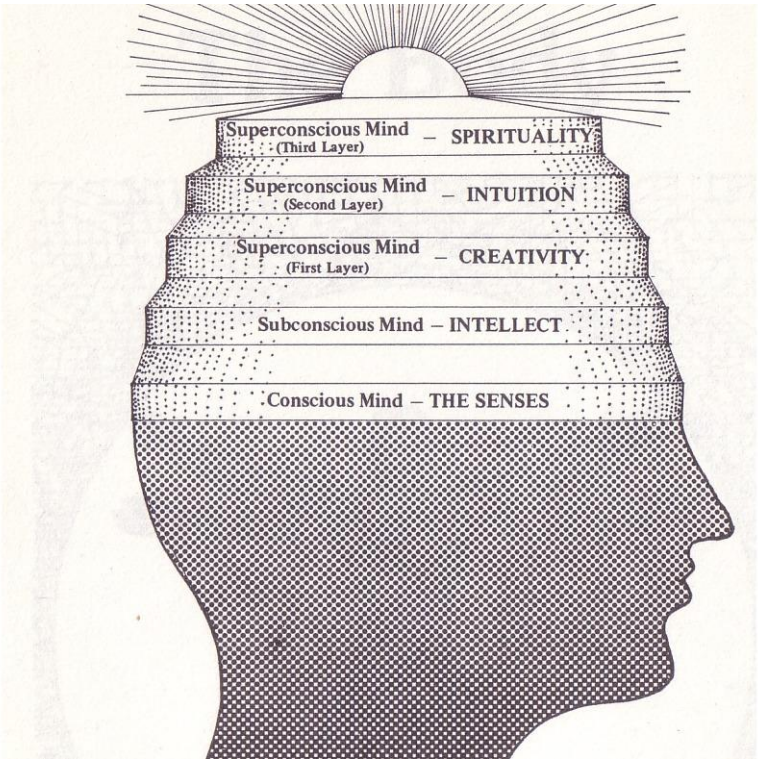
learning, establish a grammar or set of rules that define that nature of the language and the focus of the educational project.

Table 2: Sites of authority in educational traditions

	Humanist	Utilitarian	Democratic	Romantic	Green	Spiritual
Site of Authority	Text, Intellect and Imagination; Tradition	Patriarchal; Rules and Traditions	Consensus—Popular Authoritarianism	Heart and Ego	Consensus—The Commons and Future Generations	Gnosis and tradition; Master and Disciple
Tag	Liberal	Vocational	Community	Alternative	Sustainable Gaian	Shamanic Gnostic

Each position however is rooted in sets of not mutually exclusive values that determine how we orient ourselves to life, learning and teaching. The great Romantic philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau held individual experience to be the seat of authority. His was a deeply child centred philosophy. "Hold childhood in reverence…Give nature time to work before you take over her business".[19] He had little time for pure academia, for the tricks of intellect, nor did he care for the mediocrity of the utilitarian position. His romantic thirst for the experience of life, lead him to assert "Things! Things! I cannot repeat it too often. We lay too much stress upon words; we teachers babble, and our scholars follow our example". He went on, "Let all lessons of young people take the form of doing rather than talking; let them learn nothing from books which they can learn from experience".[20] This romantic position stood as an alternative to traditional forms of education and inspired both Maria Montessori and Rudolph Steiner when establishing their educational models.

Neohumanist education attempts to offer a synthesis of these positions. It does so by offering a radically comprehensive definition of mind. **Figure 2** depicts mind as layers of consciousness. In doing so it draws on Tantra as a science of mind and reflection whose deep insights into the human condition inform both Buddhism and Hinduism.



Source: Ananda Mitra Avadhutika[21]

Figure 2: Mind as layers of consciousness

These layers, known in Tantra as *kosas*, identify specific aspects of human reality.[22] Holistic education needs to engage all layers if it is to fulfil its mandate. Neohumanist education recognises that all aspects of mind are of equal importance and that to over emphasise any one at the expense of the others leads to imbalance in both the personal and social world.

Furthermore, the *kosas* are seen as an ideal curricular ordering device and have been used as such in recent developments in neohumanist pedagogy (**Appendix 1**).

The question of discipline

Where authority is placed determines how schools discipline and assess students. There are silent but extremely powerful links between history, class, power and authority as it is played out in any civilisation. Bell hooks puts it bluntly: "our ways of knowing are forged in history and relations of power".[23]

Discipline, however, can be a truly liberating and wonderful experience. This beauty is built on a sense of order and purpose, it is ethical at the core and when enacted builds trust and joy into our lives. When discipline matches the needs of individuals, it builds their self esteem and empowers them to engage with their life's true purpose: the ever deepening of their relationship with the divine.

Sarkar points out that the natural order that is discipline is essential for any system to function and expand.[24] In this sense indiscipline is not a problem for external authority but for the individual and society in terms of facilitating the potential to generate futures that fulfil their neohumanist potential. Central to this realisation is a shift from alienated individual to a self, contextualised in a living web of relationships. Part of the neohumanist agenda is to facilitate this awareness and shift the responsibility for loving discipline from external authority (hard ego) to inner personal and social processes.

The decline of the ego marks the movement of consciousness from terrified (therefore dangerous) isolation to strong (loving/trusting) inclusion. This movement is from unit consciousness to holistic consciousness. Neohumanist educational philosophy is focused on this movement as the expression of human *dharma*[*]—the natural evolution of consciousness is the defining feature of humanity—and fosters this movement by exploring the inter-relationship of consciousness with society and the phenomenal universe.

Neohumanist futures recognises that discipline is not primarily about external control of the 'other'. It is a discipline that ideally emerges from within, but needs to be structured through *practice* and a sense of *mission*. Primarily such 'practice' is rooted in love of both self and other. Our indebtedness is anchored in this love-connection as the debt was sown by indiscipline that at root is born of selfishness and a lack of awareness of the interconnectivity of life.

Global education

The holistic nature of neohumanist education also makes neohumanist futures relevant to the emerging global learning environment. Such an environment has the potential to be either colonising or participatory in nature. Neohumanist education builds on local cultural and economic

[*] Sanskrit word with no clear English equivalent: roughly it means, 'natural propensity' or 'essential characteristic'. See also the Glossary of Sanskrit terms at the end of this book.

patterns while holding a global vision for humanity as an integrated, sustainable system of ecological and cultural networks that balance global needs with local imperatives.

The local is too often overlooked in educational thought as the 'big picture' is more exciting than the practicalities of establishing schools on the ground. The intimate relationship between neohumanism and the participatory economic theory of PROUT[†] however balances the temptation of theorists to forget the local. Learning cooperatives of all kinds have a direct relevance for neohumanist educational futures that may begin with schools but will foster local relevance as a source of social renewal and as a catalyst for sustainable economics and agriculture.

Neohumanism brings together action, imagination, knowledge and ethics in order to create the optimal conditions for sustainable human activity. These four characteristics are synthesised with a spiritual outlook and commitment to libratory practice, thus it moves us towards what Marcus Anthony calls integrated intelligence.[‡] This libratory practice in turn links with the PROUTist commitment to co-operative development, self-reliance and spirituality. The links here are profound because it is too easy to think in the habit of disciplines and see economics as one activity and education as another. The transdisciplinary nature of neohumanism, demonstrated by its close links with PROUT economic and social theory, give it the flexibility and critical edge to be effective as a vehicle for the emergent global environment which ultimately fosters fluid knowledge networks that sustain the knowledge economy.

Focus on learning cultures and a readiness to learn

When we define learning as a fluid process it no longer seems appropriate to confine it to disciplinary pathways and social structures that are simply 'schools'. Neohumanist educational futures liberates us from the narrow confines of education as just a systemic act and returns it to lived cultural processes that span the divide between academic heights and the joys of practical activity. The basic premise here is that learning happens as we live. It happens actively in the family, with friends and at school. It also happens passively via a range of media and through what is commonly

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[†] For more on PROUT see either P.R. Sarkar's PROUT in a Nutshell series or visit http://www.prout.org/ also see Vadaprajinananda Chapter 3.

[‡] See Marcus Anthony, Education for Transformation, Chapter 4 of this text.

described as the 'hidden curriculum'. Learning is also relational and all learning is supported by forms of culture: some forms are positive, meaningful and *transformative*; other forms are toxic, meaningless and *formative*.

Teachers, students and their families can generate positive learning cultures when all concerned share in the learning process. In these contexts authority is shared, the joys and struggles are not born in loneliness, and though much learning is the result of personal existential journeys, there is a framework, a working context that supports this journey by allowing for mistakes, offering models of behaviour and values that support the diligence, passion and vision that motivates learning and sustains it over time. Ignorance in a neohumanist context is no longer the 'enemy' but is seen as motivational, curiosity is the corrective and knowledge a process of engaging with life.

Learning cultures hinge on a child's readiness to learn. There is no doubt that in principle all humans have the innate capacity to learn. What is less certain is if they have the freedom to learn. This freedom is an inner capacity. Until a child is freed from their inner 'demon' they can only learn in a partial and incomplete way.

What is at the root of a lack of inner freedom is a complex question. From a neohumanist perspective, some of it is simply their own life lesson—we all have these inner fault lines that we need, throughout life, to negotiate. Some of it is each individual's life history that compounds these inner fault lines. Children suffer either at the hands of others or as the result of the mishaps of life. They may have an abusive teacher or family members; they may be bullied by their peers; they may lose a loved one or experience any number of traumas. Readiness describes an individual's ability to overcome inner resistance, dismantle habits they have developed to avoid failure as 'taught' in traditions learning environments, and to access self confidence which feeds the will to learn.

So readiness to learn is a complex human algorithm. Every child is unique and therefore requires acceptance and love. But as a society there are also expectations. With these expectations come choices: personal and social choices. Neohumanist educational futures has a central preoccupation with choice and how we grapple with the forces that often silence possible choices and make them coherent and even plausible. Central to this deconstruction of the social imaginary is critical spirituality.

Critical spirituality

The critically spiritual perspective builds on the synthesis of four elements of human activity: action, imagination, knowledge and ethics. For sustainable educational practice to occur these are oriented around a spiritual perspective or orientation that strips away the instrumental accountancy of modern educational management and promotes deep relationship in order to achieve transformative development in students, rather than the calculative information banking and assessment measures in practice around the world today.

It takes as its starting point the recognition that critical pedagogy has failed to make the clear inroads into education we had hoped. It promised much but delivered little not because it was philosophically deficient but because it worked with a limited understanding of human consciousness. Critical pedagogy is concerned with the action, imagination, knowledge and ethics but has overlooked the spiritual as the source of transformative energy. It thus developed what Henry Giroux calls a language of critique but failed to simultaneously engage a language of possibility.[25]

Critical spirituality addresses this deficit by accounting for the transformative force of spiritual processes in all significant critical activity. Neohumanist educational futures, by integrating the spiritual into all dimensions of the curriculum, not as a disciplinary imperative, but as a predisposition within learning towards wonder and awe, generates the learning culture that will best facilitate all involved in educational practice that privileges the possible over the critical and thus it allows for 'open multilayered futures' to have pride of place over 'closed and colonised futures' which too often are egoistic and partial.

When we imagine futures that are rich and diverse we are drawing on the critically spiritual capacity within us. This critically spiritual imagination is a central feature of neohumanist futures of all kinds. It has particular significance within the educational context because children learn best when their full range of faculties are engaged with the process, when they feel honoured and respected as co-creators of the future and when they feel the debt that cannot be repaid not as a burden of guilt but as a privilege that invites them into the learning circle that is life.

From who am I? to When am I?

It is useful to think about our roles as teachers, parents and students in the light of this question. The Australian Aboriginal elder Maureen Watson once reminded a group of government bureaucrats that they are 'ancestors

of the future'. We all need to be reminded of this salient fact when thinking about education that is sustainable and libratory.

Sohail Inayatullah[26] framed the above questions some years ago in order to remind us that we do not exist in simple linear time. We need to take into account that time is linear, cyclic and also spirula. When we do this we "find complementary roles for the individual, for structure and for the transcendental".[27] Furthermore we also need to acknowledge that the individual consciousness is a patterning of the past, the present and the promise of the future.

The energy that informs traditions, rooted in the past, saturates the meaning making dimension of culture and validates specific forms of reasoning, acting and imagining while invalidating others. Similarly the pressure of the present bears down on the individual to create current contexts that inform and constrain action and choice. The individual is thus in many senses a construction of past weights and present, immediate pushes. These forces are formidable and in many cultures well nigh insurmountable. If they are to be contested they need to be challenged by images of the future and a critically spiritual imagination. Neohumanist educational processes actively strengthen this imaginative resource.

The forces described here can be best understood when mapped using the futures triangle.[§28] They are summed up in F**igure 3**.

Figure 3 maps the forces at work in our lives. How we answer the question of 'When are we?' determines the answer to the existential cornerstone of self: 'Who am I?'. From a neohumanist perspective the answer must begin with 'I am a spiritual being'. A spiritual being is reflective. When a reflective being recognises their connection to life and the world and thus avoids the trap of duality, then they become aware of their indebtedness to the past, the present and the future. In recognising the ties of the debt that cannot be repaid, we become active and transformative within the cultural and social setting that gives us meaning. Agency is thus returned and with it purpose, meaning and energy.

[§] This method was developed by Sohail Inayatullah to map the forces that order the present and determine what individuals and societies understand to be possible and preferable.

Figure 3: The futures triangle—When am I?

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with identifying the key features and the central concerns of neohumanist educational futures. Central to the treatment of neohumanist educational futures has been the understanding of the interconnectivity of existence in and across time and race. Neohumanism is simultaneously a practical yet subjective activity. It requires a special kind of imagination that is practical and practiced, yet critical and linked to clear philosophical principals while being inspired by the desire to liberate ourselves from the physical, intellectual and spiritual impediments that constrain human agency both at the individual and social levels. In working towards these goals it draws on both Western and Eastern educational traditions and proposes an alternative understanding of consciousness set within the Tantric tradition in order to reassess the possibilities of education and transformative social action.

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