

## **A Peaceable Classroom? Towards a Pedagogy of Peace**

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### **Introduction:**

In this paper I explore how education can and must be reformed in order to bring about greater personal well being for the students involved, an outcome which I propose will inevitably lead to greater societal well being. Education around the world continues to be modeled on outmoded ways of interacting in classrooms, ways that do not prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century and beyond. I propose that educators need to embrace a humanistic pedagogy which I am calling a pedagogy of peace. Laying the groundwork for such a pedagogy is the focus of this paper.

One of my favorite educators and writers from recent years is a Professor of English at St. Thomas University in St. Paul Minnesota, Mary Rose O'Reilley. Her book, The Peaceable Classroom is a collection of essays that have inspired and challenged me for quite some time. It was a question that a graduate professor asked her during the tough years of the American/Vietnam war that inspired me to write this paper. This provocative question was, "Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?"

Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?

Perhaps this strikes the reader as an outrageous or possibly irrelevant question. How can one entertain this idea? War, conflict, violence, struggles. We tend to believe that these are the truths of human nature. We know this to be true from history and from our own experiences. My father who grew up during the time of the great depression in the United States always said, "Times were tough. Life is a struggle." I grew up believing this. There is something uplifting, encouraging and different in

important ways about being invited to engage with THIS question. And I invite you to engage along with me.

Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?

Considering this question I extrapolate and ask, is it possible to teach mathematics so that people stop killing each other? Science? French? History? Social Studies? Art? Humanities? Physical Education? What are we talking about when we engage with this question?

The question requires that we look a little more closely. We need to deconstruct some of the ideas and possible outcomes and eventualities associated with this question.

I propose we begin with the problem. Is people killing each other the only problem we have on the planet at the moment? I think not.

### **1. What ARE the problems?**

I don't intend to linger long here. I am an optimist, generally speaking, and I hold a great deal of hope for the future. But I need to begin by briefly recounting some of the current and present issues we face in our world these days.

I begin with the seemingly never-ending war the US has waged in Iraq. There are ongoing and mounting tensions related to the nuclear capacity of both Korea and Iran. We need to come to terms with the truth of global warming and climate change and be working together towards solutions. We should worry about the suffering in Afghanistan and the political upheavals in Myanmar, Pakistan,

Thailand, Georgia, Darfur, South Africa, Indonesia – and maybe not enough of the right kind of upheaval in other places like the United States.

I personally need to hold on to hope that a new President of the United States will make a real difference in the world.

We all must be concerned about human trafficking, sexual slavery and the constant threats and actual violence against woman and children around the world. We cannot ignore the exponentially-growing divide between wealth and poverty; the intensely inadequate distribution of wealth in every country on the planet and between the classic north-south, developed and developing world distinctions.

In the U.S. and in many other parts of the world, we have to give a hard and careful look at increased violence in schools and disenfranchisement in universities. We need to be concerned about students striving to get accepted and then knowing/believing/feeling they have “got it made”; students who see getting in to the right university as the end rather than a beginning. And we cannot and must not forget all those children and young people worldwide for whom education is something they might only be able to dream of. Maybe.

We live in a world filled with, as the journalist and writer, Hunter S. Thompson often remarked, fear and loathing. The fear is that maybe there is nothing we can do about any of these problems. The loathing is of ourselves and others if we accept the current sad state of affairs. How do we confront and try to mediate that fear and loathing? How can we make a difference?

Education is one thing that humans worldwide have in common. We are, all of us, educated by our parents and communities and, if we are “lucky” and I use that word carefully, by systems of education. Education should provide us with hope or at least we tend to assume that it will.

A premise I want to put forth in this paper is that there is an inherent violence in these systems of education and indeed in systems of training and schooling as it traditionally occurs. I believe that there is a pedagogical, systematic and pernicious violence in schooling. In order to address this violence we need to understand it; we need to examine it to see what it looks like.

“The Peaceable Classroom” that O’Reilly talks about involves a keen level of humanism in teaching. In learning environments, teachers must ensure that students are provided with space and time for self-expression, the ability to connect with others, to share ideas and emotions and experiences with others in the classroom, regardless of the subject matter. This sharing is a profoundly personal, creative and spiritual act.

We are called to acknowledge that education should be a humanizing experience rather than the contrary. By being called to share our common humanity, this experience of being human, closely with each other through the educational process we are indeed connecting with others on a spiritual level.

Don’t be afraid of the word spiritual; by this I mean the fundamental human connection between us which involves the human spirits or souls. This connection is made possible through communication which is supported by a language in common and the invitation to share our experiences of living with the others who are around us. The human-to-human connection is one thing often not fostered in our schools and universities and is something we must learn how to do or do better.

Because of the dynamics just described, because of the intimate and personal nature of communication and learning, the potential for healing, for creating climates of peace and good will between people, communities and nations, the potential is so great – and therefore the risks are high. This is true every time there is great potential or great opportunity, there is also an accompanying high risk factor. As teachers we can fail our students and unwittingly create situations of great pain and suffering.

Education in its historical and current inception is often violent in that it denies students the opportunity for connection that I've just described.

We need to pay attention. We need to pay careful attention.

At this point I need to alter O'Reilly's question slightly. "Is it possible to teach so that people stop killing each other?"

A great deal of learning happens in groups, with other students, with a teacher or facilitator of some kind. Learning together is something that humans do.

Animals and other creatures learn together as well. Perhaps you have heard of the research from the animal realm related to the 100<sup>th</sup> monkey. This research shows that if a group of monkeys (99 is the number often used, but it is not that specific) have learned a skill such as learning that pressing the orange button will get them a special treat like an orange whereas pressing the green button only gets them standard monkey food, suddenly monkeys who come after learn the skill much more quickly. These monkeys have not watched other monkeys learn the skill. Also they are not necessarily offspring of the monkeys who previously learned the skill so we can't ascribe this to inherited skills

nor to DNA memory. These monkeys learn the skill faster, somehow, because of the 99 other monkeys who went before. Researchers know it's true but they can't exactly explain why. This relates to human learning as well. We learn together and in community. And, yes, we learn alone too. Reflection is often about solitary learning. This is the learning that happens in our dreams, in the middle of the night, while driving or walking alone. Even so, much of our learning happens with others in learning communities. As the proverbial phrase relates, we all stand on the shoulders of others; we build on prior learning. We learn from and with each other. And we as teachers are responsible for creating these learning communities and for defining, at least at the beginning, the norms, rules and boundaries of these groups.

Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers are systems theorists and well-known activists in terms of group learning. Wheatley is the founder of the Berkana Institute. (<http://www.berkana.org> ) Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers wrote the following,

“What we know about individuals, no matter how rich the details, will never give us the ability to predict how they will behave as a system. Once individuals link together they become something different. . . Relationships change us, reveal us, evoke more from us. Only when we join with others do our gifts become visible, even to ourselves.” (Centered on the Edge, p. 75).

These things need to happen in our classrooms. We need to plan and teach so that our students' gifts become visible to themselves – and also – to each other.

The Fetzer Institute, a progressive think tank based in Kalamazoo Michigan, conducted in-depth interviews with 40 key group/community leaders from around the world and came up with some generalizations that were shared in a monograph titled, Centered on the Edge.

Generalizations are useful, as long as we don't rely on them. They allow us to have a vision of the collective understanding that might be emerging. Following are some of the Fetzer Institute's generalizations about groups to consider in thinking about transforming education worldwide.

On Connectedness:

“People most often find great comfort and inspiration in group gatherings. There is a very real need for safe places where people feel welcomed; where they can come together to share feelings and experiences at a deep personal level. Places where they come to feel fully seen and heard and validated. Places where they are able to take the time to really listen to each other, to reflect together, to make sense of their experiences, and so to reach deeper levels of understanding in their own lives and for the community represented. In the group, people experience the power of being seen, being heard and understood at a very deep level; a sense of coming home, of belonging.” (p. 21).

Also from Centered on the Edge – On the Movement of the Whole:

“People describe times in the group when the boundaries normally experienced between them seem to dissolve. At these times, people seem to make the deliberate choice not to see their interests as separate from anyone else's, and in so doing, they begin to experience the sweetness of unity, and the harmonious forward movement of the whole. . .” (p. 27). There is something magical about this, the experience of moment the group moves together. I have seen it happen often in my work with teachers in many classrooms around the world. The magical moment when the group transcends individuality and moves to a new collective place.

Also from Centered on the Edge – On Serving Wholeness:

“People come together in response to a natural impulse to work together, to build together and to create together. They come to experience how necessary it is for them to collaborate with each other.

And so it is that humankind begins to learn how to leverage the infinite power of collective intelligence and spiritual wisdom.” (p. 41).

And finally, from Centered on the Edge – On Witnessing, the act of being present for another person and for their experience and their learning. Witnessing about watching and staying present with each other within the group setting.

“It is in the group setting that we are called to stand witness for each other – to notice, to acknowledge, to name and to give meaning to what is unfolding for us, what we are learning, what we are remembering, and what we are becoming. One aspect of witnessing is simply the creation of shared understanding and experience, through deep listening and understanding of each other’s perspectives. A second aspect of witnessing lies in being a mirror for each other’s learning. . . This aspect of witnessing takes on critical importance in the collective healing of humankind. . . .Where atrocities have been perpetuated against whole communities, whole countries and whole peoples. . . public witnessing has a critical role to play.” (p. 51).

The activity and presence of groups also commonly called communities of learning certainly has the potential to foster incredible growth and learning, when managed well. This is often the work of the teacher, especially at the outset. However, groups can also be negative places where the individual can feel diminished, worthless and invisible. I would imagine that we have each experienced that at some point in our educational lives. The feeling of being invisible, of not having a voice, of being somehow “less than” others is a part of this violence of education that I am trying to define here.

I would like to deconstruct a bit further this idea of the violence of education. I hope it is clear that my view, inspired by a range of thinkers from a variety of backgrounds, is that violence in education

involves anything in the educational process that diminishes, flattens, waters down, boils away or dilutes the spirit of the individual and the collective to take on those challenges in our world that I enumerated earlier. It is an insidious process and if we teachers are not very careful, we can be unwitting participants in every single world problem I have named and so many more.

The violence of the educational process is deeply intertwined with schooling's tendency and core intent to train, change and improve the person as though the individual who entered that educational system was, in key and fundamental ways, inadequate and flawed. If the word violence feels too strong for you, that is purposeful on my part. One could replace violence with the words violated, belittled or controlled. The individuals in question feel a loss of autonomy, of self-respect, of self-authority. This strikes me as violent.

This violence is perpetrated in a whole array of ways, mostly and typically outside of the realm of an individual teacher's consciousness. Let us examine a few places where the violence can emerge.

Violence can emerge via pedagogy. By this I mean any teaching practice that is rote, or unconscious; the curriculum having to follow the book regardless of the interests of the students; the teacher not know how to NOT follow the book. It can emerge through a teacher never having been taught how to creatively expand beyond the text and the curriculum to address the true needs of learners, or not being encouraged to do so nor being supported in your efforts. This is a form of the violence I am referring to. For many teachers around the world, the lack of autonomy or decision-making power available to them is a violence to them which then lands in the laps of their learners. Who is to blame for this? There is plenty of blame to share. Included are teacher preparation programs that don't address these issues, administrators who don't understand what's at stake in the teaching and learning process, curriculum writers who decide what students can and will learn and who possibly provide a

biased perspective. AND we mustn't ignore some students who want to simply pass the test, who just want to move on to the next level and whose parents have invested a lot of money in the success of these students, and who have sacrificed their own well-being and that of the students for it.

Much of testing, especially the so-called high-stakes tests are to blame. The tests I'm referring to only measure a student's ability to test well rather than their actual knowledge and skills. These are the tests that act as gate-keepers rather than being true measures of the student. The testing inherent in the No Child Left Behind movement perpetrated in the USA is particularly cruel to students and teachers, but even in this the US is not alone and probably No Child Left Behind, as an educational reform movement, is not the worst version on earth. Standardized testing, in general, is a kind of violence. How can it be assumed that passing, succeeding or doing poorly on a standardized test really tells us as educators anything of real importance? These tests cannot tell us anything about the nature of the learner, anything about their skills and talents nor who they are as human beings.

I realize that I am probably insulting my educational colleagues who spend their intelligence, creativity and time writing texts and in designing quality assessment and evaluation materials. I know and I understand that these materials are important tools for teachers. We all feel supported by good materials. I simply want to stress, however, that regardless of how good materials and curricula may be, they can never replace the focused attention, intelligence and wisdom of the good teacher; the teacher who can adapt and adjust materials within the context of what they know and are learning about their students.

When looking at these violences, we cannot forget to give a close look at discipline and other issues of classroom management. Here I am talking about the little acts of violence that go on in teaching and schooling. I propose that they are far from "little". They may seem small, but the cumulative effect is

huge. I am referring to “the look”, the fear of being wrong, the fear or actual experience of rejection, and the disgrace of not knowing the right answer. Of course we cannot and must not forget the actual physical violence that is still the norm in many school systems around the world.

In every educational system we can find, if we dig just a little, the hidden or tacit curriculum. Typically the hidden curriculum can be surfaced fairly easily and it usually focuses on getting people “on board” and ready to participate in a certain way in society and within the school itself. What is important is to reveal, explore and then, most importantly, revise it so that the hidden curriculum is the extant curriculum and is something we as teachers can feel good about and wholeheartedly support. We want schooling as a training function to be educative which should mean the education and growth of the whole person within a whole system of learning.

## **2. Why am I interested and why do I have anything to say about it?**

Before discussing what I see as possible solutions to the issues, I’ll share a little bit about what has driven or called me in to these questions. What are my inspirations?

My own education is a reason for inspiration. Why? I am inspired because in the early days of my educational journey it was mediocre and in later years it became inspiring. I grew up on a farm in Minnesota in the USA, went to a rural high school, was not asked to work very hard and graduated in a class of 33 students. I went to college, one of the few students from my graduating class who considered the idea and had the opportunity to do so. I went to three colleges and seven years later got a BA degree in Psychology. Seven years is a kind of family record and I’m proud of it. It took so long because early on I was struck with wander-lust and so could not bear to stay at university for very long at a time. I studied French in university. The teaching was not very inspiring but learning the language was. It is potentially my interest in a foreign language and a realization that it could bring

me to the possibility of traveling and living in francophone countries and, hopefully, communicating with people there in that other language that was the reason I stayed with it long enough to graduate. But overall, these were not inspiring years of education.

In retrospect I can see that using my French language skills to travel and stay in France to live overseas in my twenties was probably the best education I had had to date. At this stage in my education I come two engaging and fully humanizing educational experiences.

The first inspirational education was the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA where I was first a graduate student and then a faculty member for the past twenty years. This was my first encounter with a truly humanistic education; whole person; learning filled, growth filled. Experiential in its pedagogy, the program made sense to me and I felt whole and embraced within it. The School for International Training had its early roots in providing training for outgoing Peace Corps volunteers in the beginning years of that service opportunity. The education provided was and still is experience-based and focused on the development of the individual on all levels of growth based in a group learning environment.

Patrick Moran, a colleague in the MAT Program, careful thinker and scholar, in remarks at a recent conference, was reflecting on his own young adult years in finding himself in an education that went beyond “training” and was truly formative and life changing. Moran said after sharing some of his early experiences also as a graduate student at SIT, “these memories came easily to me, mainly because they had to do with moments of awareness and insight. . . they mark the beginnings of my path toward teaching in a different way than I had previous understood, toward teaching that centered on learners, on their experiences and on engagement with their experiences. These were moments of transition for me.” Moran described an experience of working with elder teachers, mentors and

luminaries in the field of language teaching at that time and his own challenge – to their faces – of the ideas they shared. And these master teachers’ reactions. Moran went on to say, “I asked myself: What kind of teacher can listen without judgment to a student criticizing his ideas? What kind of teacher welcomes and accepts student resistance? Something shifted in my thinking, something about students’ feelings. Something about resistance. Something about suspending judgment.”

Moran’s reflections and my own mark an important learning experience which was rooted in SIT (<http://www.sit.edu>) and the unusual and still progressive way in which education is held and fostered there.

A second important experience for me was doctoral studies at the California Institute for Integral Studies (<http://www.ciis.edu>). This was another “alternative” and completely inspiring education. I was encouraged to bring my entire self to the study, to explore my thoughts alongside my experiences, my instincts and intuitions and my spirit and soul. Every part of me was present at that table of learning. And instead of feeling “spat” out after completing the degree, I felt energized and enthusiastic.

My husband and I were careful in choosing educational opportunities for our children. Some of their educations occurred in the USA and some in Botswana and Thailand as they accompanied us on tours overseas. They ended up, therefore, with some wonderful experiences in their educations until now. But even with our careful planning and attention and a significant investment of time and money, we and their teachers and, therefore, our children, have sometimes totally missed the mark and education has become for each of them at various times, a violent education in the way that I have already defined it. No, none of them has ever been hit by a teacher; as has already been made clear, this is not what I am referring to when I talk about violence in education.

When I think about their educations, especially during the teenaged/adolescent years, there was a sense for each of them of biding their time. I felt it strongly as a parent. My stepson and daughter were “waiting to graduate”. They have each felt the sense of “jumping through hoops”. We have discussed with each of them their sense of being given a limited time in life and how does education make these lives more worthwhile? I cannot deny, but do not like, the key high school and university trick for survival which is “find out what the teacher wants and then give it to them. Follow the rules”.

As Seniors in High School my two elder children had serious crises as they tried to navigate the bizarre and disconnected terrain of schooling. The youngest at age fifteen is still in that disconnected terrain and we do what we can for him to come out of it safe and unscathed. I believe this is an unfortunate truth for many learners in all reaches of the earth. And I believe that it shouldn't have to be this way.

I have been a teacher educator for twenty years and before that a teacher. I am still constantly learning about teaching and learning about learning. One thing I know from these years is this: **EVERY TEACHER** everywhere in the world feel constrained by things external to them, outside of themselves, outside of their selves as teachers: the curriculum, the test, standards, the administration, student motivation, their own knowledge, skills and awareness. Every teacher, everywhere in the world has constraints upon her and his teaching.

But, but, but. . .

Every teacher, regardless of the constraints or limitations can always exercise her or his will, intention, philosophy and hope in their classes. Each teacher still has those precious 30 or 50 or 80 or 120 minutes together with their students. The power of these precious minutes is inestimable and immeasurable.

Rachel Kessler, an American educator, has long been a proponent of, as she calls it, welcoming soul (back) to our schools. We can debate whether we are welcoming soul back or soul in. Did schooling ever have an element of soul? From my understanding of it, modern-day schooling, since the early 1900's in the US and at varying times in other parts of the world, was designed to "norm" students and to create an obedient citizenry. The goal was not an inquiring, nor necessarily critically thinking student, but a "normed" student.

Kessler says, "When students feel genuinely listened to they begin to sense their significance as human beings". She also says, "When soul is present in education, attention shifts; we concentrate on what has soul and meaning. Kessler's work has been primarily with Middle and High School students, an age where, around the world as far as I can tell, students often times suffer a crisis of soul and spirit. They begin to wonder and ask the question of "who am I and what is my place in the world?" This is a question with which most adolescents suffer. Part of this suffering can be alleviated by what Kessler refers to as the hunger for joy. This hunger can be fed by, as Kessler reports, "inviting humor", teaching through play and fostering moments of heartfelt communication, as a beginning.

Let me insert a brief comment about adolescence. Current research in developmental psychology has told us that adolescence, as a phase, extends at least through age twenty-five. It is important to

recognize that when we talk about adolescence, we're not just referring to gawky teenagers, but to university students as well.

When we talk about creating playful learning communities with heartfelt communication as the norm, some people worry that we're turning the classrooms in to some kind of therapy. This worries teachers as they typically feel unprepared and unwilling, quite rightly, to take on any kind of therapeutic role as teachers.

O'Reilley, however, counters this fear by meeting the concern about "turning the classroom into some kind of 'group therapy'". She observes that good teaching IS, in the classical sense, therapy. Good teaching involves reweaving the spirit. "Bad teaching, by contrast, is soul murder." (p. 47). When O'Reilley talks about reweaving the spirit she is referring to such nuances of teaching as asking questions when you actually care about the answers. She is challenging us to cultivate genuine inquisitiveness about our students, their thoughts, their ideas, their struggles and their issues. We are now talking about engaging with our students as fellow human beings and welcoming who they are and what their lives are like now in to our classrooms.

At the same time we also have to create ways for our students to interact with each other and themselves reflectively. As O'Reilley asserts, "If we can get our students to listen to what they are doing (themselves) we will have taught them a great deal. Yet I make these suggestions about classroom practice with great trepidation because we as teachers have so long evaluated ourselves on conscientiously 'correcting' every single student mistake. Teaching English (in particular) has become a branch of the police." (p. 48).

### **3. What are possible solutions to these issues? How do the teacher and teaching matter?**

Consider the classroom or classrooms in which you teach and the learners you see before you each day. Do you stand in front of them or with them? What do you know about them? What do you know about their goals and aspirations; their dreams and their fears?

What control do you have over what you teach each day, according to the curriculum? What do you know about how to expand upon it, exchange items within it or make choices?

Are the desks in your classrooms bolted down or is it possible to set up the class as you wish? Can you move your chairs around?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is crucial that we each examine our own teaching contexts as we explore the various possibilities inherent in the important role we play as teachers.

Humanism, as an approach to education, is not a new idea. It had its last resurgence in the 60s and 70s, as a reaction to other ideas and probably as an outgrowth of that time in the world, especially the west, when many outmoded ideas were being challenged. But although the ideas seemed new at the time, many were borrowed from other traditions that had long-preceded the turbulent 60s in the United States.

One key image from humanism and from many of the traditions that I think bear re-examination is the idea of the community of learning formed as a circle. We know that many indigenous groups in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific saw the circle as a real phenomenon in that those

circles were inhabited by real people, sitting together talking, listening, learning from each other and from the stories being recounted. The circles were also, however, an image that would represent the importance of being able to see every other face in the group; not the backs of heads but the faces and the hearts of friends, neighbors and fellow learners. These circles are still common in places where people live together and share their common humanity. They are an image and a metaphor that we can all share.

The individual can see her or himself at two healthy and comforting places potentially on the circle and one devastating one. The most comfortable spot, for most individuals, is on the circle in an equal place with peers. No one is higher or lower; all faces are visible; every voice has a chance to be heard. In some native traditions, the individual is viewed as inhabiting the center of the circle. This view sees that every individual inhabits that place as their birthright. In the center, all directions are available; the individual becomes the source for their own journey and for their own story.

O'Reilly talks about it this way, "We began to discover that as teachers, one of our jobs is to help a student find her 'sacred center' the place where she stands at the crossroads of human experience. Beyond that, we needed to help her see that she exists within another circle: a community. To find voice and mediate voices in a circle of others is one of the central dialects of the peaceable classroom". (p. 40).

My colleague, Sean Conley now based at the New School for Social Research in New York City, has described for us the concentric circles of peace. These are the circles within circles of connections and community that form the basis for individual, community and societal peace. The vision you must hold is of a series of concentric circles, defining an ever-more-personal view of how peace can be fostered through aware and sensitive (i.e. humanistic) teaching. Thus, the peaceful self is at the center

and gradually we make our way out to a peaceful world. As Conley has written on his website ([www.explorepeace.org](http://www.explorepeace.org)),

“The circles of peace are a lens, one of many, for viewing the areas in which we can investigate the dynamics of peace and conflict and act to influence those dynamics. The interconnectedness of each circle in our image of circles of peace is captured by this poem by a Cambodian Buddhist, Venerable Maha Ghosananda,

A prayer:

The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.

From this suffering comes Great Compassion.

Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.

A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.

A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family.

A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community.

A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.

And a Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.

May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.

We live within circles surrounded by circles. I’ve discussed briefly how the circles envelope us all as a unifying theme. I have described two positions on the circle that feel healthy and affirming; that of being on the circle and that of being in the center. I do not doubt that you can imagine the devastating image which is to be outside the circle, to be excluded, to find oneself not able or not being invited to participate. Working as teachers to avoid this experience for our students is embracing a pedagogy of peace. This pedagogy of peace requires that as teachers, we are concerned with the inner life of our

students, our own inner lives, and the interpersonal lives we create and recreate daily with each other in our classrooms and through our teaching.

Earl Stevick, a mentor and inspiration in the English language teaching field, described in his seminal classic on language teaching, A Way and Ways (1980) a notion he referred to as “the inside and between maxim”. He said, “success or failure in a language course depends less on linguistic analysis and pedagogical techniques than on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom.” I would assert that this is not only true for language teaching but also for all other subjects as well. Learning has less to do with pedagogy, texts, testing, clever classroom activities than it has to do with the relationship between the teacher, the students, the students’ relationships with each other and, all the relationship that all of them have with the content itself.

Holding a curiosity about what goes on inside and between people in the classroom is often not easy, but it is always worthwhile. I have found it useful, always, to revisit the ideas which helped launch us on to the humanistic route. We remember Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a paradigm still completely relevant today. We can only achieve higher needs such as the need for self actualization if we have met some of our “lower needs”, having enough food to eat, clean air to breathe, being able to sleep at night without fear, to feel part of something, cared for somewhere by someone, to hold a sense of self-confidence and of feeling valued and finding one’s place in the world.

And so in addition to understanding how the human psyche is structured we also have to embrace ways of understanding, describing, engaging with and then resolving the challenges we face as teachers working with fellow humans. Teachers need to be concerned with both their own personal work with students AND how the systems of education operate.

Maxine Greene, professor at Teacher's College, Columbia university, has talked about a way of looking at educational systems/schooling and the individual teachers, administrators and students within these systems. She talks about seeing small as from a distance; and seeing big – close up, personal, detailed. Greene is interested in how teachers engage with both systems of education and individual students. She says,

“How can teachers intervene and say how THEY believe things ought to be? . . . Interested in shifting perspectives and different modes of seeing,” Green continues, “I find myself turning to Confessions of Felix Krull, Confident Man (1955), a novel by Thomas Mann. . . at the start young Felix asks himself whether it is better to see the world small or to see it big. On the one hand, he says, great men, leaders and generals, have to see things small and from a distance, or they would never be able to deal as they do with the lives and deaths of so many living beings.” Yes, in this reference Felix is talking about generals and leaders but I see this as relevant also to curriculum planners, text developers, administrators and others who deal with lots of people and ideas. In the next section Green says, “To see things big, on the other hand, is to ‘regard the world and mankind as something great, glorious, and significant, justifying every effort to attain some modicum of esteem and fame’.

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of view of the participant. .

When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable. . . The vision of

seeing things small looks at schooling through the lens of a system – a vantage point of power or existing ideologies - - - most frequently these days, it uses the lenses of benevolent policy making with the underlying conviction that changes in schools can bring about progressive social change.” (Greene, p.9-11).

So we’re supposed to trust those who “see things small”, those who design system-mandated curricula and standardized testing to bring about social change? Maxine Greene doesn’t believe this and neither do I.

Teachers teaching within these systems, however, can help to bring about progressive social change – through the transformation of one student, one person at a time. I am intrigued, however, by this not-quite-intuitive description that Greene uses. When she talks about “seeing big” that means being up close and personal with the student in front of us, close enough to smell their perfume or the scent of coffee on their breath as they articulate the ideas important to them. We can see the color of their cell phones and maybe even know what earrings they are wearing or what color ink they prefer for writing. When we see our students big, we cannot diminish them. It has often been said that by reducing people to statistics, numbers a quantity – we diminish their humanness. In that instance yes, we are seeing them small, as just a point on the bell curve.

Seeing big requires courage as seeing our students for who they are can make us more vulnerable. Greene again, (p. 109) talks about teaching for openings.

We teachers have to be willing to “break ourselves open and begin again”. We have to be that vulnerable and awake to our students and their learning. Knowing ourselves and our own prejudices is part of this. Staying awake and aware of the same in our students is another part.

I am not proposing that any of this is easy. It is, in fact, among the most challenging things that we could ask of ourselves and our colleagues. Robert Kegan, formerly of MIT and now with the Harvard School of Education wrote a fascinating book in the 90s, In Over Our Heads: The Mental demands of modern life (1994). In it he explores in a very accessible manner, how difficult it has become to function effectively in our modern world. Kegan discusses different levels, what he calls orders, of consciousness. His system includes six orders, each allowing in more information about our surroundings, people around us, and indeed ourselves. The main thrust, however, is whether or not the individual has any perspective on themselves, their situations and their relationships with others. Being able to reflect, to step back from and out of one's immediate circumstances to varying degrees is how one moves from one order of consciousness to another. In this model an infant and young child who only wants to nurse at the breast or to have the cookie is seeing the world from the first order of consciousness. Adolescents thinking about how to pass the test with the least amount of effort or how to get to know some special boy or girl are probably at the third order. Kegan points out that most adults only make it to about stage three or four. Modern life, however, and solving the world's problems requires more and more people to operate at at least a 5<sup>th</sup> Order of Consciousness which involves the ability to hold multiple perspectives and to weigh them against each other. This requires the skill of and willingness to reflect not only on one's own circumstances but how those circumstances affect others around you. This is a far from straightforward demand.

Critical thinking is a skill that can be developed in ourselves and in our students. I see the need for this with increasing frequency when I visit classrooms or training centers. Many educators around the world are highlighting how important it is that students (and, of course their teachers) develop the ability to think critically, to examine situations from many perspectives, not jump to the first

conclusion, to challenge easy answers and look for complexities and nuances. The so-called higher order thinking skills are becoming something of importance to all students worldwide.

It is important that we also revisit some of the pioneers of alternative ways of viewing teaching and learning. I will refer to some of the pioneers who contributed to the genre of language teaching pedagogy, as this is an area I have worked in for many years. I find that these ideas have profound relevance for other content areas which is why I include them.

The first set of ideas I will explore briefly is that of Caleb Gattegno who developed The Silent Way. Silent Way was originally a mathematics pedagogy that was later applied by Gattegno to language teaching. One important idea is to examine what it means to subordinate teaching to learning, to make your students' learning more important than your teaching. Another of Gattegno's core ideas was to not do for the learner what they can do for themselves. After twenty years of working with these ideas, they are still provocative and meaningful for me. Gattegno was deeply inspired by the philosophy of J. Krishnamurti so these philosophies and ideas run deep with deep roots that are extremely well grounded.

I also continue to explore Gattegno's invitation to look at our use of praise and whether or not it is necessary or even helpful. O'Reilly concurs with this question saying, ". . . many of us still define our success as teachers by our skill at 'marking'. . . such an approach to teaching inhibits students' ability to find their own strength" (p. 49). This is in contrast with developing what Gattegno called students' Inner Criteria, meaning developing their ability to know for themselves if they are correct, not correct, or where they are on the continuum.

O'Reilley continues with her exploration on the question of praise by saying, "Even our positive responses often merely addict students to repeating their most successful tricks. Both praise and blame set students looking for other people for definitions of the self. Both discourage create problem solving because you can't solve problems in new ways when you have an eye on what 'they' might think." When students are wondering "What is the answer I'm supposed to come up with?" their creativity and full potential is diminished.

A final thought from Gattegno who also said, "Only awareness is educable". We can only help to train our students' awareness of what they know or don't about the subject, of themselves as learners, of themselves within a learning community. This idea has profound implications for what we will do or not with our students.

Shakti Gattegno, Gattegno's wife, built in meaningful and sustaining ways on his work. One of her core ideas which stays with me is that we must be good to our students rather than be nice. By this she means when we make the road too easy for our students, we do them no service. Rather we must do that which will develop their full potential for human goodness. This means challenging them in appropriate ways, holding their feet to the fire, making them work hard, not for some external standard but to develop their own internal criteria and a knowledge and skill set that allows them to achieve great, human goals.

Charles Curran who followed in the footsteps of Carl Rogers, the humanistic psychologist, founded Counseling Learning also known as Community Language Learning. This learning process advocates for and requires deep listening. This includes listening by the teacher to the students but also and equally importantly by the students to each other. It highlights how important it is for learners to say

what is true and meaningful for themselves; to look at and share with each other their own worlds. When students share true and important experiences and ideas, magic happens in the classroom.

O'Reilley also talks about this, "When people sit around in a group and share experiences, the universe of possibility begins to change". I personally know this to be true from time spent with students in many places of the world, as O'Reilley continues, "when people sit and tell each other what the world is like for them, the air becomes electric with both danger and hope". (p. 41).

Paulo Friere, the Brazilian educator and activist has forced so many to look at what is chosen to teach versus what students need to learn in order to gain power and status to really make differences in their communities. Freire talked about the banking method of education and its pitfalls. Still much of education seem to continue to rely on it. Curricula often relies on it and standardized testing usually does. Now (in 2008) that we see the house of cards that is the United States and international financial system we educators really don't want to be in to banking, do we? We want to invest, rather, in the souls and spirits of our students.

Waldorf Education developed and promoted by Rudolph Steiner advocated for the inclusion of the arts and an attention to the periphery of things; beauty in the classroom, according to Steiner, is not considered a luxury. From a progressive school's literature, I found the following ". . . at this juncture I would put forth the question, might not beauty, and the love of the beautiful, perhaps bring peace and harmony? Could it not carry us forward to new concepts of life's meaning? Would it not establish a fresh concept of culture? Would it not be a dove of peace between the various cultures of humankind?" (The Unknown Craftsman, Soetsu Yanagi). These ideas provide another question we must consider, how do we include the love of what is beautiful in our work?

Maria Montessori's approach, usually thought of as a pre-school educational process, has important implications for our work. She said that learning had to be meaningful and relevant to the learner which is why there are specific guidelines for teachers at every phase of the educational process. Montessori's banner call was to follow the learner. Don't lead, but follow. See what the learner is interested in and how each one is engaging with the material. Make your decisions as a teacher based upon that information.

The Way of Council is a communication and teaching pedagogy. It was borne out of Native-American and other traditions as a way of communicating in a group and the process, again, involves a circle. Every voice has its time. No agenda is forced. The process is egalitarian and supportive of all learners.

I want to add that for teachers and students alike, collective practices, group practices, practices that collect and coalesce energy are rich and important. We cannot underestimate the power of individual and group intention and the insight and wisdom offered through meditation. We can also harness these processes to help create coherence in our classrooms so that what we say and what we do as teachers connect and resonate with our students. The energy, motivation and intentions of the teacher matter.

Angeles Arrien, a cultural anthropologist and writer, talks about different ways of engaging with the world. She breaks them down in two four categories, the ways of the Warrior, Healer, Visionary, and Teacher. I've come to see them all as elements of what a teacher must be and do in these times.

Arrien describes the way of the Warrior as showing up and choosing to be present. This means a great deal more than showing up for class and more than getting up on time and "punching in" at school. It

means bringing your full presence to those students there with you. It sometimes means leaving personal issues behind and sometimes it means bringing them in to the classroom with you if it serves the purpose of learning.

The way of the Healer asks us to pay attention to what has heart and meaning. By this is meant listening carefully and watching thoughtfully. It means to find out what is important to these fellow beings with you in that classroom. What has heart and meaning for our students will also have energy and we are asked to tune in to and pay attention to that.

The way of the Visionary reminds us to tell the truth without blame or judgment. This includes giving honest feedback to your students, your fellow teachers and to administrators. Say what you see and what you observe going on. Share your thoughts and ideas and reactions so that change might result. At the same time we are asked to avoid sitting in judgment of these other people for what they can or cannot do. This is hard to do.

The way of the Teacher is to be open to outcomes and not attached to outcomes. Teach bringing out your best, give what you can but don't assume that your students are going to learn what you teach or will do with their learning what you think they might. We need to remain open to the possibility, indeed the probability, that our students will take their learning and go with it far beyond our own imaginations and knowledge. This is as it should be.

And finally we have to acknowledge the potential power of the group, our classes, and the potential that exists there for wisdom and healing. Students often genuinely come to love and support each other and can provide much to each other, beyond what we can offer as teachers. This does often happen but must be allowed for and supported. We teachers have to be able to create space for this.

#### 4. Conclusions

What do our students need? What is required for the present and for the future? What do we need to do as teachers for their future and for a chance that people might stop killing each other? What can we do for the chance that our world can be restored and renewed and for hope for our children and our grandchildren? How do I need to alter my thinking about my students and their needs? How must I change my practices? What does it mean to engage with my students and their learning in the ways that I have explored in this paper?

I propose that possibly, probably it begins with adopting humanistic elements back in to pedagogy. I suggest that maybe it involves loving our students – as a necessity and not a luxury; not some high-on-life, liberal, former hippy, American ideal. No, it is good, common-sense, humanistic pedagogy to love our students and to employ the golden rule with them. We must treat them as we would like to be treated because we would like to be part of the change that needs to happen on this planet. Multiply the number of students you work with each year by at least 20, the number of people whose lives they most likely strongly influence. You can do the math of how many people we can potentially have a positive impact upon through our teaching. Let each of us do this in whichever ways we feel are right. But let us, together, teach so that people stop killing each other.

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