Section III

HOW DO WE THINK ABOUT CURRICULUM?

To understand today's current curriculum concerns about what should be taught in schools, it is helpful for those who are affected by the curricular decisions made by government legislation or administrative mandate to know how past curriculum thinking has influenced (positively, negatively, or not at all) those decisions. If we can't learn from out past, what hope do we have for our future? The series of articles in this section provides historical perspective to curriculum theorizing and draws conclusions about what might happen in the future if we do not heed lessons previously learned.

William Schubert, a well-respected curricularist shares his thoughts in "The Curriculum-Curriculum," on how he teaches curriculum theory to teachers so that theory becomes meaningful and useful to the practitioner.

Hanan Alexander revisits four seminal curriculum theories. She examines how they relate to human beings through the concept of human agency. By human agency she means the need for humans to form their own beliefs and actions and to understand their mistakes. Her concern is how curricular thinking can help develop human agency.

Progressive education was a major curricular event in the history of American education. Bullough and Kridel focus their article on the debates of individual needs and social philosophy as foundations for curriculum building. These debates contributed to the demise of the progressive movement. Although progressive education as a movement died, the influence of the movement continues today in curriculum thinking.

Professors Wraga and Hlebowitsh provide a succinct historical perspective of 20th-century curriculum thought. They suggest ways to exit the curriculum chaos that interferes with contemporary curriculum decision making.

Neil Postman closes this section with a humorous look at the glut of information confronting us and how dealing with that information poses interesting challenges to the schools. He offers a suggestion on how schools can organize all this information around five narratives that could build a sense of purpose to learning.

As you read through this collection of articles, you need to think about the following:

- How knowledge of past curriculum theory informs present thought

- How curriculum deliberations can be useful activities for teachers to participate in to provide appropriate educational opportunities for students

- How teaching can influence what is learned within the curriculum

- Why progressive education failed—or did it?

- The role schools need to play in coping with the enormous increase of information provided through technological advancements

Article 6

THE CURRICULUM-CURRICULUM

Experiences in Teaching Curriculum

WILLIAM H. SCHUBERT

To share my teaching of curriculum studies raises the question of where to begin. I am convinced that my curriculum discourse was born in childhood play as an only child on a farm where I generated a host of imaginary playmates. Coupled with travels I was fortunate to have in a family of educators, I lived the journey metaphor that is a founding archetype of curriculum studies. As a young child, I reveled in planning where we would drive each summer, what we would see, and why it would be worth experiencing.

I continued this process of talking to myself throughout my life, although it would be more accurate to say talking with *my selves.* I am increasingly convinced that *I am several.* Perhaps, *I am a conversation.* I submit that over the years my real and imagined companions, journeys, and ponderings of the worthwhile have helped my selves thrive. These *selves* [like the cells that L. Thomas Hopkins (1954) analogized to self-development] expand, differentiate, and integrate as the curriculum of my life unfolds in a panoply of conscious effort and untold surprise.

Before doctoral study, as an elementary school teacher for eight years, I recall that my most important *in-service education* was the continuous conversation among the conflicting selves that emerged within me—sometimes collaborating, often conflicting, but almost always bringing a rich diversity of expansion, differentiation, and integration of my emerging self. During those years, reading philosophy or talking about ideas with friends (including students) provided much greater stimulation for my teaching than did the drudgery of writing lesson plans or behavioral objectives. I began to find curriculum literature that augmented my conversation

about what is worth knowing, doing, needing, being, becoming, overcoming, sharing, and contributing. This *multilogue* helped me see that few important issues were settled and that a productive uncertainty was the best place to be on the toughest issues.

My experience with family, friendship, journey, hope, and imagination doubtless is a seedbed for the way I teach curriculum studies. Imaginative playmates came in handy as I role-played my way through eight years of elementary school teaching and later made their way into my professing of curriculum studies.

One of my enduring methods grew from my elementary teaching, wherein I would *be* a person from history, rather than simply tell about that person; for instance, I might transform myself to become a prehistoric man, a Buddhist, or a serf in the Middle Ages. Later, as I worked on my first book, *Curriculum Books: The First Eighty Years* (Schubert & Lopez, 1980), I saw recurrent curriculum orientations or ideologies emerge in each decade of the 20th century, so I named them: *social behaviorist, intellectual traditionalist, experientialist,* and *critical reconstructionist.* I saw some of each of them in myself, and so it was not too difficult to summon up the pure form of each to teach in my classes. These mysterious visitors became known to my students as Schubert's *guest speakers.* Soon, I took them on consulting ventures, as well.

What I want to convey in this article is an interpretation of the story of strategies I used to teach curriculum studies and the internal reflection that accompanied their development. I do so in the spirit of *dialogue.* My thoughts on teaching curriculum studies, and on generating dialogue about teaching and curriculum, have evolved under the title *Curriculum-Curriculum.* The point (although not realized by my spell and grammar check, which sees the term *curriculum-curriculum* as a redundancy) is that if I am teaching about curriculum studies, I am trying to influence the curriculum that helps students understand and engage with the field of curriculum studies. So, I encourage them to think about the curriculum (or personal journey) of their

current exploration of curriculum and, as well, the explorations they hope to carry out as they continue their career in curriculum studies.

When I began to teach curriculum studies, I realized this purpose only on a superficial level. I somehow wanted my students to realize the whole panorama of the curriculum studies field in one or two courses. Perhaps due to my own indoctrination through school and college experiences that saw coverage as a possibility, I dished out curriculum *knowledge* fast and furiously, wanting instant expertise. I was well meaning, and clearly naïve. After all, it had taken me several years of study to learn what I wanted graduate students to comprehend in a quarter. I wanted students to know what I knew, so we could have discussions from that mutual stance. To determine if they knew what I had presented via lecture and reading, I gave tests.

I began questioning what *understanding the knowledge base* meant. I began to question whether (or how much) the meaning or essence of curriculum studies really pertained to amassing details on such matters as the Committee of Ten and Fifteen reports, the Eight Year Study, life adjustment curriculum, post-Sputnik curriculum reform, or the comprehensive high school. I wondered how much everyone should be able to recite about John Dewey, Edward L. Thorndike, Harold Rugg, George Counts, Franklin Bobbitt, W. W. Charters, William Kilpatrick, Wilford Aikin, L. Thomas Hopkins, Alice Miel, Theodore Brameld, Ralph Tyler, Hollis Caswell, Florence Stratemeyer, Max Corey, Edward Krug, Virgil Herrick, Hilda Taba, B. Othanel Smith, or J. Harlan Shores, among others. With faith in the possibility of the synoptic, we claim to *cover* world history and biology in a year, or economics or psychology in a semester. Incredible! I recall a story (perhaps apocryphal) that Einstein agreed to give a graduation address, and the high school valedictorian sitting next to him asked what Einstein did. He replied, "I study physics." The student looked at his white hair and aged features and said incredulously, "Well, I studied physics last year!" Her implication was that she completed

the study in a year, so why is this Einstein fellow taking so long to study it!

So, I thought about my expectations, noting how the students struggled to be able to give cursory identification of characters and events in the curriculum field that came so easily for me. I listed 100 sets of four or five items about curriculum. All but one fit a category of curriculum studies, and students had to identify which item did not fit with other members of the set. If they thought more than one could be excluded, they were asked to include written justification. Few did. They had been programmed by years of "giving the right answers" to try to *psych out* the teacher or professor to give what they wanted. While I thought the activity made the necessary drudgery of amassing information fun, anxiety continued (although students acted as if the exercise were fun because this attitude was part of "the right answer," too).

Why is it so difficult to break away from the diabolical identification of information acquisition with learning and growth? Is it merely that the former is easier to request and measure than insight and understanding, which are much more defensible outcomes of study? I pondered such matters and realized that the curriculum field, for me, was like family and friends, because I lived it. I knew the people. I saw a connection between my own personal wonderings about life's meaning and what curriculum scholars ask. As I thought about why I was so drawn to curriculum literature, it came to me that amid all of the emphasis on planning, surveillance, and control, there exists in that literature a persistent voice that asks, "What is worthwhile?" As I pondered this observation, I concluded that if I could somehow get students to ask this question, and keep it alive in their educational endeavors, the rest would follow. They would come to appreciate the legacy of curriculum dialogue and discourse, characters and events, and even contextual details. So I concluded that the *what is worthwhile* question is the essence of the curriculum field. I thought that maybe I could somehow connect whatever students considered worthwhile in life generally

with this *what's worthwhile* heart of the curriculum field.

So, I began to develop alternative approaches.

I began a curriculum theory class as usual with students telling something of who they are. Expanding a bit beyond asking about each student as an educator, I inquired about his or her outside interests. Each was asked to identify a topic about which he/she knew well. Choices included restaurants, cars, shopping, chess, cards, golf, pets, musical instruments, sports, travel, and much more. I then asked students to note several (say, 5–10) subcategories of their interest. So, for television, someone might list cartoons, family shows, news, movies, dramas, commercials, soap operas, specials, game shows, and sports. Then they spent a few weeks reading short pieces by a wide variety of curriculum authors. Finally, they were asked to categorize the theorists using the subcategorical scheme of their interest area. Since their interest area was something they knew a good deal about, it was not difficult for them to explicate in detail a rationale for placing curricularists into their subtopics. By connecting their interests with the purport of curriculum essays, curriculum meanings came closer to students' life concerns. This activity confirmed my contention that we learn best when we make analogies that connect the novel with the familiar in our lives. It occurred to me that doing so puts one rather close to John Dewey's (1916) connecting of the *psychological* (interests and concerns of learners) with the *logical* (extant knowledge in disciplines or personal experience).

I also tried individual conferences, thinking that focus on personalized concerns in light of curriculum questions would highlight the question of worth. It also helped those who could express ideas better orally than via writing. So, I constructed six questions built around central themes in readings and class sessions, stating them in ways that enabled discussion to move to application in each student's realm of experience. To avoid an emphasis on role memorization, I gave the questions to students in advance and said they could bring notes to help center

discussion on ideas that students deemed relevant to their lives as educators. Students had to do considerable study in preparation for the conference. Nonetheless, anxiety was not much relieved, as compared with the test situation. Shortly, I dropped this highly charged conference. My surveillance quotient was still too high, and my uneasy feelings persisted.

Knowing how I have benefited from talking with curriculum theorists at conferences and through corresponding with them, I thought of another tack to simulate similar experiences in the classroom. I asked students to identify two or three of the theorists whose work spoke significantly to them and to pose questions that they would like to ask these theorists. I often followed this activity by having the students construct responses that they thought the theorist in question would be likely to make. Sometimes I would role-play as the theorist responding, and a conversation would ensue. An alternative activity, perhaps more connected to lived experience, was to have students write letters to theorists after reading an article or book. While only an exercise for theorists no longer alive, I actually mailed the letters to living authors. Both students and authors expressed enjoyment and personal benefit from the transactions that occurred.

As a variation on this theme of communicating with authors, I instigated a simulated conference or seminar among authors read, with each student role-playing as an author, sketching out his or her major points, and engaging in dialogue that I moderated. As moderator, I attempted to provide additional background on the authors and ideas found in other works they had written. I began to invite scholars to visit with my students, even offering a stipend to have a colleague from another university visit in the rare instance that the financial wherewithal existed. Moreover, the following idea struck me about 20 years ago: If I could attend conferences, so might my students.

Influenced by the corpus of Elliot Eisner's work, I decided that assignments should not be so unidimensionally discursive. So, sometimes I have asked students to make a nonverbal,

artistic rendition of the impact of an article or book.

I have also asked students to keep elaborate card files (in a recipe box) of different categories of curriculum-related artifacts. This works especially well with students of teacher education. Nevertheless, it could be a basis for analysis and discussion of the *worthwhile* question for experienced educators who are already doctoral students. I usually ask that the cards include book cards (with brief summary and commentary on major ideas or perspectives), methods or approach cards (with practical ideas for curriculum and teaching, noting underlying assumptions), materials cards (actual notes on resources and materials and their rationale for use), frequent thought cards (any ideas that enhance perspective or reflection on curriculum matters), and salient quotation cards (exact words from pieces read, for future incorporation in dissertations or other writings that students might do).

Since it is next to impossible to read and write comments on the voluminous selections of cards that often emerge, I have also asked students simply to provide one-page, single-spaced, 10–12 font, written commentaries that are merely a slice of the continuous reflection that each normally carries out; strangely and *quantitatively*, this is a kind of *sample* of the stream of consciousness that any serious budding scholar experiences all of the time! I ask that students leave marginal space for my comments, which is not difficult to provide for one-page per student, a few times per semester.

Most recently, along with these one-page renditions, my larger assignment is for students to present what I call their *curriculum-curriculum.* Rather than teach and then test (trying to see if what students recall is what I want them to recall), I simply ask them to imagine ways to express how they are growing through their encounters with curriculum literature. Expressions of the *curriculum-curriculum* take many forms: journals, video, audiotapes, personal conferences, relevant stories, and varied commentaries (e.g., mini reviews of books, projections of next readings, imagined projects, discussions of the meanings of work

encountered, and related experiences in education and life). Oral presentations on key dimensions of each student's *curriculum-curriculum* serve as culminating experiences for the course. A course, I have increasingly come to believe, is not a completion of study; rather, if worth its salt, it is a beginning of lifelong pursuit that will move in yet uncharted directions.

By my *curriculum-curriculum* assignment, I therefore mean to ask students, How is this journey of learning (journey as a root of curriculum, derived from the course of a chariot race) into curriculum studies providing you with insight into the curriculum of your own life? How does this course influence your ongoing journey toward images of the worthwhile? How is your journey toward educational worth also a journey toward personal, societal, and environmental worth? How does it provide meaning and sense of direction or purpose in your life as an educator?

How do I as each of my guest speakers (social behaviorist, intellectual traditionalist, critical reconstructionist, and experientialist) encourage this curriculum-curriculum journey? Let me give a few examples of each. As a social behaviorist, I often return to Franklin Bobbitt (1918 and 1924), well known for his notion of activity analysis. Unwilling to take a stand on what is worthwhile, I (as social behaviorist) claim to be a curricular engineer, who seeks to find and facilitate the voice of the majority, while also protecting minority opinion. Almost forgotten, activity analysis is shown to be a prerequisite that gives defensibility to the commonly assumed starting point of curriculum development—namely, needs assessment. From a Bobbitt-esque posture, I ask students (usually practicing educators) if they want their own students to be successful. Seldom does anyone oppose success as a marker to strive for, although a few want me to define success. With Bobbitt, I claim that we can discover it empirically. Imagining Bobbitt's practice of observing successful persons in an effort to delineate their frequent activities, we recall persons we consider to be successful in an admirable sense (famous and not, past and present). I call for an analysis of key qualities or characteristics that

define successful practices of these persons. Personages commonly named include Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, President [Whomever], Bill Gates, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Nader, Bono, Jesus, Gandhi, Buddha, a good friend, an admirable relative. In any case, we then launch into what must these individuals know, value, and be able to do in order to make the good contributions they make. Hence, addressing the basic curriculum question: What is worthwhile? Once identified and carefully defined and defended, these qualities of knowing and being become a baseline from which to do a needs assessment. Herein is the basis for curriculum development, and the social behaviorist shows how to convert needs into purposes and objectives (behavioral whenever possible). Continuing with the Tyler rationale (see Tyler, 1949), purposes are conveyed through a delivery system known as content, learning activities, or experiences; they are engineered via organizational patterns of scope, sequence, and learning environment and are enacted through instructional strategies and materials; they are evaluated (measured whenever possible), and the results are used as feedback for curricular improvement (see Schubert 1986/97, Chapters 8–11). Extant scientific research is sought as a valid and reliable basis for carrying out each phase of this process of curriculum design.

My *intellectual traditionalist* visitor answers the basic curricular question of worth by saying that the great works should be the basis for curriculum. After all, they embody the best that humans have created—the best wisdom and knowledge in philosophy, history, the arts, literature, science, mathematics, and social science. I ask students each to identify a great work or genre of work that has moved them deeply and influenced their journey toward that which is worthwhile. Once identified, I challenge students to figure out how the creator of the work(s) reached them. It is noteworthy that the author or artist did not know them personally. I argue that the great work in question is, in fact, *a curriculum* that has influenced them greatly. How has the creator of that *curriculum* known what to do to

extend such influence? How is he or she a great teacher? Has this teacher–curricularist–artist implicitly employed what Gilbert Highet (1950) called *the art of teaching*, based on knowing the subject, loving the subject, knowing the students, caring about the students? Isn't great teaching and curriculum making from an intellectual traditionalist stance more of an art than the science of the social behaviorist? How can the qualities of the greatest teachers (creators of our great works) be identified and utilized as models of curriculum and teaching in schools and other places of education? Although they do not know us personally, do great authors and artists reach us because they know that we are all concerned with [Adler's] great ideas or [Ulich's] mysteries and events of life, since these are common human qualities or interests? How can we make better use of great works and their creators as a basis for understanding curriculum and teaching?

When my *critical reconstructionist* emerges, I focus on social justice as a worthy object of curricular discourse. Saturating students with the literature of inequity (vis-à-vis race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, health, ableness, age, membership, place, ethnicity, religion, language, belief or unbelief, cultural practices, nationality, and more), I [as the critical reconstructionist] encourage students to tell stories from their own experience about discrimination (for or against) that they have known personally and learned from others. From these stories, they sense what it means to name their experience (see Freire, 1970) without the imposition of hegemonic master narrative. Drawing from Jean Anyon's provocative analyses (1980), how is it that some groups must learn that the route to success (if there is one at all) is to learn and play the rules, while slightly more privileged groups learn to find success by *psyching out* the persons in charge and giving them *the right answers*? How is it that even more privileged groups (those considered potentially dangerous by rulers—governmental, corporate, or military) are given a special *deal* that allows them to be creative and rather well-to-do, if they promise not to challenge ruling class supremacy? How is it

that *rulers* are kept in power through success that derives from large amounts of money and power-wielding connections? To this duo, obedient educators can add high-quality (e.g., Ivy League) certificates.

Teachers often tell students that they have to leave their problems [of a toxic waste dump near their homes, pressure to buy or sell drugs, or threat to join a gang] at the doorstep of the school and come in to *circle the verbs* (see Rehak, 1996), seldom addressing the meaning of such activities. The surreptitious meaning—could it be to prevent questioning of inequities? Instead, what if we enabled students to see that their oppressions (repressions, suppressions, and depressions) could be addressed by *carefully* integrating subject matters and personal experience to pose and act on real life problems and concerns, as *named* by students themselves.

The *experientialist*, less strident than the critical reconstructionist, suggests that curriculum should come from a full range of experience and the wonders therein, oppression being one of many. I often ask students to make a list of six things they hate to do, with extra credit given for items on their list that they cannot do well. I ask them to imagine that the next Monday they have to arise early, go off to a factory-like building, and have an hour of each. This is their schedule. They groan. I assure them it is only five days a week, 200 days a year, and for merely 13 years. Somehow, this does not make them feel better. When there, they will be compared with others, some of whom can pursue these topics rather well, others very well, and a few [like themselves] do poorly. They will be tested and graded and their marks will determine opportunities for the future. So will their conduct. Would they ever feel like dropping out, causing trouble, being destructive to property, others, or themselves? They would, of course. Who wouldn't? Only a few say it would be good for them to be forced to improve through suffering. Then we reflect on the fact that there are many students who look at their schedules (math, science, reading, English, foreign language, social studies, and more) and feel as these educators do when they look at the

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list of things they hate to do and can't do well. Herein, we consider the deficit model and its prominence in schools, as we too often see played out in reality (see Ayers, 2001, 29–32, for critique of the deficit model).

What of the possibility of defining students in terms of their strengths, instead of their deficits? As an exercise, I ask students to think of one of their strengths—perhaps a skill, an area of knowledge, an interest, a value or belief that guides their lives. I ask them to draw a pathway, a meandering circuitous journey, with *birth* at one end and *now* at the other. I have them draw some milestones on the pathway to represent significant influences that inspired development of one or more of the strengths they identify. In pairs or small groups, students tell stories about those milestone experiences. They become enthralled in memories of experience—their own and those of others. I ask them to interview someone outside of class [e.g., a friend, relative, or significant other] and to reflect on what they have heard. What builds strength and capacity? What conditions, kinds of interactions, inspirations, exemplars? They reflect on how to bring more such capacity builders to their situations as educators.

All of the attempts to inspire reflection, with the help of my guest speakers, often merge with lived experience. Sometimes this takes the form of direct applications by students in educational situations outside of the university. Sometimes students (teachers and administrators) take these activities to their work and share them with colleagues for in service education or professional development. They might build curriculum from studying meanings of success, as the social behaviorist admonished them to do. Or, from an intellectual traditionalist standpoint, they might relate educational experience to great ideas or life's mysteries and events. Alternatively, they might struggle to integrate curricula around student experience of oppression, responding to the critical reconstructionist call to remake society. Or, from the experientialist, they might begin by learning about their own students' milestones on their journeys of experience and ask together how they can create meaning, growth, and beneficial contributions in the world.

For me, the essence of any project, dissertation, article, or book is *to consider what is worth doing and being, experiencing and knowing, needing, sharing, overcoming, imagining, and contributing.* I think that this is the essence of education itself.

Discussion Questions

How is your educational journey reflected in your teaching philosophy?

How would you define each of the curriculum approaches delineated by Schubert: the social behaviorist, the intellectual traditionalist, the critical reconstructionist, and the experientialist?

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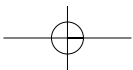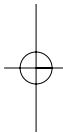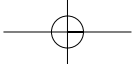
Article 7

HUMAN AGENCY AND THE CURRICULUM

HANAN A. ALEXANDER

Philosophers since Plato have held that education in the fullest sense entails initiation into communities in pursuit of worthwhile know1edge (Plato, 1987). This means, as Richard Peters (1965) put it, that education involves two conditions, one concerning knowledge and the other desirability. Regardless of how one conceives the nature of knowledge, however, addressing the question of what is *worth* knowing requires a conception of what it means for something to be worthwhile (Bode, 1927; Spencer, 1945). Yet, recent curriculum thought has tended to deny or undermine one or another aspect of the key assumption upon which a meaningful account of desirability depends—that people are the agents of their own beliefs, desires, and actions. This renders a significant encounter between the curriculum and substantive ethics highly problematic.

ETHICS AND HUMAN AGENCY

Crucial to any ethical stance is the assumption that human beings possess agency. This means that they have the freedom within reasonable limits to choose their beliefs, desires, and actions, the intelligence to distinguish between better and worse according to some conception of these notions, and the capacity to make mistakes in what they believe, feel, and do. Elsewhere I have called these the conditions of moral or ethical discourse: freedom, moral intelligence, and fallibility (Alexander, 2001, pp. 44–48).

These conditions can be clarified by reference to three concepts that emerge in the thought of Charles Taylor (1964): self-determination, self-expression, and strong evaluation. Free will is related to self-determination. Taylor followed Kant in believing that personal autonomy is a

"transcendental condition" of ethics, an assumption we must make for any conception of normative discourse to make sense. Ethics is concerned with persuading a person to discipline her will to act or arrange her life in a certain way. If it is not in fact within a person's sphere of influence to direct her will, because it is controlled by some other agent such as society or history or chemistry or the gods, if she is not in this sense autonomous, then it is futile to endeavor to persuade her to desire this rather than that or to behave in this way rather than that, since she is not the agent in charge of her desires or behavior.

Moral intelligence is connected to what Taylor calls self-expression. He follows Hegel in recognizing that for a person to be able to exercise autonomy she must be able to ground her choices in some sort of reasoning or understanding; otherwise her choices would not actually be hers, but rather a product of caprice. This requires "horizons of significance" or "transcendental ideals" embedded in moral traditions sufficiently "thick" to sustain meaningful moral choice, not mere reflections of arbitrary taste, personal whim, or momentary feeling, to which competing conceptions of the good give expression, even if we cannot agree on their content (Alexander, 2001, pp. 145–50; Smith, 2002, pp. 65–66; Taylor, 1991; Walzer, 1994, p. xi).

For self-expression to be meaningful, moreover, we must suppose that people have the capacity to engage in a particular kind of self-evaluation. This is connected to what I have called fallibility, or the capacity to err. Unlike animals that possess only first-order desires concerning such needs as food, procreation, and survival, humans also possess second-order desires—desires about desires—in which they evaluate their primary preferences (Frankfurt, 1971). I can choose, in the first instance, between two flavors of ice cream, say. Taylor calls this "weak evaluation," because the decisive factor in choosing one flavor over another is how I feel at that moment. Today I feel like vanilla, but tomorrow, I might prefer chocolate. I can also choose, however, between risking my life to save a friend in battle or running away to save myself. The crucial factor

in this instance is not how I feel at a given moment, but how I assess the worth of a particular feeling. I might consider the desire to save a friend courageous or generous, for example, and the motivation to run cowardly or selfish. Or, I might think it foolish to risk my life for another and eminently sensible to look out for myself first. It is this sort of assessment, which Taylor calls "strong evaluation," that we must express in making autonomous ethical decisions if they are be meaningful in other than a weak sense.

Curriculum thought must assume that teachers and students possess agency, that they are capable of self-determination, self-expression, and strong evaluation.

THE TYLER RATIONALE

Ralph Tyler (1949) is often associated with the technological movement in curriculum thought. He responded to the so-called scientific curriculum making of Franklin Bobbitt and W. W. Charters, according to which the curriculum should prepare students for adult life (Bobbitt, 1924). The tasks to be mastered to that end are to be determined by means of a statistical survey of daily adult behaviors (Charters, 1923). Unfortunately, this assumes that current adult behaviors are those that ought to be taught to children, which, as Boyd Bode pointed out, is not always the case (Bode, 1927). Additionally, it assumes that we can conclude from the way things are how they ought to be, and as David Hume (1953) long ago pointed out, this is logically problematic. This problem is commonly associated with what G. E. Moore called the "naturalistic fallacy," although Moore's formulation differed in significant ways from Hume's (Moore, 1993).

Tyler addressed this among other concerns by suggesting that three sources be consulted to determine curriculum objectives: the learners themselves, the social environment, and the subject matter. By comparing an assessment of what students know in a given field to what the society and subject matter require them to learn, we can establish the proper objectives in each

discipline. Since there are likely to be many more objectives than can be attained, the results of this process should be sifted through two screens; the philosophy of the school and the psychology of learning. The first establishes the normative priorities of the school and the latter the appropriate developmental stages at which each priority should be addressed.

To establish the objectives of a language or mathematics curriculum, for instance, we should first assess what the students already know and compare this to what the social environment and subject matter require. French or American schools will demand different levels of language proficiency at home than they do abroad, and a math program in a science magnet will have different expectations from that of an arts-centered school. Whatever the environment, the subject matter will require much more than can be accomplished in any given academic year. So the school philosophy should be consulted to establish priorities and educational psychology to determine developmental appropriateness. The school philosophy can help to allocate resources such as instructional time, money for textbooks, language laboratories, and other instructional aids. Educational psychology will assist in deciding what students of a given age can be expected to achieve.

Once the objectives have been determined, Tyler then asked the curriculum planner to consider the experiences that might ensure that they are achieved, the ways in which those experiences should be organized, and how they ought to be evaluated. Tyler was among the first curriculum theorists to conceive the curriculum process in terms of student learning and social conditions rather than subject matter alone.

In a well-known critique, curriculum historian Hebert Kliebard (1975) pointed out that to assess students' knowledge or the demands of any given subject matter we must first know what subjects are to be taught. However, this is the whole point of curriculum development: to determine what those subjects ought to be. In other words, according to Kliebard's critique, to determine what subjects should be taught we

must already know what they are. The sources of objectives may help to refine the desired behaviors the curriculum should seek to attain, but at the end of the day the real work of curriculum development comes down to the normative philosophy of the school, which is predetermined by the adult society. Yet, Tyler offers no guidance as to how to evaluate competing claims among normative philosophies of education. Similar to his predecessors Bobbitt and Charters, he uncritically assumes that the way things are is the way they ought to be.

However, Tyler's difficulties with the normative side of the curriculum run deeper than this. Kliebard also questioned the morality of manipulating educational environments to achieve predetermined behavioral objectives. Does not the very idea of stating curriculum aims in terms of predetermined measurable objectives presume that the outcomes of learning can be controlled by the educational experiences in which the learner is required to participate? Where is the will, or desire, or interest of students in this scheme? To be sure, Tyler calls upon the curriculum planner to measure the interests of students in assessing the needs of the learners, and even asks that student interest be taken into account when planners select educational experiences for learners. Yet in the final analysis, the interests of society—expressed in the philosophical screen and translated into experiences designed to ensure outcomes—will always trump student desires. It would appear that interest is to be consulted in Tyler's curriculum primarily for the purpose of packaging predetermined social objectives to make them appealing to students, rather than to actively engage their genuine aspirations and concerns.

Tyler might respond, of course, that aspirations are socially determined, and that one purpose of the curriculum is to shape student desires according to social needs, or at least to provide a basis upon which autonomous decisions might later be founded. Communities of all sorts—political, cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic—have legitimate interests in inculcating their particular concerns in their children (see Counts, 1978). But

this response misses the key point: Kliebard questioned not only the adequacy of Tyler's approach to competing social needs and rival educational philosophies but also the morality of his assumption that learning should be defined primarily in terms of experiences designed to produce predetermined outcomes.

The only way for students to embrace desired outcomes according to the Tyler rationale would be through experiences that are prearranged to produce those outcomes whether or not a student might at some point be so convinced or inclined. Yet, the very idea that social or any other sort of interests are *morally* legitimate only makes sense when we recognize that people, including students, are agents endowed with the capacity for self-determination. We flatten the ethical significance of social or other concerns, therefore, to the extent that we suppress or subvert this essential human capacity.

There is a deep tension within a curriculum that offers an account of what is most worth knowing, which is what the Tyler rationale proposed to do, but that flattens the self-determination of students; for the very idea of something being worthwhile requires the assumption that within reasonable limits students are agents of their own desires, beliefs, and actions.

SCHWAB AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISCIPLINES

An especially influential approach to the academic curriculum during the past half century was launched in the 1960s as "the structure of the disciplines" movement. Joseph Schwab (1982), Tyler's colleague at the University of Chicago, was a towering figure in this tradition.

Schwab and his structuralist colleagues responded to the rapid growth of knowledge by arguing that the curriculum could no longer provide students with a comprehensive knowledge of any given subject matter, since scientific discovery is moving so rapidly that what is believed to be true today may turn out to be false tomorrow. Instead of focusing solely on the *substance* of a

discipline, its basic concepts and findings, the curriculum should also teach the *syntax* of a discipline, its methods of discovery and justification. Such an inquiry-based curriculum would teach students not only the matter of a discipline as Richard Peters (1965) called it, but, more important, its epistemological form, the tools of investigation and critical assessment used by scholars to discover new knowledge (Hirst, 1974; Hirst & Peters, 1970; Schwab, 1982). For this reason, the structuralist approach to curriculum has sometimes been associated with what came to be known as the "discovery method" (Shulman & Keisler, 1968).

How are we to devise such a curriculum? Schwab had a unique and ingenious answer. Following Aristotle's distinction between theoretical knowledge (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), he held that curriculum is a practical not a theoretical discipline (Aristotle, 2001). Its aim is not to discover laws of nature, society, behavior, or education but to translate those discoveries into practical strategies for teaching the structure of disciplines. The products of curriculum development are alternative lesson plans that anticipate instructional challenges in teaching a particular subject matter, not experiences designed to meet objectives measurable by the tools of social or behavioral science.

Arriving at such plans is a complex process because the disciplines to be taught, and the research that provides guidance for how to teach them, are not static doctrines to be memorized and applied but dynamic disciplines rich with scholarly discussion and debate. The challenge is to create an ongoing conversation between those working to discover new disciplinary and pedagogic knowledge and those endeavoring to teach students in school. This process, which Schwab called "curriculum deliberation," engages representatives of the essential ingredients of curriculum in dynamic discussions about how best to translate theory into practice. He called these ingredients "commonplaces"—teaching, students, subject matter, and milieu. Since there is no one right way to teach a discipline, the creation of practical pedagogic wisdom requires the "arts of

eclectic," an integrated application of the most compelling and relevant theories from both the subject matter itself and the study of how best to teach it (Schwab, 1982, pp. 322–383).

Schwab and his structuralist colleagues were not ambivalent about normative discourse in curriculum thought; but they were ambiguous. A normative educational philosophy is implied in the communal requirements of what Schwab called milieu. However, Schwab is unclear about whether normative philosophy should provide the conceptual and ethical frame that guides curriculum deliberation. If so, how is it to be determined given Schwab's complex, plural, and evolving conception of theory? If normative visions of education are to be considered as one of a number of types of theories to be taken into account during the process of deliberation, how can it be said that the curriculum subscribes to a normative vision?

This ambiguity is related to an epistemological problem with curriculum structuralism that raises questions about the second condition of human agency—moral intelligence and self-expression. Schwab was among the pioneers of what later became known as postempiricist and postpositivist philosophy of knowledge that argued that scientific theories are more tentative and partial than was previously supposed (Bernstein, 1983; Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Since the findings of inquiry are underdetermined by data according to this view, theoretical expectations and conceptual frameworks play a significant role in the formulation of explanations. These frameworks are organized into disciplines or forms of knowledge each with its own assumptions, concepts, and methods of inquiry. This leads to a strong form of cognitive relativism, which holds that truth is a function of conceptual framework.

Although it does not follow logically from his epistemological position, Schwab appears to treat moral traditions like structures of knowledge. Since all moral positions are underdetermined by reasoning, and no argument exists that can sustain the superiority of one over another, normative positions must be evaluated within the context of the conceptual frameworks within which they are formulated, and a variety of competing (even contradictory) positions should be considered in making curriculum decisions.

His intention was to create an eclectic basis for educational practice in which a rich variety of normative as well as empirical traditions, from Plato and Aristotle to Freud and Skinner, could play equally challenging roles in making curriculum decisions.

In throwing out arbitrary and overly simplistic empirical standards, however, Schwab may have gone too far by blurring important epistemological distinctions between truth and falsehood. And in adopting a parallel stance toward moral traditions, Schwab may have embraced an overly eclectic attitude toward normative visions of education that weakens our capacity to identify value differences between better and worse. This threatens the possibility of moral intelligence and self-expression. If every moral tradition is as good as every other, it becomes impossible in principle to distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong according to any theory.

EISNER'S ESTHETIC HUMANISM

If Tyler's technological curriculum focuses on producing desired behaviors and Schwab's academic structuralism focuses on cognitive processes, the humanistic curriculum turns our attention to emotional dimensions of education. One important theorist in this tradition is Elliot Eisner (2001).

To conceive education as an art requires an esthetic theory. For this Eisner turned to Suzanne Langer's analysis of art as the symbolic expression of feeling. Langer (1957) grounded art in two important distinctions, between discursive and nondiscursive expression, and between logical and dynamic form. Discursive expression is abstract, conceptual, and theoretical. We use it to communicate about our world in daily and academic life, from shopping lists and travel directions to scholarly discoveries and scientific theories. Nondiscursive expression, on the other

hand, is concrete, particular, and experiential. We use it to communicate about dimensions of experience where words and concepts fail us— for instance, in expressing intense emotions such as love or anger. This sort of expression often relies on religious rituals, artistic symbols, or metaphoric language to create immediate, virtual, or vicarious experience.

Logical form, according to Langer, is rigorous, structured, and fixed. It is concerned with the precise measurements and conceptual contours of reality. For instance, two lampshades that share precisely the same profile but for size can be said to have the same logical form. Dynamic form, on the other hand, speaks to the shape of experiences that are fleeting and in flux. A dry riverbed, for example, can be said to capture the dynamic form of flowing water at the moment the water ceased flowing. The description of an automobile accident by a police officer, to take another example, will strive to express the logical form of the events in discursive language: when the accident happened, the direction of each car before they collided, where they ended up immediately afterward, and so on. But the stories told by the drivers to their families and friends will be filled with emotion. They will seek to capture the emotional shape of the accident through expressive language that involves the listener in a vicarious experience of it.

The academic curriculum prefers discursive expression of logical form. It aims to convey concepts, methods of inquiry, and truths in the precise theoretical language associated with scholarship. The fine arts, on the other hand, aim to capture the dynamic form of human feeling in nondiscursive expression such as symbols and metaphors (Goodman, 1978). To take seriously the image of teaching and education as fine arts, then, we must understand how they use nondiscursive expression to capture and communicate the shape of human feeling. Eisner offers such an understanding by rethinking curriculum content and evaluation, rather than in a new approach to its design and construction.

Eisner conceives curriculum subject matter in terms of what he calls "forms of representation."

In contrast to the structure of a discipline that emphasizes its mode of inquiry, the notion of a form of representation stresses a mode of expression. "People don't paint what they see," Eisner is fond of musing, "they see what they can paint." The shape of consciousness is determined by the ways we represent experience, not by how we study it. Art and science are both forms in which we represent what we experience. Excluding forms of representation such as the fine arts from the curriculum, as so often occurs in state schools, denies students the opportunity to appreciate the sort of experience that they capture, indeed to enjoy those experiences altogether.

If the curriculum initiates students into a collection of artistic forms, the evaluation of curriculum entails appreciating and critiquing the ways in which those forms have been represented. To view teaching and education as fine arts requires that assessment be conceived as artistic connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurship refers to the refined taste for a particular art form that is acquired through extensive personal experience as either a creator or student of that art. It involves the capacity for judging quality, for assessing the artistic merit of a particular work of art. Educational connoisseurship, then, is a form of understanding what goes on in classrooms based on personal experience. Educational criticism, on the other hand, is a form of representing that knowledge. It involves commenting on pedagogic activities in rich, metaphoric terms in order to transform how we perceive and do our educational work (Eisner, 1997).

This conception of curriculum and evaluation expands our thinking about the tasks of education by placing the affective domain and subjective experience at its core. It recognizes that the curriculum needs to influence feeling and creative self-expression as well as thinking, to foster love of learning, mold commitment and dedication, and shape the student's deepest appreciation of what it means to be devoted to people and ideals. Following Plato, Schwab called this the education of "eros" (Garrison, 1997; Schwab, 1982, pp. 105–132).

Nevertheless, although Eisner is acutely sensitive to the impact of what we choose not to teach (see Eisner, 2001, pp. 97–107), he offers little guidance concerning how to make those choices. If every form of representation is as suitable for inclusion in the curriculum as any other, how are we to distinguish between those that are more or less worthwhile? Under these circumstances, it is difficult to assess whether or to what degree particular curriculum alternatives are more or less desirable. This undermines the third assumption of moral agency mentioned above, fallibility, or the possibility of being wrong (Alexander, 1989). The very self-expression Eisner seeks to promote would appear to require what Taylor calls strong values that enable the assessment of the quality of an experience (Taylor, 1991). Yet, Eisner shies away from such strong evaluation when he fails to offer an account of how to distinguish the relative worth of forms of representation that compete for time and resources in the curriculum. In short, Eisner's esthetic approach to self-expression appears to rely on too "weak" or "thin" or "merely" personal an account of the values needed to make curriculum decisions and assess classroom experience (Walzer, 1994).

This point is driven home it seems to me by Eisner's tendency to posit a personal conception of connoisseurship as the primary source for assessing the merit of education experiences. This weakens the meaning of the term *merit*. It is not enough for educational criticism to re-educate our perception of educational events according to the connoisseurship of an experienced educator alone. For this sort of personal assessment to be meaningful, it must carry weight because the connoisseur has acquired an appreciation for a standard of excellence; and for such standards to have meaning they must appeal to strong values that transcend self and society (Alexander, 1986; Phenix, 1971). Yet it is the very possibility of this kind of strong evaluation that Eisner appears to avoid in stressing the role of personal understanding in the assessment of school programs.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE RADICAL CURRICULUM

Eisner wrote of the three curricula that all schools teach: the explicit curriculum that is announced in brochures, course syllabi, and textbooks; the implicit curriculum, which is embedded in classroom norms and student–teacher relations; and the null curriculum, which refers to what we do not teach (Eisner, 2001). Practitioners and policymakers often ignore the latter two curricula. For radical curriculum theorists such as Michael Apple (1979), however, the implicit and null curricula are not merely ignored; they are hidden by those in power.

Neo-Marxist critical theorists hold that beneath the surface of social life lies conflict between the powerful and the powerless (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). Those who have power, based on wealth, lineage, or majority-rule, use culture to impose an ideology on others that sustains their power. This ideology—expressed in language, media, religion, knowledge, morality, and education—obscures the fact of oppression from those who are enslaved to the degree that some even prefer subjugation to liberation. Marx called this "false consciousness" (Marx & Engels, 1947). Epistemological ideas such as truth and knowledge and moral ideas such as right and wrong have no "objective" basis outside of the power interests they serve. At the end of the day, all beliefs and behaviors are ideological save those dedicated to liberating the oppressed (Watt, 1994, pp. 1–26). The task of critical pedagogy, an educational orientation influenced by critical theory, is to expose the hidden tools of oppression utilized by those in power so that students can embrace more authentic ideologies that reflect their own cultural, social, and political interests (Gur-Zeev, 2003; McLaren, 1989).

Neo-Marxist analysis assumes that all education is ideological. The question is not whether but which ideology to inculcate (Counts, 1978). It might appear that this is entirely consistent with my call for a return to substantive ethics in curriculum thought, but this is not so, because

radical curriculum theory uses the term *ideology* in what I have called an amoral (or nonethical) rather than a moral (or ethical) sense. Moral ideologies embrace the conditions of human agency. They are not moral in the sense that they embrace a particular substantive ethic, although the conditions of moral agency are by no means value free, but in that they accept the transcendental conditions that make it possible to have meaningful ethical discourse. Amoral ideologies, on the other hand, deny these conditions. They assume that beliefs and behaviors are not chosen but determined by family or socioeconomic class or culture (Alexander, 2001).

By advocating that children ought to be liberated from hegemonic culture to serve ideological interests they may not necessarily embrace, radical curriculum theory employs the term *ideology* in an amoral sense; and since all truths and values that do not reflect the necessity of liberating the oppressed are relative to class, or culture or gender, there is no way to assess whether the interests of a particular child, however they might be interpreted, are in fact being served by this new ideology of liberation (Watt, 1994, pp. 1–26). This undermines all three assumptions of human agency. The child does not make choices that give expression to her own strong values, either now or upon reaching maturity. Values are not chosen at all but determined by ideology, culture, and class. It is assumed, therefore, that the child will express the values of her culture or social class and embrace liberation as defined by others, whether or not she would choose such a form of liberty for herself. Positions of this kind do not engage substantive ethics; they render such an engagement deeply problematic (Alexander, 2001, pp. 94–107).

My point is not that radical curriculum theory is illiberal because it fails to embrace autonomy, but rather that in diminishing the significance of human agency, it tends to undermine the *moral* bite of the claim that one group or another has suffered oppression, because it undercuts the conditions necessary for ethical concepts to be meaningful altogether. Instead, its antidote—"liberation" or "positive liberty"—runs the risk of replacing one form of subjugation with another. In an amoral universe, power not ethics is the primary court of appeals; and force of one kind or another too often appears to be the only recourse to resolve differences or redress perceived injustice (Alexander, 2003).

HUMAN AGENCY IN THE CURRICULUM

To speak of ethics in the curriculum does not require an alternative account of instructional content, design, or evaluation. Rather, to engage ethics in the curriculum requires a conception of what it means for an educational program to be better or worse, and this can be articulated only within the context of a conception of the good. Although there is no single ethical vision that all curricula are bound to promote, they must embrace the formal criteria without which the very idea of an ethical stance is meaningless in other than a weak sense, that people have the capacity for agency. Let us conclude then by considering how each of the conditions of agency—(a) free will or self-determination, (b) moral intelligence or self-expression, and (c) fallibility or self-evaluation—might be incorporated into the curriculum.

Free Will

To foster free will and self-determination, the primary concern of any curriculum must be the ultimate independence of children, their ability upon reaching maturity to understand within reasonable limits the options they face and the consequences of choosing one direction over another, and their ability to make intelligent choices based on this understanding.

To live meaningfully in and contribute productively to a liberal democracy requires the ability to assess not only the strength of an argument but also the quality (according to some conception) of a piece of art or literature, the significance of a historical or a sociological development, or the contribution of a scientific

or technological innovation as well as the capacity to understand or reproduce them (McPeck, 1990). Education for self-determination implies fostering a critical stance toward subject matter, not only in the sense of the ability to employ and assess reasons (Siegel, 1988; Norris, 1992; Paul, 1994; Ennis, 1996) but also—and perhaps more importantly—in terms of the capacity to appraise quality or significance, to evaluate not only the amount of happiness one may achieve by making one choice rather than another, or the strength of the reasoning that favors that choice, but also the relative worth of the satisfaction that may be realized from making it.

Moral Intelligence

However, qualitative judgments of this kind only make sense within the context of ethical orientations that enable one to say that this is more important than that. And to make such judgments possible, a tradition must meet at least two conditions: (a) to serve as a basis for a person's self-determined choices—what Taylor (1989) calls a "source of the self"—a moral tradition must be an expression of one's identity, integral to how one conceives who one aspires to be. And (b) to achieve this level of ownership and investment, a tradition needs to be sufficiently robust and emotionally compelling to inspire affiliation and identification.

Fallibility

Finally, to assume that students are fallible and to promote strong evaluation means among other things that the moral understanding necessary to acquire or construct worthwhile knowledge is not innate but learned, that it is not in a person's very nature to grasp the wisdom of an ethical tradition, or to behave well or poorly. Students might just as readily misunderstand as understand that tradition, or choose poorly as wisely. Whether or not they do so is a contingent matter, which implies that if they in fact comprehend the tradition's conception of what counts as

worthwhile, or learn to desire or appreciate something of particular value, or choose to follow a virtuous course of action, they are to be credited with a meritorious intellectual, emotional, or practical accomplishment. And if they fail to achieve this understanding or appreciation, or to exercise this choice, they are in some measure responsible for the failure.

This is not to say that there are no factors beyond the student's control. All students are disadvantaged in some way or another, and some are obviously more advantaged than others, economically, intellectually, emotionally, artistically, and physically. Surely curriculum theory and educational policy should consider whether, when, and how to address these imbalances. However, insofar as we are unwilling to hold students accountable for any portion of their learning, or to see them as responsible in some way when they miss the mark, they will face grave difficulty in acquiring or constructing or doing whatever a tradition deems appropriate with the knowledge that it considers to be worthwhile. An equally, if not more, important curricular and educational task, therefore, is to cultivate within students this sense of responsibility and accountability. This requires that students be encouraged to experience the exhilaration of genuine accomplishment when they succeed and to examine their own beliefs, desires, and actions when they have not achieved all that they had hoped. What might I have done differently? Where have I missed the mark? The strong evaluation required of future life choices begins with an assessment of the quality of personal investment a student has made in the learning process.

Although this may sometimes mean that students will need to face uncomfortable aspects of their own personalities, and this can result in fear or stress, the up side is that they will come to recognize that they have the capacity to change course, to make a difference. What they do, feel, and think does in fact matter; and their inherent worth is to be discovered not in the feeling that they will get it right no matter what but rather in the realization that they matter even when they get it wrong, indeed because they have the

capacity to get it wrong, since were this not the case, it would literally make no sense to speak of anything mattering at all. Students can thus learn to accept themselves as imperfect but nonetheless worthwhile beings, even as they strive to improve where they can.

A meaningful account of curriculum must begin with what can count as desirable, with what it means for knowledge on any account to be considered worthwhile, with the conditions of human agency: attempts to conceive the curriculum in terms of establishing, realizing, and evaluating behavioral objectives, or the structure of disciplines or knowledge or rationality, or forms of esthetic representation and evaluation, or the liberation of the oppressed have tended to undermine one or more of these conditions. To engage

worthwhile knowledge requires that the curriculum not only presuppose these conditions as human capabilities, but also that it actively promote them. This requires that students learn to make independent choices grounded in assessments not only of the reasoning entailed but also the relative worth of various human activities, that these choices express their personal identification with thick ethical traditions within which strong evaluation makes sense. It also requires students to recognize that in the context of those traditions they have the capacity to err in what they think, feel, and do but that they can also change course and make a difference. This is a source of fear and trepidation but also of great joy. Cultivating this sort of existential joy is, to my mind, the highest aspiration of any curriculum.

Discussion Questions

Like Schubert, Alexander examines different schools of curricular thought, and she finds each lacking for different reasons. How do you assess her critique?

What, according to the author, is the relationship between curriculum and ethics?

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Article 8

ADOLESCENT NEEDS, CURRICULUM, AND THE EIGHT-YEAR STUDY

ROBERT V. BULLOUGH, JR.

CRAIG KRIDEL

The concept of "needs" has played a central role in U.S. curriculum decision making since the early years of the 20th century. The word is frequently used uncritically, as if its meaning were understood and its value obvious. In this article, we explore the concept of needs in the deliberations of the educators associated with the Eight-Year Study (1933–1941) of secondary schools and consider the implications for current educational theory and practice, particularly the movement toward a standards-based curriculum.

FRAMING THE DEBATE

In his history of U.S. curriculum ideologies, Kliebard (1986, p. 219) demonstrated that by the middle of the 20th century the notions of "needs" or the "needs curriculum" provided a "convenient meeting ground" for developmentalists and educators committed to efficiency and functionalism. That these two apparently contending groups could find a comfortable place beneath the same conceptual umbrella ought to give pause. However, the way in which the debate around "needs" and the "needs curriculum" was initially and commonly framed—with the individual and the society placed in juxtaposition with one another—permitted such reconciliations.

Such thinking still exists, although one now rarely hears talk about individual needs in the sense argued by the "developmentalists." Rather, in the spirit of efficiency and functionalism, contemporary debate in the U.S. centers on identifying "student lacks," those gaps in knowledge, skill, and character that likely will interfere with success—namely the ability to be economically

self-sufficient. Certainly, this perspective under-pins the standards movement sweeping across the United States.

In his well-known rationale for curriculum work, the *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* Tyler (1950) recognized this social-deficit-driven way of framing the issue as mis-guided, and in his "rationale" placed the two orientations—individual needs and social needs (as well as a third orientation, subject areas)—alongside one another, thereby asserting that each had legitimate claims on the curriculum. In this way, he attempted to sidestep the contro-versy that, according to Taba (1962, p. 285), "split the Progressive Education Association in 1942" and led to its demise.

THE EIGHT-YEAR STUDY

Tanner and Tanner (1975, p. 319) have described the Eight-Year Study as "the most important and comprehensive curriculum experiment ever car-ried on in the US." Yet, misconceptions abound (Kridel & Bullough, 2002).

The study originated from the concern that curriculum experimentation in secondary edu-cation was made impossible by college and university admissions requirements. Under the leadership of Wilford Aikin, then headmaster of the John Burroughs School of St. Louis, Missouri, the Commission on Relation of School and College was formed by the Progressive Education Association (PEA) in the fall of 1930:

1. To establish a relationship between school and college that would permit and encourage recon-struction in the secondary school.

2. To find, through exploration and experimenta-tion, how the high school in the US can serve youth more effectively. (Aikin, 1942, p. 116)

The view was that secondary schools needed to be freed from the domination of college and university admissions requirements. Stimulated by the effects of the deepening Depression and

with the promise that rich data useful for making admissions decisions would be provided in due time, over 300 college and university administra-tions agreed to suspend their established admis-sions policies for a time to enable curricular experimentation in a few select secondary schools.

Sides were taken and camps formed in the debate over the meaning and proper place of needs in educational decision making. Sharp dif-ferences emerged, even within the progressive camp itself, including a disagreement between Boyd H. Bode, a professor of education at Ohio State University, whom, in 1938, *Time* magazine had dubbed "Progressive Education's No. 1 present-day philosopher," and V. T. Thayer (Zepper, 1970), chair of the PEA Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum (CSSC) (the curriculum arm of the Eight-Year Study) and educational director of the Fieldston School in New York City, one of the 30 participating schools. To make sense of the argument, we must situate the Eight-Year Study within a conceptual and social context, beginning with a brief consideration of the emergence of the idea of adolescence as a way of thinking about human development. This is important because psychology became the great champion of individual needs in contrast to social demands.

ADOLESCENCE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of adolescence, as a particular stage of human development, emerged in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Gillis (1974, p. 138) con-tends that the concept, a "discovery" of the middle classes and a product of "elite secondary schools," spread outward to the laboring population.

Hollingworth recognized adolescence as a period of "transition" that brought with it unique biological and social challenges from "learning to shave" to "getting away from the family" and find-ing a place within the larger society (1928, p. 36).

While Hollingworth and others were explor-ing human development, the social setting within

which that development took place was in great turmoil. The Depression had a profound effect on schools and on young people who found themselves unable to obtain employment and increasingly dependent on parents for longer periods of time. Following a 3-month cross-country trip to survey the condition of U.S. youth, Davis (1936) concluded they were a "lost generation."

Lacking employment opportunities, young people stayed longer in school where they encountered a curriculum out of touch with their experience.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

The PEA maintained that one of the reasons for the disconnection between adolescents and the high school and the unresponsiveness of the curriculum was the dominance of the college over the high school curriculum. A call was made for curriculum reform. However, as the Eight-Year Study began, its directing committee quickly realized that the participating schools needed help in rethinking the curriculum. The grip of traditional practices on educational thought was tight, and simply declaring a faculty free to experiment did not guarantee innovation would follow. Thus, in May 1932, the PEA Executive Board organized the CSSC under the direction of V. T. Thayer. From the beginning of its work, the CSSC was concerned with determining needs and the problem of creating responsive school programs.

SCIENCE IN GENERAL EDUCATION AND THE DEBATE OVER NEEDS

The CSSC committee charged with exploring the implications of science for general education was chaired by Harold Alberty, a former student of Bode's and his colleague at Ohio State University, and co-author with Thayer of a book on democratic supervision. In addition to Thayer, other members included Robert Havighurst,

director for general education of the General Education Board, and Caroline Zachry. Ultimately, this committee set the definition of needs that shaped much of CSSC's discussion and all of its publications, including *Science in General Education* (CSSC, 1938). This volume's influence was profound.

The view of needs presented in *Science in General Education* (CSSC, 1938) emerged over a period of 3 to 4 years of intense discussion. Teachers provided pointed feedback on an early draft that was shared at the first workshop sponsored jointly by the Commission on the Relation of School and College and CSSC in 1936. [Psychologist] Caroline Zachry became a key figure in the debate. Under Zachry's leadership, CSSC established the Committee on Adolescents. The committee was given a broad charge: "gain increased understanding of young people for the purposes of education" (Zachry, 1940, p. v).

Observation and written case studies in various settings of 650 adolescents from participating and nonparticipating Eight-Year Study schools were the central methods of study.

In May 1935, CSSC members met to discuss the early work of Zachry's committee as it related to the subject committees' charge. A report was presented that included a section on "social maturity." Alberty found the approach taken to social maturity in the report somewhat troubling. Notes from the meeting report that "Dr Alberty . . . said he always shies away from the word 'adjustment,' for to him it denotes a passive attitude of acceptance of a condition, rather than attempts to improve it" (CSSC, 1935, p. 12). Zachry responded to Alberty, saying that:

> adjustment is a dynamic thing. . . . That [the individual] must adjust to society as it is now in order to be able to change it. If he is maladjusted he will go to pieces, be powerless to change. (p. 12)

Alberty asked, "Will he be competent to react to change if he is always lagging behind, adjusting to present conditions?" To this comment,

Zachry said, "Adjusting to society does not mean [being] satisfied with it. . . . A person who is satisfied with his own present adjustment is a turtle." Alberty retorted, "I'm wondering what in this description keeps us from being turtles." Then Thayer commented, "But the goal is not, certainly, passive adjustment to the present conditions; nor is it being radical to the point where you are not living in the present at all."

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREJUDICES AND CURRICULAR UNDERSTANDINGS

In the Study of Adolescents, Zachry engaged educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychiatric social workers. Her bias was obviously a psychological one. The minutes from this meeting report that Zachry thought:

> The philosophy of progressive education is based to a large extent upon the belief that the individual learns best when he is conscious of a purpose. One of its main objectives has been to help the individual work out, become conscious of his purpose. The mental hygiene group is likewise concerned with purpose but maintains that *all* behaviour has a purpose, whether it be conscious or otherwise. (CSSC, 1935, p. 12)

Yet, her view was decidedly not philosophical but more concerned with identifying patterns of normal individual development within an established social context.

Adolescent needs were a topic of additional seminars. Making links between the CSSC subject committees and the emerging results of the Study of Adolescents became urgent, and discussion intensified as data accumulated and publishing deadlines approached. Following a far-ranging and sometimes heated discussion of "needs," Zachry pressed her view in a later seminar: "teachers will have to be as much concerned with [the student's] total needs and the total environment in which he is functioning as they are with the specific subject matter, and

those two things have to go hand in hand" (Zachry, 1937, n.p.).

There were, she said, both conscious and unconscious needs, and to meet unconscious needs required a curriculum that anticipated the emergence of a need but not too far in advance of its development:

> We have to train teachers to . . . sense these problems, understand the psychology of the child well enough to see when he is about ready for it [i.e., a curricular topic or activity designed to address a need], instead of organizing it ahead and giving it when he isn't ready.

This discussion continued and, perhaps in frustration, Harold Alberty remarked:

> It seems to me that one of our difficulties in these discussions is the very broad way in which we use the word "needs." We start in by using needs as a very definite drive on the part of the individual and then later use needs to mean those things which we, as adults in our present culture, anticipate that young people need. I am wondering whether or not before we can really get very far with our discussions, we don't have to settle upon some meaning of this word "need." (Zachry, 1937, section II, p. 2)

To decide what a need is, and whether or not once identified, it should be honored within the curriculum, presented a philosophical and a sociological problem. Psychology could not answer questions of this kind.

Zachry did not see the issue. To her, the philosophy guiding the study was straightforward and simple, an extension of her view of the PEA and its purpose.

The view she supported was that "fundamental needs are the same as those of an adolescent anywhere. . . ." Fundamental needs were first biological, but how they were expressed or satisfied depended on the wider environment. The challenge then became one of generating, in Thayer's words, an "inventory of needs," a "specific statement of needs" (Zachry, 1937, section III, n.p.).

Dissension emerged. Some participants thought it unwise, if not impossible, to generate

such a list, fearing that in so doing, the emphasis in the curriculum would shift away from concern for the individual adolescent's development and toward responding to a predetermined list of needs. Yet again, the question of philosophy was raised.

Thayer disagreed: "I think the difficulty is not so much philosophical as verbal." Later, Thayer pressed a more sociological position than that of Zachry's, a view that influenced the way in which the list of needs that eventually emerged was framed and presented in the various subject publications, including *Science in General Education* (CSSC, 1938): "I think that if we recognize needs as something that arise out of the interaction of the individual and the environment, defined by both, then we must have an analysis of both" (Zachry, 1937, section VIII, n.p.).

SUBJECT COMMITTEES AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF NEEDS

Each of the five volumes produced by the subject committees of CSSC (1938, 1940a, b, c, d) is organized around the classification of adolescent needs first presented in *Science in General Education* (CSSC, 1938, p. 24).

The committee is not, of course, proposing a curriculum based on the notion that the adolescent is always conscious of his needs or of his range of interests, or that he be permitted to do as he pleases. Neither is it proposing a curriculum based solely upon an adult conception of what is valuable as a preparation for adult living.

The committee asserted that needs evolve in response to the environment and develop through experience, a view consistent with Thayer's. In contrast to a curriculum imposed from the outside, the committee proposed that "needs serve as a point of departure in curriculum construction" (p. 24).

Following an acknowledgment and brief discussion that the word *need* has various meanings, the authors claimed they sought a middle ground, one that unites the individual and the social context: needs are "personal-social in

character" (p. 25). Thayer's view, which he earlier presented in the Zachry seminar, is clearly evidenced:

> A need will have always a personal or individual aspect which may best be understood as a biological or somatic tension. . . . Needs do not exist "under the skin" of the individual or in a vacuum. They arise and work themselves out in living, dynamic events which can only be described as *interactions between the individual and the social situation.* Thus when we speak of "the need of the student to select and use goods and services wisely," we refer to a want (biological tension) or a desire on the one hand, and the requirements, demands, standards of social living on the other. (p. 25)

Yet, the values of adjustment are also present: "a need—the tension in the already organized personality of the adolescent as he interacts with the demands of the environment and the standards or ideals which it sets—is truly unique with the individual" (p. 26).

Four categories of need were presented: needs in "Personal Living," "Immediate Personal-Social Relationships," "Social–Civic Relationships," and "Economic Relationships." The framework was to be used by teachers heuristically, as "convenient centres of reference for identifying worthy interests and needs and for selecting and organizing appropriate learning experiences." Chapter 2 of *Science in General Education* (CSSC, 1938, 23–57) points to a serious issue: Adolescents live within a democracy and have civic obligations; but the connection between democracy and the aim of meeting adolescent needs is unclear and surprisingly undeveloped. The apparent presumption was that the listed personal characteristics associated with democracy are somehow needs, yet they fall outside the social–civic category that is concerned with two needs: "the need for responsible participation in socially significant activities" and "the need for social recognition" (p. 188). Rather than operate as a social philosophy and social agency, as Bode contended, democracy appeared as an addendum to rather than as an integral part of the committee's argument.

BODE AND AN OPPOSING CONCEPT OF NEEDS

As Zachry's seminar group debated the meaning of needs, Bode was busily at work clarifying his own views. Earlier, Bode had resigned from CSSC, reportedly because it was "far too sentimentally child-centred" and dominated by the attitude of "the psychiatrist" (Lagemann, 2000, p. 146).

Bode (1938a) maintained that a standard is needed not only to determine which desires are educationally legitimate but also to serve as a means for resolving conflicts between desires. This requires a "long-range programme" that attends to "remote aims" (p. 64). He then takes a swing at "guidance," a role and position highly favored by progressive educators, including Zachry: "Guidance work often has to do with the discovery of needs which are not recognized as such by the persons concerned" (p. 66). Bode asserted that the "only way to discover a need is in terms of a 'pattern' or scheme of values or an inclusive philosophy of some kind" (p. 66). Later, Bode (1940) would argue that "it is just as true to say that needs must grow out of the curriculum as to say that the curriculum must grow out of needs" (p. 536).

It was toward a philosophy of democracy as a way of life that Bode (1937) had looked for a solution to the problem: "What is needed is a moratorium on needs, so that we can get down to serious business and bring to fruition the splendid promise that is contained in the philosophy of progressive education" (p. 67).

THAYER RESPONDS: THE BATTLE BEGINS

Bode (1940) wrote a negative review of *Reorganizing Secondary Education* (Thayer, Zachry, & Kotinsky, 1939) within which Thayer and Zachry again presented CSSC's conception of needs. Among Bode's charges was that the book lacked an adequate social philosophy. Thayer (1940, p. 538) reacted with "shock

and . . . disappointment," but his response was carefully measured.

Thayer insisted that Bode had misread the book. Thayer had a point. However, so did Bode. Bode found no value in the concept of needs as an organizing principle for education. In his view, in one form or another a need is a lack, and the best means for gaining insight into what students ought to learn, be able to do, feel, appreciate, and experience arises from clarity in social vision and not from a predefined conception that displays students' deficiencies. To be sure, student development and student interest have a place in determining how one goes about organizing the environment to encourage the desired growth. However, the concept of needs as a determining factor for curriculum development was beyond redemption in Bode's view. Bode failed to appreciate Thayer's defense of the concept: The division of needs into four categories helped to orient educators to aspects of human experience too often ignored by a school system bent on serving the college-bound student. Bode suspected that what would follow in the wake of an education driven by needs so conceived would be a wholesale dismissal of intellectual content with the result that young people would fail to develop the qualities required to make sense of the cultural complexity and confusion that surrounded them.

Thayer and his colleagues (Thayer, Zachry, & Kotinsky, 1939, p. 15) acknowledged cultural dislocation. The challenge on one hand was to avoid indoctrination, the inculcation of a fixed social vision; and on the other, relativism born of an open-ended and generous pursuit of student desires of the sort Bode found so troubling.

They (Thayer et al.) thought their concept of democracy avoided both difficulties:

> Defining desirable directions of growth in terms of the democratic tradition is not indoctrination in the derogatory sense of the word. It does not mean that the school must serve the interests of the *status quo*. Change is an axiom in American society, and democracy by its very nature implies change and the reimplementation of its own values under the changing conditions of life. (p. 75)

But, further, they thought, "democratic tradition embodies values that all men seek, and its principles must guide social arrangements if these values are to be realized" (p. 75). However, their argument is not self-evident. If, as Thayer thought, the environment of the school is anchored in the essential principles of democracy noted earlier, then needs will be met in ways that are consistent with an evolving understanding of democracy, an understanding and practice that will enable adolescents to sort out the confusion in their culture and strengthen their allegiance to those principles. In this way, Thayer believed the personal and social aspects of needs would be brought together and resolved.

BODE'S WORST FEARS REALIZED

Bode (1938a, pp. 43–44) concluded his discussion of the concept of needs in *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* with a warning. Lacking an adequate social philosophy, the future was bleak for progressive education.

In the later stages of the war, educators began to look ahead and consider the future. Stimulated by the G.I. Bill, which supported university education for war veterans, college and university enrolments would soon explode and college administrators would no longer need to experiment with admission policies or practices. The domination of the college over the high school curriculum, the issue that initially lead to formation of the Eight-Year Study, would continue unchallenged. Yet, questions over the appropriateness and value of the high school curriculum remained. Dropout rates were high and a perception again grew that change was necessary. It was within this context that the life-adjustment movement was born (Kliebard, 1986, pp. 240–270), a well-intentioned reform effort that proved Bode's prescience: Lacking a democratic social philosophy, a curriculum driven by student needs would fail.

Douglass (1950, p. v), one of the most articulate champions of life adjustment as an educational aim and program, had high hopes for the movement:

Various movements, reports, statements, commission activities, and investigations such as the Eight-Year Study of the 30 schools by the Progressive Education Association have come and gone, with no great effect upon the practice of the great mass of secondary schools. Only in the past few years has there seemed to be a real possibility of thoroughly reviewing the educational program of our high schools with a view to developing markedly improved opportunities for becoming adjusted to, and developing a capacity for adjusting to, life as we find it today.

With U.S. Office of Education (USOE) support, the intention of life adjustment, in the words of J. Dan Hull, assistant director of the USOE Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, was straightforward: "As developed in regional and national conferences, life adjustment education means organizing and reorganizing schools to achieve useful living purposes" (Douglass, p. 9). Harkening to an important reform document of an earlier era in the United States, *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (National Education Association, Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918), the intention was to make the high school curriculum directly "functional," and the language of students needs was prominently called upon as justification: "there is obvious and material acceleration in revamping the entire high school curriculum in order better to meet the needs of young people and of modern life" (Douglass, p. 27). Furthermore:

> It is obvious that a study of many of the subjects in the high school will reveal their potentialities for conditioning young people so that they may make more effective and happy adjustments to life problems and situations than has been the case in the past, when objectives have been in terms of preparation for college, training of the mind, or objectives stated in terms of the subject itself. (p. 41)

Douglass's use of the word *conditioning* is revealing. Alberty's concern, expressed in the Zachry seminar, that students would become "turtles" proved to be closer to the mark than he likely imagined.

Even as the movement began to gather energy, criticism grew. Bestor (1953) led the attack and charged that students were not learning the disciplines as they should; the schools were anti-intellectual. Despite gross exaggerations, Bestor's characterization of the movement played to national fears and garnered support. Soon the movement faded and the last remnants of educational progressivism slipped into memory as the USA became preoccupied with the Cold War.

The intellectual roots of life adjustment sit squarely in the psychological traditions of progressivism as exemplified by Zachry and the mental hygienists. A "human relations standpoint" (Meek, 1943, p. 123) that elevated group work, social acceptance, and guidance as educational aims is prominent within the membership of the commissions and committees associated with the Eight-Year Study. A biological and evolutionary model of human development emerges within which needs reveal themselves as the child ages and to which teachers are urged to respond. The human relations challenge was to focus on present needs and extend them:

> The teacher will meet the individual where he is and will provide *first,* rich opportunities for the satisfaction of present needs and interests and *second,* experiences which will continually extend the individual's horizon so that new needs and interests will emerge which in turn must find satisfaction. This process continues throughout the life of an individual and is essential to a democratic way of life. (p. 165)

While democracy served as a rallying cry for the PEA in the 1930s, Meek linked it to extracurricular activities, clubs, and student government. Democracy was reduced merely to learning how to get along with others, a matter of human relations.

Thayer sought to forge a dynamic bond between the individual and the social aspects of needs, and "democracy" was to be the conceptual glue. As Bode argued and Thayer agreed, democracy required young people who have knowledge of democratic traditions and who have consistent experience in school working with these principles. Students need to consider consequences of their actions in terms of their likely long-term effects, not only on their own lives but on those of others far-removed from them in time and place. This is what is meant by "social sensitivity." And they require an experimental attitude and knowledge of the disciplines because they form the basis of informed decision making and intelligent action.

Working beneath the umbrella of the Eight-Year Study, educators who sought to elevate the importance of social philosophy in educational decision making resisted the temptation presented by the challenge to democracy from the right and the left to prescribe a specific program.

School faculties wanted assistance and it was given, but only in order to facilitate the effort to produce clarity in aims and not to prescribe outcomes. To this end, the following criteria were proposed in 1937 and further developed as guides to developing and articulating an educationally useful democratic social philosophy:

- Is the announced social philosophy of the school the product of group thinking on the part of the entire teaching staff, the pupils, and the parents?

- Is the social philosophy of the school in the process of continuous reconstruction and revision in the light of changing conditions?

- Does the social philosophy of the school provide a sense of direction in all areas of school life?

- Does the social philosophy of the school serve as a basis for integrating school–community attitudes and practices?

- Does the social philosophy of the school aid the pupil in developing standards for determining beliefs, attitudes, and plans of action concerning personal problems of school and community life?

- Is the effectiveness of the school's social philosophy being systematically tested by available means of evaluation? (Alberty, 1937)

Clearly, a school's social philosophy was expected to further the cause of democracy and, like democracy itself, evolve in response to changing conditions and aspirations.

NEEDS AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY IN OUR OWN TIME

As we write, a "standards" movement is sweeping across the United States. Scores on standardized tests are taken as proof of educational accomplishment. Soon, such tests may determine who graduates from high school, just as increasingly they determine what gets taught. Nowhere in the current discourse about education does one hear talk about individual student needs other than in the sense that all children need to be able to read fluently, write with a degree of skill, and understand mathematics and science at some basic level because these abilities are understood as necessary to employment. This certainly is not the kind of moratorium

Bode had in mind. The principles of democracy Thayer and Bode took so seriously have been replaced by a single principle: the individual's right to choose. Nothing is said about wise choice, nor how choices reverberate outward and shape a shared social and natural world. Education is accepted as the primary means for maintaining international competitiveness, but with the deterioration of the Japanese economy, even this aim is now seldom discussed. It is merely understood. Such is the current condition of the United States.

The central educational and curricular challenge for the United States in our time is to rekindle and invigorate debate over the purposes of education and the place of schools in a democracy. A focus on democracy will bring with it concern for the individual and his or her development.
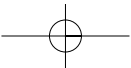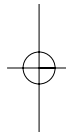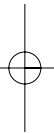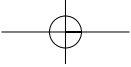
Discussion Questions

What kind of curriculum do you believe would best meet the needs of adolescents?

How do the authors examine the concept of the social needs of children?

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Article 9

TOWARD A RENAISSANCE IN CURRICULUM THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE USA

WILLIAM G. WRAGA

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THE "STUBBORN DISARRAY" OF THE CURRICULUM FIELD

The U.S. curriculum field has long existed in a state of "conceptual disarray." During its formative years in the early 20th century, conceptual disagreement fell along the lines of the preferred source of educational purposes, with camps rallying around varied subject-centered, child-centered, and activity-analysis approaches to curriculum development (Whipple, 1926). During the Great Depression of the 1930s, sharp disputes erupted between progressive curricularists and educational philosophers, social reconstructionists, and academic "traditionalists" (Hlebowitsh & Wraga, 1995). During the decade following World War II, attacks on progressive education from the political and educational right aggravated divisions within progressive

education at large and the curriculum field in particular (Cremin, 1961; Foshay, 1975). With the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 and the dominance of the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) discipline-centered curriculum projects of the 1960s, all of these traditions of curriculum theory, questions, and work were firmly ushered to the sidelines of educational work (Tanner & Tanner, 1990).

Beginning in the 1970s, a new generation of curriculum scholars pronounced the historic curriculum field "dead" and launched a self-styled "reconceptualization" of curriculum studies (Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). However, by the 1990s, even as "reconceptualized" perspectives dominated the academic curriculum field, internal ideological feuding and external critique fractured even the reconceptualist camp. Presently, with the appearance of several new

curriculum associations and conferences, and with little evidence of interest in communication among the various factions often represented by these affiliations, Cuban's (1995, p. vii) recognition of "the stubborn disarray that marks the academic field of curriculum" in the United States continues as an apt characterization of the field.

The reconceptualization of the U.S. curriculum field that began in the 1970s was premised partly on the assumption that this new project would extract the field from the crisis that Schwab, himself a newcomer to the field, had diagnosed (Marshall et al., 2000; Pinar et al., 1995).

SCHWAB'S SIGNS OF CRISIS REVISITED

As early as 1988, Pinar (1988) confidently declared the reconceptualization complete; recent retrospectives (see Marshall et al., 2000; Pinar et al., 1995) depict the triumph of the reconceptualization as a self-evident fact. Wright (2000, p. 8) considers the consequences of the reconceptualization so pervasive that use of the term when discussing curriculum scholarship is unnecessary. An assumption of the reconceptualization of that field was that it would arrest the continual decline of the field into a moribund state as Schwab had discerned.

However, has reconceptualized curriculum theorizing rescued the curriculum field from the troubles that distressed Schwab? Let us explore this question by testing Schwab's six signs of crisis against contemporary circumstances, particularly against curriculum work engendered by the reconceptualization.

Schwab's (1969, p. 3) first sign of crisis in the curriculum field involved "a translocation of its problems and the solving of them from the nominal practitioners of the field to other men." Current reforms in the United States, notably the standards movement, have been driven largely by politicians and corporate leaders. Moreover, the reconceptualist priority of pursuing curriculum theory to the neglect of curriculum practice represents a clear and conscious flight from the

practical curriculum development work of the historic field (Pinar, 1992). That is, while the exclusion of curriculum professors from the post-*Sputnik* reforms was involuntary, the reconceptualist distancing of theory from practice has been intentional. Schwab's first sign of crisis in the curriculum field, that persons other than curricularists bear primary responsibility for solving curriculum problems, remains apparent.

Schwab's second sign involved a flight "from *use* of principles and methods to *talk* about them" (pp. 3–4, emphasis in original). The reconceptualist commitment to seeking new ways of understanding curriculum at the expense of developing curricula seems to be the most obvious manifestation of this crisis in the contemporary field. Varied forms of enquiry, including structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism (to name a few) have been introduced to the field, manifesting a greater commitment to talk about rather than to engage with curriculum endeavors.

Schwab's third sign of crisis involved "an attempt by practitioners to return to the subject matter in a state of innocence, shorn not only of current principles but of all principles" (p. 4). Although Schwab characterized this sign as a "missing symptom in the case of curriculum," in the contemporary field it may partly exist as a consequence of the reconceptualist repudiation of the historic field. By dismissing principles and practices that emerged from the historic U.S. field, reconceptualists are able to return to curriculum matters innocent of earlier work. New theories displace established principles. The frequent result of this repudiation, however, is a reinvention of ideas and practices, but with no acknowledgement of preceding work. Indeed, reconceptualist theorists have been known to identify ideas and practices that the historic U.S. field in fact was invented as emerging from reconceptualist theorizing. Slattery (1995), for example, identifies practices such as interdisciplinary curriculum, thematic units, authentic assessment, team teaching, nongraded schooling, laboratory work, and field trips with "postmodern" curriculum theory rather than with the "modern"

curriculum field. Each one of these practices, of course, was advocated, if not invented, by the historic U.S. curriculum field.

Schwab's (1969) fourth sign of crisis in the U.S. curriculum field involved retreat of the curriculum professor "to the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of the contributions of others to the field" (p. 4).

This is not to say, however, that the theorists around the reconceptualization completely ignore practical curriculum matters. Schwab's fifth sign of crisis in the curriculum field involved "a repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new languages which add little or nothing to the old meanings as embodied in the older and familiar language" (p. 4). This sign is an effect of the presence of Schwab's fourth sign.

Finally, Schwab's sixth sign of crisis in the curriculum field involved "a marked increase in eristic, contentious, and *ad hominem* debate" (p. 4). Milburn's (2000) characterization of the 1999 exchange between Pinar (1999) and Wraga (1999a, b) as "heated" probably provides sufficient evidence to suggest that this sign remains apparent. In addition, the inclination to label academic analyses of reconceptualized curriculum theory as "harsh," "uncivil," "passé," or "naïve" without substantiating such claims, while characterizing reconceptualized work as self-evidently "diverse," "emancipatory," and "eloquent," can foster a contentious, divisive climate that is not conducive to intellectual exchange.

A comparison of the current conceptual disarray in the curriculum field to previous manifestations of disarray reveals other problems. During the 1950s, for example, the sources of the crisis in the U.S. curriculum field were largely external: first the conservative assaults on progressivism in education, then the political surrender of curriculum reform to arts and sciences professors by federal legislators. The current "crisis" in the field has both external and internal sources, the former stemming from the sheer irrelevance of the curriculum field in educational reform and the latter from conceptual and theoretical disputes within the field. During the first half of the 20th century, "conceptual disarray" in the U.S. curriculum field resulted largely from internal disputes among differing theoretical perspectives. During the 1920s, however, and to a lesser extent during the following decade, not only did disagreement not suppress dialogue, but a concerted commitment to conversation produced some consensus that was inclusive of a diversity of perspectives. Taking a cue from our predecessors, we think that continual debate and dialogue is the only way to establish a universe of curriculum discourse that is animated by both consensus and diversity.

A WAY OUT OF CURRICULUM CONFUSION

What, then, should curriculum professors discuss? We think that for the U.S. curriculum field to extract itself from its state of chronic crisis, curriculum scholars would do well to confront frankly at least four fundamental issues.

Curriculum Boundaries

The U.S. curriculum field in general, and reconceptualist theory in particular, needs to mark the boundaries of the field. The demarcation of the field defines the field. The curriculum field needs to identify those phenomena considered in the domain of curriculum inquiry. We think that these phenomena should be limited largely to matters pertaining to the life and program of the school. Cultural studies, writ large, and personal psychosocial therapy, writ small, for example, are worthy pursuits but lie beyond the bounds of curriculum enquiry. We need to heed Reid's (1992, p. 166) caution that "research that is about everything is about nothing." His suggestion that "At some point, a certain humility is in order—a willingness to render unto curriculum the things that belong to it, rather than strive to expand it to the whole of 1ife" (p. 168), warrants serious, candid deliberation. Or, using Kuhn's (1970) language, curriculum scholars should fix their gaze on the "constellation of objects" that are curricular, rather than casting

their gaze toward the whole vast heavens. Distinguishing curriculum phenomena from noncurriculum phenomena will impinge little on "diversity" in the field, because the range of perspectives to bear on those phenomena will remain appropriately wide.

History Is With All of Us

The U.S. curriculum field in general, and reconceptualist theory in particular, needs to come to terms with curriculum history. Pronouncements of the death of curriculum development and the consequent repudiation of the historic field appear more as rhetorical tactics than as considered scholarship. The rejection of the historic field contradicts the reconceptualist commitments to understanding curriculum as historic text (Pinar et al., 1995) and to affirming and validating diverse perspectives. In addition, the reconceptualist interpretation of the historic field suffers from an inherent historical presentism that enlists history largely for the purpose of rationalizing the reconceptualist movement (Lincoln, 1992; Milburn, 2000; Wraga, 1998). The reconceptualist interpretation of the historic field is also based on claims that are contradicted by the historic record (Hlebowitsh, 1992, 1993; Wraga, 1998). Moreover, the fact that practices ostensibly engendered by reconceptualized curriculum theorizing often bear a striking resemblance to practices invented by the repudiated historic U.S. field not only points to internal inconsistencies in reconceptualized scholarship but also raises questions about the extent to which reconceptualized curriculum theorizing has reinvented the curriculum wheel (Wraga, 1996). (Perhaps Faulkner's [1966] epigrammatic admonition from *Requiem for a Nun* applies here: "The past is never dead. It's not even past" [p. 96].)

The conscious building upon past accomplishments makes creative advances possible. In virtually all fields of human endeavor—except, perhaps, education—established conventions form the foundation for subsequent invention. The great creative achievements of the Italian Renaissance, for example, were enabled in part by a rediscovery of knowledge and methods of Roman architecture and sculpture that had been forgotten for centuries during Europe's so-called Dark Ages (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Similarly, in a more recent U.S. example, John Coltrane's extraordinary inventiveness in the jazz arena was the outgrowth of his near obsessive mastery of a range of historic musical material (Porter, 1998). Such examples are legion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The reality is that creative contributions are almost invariably predicated upon mastery of the particular domain of human endeavor. Reconceptualized curriculum theorizing, however, has been based upon a repudiation of the very domain it claims to recreate.

As Hargreaves and Moore (2000) demonstrated, some of the benefits new curricularists seek for children and youth are obtainable through curriculum forms developed and advocated by the historic U.S. field. Apple and Beane (1995), too, have endorsed the democratic forms of curriculum developed by that field. In short, reconceptualist curriculum theory must be situated in the context of the entire U.S. curriculum field, historically and contemporaneously; we also need to move beyond presumptuous claims that reconceptualized work embodies the whole of the field. To propel the field progressively and inventively into the future, we must build upon past accomplishments and develop a constructive synthesis of historic principles and practices and new ideas.

From Ideology to Ideas

We think that the lack of sustained deliberation and dialogue about these and other issues perhaps is attributable in part to an exaltation of ideology over ideas in reconceptualized curriculum theorizing. Positions such as the repudiation of the historic field, the separation of theory from practice, and the redefinition of curriculum from the course of study to the course of one's life experience originated as planks in the platform of "reconceptualized" thought. Over time, however, as these positions were operationalized in

reconceptualized curriculum scholarship, they became reified into doctrine. These positions now seem to function more as articles of faith than as ideas to be tested. The lack of substantive response to criticism of these positions perhaps can be explained by recognizing that, typically, ideological tenets prove intellectually indefensible.

Moreover, not only is the rationale for the reconceptualization based on academic ideologies, but as well reconceptualized scholarship is often driven by and devoted to advancing particular political ideologies. From our perspective, advancing any political ideology or doctrine is incompatible with sound scholarship.

The argument that all scholarship is inherently ideological and, therefore, the propagation of ideology through scholarship is both inevitable and acceptable hinges on equivocation of the meaning of the term *ideology*: *Ideology* as signifying a set of ideas gives way to *ideology* as signifying political doctrine. If personal biases are largely inescapable, however, political ideologies are largely a matter of choice. Is not the argument for promoting ideology through scholarship tantamount to imploring that, because prejudice and stereotyping will likely always exist, researchers not only should cease working to mitigate prejudice and stereotyping, but that they even should embrace and foster them? Clearly, both of these positions are unacceptable. Social scientists (e.g., Myrdal, 1944) have long recognized the fact that personal bias does, and that political ideology can, influence research. They also called for methods to mitigate the effects of both personal bias and political doctrine because of the obvious distortions in the record of evidence and fallacious conclusions that usually result.

Every person, including curriculum scholars, is obviously entitled to his or her personal beliefs, political or otherwise. However, ideology as political doctrine, by definition, ignores mitigating evidence and rejects contradictory arguments. Ideology as doctrine privileges personal preference over proof and results, ironically, in positivistic positions. Ideology as doctrine compromises accuracy and constrains

perspectives. And ideology as doctrine militates against free and open communication; dogma displaces debate.

Our concerns about ideology may be interpreted by some readers as a manifestation of a positivist epistemology; we think our position is better characterized as pragmatic. Constructive conversation and communication are virtually impossible if academic or political doctrine governs the representation of evidence and the evocation of arguments.

Finally, the resurgence of interest on the part of U.S. academics in ideological social-reconstructionist curriculum theory is both problematic and symptomatic of some of the issues just mentioned. For all of its commitment to "critical" analysis of social structures and cultural values, this renewed interest in social reconstructionism has been remarkably ahistorical and un-self-critical. Cautions against the anti-democratic nature of curricula imbued with ideology and committed to indoctrination were something of a fixture of the historic U.S. curriculum field, at least among progressives. The Committee on Curriculum-Making (Whipple, 1926), for example, contended that when school curricula include investigation of social problems, as they should:

> the curriculum maker must take care that the material presented and the treatment given shall be fair to all sides. The chief aim will not be to reach final solutions for such problems—still less to establish any prior chosen position—but to build in the children methods of attacking controversial issues and increasingly to develop attitudes of open-mindedness and sympathetic tolerance. (pp. 15–16)

When Counts and others ignored this principle and advocated open indoctrination through the instrument of the school curriculum, criticism of their position was incisive. Dewey (1987), for example, objected to curriculum designed "to impress upon the minds of pupils a particular set of political and economic views to the exclusion of every other" (p. 415). Bode (1935) accepted indoctrination in education only in the sense of

"indoctrination in the belief or attitude that the individual has the right to a choice of beliefs." Bode continued, "Stated negatively and in terms of paradox, it is indoctrination in the belief that the indoctrination of beliefs is wrong." For Bode, the failure to allow students to think reflectively and independently amounted to an admission "that our belief in democracy was a mistake." The progressive critique of social reconstructionism largely has been lost on contemporary educators who advocate a critical pedagogy that accommodates, and even encourages, indoctrination (Hlebowitsh and Wraga, 1995). Our position is that such approaches to curriculum theory and practice will likely thwart democratic forms of living and learning.

The Interplay of Theory and Practice

The U.S. curriculum field in general and reconceptualist theory in particular, needs to confront frankly the relationship between theory and practice. As an academic field with a professional–practitioner constituency, curriculum theory and development cannot neglect practice and reasonably expect to thrive. The curriculum field must serve as an "agent," not merely as a "spectator" (Rorty, 1998).

The express commitment to distancing, even divorcing, theory from practice as a variable in the calculus of reconceptualized curriculum studies has surprised and troubled even some reconceptualists. Perhaps this reaction indicates that favorable conditions already exist for refocusing curriculum studies on practical matters (Milburn, 2000). The potential for fostering a vital interplay between curriculum theory and curriculum practice is a key to advancing the field.

A RENAISSANCE IN CURRICULUM THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT

The reconceptualization [of the U.S. curriculum field], which involved a conscious and calculated repudiation of historic forms of curriculum development, cannot in any historically accurate sense of the word be considered a "renaissance."

When U.S. curriculum scholars shed ideological blinders, clearly delineate the boundaries of the field, consciously build upon the field's constructive legacies, and foster a robust interplay between curriculum theory and curriculum practice, then a renaissance in curriculum theory and development will be at hand.

Discussion Questions

This article focuses on deep disagreements in the field of curriculum. What are the basic disagreements discussed?

Given your readings to this point, how do you understand the field of curriculum studies?

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Article 10

THE INFORMATION AGE

A Blessing or a Curse?

NEIL POSTMAN

The following is an abbreviated transcript of Neil Postman's Brown Bag Luncheon talk given at the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University on February 7, 1995. Postman was the Shorenstein Center's Visiting Lombard Professor in the spring of 1991.

The title of this session is "The Information Age: A Blessing or a Curse?" Or maybe it says a curse or a blessing, I don't know. But, when we get to talking about it, many of you, I would guess, will want to talk about the blessings of the information age. So let me begin with the curse. And the curse was spoken of in a prophetic poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and this poem is from her book *Huntsman What Quarry*. Wonderful book. This is a fragment of this poem in which Miss Millay describes precisely the problem that bothers me so much. This is the fragment: "Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour, rains from the sky a meteoric shower of facts. They lie unquestioned,

uncombined. Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill is daily spun. But there exists no loom to weave it into fabric."

I like that—no loom. Now what the poet speaks of here is a great paradox. Beginning in the 19th century, humanity creatively addressed the problem of how to eliminate information scarcity, how to overcome the limitations of space, time, and form. And we did this in spectacular fashion, especially in the 19th century. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the 19th century, here are some of the inventions that contributed to the solution: telegraphy, photography, the rotary press, the transatlantic cable, the electric light, radio waves, movies, the computer, the x-ray, the penny press, the modern magazine, and the advertising agency. By the way, we also invented the safety pin in the 19th century. Of course, in the first half of the 20th century, we added some important inventions, so that the

burdens of information scarcity were removed once and for all.

But in doing so we've created a new problem, never experienced before—information glut, information incoherence, and information meaninglessness. To put it far less eloquently than Miss Millay, we have transformed information into a form of garbage and ourselves into garbage collectors. Like the sorcerer's apprentice, we are awash in information without even a broom to help us get rid of it. Information comes indiscriminately, directed at no one in particular, in enormous volume, at high speeds, severed from import and meaning. And there is no loom to weave it all into fabric. No transcendent narratives to provide us with moral guidance, social purpose, intellectual economy. No stories to tell us what we need to know and what we do not need to know.

So this is the problem we have to confront. This is the curse I was referring to. We have to confront this with as much intelligence and imagination as we can muster. So, how should we begin? Well, we have to stop consulting our engineers, our computer gurus, and our corporation visionaries, who though they claim to speak for the future are strangely occupied in solving a 19th-century problem that was already solved. Instead, I think we need to consult our poets, playwrights, artists, humorists, journalists, theologians, and philosophers, who alone are capable of creating or restoring those metaphors or stories that give point to our labors, give meaning to our history, elucidate the present, and give direction to the future. These people are our weavers, and I have no doubt that there are men and women among us who have the looms to weave us a pattern for our lives. And the prospect of their doing so is for me the gleam of light on the horizon.

We have this special problem, created by our own ingenuity, on one hand that our amazing technologies permit the constant flow of unedited, as Millay says, unquestioned, and uncombined facts; on the other hand, we have lost our sense of narrative in our lives, which is always what helps people know what to do with information.

And these narratives come from many different sources. When I grew up there were some great American national narratives, which I don't think my students at NYU, it may be different here at Harvard, believe in anymore. One of them was that the great revolution that took place here at the end of the 18th century was not just an experiment in government but part of God's own plan, and because of that it gave a moral authority to our believing that we could be a light unto other nations. I can tell you don't believe that anymore.

There was the great narrative of the melting pot, which is now being challenged in a return to tribalism. By the way, the return to tribalism that we see around now is a kind of response to the decline of great national transcendent narratives; that is, people not believing in some of these stories return to the stories of their own group, their own tribe, in order to find a sense of identity and a sense of meaning. I want to add to all of this notion of the increase of information with a decline in narrative that some of the authority of important social institutions has also declined. Religion, the family, school, even political parties—institutions of that kind have acted as filters to immunize people against unwanted information.

If you look at the Harvard or NYU catalog, what you have there is a statement of what sort of information the faculty believes is important, and what is not there is a statement of what the faculty thinks you can do without, astrology for example. Now there's a lot of information about astrology. Is there a course at Harvard in astrology? Probably not, because the faculty has determined this is information that educated people can do without. But there would be a course, let's say, in American history, because the faculty thinks you should let this information in. So, every social institution has a kind of theory about what sort of information is worthwhile and what is irrelevant.

The decline of political parties, by the way, is almost a catastrophe on this issue. I will give you an example. I grew up in New York in a standard Democratic, with a large D, household. And we

had a theory that helped us manage information, helped us know what information we needed to pay attention to and what information we could ignore. The theory went like this. Anything a Republican says, you could ignore. [Laughter] Now that helps enormously, right there. Now then, the theory went on. Anything a Democrat says you should pay attention to, except if the Democrat is from the South, because they are racist and you don't have to pay attention to them. So, this made one's political education simplified. All theories tend to simplify. That's the purpose of theories—to help people manage information.

With the decline of the authority of religious systems and political parties, and the authority of education and families, what you have is people without information-immune systems. I have used this metaphor before, which some people find offensive, but I hope you won't. We are suffering from a kind of cultural AIDS in this sense. AIDS is a breakdown in the immune system. What does the immune system do biologically? It protects the organism from unwanted cells. If the immune system breaks down so that it cannot destroy unwanted cells, we basically get cancer. Now to use that metaphor here I would say narratives and the theories of social institutions are somewhat like information immune systems in that they help you manage information by discarding information you do not need in order to function. But if you lose those filters, then you do not know what is relevant, you do not know what is irrelevant, and therefore there is a general breakdown down in your, our, grasp of what is meaningful. And that's what I think is the curse of this information age.

Think of any serious problem in the world today and I think you'll have to conclude it has nothing to do with insufficient information. The problem lies elsewhere, and I think it is a loss of meaning. People don't know what to do with the information. They have no organizing principle—what I would call a transcendent narrative.

Now there are a couple that the media have promoted. One of them is technology *uber alles.*

We have this other theology which says the pathway to Heaven is through technological innovation. Technological innovation is the same thing, according to this narrative, as human progress, and therefore anyone who would stand in the way of technological innovation is a reactionary neo-Luddite. Should we say a word about the Luddites? You all know about the Luddites and it's something of an insult today to call someone a Luddite. But, when you look at the Luddites, I think you would see them in a favorable light.

This was a group of people in England who between 1811 and 1818 tried to resist the factory system and the machine system.

These are people who wanted their children to have a childhood, who wanted a community life, and they saw this machinery crushing that, so they resisted it. Of course, eventually they were put down, and in our own time the word Luddite has come to mean someone who is reactionary and is not with it and is not in touch with the future. Well, I'm not a Luddite. It would be pointless to be a Luddite, although I secretly like it [Laughter] when something happens, as it occasionally does, where a group of people in political concert say no to a machine.

Well, suppose it were 1946 and we knew in '46 what television would do and we made our list of possible advantages and disadvantages. Destroy the idea of childhood, that's part of it, and many other things, corrupt political discourse and so on. On the other hand, there'd be a lot of wonderful things. Well in 1946, we say, should we go ahead with this? And people would probably say, "Yes, it's great." But then someone pipes up and says, "What can we do to minimize the negative consequences?" So here's how dumb I am. I thought that television was going to be the last technology that Americans would go into with their eyes totally shut. And of course I'm completely wrong about this, because the same stuff is happening with computers now. Everyone wants to talk about what they will do for us, and it is not so easy to find someone who'll say what it will undo. What I'm interested in is not destroying any

machines but changing the way our citizens view technology.

I went in to buy, about eight months ago, a Honda Accord. Do you know this car? So the salesman tells me it has cruise control. I said to the salesman, what is the problem to which cruise control is the solution? [Laughter] He says, "Well, first of all—" He's a little taken aback [Laughter] so then he thinks and he says it's the problem of keeping your foot on the gas. I said I'd been driving for thirty-five years and I never really found that to be a problem. [Laughter] Then he says, well, you know, this car has electric windows. You know what I asked him. What's the problem to which electric windows is the solution? So he was ready for me this time—he says it's the problem of going like this, up and down with the windows.

I said, well, I never really found that to be a problem. As a matter of fact I'm an academic and I live a sort of sedate life and I kinda like the exercise. [Laughter] Well, I bought the Honda with cruise control, with the electric windows, because you cannot get this car without electric windows and cruise control, which is a very interesting point to keep in mind because lots of people think that new technologies, information technologies as well as any other kind, increase people's options. And sometimes they do, but just as often they decrease their options.

So, we have to face up to the issues that technological change brings, especially in relation to this issue of information. What are we going to do with all this information? And in the end, I think that the great contribution of the computer is not going to be that it gives us access to more information but that it can be used to eliminate unwanted information. And in the end that may be how we will discover the blessing of the computer—that it simply functions like an immune system does biologically in the realm of information.

Now these transcendent stories are not always "good" stories. When I talk about "good," I mean a story that gives meaning to your life, but it may not ensure your survival. Hitler's story of the Aryan race is a transcendent narrative and it gave point to the labors of Germans, it gave them

a way to interpret their past, to understand their present, and it predicted the future—the Third Reich was to last for a thousand years. It lasted for exactly eleven years. It was a flawed story in many ways, and we could study that now.

Of course, one of the most interesting things that's happening in the world, we are talking now about transcendent narratives, not the O. J. Simpson story, is what Vaclav Havel has been talking about. The great story that Karl Marx, and then Lenin, provided is that their revolution was not part of God's plan but part of history's plan. That history is moving inexorably toward the triumph of the proletariat. We can join in the movement of history or we can oppose it, but inexorably it is moving in this direction. This is a great story, and a billion people in the world believed that story, or so we were led to think. It's sort of strange that almost overnight they said, "Ah, to hell with that story." [Laughter]

What happened: Havel has been saying that if you take a story like that away from people, all of a sudden, they'd better find another story fast. Without one, it means living without meaning. It's worse than death in a way. So, they're going to find stories that could be very dangerous to others and themselves. Havel asks what are we going to do in Eastern Europe, what are these people going to believe in?

The kinds of transcendent narratives that we're talking about here cannot be manufactured by the carload. There are a limited number of themes that mean something to people and are powerful enough to allow them to organize their lives around them. Now, you mention science fiction. In a movie like *E.T.*, Steven Spielberg is trying to amplify an interesting new narrative that young people do respond to—that we are crew members on the spaceship Earth and we must be stewards of the Earth. We're Earthlings not Bulgarians and not Somalians and not Chileans, but we're Earth people and the loss of the rainforest is not a Brazilian problem it's an Earth problem and the toxicity of the ocean is not a Miami problem it's an Earth problem.

By the way, I'm quite sure that this is the essential problem in education in America. I've

just done a book that'll be out in the fall, which I call *No Gods to Serve*, and what the book is about is this issue: What makes public education possible is not that all schools have the same goals but that all the children have the same gods. By god I mean a small *g*. That there's some story that connects them and gives meaning to learning. Now the problem I see in education now is there is no god, there is no transcendent. Why should you stay in school—to get a better job?

I propose five narratives around which school might be organized. I don't know if they would work because a school or an education system cannot in itself create a narrative. Schools amplify narratives that are in the culture, make them more articulated and visible, but teachers especially in the public schools have no authority really to create narratives on their own. So, I tried to find stories that I think have some resonance in the culture and around which schools could build a sense of purpose in learning. One of them I mentioned already, my Spielberg narrative, the stewards of the Earth, and I think young people respond to that idea.

Another one is human beings as fallen angels. Meaning that what we should do in education is study human error that the most human thing about us is that we make mistakes all the time. There isn't an hour that goes by that any one of us doesn't make a mistake. So, I've proposed a curriculum where whatever subjects we study—philosophy, biology, physics, linguistics, history—we're studying the history of human error and our attempts to overcome error. Now that's the "fallen" part of my metaphor, the fallen angel, that we make mistakes all the time. The "angel" part is that we can overcome our error if we accept our status as the error-prone species. But in overcoming error, what do you think happens? We make more errors.

I mean, Aristotle was a genius—he believed that women had more teeth than men. The guy was married twice. You would think it would have occurred to him to ask one of his wives if he could count her teeth. [Laughter] He believed that if you dropped a 10-pound weight from a height it would fall to the ground ten times faster

than a 1-pound weight. He never took the trouble to try it out.

But, it took almost 2,000 years for someone to correct Aristotle's error on that. Galileo finally said no, things don't work that way. Ptolemy was a genius, but he had it a little mixed up, so Copernicus corrected him. But Copernicus would have been amazed to see how Newton had corrected him. And if Newton could have read any of Einstein's papers, I think he would have said some version of "whoops." [Laughter] Now, this doesn't mean that Einstein is better than Newton or Copernicus is better than Ptolemy. It doesn't mean that at all. It means that people address the work of their predecessors by finding the limitations and the mistakes they've made and then they give us what they have and then the next come along and do the same. I mean, Ibsen is not better than Shakespeare, but Shakespeare couldn't write about ordinary people and their problems. That was the limitation that he had, and Ibsen could. And Freud is not better than John Locke, but Freud looked in places that Locke dared not to look.

One theme is what I call diversity, because I think the principle of diversity is extraordinarily rich, but this is not the same thing as what most people are calling multiculturalism, which Jacques Barzun called multiprovincialism. As a matter of fact, it's the opposite of ethnicity. A lot of people think diversity and the promotion of ethnicity are sort of the same thing, but ethnicity wants one to feel pride in being a member of a specific group, whereas diversity, I think, celebrates the contributions of many different groups, and there's a principle, that we even get from physics, that promotes the idea of diversity, that strength and power and excellence come when you introduce new perspectives, new energies from outside the system. When people are just interested in cloning themselves, as it were, and building walls around themselves they lose energy and power. A country like America is a wonderful place to build a strong education around the principle of diversity.

Do we offer in America, in education or any other place, something to live by? That's what we're talking about. I don't think to live by technological innovation is going to be the answer.
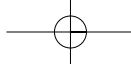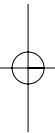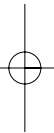
Discussion Questions

How do you deal with information overload for yourself and your students?

Explain Postman's five narratives for school organization and discuss which might be most practical for your classroom situation.

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Neil Postman was a professor at New York University.