

Tapping the Potential for Wisdom Inherent in Humankind

Conference Transcripts

Saturday, August 20, 3-5 p.m.

Afternoon Presentation:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Moderator: Dr. Donald De Martini,
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I) Professor Donald Bishop:

EDUCATION FOR WORLD CITIZENSHIP

I) My topic is "Education for World Citizenship." I would like to stress especially the word "world." In the past our education and educational systems have been oriented much more toward national citizenship, or citizenship in a particular nation. Because of science and technology, our world is rapidly changing, and will continue to do so, from an independent to an interdependent one. The nations of our world are no longer isolated, independent, self-sufficient, or self-contained entities. Instead they are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent.

What this means is that each of us holds a dual citizenship and dual allegiance. We are not only members of one part of mankind, but we are a part of all mankind as well. We are not only members of a particular race, but members of the whole human race. We are not only citizens of the particular country we were born in, but citizens of the world of which that country is a part. For just as above one race is the entire human race, so above all nations is humanity. We were born into a world of human beings first, and into a particular race or portion of it secondly. We are, philosophically speaking, members of the category of the universal first of all, and of the particular, secondly.

The effect of science and technology has many implications for education, now, and in the 21st Century. It implies, above all, that education must teach us how to become world and not just national citizens. So the question I shall deal with, briefly, is what attitudes, what views, what kind of an outlook should education instill in students so that they may become world citizens in the 21st Century. We should be taught that no one nation, race, society or people has a monopoly on truth, virtue, or goodness. Conversely, no single nation is a total embodiment of evil, wrong, and falsehood. Instead, good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood are spread through all people, all places, all nations, all societies, and all parts of the world.

It seems a common human tendency to believe that one's own ways of doing things are better than others, that our culture is superior to others, that what we think is right and what others who disagree with our think is wrong. Education should rid us of this illusory way of thinking, for it is a dangerous one which has brought much tension and conflict to the world in the past. In its place we must learn the truth that all of us participate in evil as well as good, that all of us share in right and wrong, that all of us are seekers of the truth but have not yet found it, or that no one has the Absolute Truth.



Friends from all over the world attended the Post-Graduation conference.

2) Education ought to teach us to think monistically, not dualistically, as it has in the past. What do I mean by thinking dualistically and dialectically? I illustrated it in my previous remarks when I used such terms as truth or falsehood, good or evil, right or wrong. We think dualistically when we divide people and reality into two categories and view them as opposites and exclusive of each other. Thus we say he is either a good or bad person, what he says is either right or wrong, they are either our friends or our enemies, for me or against me, this is either black or white, it is either hot or cold. We think monistically and nondialectically when we view people and reality in terms of complementarities and on a single scale.

Man and woman, for example, are not the opposite of each other but complement or supplement each other. One has what the other lacks and each is essential for the functioning of the whole. Sun, water and soil do not compete or conflict with each other but complement or supplement each other, so that plants might grow and we can have food. Black is not the opposite of white; rather, they are but two different shades on the same color spectrum. Hot and cold are not opposites but are two different points on the same temperature scale. You do not have to be either for me or against me; it is possible to be neutral (or both).

To think dualistically and dialectically is to think in terms of the
either/or;

To think monistically and nondialectically is to think in terms of both/and.

Education should teach us to think in terms of the latter, not the former.

The Neo-Confucianist Chang Tsai who lived from 1020 to 1077 A.D. and who was influenced by Buddhism, is an example of a monistic outlook as illustrated by the famous *Western Inscription*, a statement written on the western wall of his lecture hall and recited by his students each day:

"Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. That which fills the universe I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. Therefore, all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions."

In this beautiful statement Chang Tsai reminds us that we all have the same Heaven as father and Earth as mother. Each of us is an integral part of the same universe. Each of us is filled with the same universal substance, *chi*, and each of us is directed by the same universal principle, *li*. And because of this common origin and common nature, we are all brothers and sisters.

3) Education should teach us what is implied in Chang's statement that what we as human beings throughout the world have in common is much more numerous and important than our differences. Our similarities are more significant than our differences. That which unites us as persons greatly outweighs that which divides us. In the past, education has tended to focus on differences between people and cultures. Now it must focus much more on similarities. In the past we have tended to conceive of differences as opposites and therefore inevitably leading to opposition and conflict. Now we must begin to learn that difference need not necessarily yield conflict but can result just as well in a harmonious, peaceful and pluralistic world.

4) Education in the future must help us to become clear about the two categories of means and ends. Some things, such as food, are of the category of the means, while others, such as nourishing our bodies, are the ends. Education should help us to recognize that people throughout the world have similar needs, ends, goals, desires, hopes, and longings--adequate food, shelter, peace, contentment, self-fulfillment. It should teach us that there are different means or ways of reaching those ends, and that one way or system (social, political, economic) is not necessarily better than all others. Education should help us to distinguish between good and not good ends, and good and not good means. It should remind us that good ends do not justify evil means, as the world often thinks, that in attempting to achieve good ends through evil means, the ends themselves are soiled and are seldom gained.

5) If we are to educate for world citizenship we must be taught to think and view the

world inclusively but not exclusively. We think exclusively when we think in terms of "I" and "mine." We think inclusively when we think in terms of "we" and "ours." We think exclusively when we think in terms of what is good for me and my group. We think inclusively when we think in terms of the good of all humankind. We think exclusively when we see the world as filled with nations with competing self interests. We think exclusively when we do what the poem says, "Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout: they drew a circle and shut him out." We think inclusively when we do what the same poem says, "But love and I had the wit to win; we drew a circle and took him in."

We think exclusively when we think of ourselves as separate, independent selves. We think inclusively when we think of ourselves in the words of a Buddhist, "There is no self that is not I and no self that I am not."

6) Education for world citizenship should aim at deepening and broadening our consciousness and awareness. A person may be defined as a locus or center of consciousness. The consciousness, awareness or range of perceptions of some people is small and in others, large. K'ang Yu-wei, the Chinese reformer (1858-1927) wrote in his book *Ta-t'ung Shu*,

"The love of those whose consciousness is small is also small, and the humanity of those whose consciousness is great is also great."

An education for world citizenship would deepen and expand our awareness to include not just ourselves and our group or nation, but all the world's people. It would teach us to empathize with others, to rejoice with them in their successes and lament with them in their sorrows, and to love them in their weaknesses as well as their strengths.

There are many other items an education for world citizenship would include. I do not have time to discuss them. I shall close by only listing them briefly. Such an education would teach us how to build bridges which bring people together rather than walls which keep them apart. It would teach us that the good is not to be equated with the expedient. It would emphasize that being what we are is just as, if not more, significant and important as what we do. It would give us a different measure or definition of success. Success is not to be determined just by what we have, but by the kind of person we have become. It would give us a new view on what a nation's greatness consists of. A nation's greatness is not determined by its power of production but by the character of its people. It would redefine progress as an increase in the quality of life and not the quantity of things we produce. It would teach us not to be deceived by the externals which are of the category of the relative and characterized by differences, but would teach us to go beyond the externals to the category of the essence which is absolute and characterized by similarity. Outwardly people and races differ; inwardly, or in essence, they are alike.

Finally, education for world citizenship would help to rid ourselves of illusions, a

major illusion today being the illusions of power and force. Science and technology have placed so much power and force in our hands that we turn to it almost instinctively to resolve our human problems. But this is the illusion we are under. Science and technology may resolve technical problems. They will not resolve human ones.

I shall end with this question. What kind of a world do we want? What kind of a world should we work for? Do we want a monolithic or pluralistic world? Do we want a world in which everyone is alike, a world in which everyone is covered over with the thin, superficial veneer of modern western civilization, or do we want a world which is a mosaic of many colors, shades or hues, each separate and unique in itself and at the same time a necessary and vital part of the whole?

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