

**IMAGINE PEACE:  
KNOWING THE REAL—IMAGINING THE IMPOSSIBLE**

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Standing on a busy street corner, I held a sign reading “IMAGINE PEACE.” I could have chosen a sign that read “War is Not the Answer,” or “Honk if You Want Peace,” but a simple appeal to imagination seemed the most promising plea for me to make in the midst of our sign-carrying group. How can people engage in peacemaking if they (we) cannot imagine a peaceful world? The purpose of this presentation is to explore the educational challenges of process thought in dialogue with seemingly intractable conflicts in the present world.<sup>1</sup>

In the essay, I will give particular attention to conflicts in the Middle East and United States involvements in them. I will also explore some of the movements in educational theory of the past thirty years, especially as they bear on social critique and educational reform. These movements are promising, but still somehow lacking. I will thus search for further insight regarding educational practice, focusing particularly on that which has been neglected—the imagination. The role of imagination in process epistemology promises to bear much fruit as a vital, though often missing, element in global peacemaking and in the educational process of most schools and other institutions.

One of the hallmarks of process thought is its attention to the tiniest details of reality and its attempt to grasp the cosmic whole, while placing hope in the possibility of a world transformed by immanently transcendent values. This is one of the reasons why religious thinkers, ecologists, and idealists of many sorts have been drawn to process thought. On the other hand, the very complexity of process thought explains how it can easily be reduced to one aspect or another. Its uniqueness is in its ability to contemplate life as a whole—the small and the large, the past and the future, the rawness of present reality and the possibilities of a world that could be.

Given the possibilities in process thought to engender integrated thinking about complex realities, we turn to process epistemology as a generative source of insight for imagining peace. Five kinds of knowing will be studied in particular: seeking goodness, seeking transcendence, intimate knowing, knowing the stranger and the unfamiliar, and imaging and responding to the possible. With such a promise, we turn now to the frightening and seemingly intractable realities of violent conflict.

**INTRACTABLE VIOLENT CONFLICT**

Two women recently talked about the U.S. war on Iraq. Both women had voted for the current U.S. President, but one critiqued the war and the other favored it. The first woman said:

I do not understand why Bush had to wage war on Iraq. I am a student of history, and Bush is asking for trouble if you ask me. The U.S. could lose its position, like the Roman Empire did long ago, or we could abuse our power like Germany did in the last century. Besides, we still have no proof that the war was necessary, even in terms of the hidden weapons that Bush used as his excuse for invading Iraq.

The other woman replied, “But we had to get rid of that evil man!” The first woman replied, somewhat meekly, “Yes, I know.”

This conversation reveals a tension that disturbs two ordinary women, both part of the dominant mainstream of U.S. public opinion in 2003, but with different views on war. One is critical of the war against Iraq, but had no alternatives to offer, except for encouragement of the U.S. not to make war. The second agrees with the war, justified by the evil of Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein. Both had opinions about war, but nothing to say about peace and peace making. Both reveal the intractability of conflict—the historical persistence (first woman) and the necessity for resolving problems (second woman)—but neither offers a constructive alternative. This analysis is not a simple critique of two women; their conversation was brief and it took place in the midst of another discussion on a pressing personal subject. The analysis does, however, point to a common interchange in the U.S., reflecting the dominant images of war and the minimalist images of peace. Even the signs for recent peace protests (described in the opening paragraph) reveal similar options: “War Is Not the Answer” (a statement of the negative) and “Honk If You Want Peace” (an invitation to express an opinion). Neither gives a constructive alternative.

We see further parallels in the description of HB Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, commenting in a Christian ecumenical meeting on the present situation of Israel and Palestine.

Both Israelis and Palestinians want peace and pray for it, despite the fact that the situation on the ground is far from being a situation of peace . . . Violence reigns everywhere you go in the Holy Land. Violent Israeli military occupation on one hand, and violent Palestinian resistance on the other hand, leading to terrorism in many cases. Meanwhile Israelis blame it on Palestinians and their terrorist attacks on civilians and non-civilians drawing the conclusion that they do not want peace . . . Palestinians, in their turn, blame it on Israelis and their protracted non-stop military occupation of the portion of land left for them, in addition to all the practices and collective punishment measures inflicted upon them indiscriminately by the Israeli troops. They too are reaching the conviction that Israel is not willing and do not in fact want to relinquish its military occupation and to give them back their freedom and independence.<sup>2</sup>

We see here the hopelessness of two peoples, stirred by violent skirmishes on both sides. Each side interprets the acts of violence as signs that the other side does not want peace; therefore, peace cannot replace fear in their collective psyches. The cycle continues.

Whenever movement is made toward peace in the Middle East, as in recent talks regarding the Road Map, people are wary of the promises. In a meeting between Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), Abu Mazen explained his success in achieving a cease-fire from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which added to the military and intelligence cooperation between Israel and Palestine. People continue to be concerned, however, as reported in Israel's major newspaper *Ha'aretz*:

Alongside all this, both the Palestinian and the Israeli leaderships know that declarations that are pleasing to the ear cannot change the reality just like that; they cannot rebuild a trust that has been crushed through three years of harsh violence and cause all the forces on both sides to simply discard the residues of hatred and vengeance. The Palestinians have yet to feel any substantial change in their lives, and they believe the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem is merely a

temporary measure. The Israelis are shrugging off the cease-fire, believing it will not endure and will end in a large terror attack.<sup>3</sup>

Such a commentary has already been followed by further instances of good news and bad news; both are likely to continue. Violence poisons the ground upon which people live and the waters from which they drink; violence seeps into every person and every relationship. Thus, it requires years of dreaming, hoping, and building an alternate world of peace. The *Ha'aretz* editorial does, however, point to the sparks of hope that come from human decisions and actions. However threatened these sparks may be, they stir human imagination and point to the possibility of peace beyond violence.

We cannot attend to the intractability of violent conflict without recognizing the complexity and ideological contortions that were used to perpetuate and justify the United States war on Iraq. Months after the close of the war, the U.S. President claimed that Saddam Hussein had hidden nuclear weapons, and these would eventually be found; yet a major piece of evidence used before the war to justify the upcoming conflict was the supposed purchase of uranium from Niger in Africa. This evidence was proved by the CIA to be based on a forged document signed by a Niger official who had not been in office for many years. The President's Office argued later that the illegitimacy of the documents was not passed onto the President, though the CIA claimed to have known of the forgery in early 2002 and to have passed the news to the President long before the State of the Union Address in which the President presented this data as fact.<sup>4</sup> Getting the full and true story is challenging, to say the least, and deception in the interest of promoting an ideological stance and an aggressive action is easy to advance. How easily people can believe, or be led to believe, the justifications for war. Such gullibility reflects a failure of imagination.

### **THE POWER OF IMAGINATION—A WHITEHEADIAN COSMOLOGY**

In a Whiteheadian worldview, intractability does not exist as a binding reality, but only as a dominant stream of memory. Because all of reality is in an ongoing process of emerging, the possibilities of change always exist, even as the heritage of the past is passed from generation to generation. Even heritage holds within it seeds of novelty and change; the dominant heritage (as the heritage of conflict between Israel and Palestine) is never all there is. Other aspects of heritage also exist, such as instances of peaceful coexistence, successful cooperation, and healthy personal and cultural relationships. These seeds of hope can be uncovered and magnified as sources for recreating relationships in the future. Four aspects of Whiteheadian cosmology are particularly helpful in revealing the power of imagination to evoke a life-filled future—an alternative to violence and destruction that is grounded in the real, but attuned to the possible.

### **VISION OF PEACE**

For Alfred North Whitehead, Peace is an ideal that pulls the individual and the world toward its finest. It is a sense of the whole, transcending the particular, acquisitive desires of an individual. Further, it is a way of knowing; thus, it bears epistemological and educational significance:

[Peace] is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, unverbilized and yet momentous in its coordination of values. Its first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's

preoccupation with itself. Thus Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality. . . . Peace is the removal of inhibition and not its introduction. It results in a wider sweep of conscious interest. It enlarges the field of attention. Thus Peace is self-control at its widest,—at the width where the ‘self’ has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality.<sup>5</sup>

This reveals the nature of Peace as an ideal or vision that invokes a sense of wideness or cosmic vision. It enables individuals and communities to transcend themselves. It enables them to transcend the values of acquisitiveness in order to sense the value of wellbeing for the entire world. It enables people to let go of fears and other emotions that inhibit, and expand interest in the Other, thus intensifying their concerns for the larger world. This vision of peace is far larger than the absence of war; it is an active way of knowing and being in the world—a way that can be cultivated educationally.

To build upon this image, we turn to one further explication of Whitehead, who says: “The Peace that is here meant is not the negative conception of anaesthesia. It is a positive feeling which crowns the ‘life and motion’ of the soul.”<sup>6</sup> In light of this vision, peace is an active vision, which includes reason and feeling; thus, it can be actively cultivated through active engagement with the world. It is not the absence of war and violence, but the presence of other relationships (“a broadening of feeling”) with the wider world.

Whitehead’s view of Peace carries with it a special sensitivity to tragedy, which not only encounters the reality of tragedy, but also the unrealized ideal toward which tragedy points.

[Peace] keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at fineness beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. Each tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal:—What might have been, and was not: What can be. The tragedy was not in vain. . . . The inner feeling belonging to this grasp of the service of tragedy is Peace—the purification of the emotions.<sup>7</sup>

With such a view, Whitehead recognizes that, even the most destructive of situations have within them the possibility of transformation. This will not take place by human effort and reason. “Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose”; thus, peace “comes as a gift.”<sup>8</sup> In short, peace is not a thing to be taught, but a gift to be expected and received. Teachers are thus challenged to cultivate expectation and wonder, rather than teaching reliance on human reason and control.

### INHERITANCE AND NOVELTY

The very process of inheritance is promising for transformation. Transformations of the past are evidence that change is possible; indeed faithfulness to the past is *only* possible if emerging occasions are open to transformation as those of the past have been. In the trajectory of peace making, for example, each effort at peace in the history of humankind can potentially contribute to a decision for peace in the present moment. Any regret for violence, or tragic awareness of the devastations of war, can contribute to a decision for peace. At the same time, novelty also enters into the present moment, through unique combination of the past inheritance or through the initial aim. Novelty might stir a truly new response on behalf of peace. The combination of inheritance and novelty opens endless possibilities for imagining and building peace.

In a process-relational view, the combination of inheritance (continuity) and novelty (change) can be explained metaphysically. Each occasion of experience receives the whole of the past, plus the novelty that emerges from God's initial aim, and, then, creates itself. In Whitehead's language, "The many become one, and are increased by one."<sup>9</sup> The manyness of the past enters into the present moment, but once the new occasion creates itself, it is added to the many. John Cobb and David Griffin explain this in terms of an open window:

Each of Whitehead's occasions of experience begins . . . as an open window to the totality of the past, as it prehends all the previous occasions (either immediately or mediately). Once the rush of influences enters in, the window is closed, while the occasion of experience forms itself by response to these influences. But as soon as this process is completed, the windows of the world are again open, as a new occasion of experience takes its rise.<sup>10</sup>

This metaphorical description of inheritance and novelty points to a third aspect of process-relational cosmology, namely that all reality is open to the future.

### **OPEN FUTURE**

In a way somewhat parallel to Teilhard de Chardin, Whitehead understood the future as "fully and radically open," believing further that progress was possible.<sup>11</sup> This view is easily misunderstood, either by emphasizing the determinism of the past inheritance or by asserting the inevitability of progress. Neither is adequate to capture the cosmology of Whitehead. After many years as an agnostic, Whitehead posited the participation of God in the universe because his metaphysical analyses required some kind of transcending explanation of the world's movements. He came to the view that, through God, people encounter ideals and possibilities. People come to sense a rightness or goodness that is "attained or missed, with more or less completeness of attainment or omission."<sup>12</sup> This early insight, developed with more fullness in later writing, reveals Whitehead's hope for progress, devoid of naïve optimism or philosophical necessity. The open future is, thus, open to possibility, but without guarantees of global progress.

### **OVERCOMING DUALISMS—CONVERTING OPPOSITION INTO CONTRAST**

Whitehead was a synthetic thinker, who boldly overcame dualisms that were so ingrained in Western culture and language that they were taken to be common sense. He replaced dualistic thought patterns with integrative impulses and delight in the adventures of ideas. These impulses led Whitehead to his philosophy of organism, exploring complex wholes. In *Science and the Modern World*, he sought to overcome dualisms through a critique of scientific materialism and a focus on the wide range of values in human experience, indeed in all experience.<sup>13</sup> With this comprehensive view, he turned to philosophy, religion and aesthetics to complement the knowing that comes through scientific theories. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead sought to "accommodate scientific theory and practice, and our social, aesthetic, and religious experience."<sup>14</sup> In so doing, he drew liberally upon the work of imagination.<sup>15</sup> Consistently, Whitehead resisted reductionism and dualistic contradictions as explanations of reality. He sought to make sense of complex realities that people know through radically different experiences of the world; thus, for him, knowing was best approached from many different directions and integrated into wholes.

The Whiteheadian concept that illumines this dynamic most clearly is the concept of converting opposition into contrast, or transforming realities assumed to be opposites into wholes that preserve the uniqueness of each, while binding them in relationship.<sup>16</sup> Contrasts include order and chaos, freedom and necessity, permanence and flux, sadness and joy, even God and the world. Note that Whitehead's approach to opposition is quite different from human practices of compromise—blending things together into a unity that takes a little from each but loses the distinctions. In human terms, the idea of contrast might be depicted as the process of negotiation, or forming unity with diversity. In cosmological terms, the idea of contrasts explains how, in the process of concrescence, realities of difference can be brought into a unity that contains each part *and* the distinctions among them.

With such a view, either/or thinking is unthinkable, for one can never fully separate and choose between oppressor and oppressed, comedy and tragedy, right and wrong. In terms of imagining peace, this view suggests that the very act of imagination requires thinking of all parties at once, each with distinctive histories, hurts, and values, and all in relationship with one another. On a global political scale, this view is embodied more by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission than by the Nuremberg Trials following World War II. The former dealt with more of the complexities, evils, and tragedies of diverse peoples and political communities; the latter targeted one particular group as war criminals.

This discussion has considerable relevance for education, which even Whitehead acknowledged. He noted that order can function either "as the condition for excellence" or "as stifling the freshness of living."<sup>17</sup> In relation to education, he added:

The condition for excellence is a thorough training in technique . . . The paradox which wrecks so many promising theories of education is that the training which produces skill is so very apt to stifle imaginative zest. Skill demands repetition, and imaginative zest is tinged with impulse. Up to a certain point each gain in skill opens new paths for the imagination. But in each individual formal training has its limit of usefulness.<sup>18</sup>

Dangers arise when distinctions are not preserved in contrast—degeneration, triviality, loss of value, and loss of intensity. Educationally, this presents many challenges—maintaining a richness of subject matter and points of view, embracing conflict, and engaging in diverse ways of knowing. Politically, this presents the challenge of upholding the values and powers of diverse peoples, lest one becomes so powerful that it dominates others. According to Whitehead, "The moment of dominance, prayed for, worked for, sacrificed for, by generations of the noblest spirits, marks the turning point where the blessing passes into the curse."<sup>19</sup> In short, no society's order is adequate to preserve and enhance life permanently over time, just as no particular order in school classrooms or family relationships is adequate. Whitehead concludes, "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."<sup>20</sup>

These various aspects of Whitehead's cosmology are rich for imagining peace. A vision of peace and harmony pervades his work. This vision becomes embodied in reality through the interplay of inheritance and novelty, and it is fueled by the hope of a radically open future. It thus counters the sense of inevitability in the brief case studies I shared, replacing inevitability with possibility. Finally, imagining peace travels a path made possible by converting opposition into contrast, moving away from the sense that

one side of a conflict is fully right and the other fully wrong, or that one has been persecuted in a more horrific history than the other. Converting opposition into contrast suggests another way to respond to the “evil man” described by the woman in the first case, and another way for Israel and Palestine to respond to one another, and for the U. S. to respond to Iraq. This way transcends scapegoating and simple answers. It is a way of imagination and negotiation, hard work and bountiful possibility.

### CULTIVATING IMAGINATIVE KNOWING

People will never be able to make peace until they can imagine it. They can never even long for peace if they cannot imagine it. Imagination, however, has the power to make war as well as peace. Mark Juergensmeyer exemplifies how religious imagination has sometimes contributed to violence by its “propensity to absolutize and to project images of cosmic war.”<sup>21</sup> This reality is seen in the conflict between Arabs and Jews, which Juergensmeyer characterizes as “a cosmic struggle of Manichaean proportions.”

Sheik Yassin, for example, described the conflict in virtually eschatological terms as ‘the combat between good and evil.’ A communiqué issued by Hamas when Americans sent troops to the Saudi Arabian desert following Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 declared it to be ‘another episode in the fight between good and evil’ and ‘a hateful Christian plot against our religion, our civilization and our land.’<sup>22</sup>

This analysis suggests that imagination needs to be subjected to critical analysis, as any other form of thinking. Its power is great, but its power can be used for good or for ill.

At the same time, critical thinking has been given much more extensive attention in modern education than imagination. This has taken several forms—critical thinking in relation to *what* is taught (subject matter), *where* teaching takes place (institutions and other sites), and *how* teaching is done and *by whom* (process and leadership). A few examples will suffice.

- *What?* Paulo Freire critiques the subject matter of education, insisting that educators engage with learners in critical thinking about subject matter from the learners’ lives and social worlds.<sup>23</sup> Others argue more specifically that the subject matter for critical reflection should be gender, culture, class, and/or power. This approach is represented by such theorists as Kathleen Weiler, William Pinar, Petra Munro, and Christine Sleeter.<sup>24</sup>
- *Where?* As to the sites of educational practice, one of the most profound critiques continues to be that of Ivan Illich, who argued in the early 1970s for disestablishing schools. He explained that “the institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery.”<sup>25</sup> He even linked this critique of institutionalized education with the absence of imagination, quoting a black friend from Chicago as saying “that our imagination was ‘all schooled up.’”<sup>26</sup> For Illich, therefore, teaching needs to take place in many sites (family, workplace, and other communities) so that human life, human consciousness and global wellbeing will be tended. Illich’s agenda has been continued by others, especially in the United States debate regarding educational standards and curriculum.<sup>27</sup> Peace education is another arena that lends itself to widening the venues for teaching, as exemplified by such projects as the “Million

Minutes of Peace Appeal,” and other initiatives implemented in relation to, and following upon, the United Nations International Year of Peace (1986).<sup>28</sup>

- *How and by whom?* How teaching is done and by whom is a subject for many educational theorists as well, including those already named and others who have focused on educational vision. Consider John Dewey, who fostered a vision of education by and through social experience, and James Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra, and Mircea Militza, who made one of the early cases for anticipatory and participatory learning.<sup>29</sup> More recently, William Doll has attended to the practices of education, drawing upon process-relational thought and chaos theory, and C. A. Bowers has attended to practices of education that will foster eco-justice and community.<sup>30</sup>

One fruit of all of this work is increased attention to consciousness in education, which has also yielded attention to human agency and cultural action. Some dangers persist, however. Some appeals to envisioning the future focus more on technological readiness or advancement.<sup>31</sup> Other appeals focus on critical thinking with little attention to other ways of knowing. What is most notably missing is attention to imagination, not to replace other forms of thinking but to enhance and enlarge them with creative possibility. Attending to imagination is particularly important in a process-relational cosmology. According to Whitehead the influences on an emerging occasion can never be exhausted by the components of a concrescence—“its data, its emotions, its appreciations, its purposes, its phases of subjective aim”; these components will always be transcended by “the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe.”<sup>32</sup> If self-creativity is thus built into the nature of the universe, then imagination’s role in education must be extraordinarily important.

Recognizing imagination as one among many ways of knowing, we move now to consider diverse ways to cultivate imagination for peace. I will name five approaches to education that could bear fruit in the future, as well as the present.

## 1. SEEKING GOODNESS—THE SUSTAINING POWER OF LIFE

We have been touting the promise of imagination for peacemaking, but this requires more than free imagination. It requires purposive imagination. It requires a kind of knowing that quests for goodness, or quests to feed the sustaining power of life. We have already noted that power can be used for purposes that defy goodness, but the quest for goodness involves searching for the power that exists *within* life and has the potential to *tend* life.

This insight is important to education, for power has often been seen as the purpose of education, reflected in the oft-quoted dictum of Francis Bacon, “Knowledge is power.”<sup>33</sup> Distorted into human constructions of technological or political power, or distorted into instrumental versions of pragmatism, this emphasis on power can lead to destruction of human culture and the natural world. Bernard Meland appeals to William James radical empiricism as a wiser and more educationally valuable form of pragmatism. According to him, John Dewey’s instrumental version of pragmatism ignored James’ emphasis on the human spirit. Meland argues that James’ radical empiricism had an implicit educational agenda, namely “a reorientation of the human spirit for a deeper probing of the meaning of existence” and a more specific probing into the meaning of human life; Meland identifies these as educational issues.<sup>34</sup> To

encourage such probing is to emphasize both power and goodness and to recognize the relationship between them, rather than assume an independent or antithetical relationship.

This is quite different from a simple and brash quest for power. Bernard Meland argues that the “imbalance of wisdom and the patronage of power has long corrupted our cultural life,” even in universities oriented “to advance the arts of the mind.”<sup>35</sup> The culture of mind that aims toward power fails to attend to the culture of human spirit. Yet, the human spirit is the pathway by which the human mind and imagination can be judged and transformed, thus converting human energy toward good ends. According to Meland, “This implies no simple choice between power and goodness, between knowledge bent on power and knowledge concerned with goodness, but an interrelation of power and goodness.”<sup>36</sup> Education that encourages such a relationship will cultivate all forms of thinking. Meland suggests six levels, all of which are important in the educational process: survival thinking, survey of experience, critical appraisal of experience, constructive understanding, imaginative interpretation, and theological and metaphysical thinking, which combines the analytic, constructive and imaginative.<sup>37</sup> These do not exist in a hierarchy, but in relation to one another.

Please note that many other educational theorists write about educational process in ways similar to Meland; this is not fully new. I hazard a generalization, however: of all the levels in Meland’s list, imagination is the approach to knowing that is most often underplayed by other theorists and educators. This is particularly problematic when we consider that imagination is a critical pathway by which insights and possibilities are evoked and communicated to others. It is also the pathway by which patterns of relationship are established to support the common good.

## **2. SEEKING TRANSCENDENCE—TOUCHING THE UNKNOWN**

Closely related to the search for goodness is the search for transcendence—reaching for the beyond and beneath—touching the unknown. Bernard Meland himself posits a connection among goodness, imagination and transcendence. He encourages educators to seek that which transcends the obvious—not by ignoring facts and figures, but by diving into them more deeply. Educators can thus use “fact for a transcendence of fact or for a penetration of the obvious meaning to its deeper import.”<sup>38</sup> This is an aesthetic way of knowing, “for it elicits overtones of feeling and opens vistas in the mind which awaken wonder.”<sup>39</sup>

Religious educators have been particularly helpful in reflecting on transcendence as a quality of education and a feature of imagination. Drawing upon the depths of diverse religious traditions in dialogue with contemporary educational literature, religious educators such as Hanan Alexander have drawn connections between transcendence and the possibilities for transformation. He says, for example: “Transcendence is the wellspring of hope and creativity because it leaves open the possibility that there is always another, better way to consider any possible situation.”<sup>40</sup> Such education requires vision, and it also requires non-traditional approaches to education. Alexander says, “A nondogmatic, transcendent vision of goodness cannot be satisfied with regenerating that which has existed, with mere training and reproduction.”<sup>41</sup> This calls for inquiry and criticism—educational approaches that open better ways for human life. These ways of innovation and creativity are grounded but not limited to the received traditions; thus, no false dichotomy is established between past and future, inheritance and innovation. The

rationale for this approach to education is “to strengthen the moral agent within each person,” which is the pathway toward goodness, education, moral discourse, and civilized life.<sup>42</sup> In short, Alexander, as Meland, makes a tight connection among goodness, transcendence, and acts of imagination.

This conversation points to eschatology, a topic that is strange within an educational discussion. This, however, is a recurrent emphasis among process-relational thinkers; the transcendent unknown seeps into the reality of the present world through the initial aim offered to every emerging occasion. This transcendent unknown is variously identified as the Kingdom of Heaven, everlasting redemption, reign of God, New Creation, and eschatological future. Process theologians emphasize God’s role in offering the initial aim to every occasion, and others focus less on God and more on the openness of the future. In either case, attention to this open future is seen as making a difference in the present as well. For Marjorie Suchocki, for example:

Clearly, the overcoming of evil which takes place in the everlasting redemption of occasions within God has an effect in the ongoing world . . . The redemption in heaven demands its likeness on earth. This demand comes to the world through the initial aim which God offers to each concreting occasion.<sup>43</sup>

This, of course, is a religious concept, but its references are not limited to religion.

One of the interesting moves in contemporary educational theory is a more bold interplay between the disciplines of religion and education, sometimes explicit and sometimes simply the use of some common concepts and literature. Philip Phenix is one philosopher who attended widely to transcendence in education.<sup>44</sup> This emphasis continues now in the work of Patrick Slattery, who turns to eschatology as “a framework for developing and understanding contemporary curriculum,” drawing upon philosophical, educational and theological sources to develop his ideas.<sup>45</sup> He concludes that an eschatological focus is essential for social transformation: “The reconceptualization of eschatology, where the future and transcendence become transformative for the individual and the global community, is an imminent necessity.”<sup>46</sup> Surely, if transcendence is of such import for social transformation, the practice of imagining peace is critical to the educational process.

### 3. INTIMATE KNOWING

The focus on transcendence ironically turns us back to a third way to cultivate imagination for peace—intimate knowing. Elsewhere I have attended to the importance of particularity in educational practice.<sup>47</sup> Here we turn to the possibility for creating spaces for deepened relationships and opportunities for play that can contribute to the intimate knowing for which human beings yearn. This is an area that has received little attention by educational theorists. The absence of intimate knowing is implicit in the critiques of schooling offered by such people as Ivan Illich, Pat Farenga, and Linda Dobson; however, what is needed is more than they offer by extension or implication. What is needed is a clear and prominent place for intimate knowing within the educational process, both within and beyond institutions of formal learning.

This concern connects in part with Whitehead’s passion for brute facts, and his dream that, in education, abstract generalizations and real facts be interwoven so that the relation between them can be explored and valued.<sup>48</sup> Whitehead’s elaboration of this is a strong critique of contemporary educational method, though he focused on approaches to

education in his day:

My own criticism of our traditional educational methods is that they are far too much occupied with intellectual analysis, and with the acquirement of formularised information. What I mean is, that we neglect to strengthen habits of concrete appreciation of the individual facts in their full interplay of emergent values.<sup>49</sup>

Whitehead's attention is on intimacy with particular facts of the world. I suggest that this is a critical aspect, but not a full description, of intimate knowing.

Intimate knowing includes engagement with particular people, beings, observations, and ideas. It includes relating with others from the deep marrow of human experience, what Meland hinted when he pointed toward meaning. It also includes playing with others, and with ideas and combinations of ideas. Such education requires the creation of safe spaces in which people can be honest and open, as they are moved to be, where they can experiment with new ideas and new forms of activity, and where they can be assured of trust and confidentiality insofar this is possible. Such education is risky, but it responds to a human need and creates a way of being in small communities that will be essential if peace is to be reached in larger social bodies.

#### **4. KNOWING THE STRANGER AND THE UNFAMILIAR**

Another avenue for stirring imagination is encouraging people to know the stranger and the unfamiliar. This involves crossing cultural, geographic, religious, and age boundaries, what Meland describes as "survey of experience." It also involves crossing disciplinary boundaries, so that scientists and mathematicians engage with the arts and social sciences, and vice versa. Whitehead was persistent in urging educators "to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum." He insisted, "There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations."<sup>50</sup> If Life is the curriculum, then teaching involves meeting the neighbor and stranger, the familiar and unfamiliar. Such meetings stir imagination by opening new windows of experience from which people can draw as they face the particularities of their own lives and their participation in the larger world day by day.

Three issues emerge in any reflection on knowing the stranger and unfamiliar. One is the danger of collecting otherness as a thing to be accumulated. This danger sometimes involves treating the Other as an exotic being to be admired or even laughed at or pitied. It sometimes takes the form of gathering facts about the Other as one collects butterflies or bells. Whitehead describes culture in a much more interactive and responsive way: "Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling"; to this he added, "Scraps of information have nothing to do with it."<sup>51</sup> For Whitehead, nothing could be more destructive to good education than "inert ideas," or ideas that are received without being utilized, tested, or "thrown into fresh combinations."<sup>52</sup> We see here a warning about any kind of knowing that is passively received or entertained at a distance. Whitehead, as process-relational philosophers and educators after him, was concerned with genuine, life-changing interactions and the deep knowing that emerges from them.

A second issue in knowing the stranger and unfamiliar is related to the first; this is the danger of engaging in boundary-crossing education while ignoring differentials of power. Christine Sleeter has addressed this directly in her work on multicultural education, suggesting that "*empowerment* and *multicultural education* are interwoven,

and together suggest powerful and far-reaching school reform.”<sup>53</sup> If knowing has to do with relating with the world in a deep and responsive way, then our relationships need to be permeated with awareness and critical response to differentials in power, as well as differentials in language, style, arts, and rituals. Differentials need to be analyzed and critiqued, but more than that. Education needs to cultivate the relative self-sufficiency of each person, each culture, each religious community, contributing to the wholeness of each. Each party needs to be recognized as a whole and not simply in relation to the other. To study African children only as victims of draught, hunger, or AIDS is as demeaning as not studying them at all. To study them as people—with families and communities who love them, with religious and cultural traditions, with lives affected by global political and economic patterns—is to recognize them as real people, and to recognize the multifaceted relationships that affect their lives. Such knowing requires response, which inevitably asks much of the knowers *and* the known, including a redress of inequities and a movement toward equality and interdependence.

A third issue in educating people in difference is the danger that *differences will be understood in substantive, non-changing, and externally related ways; thus, knowing the stranger and unfamiliar is seen as an encounter with a radical Other, which may or may not affect learners*. The danger here is that people might fall into substantive, disengaged thinking about otherness. This happens often in interreligious education, as when people argue that learners need to know their own tradition well before learning others, lest they become confused. Carl Sterkens argues, however, that religion itself is “not a fixed entity but a dynamic, changeable totality of cognitive processes, associated with affect and behavioural orientations.”<sup>54</sup> Further, he argues that all individuals and all religions are polyphonic, embracing a plurality of worldviews.<sup>55</sup> For these reasons, religious pluralism is not a threat but an unavoidable reality; indeed, the polyphonic self is not a “single, substantive self, existing in its own right and acting in an undivided capacity.”<sup>56</sup> It is, rather, a distributed self, located in different situations, times, places, positions and roles. Sterkens’ view is compatible with a process-relational view of human selves and human culture, recognizing that diversity exists both within and beyond individuals’ experience.

These dangers are all related and they all suggest that the learners are non-relational, static, unitary selves. If, however, the self is relational through and through, and is in a dynamic process of change over time, then the self’s unity is not a settled core. It is an emerging integration and re-integration of its stream of inheritance, the influences of the present moment, and the initial aims that enhance novelty and self-transcendence in every new moment. This view of the self suggests that knowing the stranger and unfamiliar has potential to enhance learners’ ability to know reality, in all of its manifestations, and to imagine the possible, knowing that the future is radically open.

## **5. IMAGING AND RESPONDING TO THE POSSIBLE**

Another recurring emphasis among process-relational thinkers is the real possibility of social change, and thus the human challenge of envisioning alternate futures. This is consistently evident in the works of John Cobb and David Griffin. Cobb, for example, develops an alternative perspective on global politics and economics. He proposes that people invest maximum power and decision-making in local entities and strengthen global entities to address global problems, but only those problems requiring

global coordination.<sup>57</sup> His final conclusion is tempered with a realistic assessment that no ideal solution exists, but that some solutions are better than others—avoiding or minimizing catastrophes and preparing for the sustainable rebuilding of society. For him, the most hopeful plan is one that decentralizes the economy and organizes the political world into communities of communities.<sup>58</sup> This proposal is based on building relatively self-sufficient communities so that one community or country is not totally dependent on others for survival.

This idea of relative self-sufficiency mediates against dependent and oppressive relationships, and fosters interdependence. Such a view is promising, both in terms of relations within human communities and ecosystems, and in terms of relations among them. Imagining peace is an exercise in imaging—imaging relationships that empower each being and community to live as fully as possible *and* to relate with others in ways that nourish life abundant for the entire cosmos.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we return to the three case studies of violent conflict. Without making claims that education has the power to change the world in every respect for the better, I do propose that the process-relational epistemology and educational approach sketched here promise to open people to the exercise of imagination. Then, *by way of* imagination, people might also be stirred toward fresh visions of peace and toward more just and nourishing ways of engaging with other people and the environment. To engage in such educational practice, we will need to tap many forms of knowing, which would likely push the two women of the case study beyond the limitation of their present reflection on war, for example. We will also need to engage deeply with difference in both small and large settings, and to build trust within safe spaces of intimate knowing. Only then might the practice of scapegoating and the active blocking of peace impulses—such as those characterizing Middle East conflicts and U. S. involvements with Iraq—be thwarted and replaced by alternative visions for the future. Is this an exercise in imagination? It certainly is, but I would risk hoping that our imaginative knowing will make all the difference.

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to two communities who have engaged with me in reflecting on oral versions of this essay. These are participants in: Association of Process Philosophy of Education, St. Paul, Minnesota, 11-14 July 2003, and Center for Process Studies Seminar, Claremont, California, 5 November 2003.

<sup>2</sup> HB Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, delivered in Oekumenische Kirchentag, Berlin, 30 May 2003.

<sup>3</sup> “The Move to a Political Conflict,” Editorial, *Ha’aretz*, 4 July 2003, published on-line 6 July 2003 (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?>).

<sup>4</sup> See the discussions in public media: “CIA Questioned Documents Linking Iraq, Uranium Ore,” *Washington Post* (22 March 2003); “Italy May Have been Misled by Fake Iraq Arms Papers, U.S. Says,” *Los Angeles Times* (15 March 2003); “(Over)selling the World on War,” *Newsweek* (9 June 2003); “CIA Did Not Share Doubt on Iraq Data: Bush Used Report of Uranium Bid,” *Washington Post* (12 June 2003); Representative Henry Waxman, “New Questions on President’s Use of Forged Nuclear Evidence,” House Committee on Government Reform, 12 June 2003 ([http://www.house.gov/reform/min/inves\\_admin/admin\\_nuclear\\_evidence.htm](http://www.house.gov/reform/min/inves_admin/admin_nuclear_evidence.htm)).

<sup>5</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967, 1933), 285-286.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, The Free Press, 1978, 1929), 21; cf: 21-22, 40, 56-57.

<sup>10</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 20.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham University, 1996, 1926), 60-61. [Re-check page numbers in this edition. ///////////////]

<sup>13</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, The Free Press, 1967, 1925). Whitehead concludes that neither pure objectivism nor pure subjectivism is adequate to explain the world. Reality is best described in terms of dynamic relationships.

<sup>14</sup> Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work, Vol. I—1861-1910* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1985), 5; cf: Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3-17, 266-281, 342-351.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17, 274-275.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 109, 111, 338-341, 348, 350.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 242.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 153. Quoting Hamas communiqué no. 64, 26 September 1990, quoted in Jean-Francois Legrain, "A Defining Moment: Palestinian Islamic Fundamentalism," in James Piscatori, ed., *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (Chicago: Fundamentalism Project, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), 75-76.

<sup>23</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters from Guinea-Bissau* (New York: Seabury, 1978); Freire, *The Politics of Education* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1985).

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1988); Weiler, "The Lives of Teachers: Feminism and Life History Narratives," *Educational Researcher*, 23 (4), 30-33; William F. Pinar, ed., *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1975); Pinar, "Curriculum as Gender Text: Notes on Reproduction, Resistance, and Male-Male Relations," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 5 (1), 26-52; William F. Pinar, William M. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, and Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding Curriculum* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Pinar, ed., *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses: Twenty Years of JCT* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Petra Munro, "Resisting 'Resistance': Stories Women Teachers Tell," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 12 (1), 16-28; Christine E. Sleeter, ed., *Empowerment through Multicultural Education* (New York: State University of New York, 1991); Sleeter, *Multicultural Education as Social Activism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971, 1970), 1. Illich explains that the school is not the only modern institution with the primary purpose of shaping human visions of reality; however, the school "enslaves more profoundly and more systematically, since only school is credited with the principal function of forming critical judgment, and, paradoxically, tries to do so by making learning about oneself, about others, and about nature depend on a prepackaged process." (47)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; cf: 40.

<sup>27</sup> Ron Miller, ed., *Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society: A Critique of National Goals, Standards, and Curriculum* (Brandon, Vt.: Resource Center for Redesigning Education, 1995). See particularly: Pat Farenga, "Unschooling 2000," in Miller, 208-225; Linda Dobson, "Thoughts from a Free Mom," in Miller, 226-240.

<sup>28</sup> Jagdish Chander Hassija and Mohini Panjabi, eds., *Visions of a Better World* (London: Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, 1994, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, (New York: Macmillan, The Free Press, 1997); Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1997); James W. Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra, and Mircea Malitza, *No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap: A Report to the Club of Rome* (New York: Pergamon, 1979), esp. 24-33.

- <sup>30</sup> William E. Doll, Jr., *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College, 1993); William E. Doll, Jr., and Noel Gough, eds., *Curriculum Visions* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); C. A. Bowers and David Flinders, *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought* (New York: Teachers College, 1990); C. A. Bowers, *The Culture of Denial: Why the Environmental Movement Needs a Strategy for Reforming Universities and Public Schools* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997); Bowers, *Educating for Eco-Justice and Community* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 2001).
- <sup>31</sup> Botkin, Elmandjra and Malitza; James Botkin, Dan Dimancescu, Ray Stata, with John McClellan, eds. *Global Stakes: The Future of High Technology in America* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1984, 1982).
- <sup>32</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 47.
- <sup>33</sup> Bernard E. Meland, *Higher Education and the Human Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953), 33, cf: 33-47.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-30.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*; see also: Meland, "Some Philosophic Aspects of Poetic Perception," *The Personalist*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1941), /////.
- <sup>40</sup> Hanan A. Alexander, *Reclaiming Goodness: Education and the Spiritual Quest* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2001), 146.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-188.
- <sup>43</sup> Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (New York: State University of New York, 1988), 116. Suchocki develops these ideas with a more explicit connection with Christian tradition in: *God Christ Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1989, 1982), 183-224.
- <sup>44</sup> See, for example: Philip Phenix, "Transcendence and the Curriculum," in Pinar, ed., *Curriculum Theorizing*, 323-340.
- <sup>45</sup> Patrick Slattery, "Toward an Eschatological Curriculum Theory," in Pinar, ed., *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*, 281, cf: 278-288; originally published in *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 9 (3), 1992, 7-22.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 283, cf: 284, 286.
- <sup>47</sup> Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Ethnic Diversity and Biodiversity: Richness at the Center of Education," *Interchange*, 31:2 & 3 (2000), 259-278.
- <sup>48</sup> Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 3, 18, 25, 135, 198-199.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.
- <sup>50</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, "The Aims of Education," in *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, The Free Press, 1968, 1929), 6-7.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Christine E. Sleeter, ed., *Empowerment through Multicultural Education*, 2. See also: Christine E. Sleeter and Peter L. McLaren, eds., *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995); Sleeter, *Multicultural Education as Social Activism*.
- <sup>54</sup> Carl Jozef Alfons Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education*, Proefschrift, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, Nijmegen, 2001, 81.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-85.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>57</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., *Sustaining the Common Good: A Christian Perspective on the Global Economy* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994), 111-131. See also: Cobb, *Postmodernism and Public Policy: Reframing Religion, Culture, Education, Sexuality, Class, Race, Politics, and the Economy* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002); Cobb, *The Earthist Challenge to Economism: A Theological Critique of the World Bank* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good:*

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*Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon, 1994); David Ray Griffin and Richard Falk, eds., *Postmodern Politics for a Planet in Crisis: Policy, Process, and Presidential Vision* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131. See also: Herman Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon, 1994, 1989).