

Universal Education Association

Bad education is like a prison. We must learn to open the prison, and psychologically liberate human beings.

Thubten Yeshe

Educate is derived from the latin *educare*, to rear or bring up, and related to *educere*, to lead forth. Viewed in this way education takes on a profound dimension. Rather than being the mere passing on of information, education becomes a dynamic process of eliciting understanding and qualities latent in every person, thus bringing about true individual and cultural transformation.

The Universal Education Association (UEA) was founded in 1982 by a group of deeply committed educators and parents. Determined to 'open the prison,' they saw a need to develop education that is truly universal in that it not only reaches out to all people, but also touches on their complete experience. And, it is universal because it does not depend on a single curriculum to be disseminated to all and sundry, without regard for individual and cultural differences, or specific social needs. Rather it is an educational process, rooted in a well-developed philosophy of education, that can be adapted and tailored to any curricular or social situation, from New York City or Paris to the villages of South America or Africa. They also saw the need to create support for the many people around the world who have become convinced that transformative, holistic education is the best means of ensuring the future of the human race.

UEA has its executive offices and a national group in the United States, with other national organizations in Australia, Holland, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These groups are working locally, in ways best suited to their own particular cultural milieux, to encourage and promote universal education, to provide creative forums for people involved at every level of education — teachers, parents, students, administrators, counsellors and so forth. In addition, they have begun to seek out and initiate educational methods, materials and projects based on the perspectives of wisdom and altruistic values that are at the heart of universal education.

Educaré, the UEA journal published in London, provides a medium for discussion and debate on all aspects of



education, for the development of methods, and for the refinement of the philosophical principles upon which education is based.

The Universal Education Network (UEN) is evolving as a global communications and resource network.

Education can produce human beings with finely honed, well-informed intellects coupled with the wisdom essential to be able to live constructively and peacefully. However, when schooling presents a view of the world that is narrow and limited, children and adults

alike feel suffocated, frustrated and blocked. And, learning ceases.

Universal education is a process that, above all, opens and expands both mind and heart. It is a continuous progression from birth to death. It seeks to transcend all the boundaries with which we circumscribe our experience — boundaries of age, culture, gender, discipline, and most importantly our own preconceptions of ourselves, others and our world. It is grounded in the understanding that each of us has an infinite supply of raw materials with which to create and recreate ourselves anew, in every moment. Part of the process is recognition of these raw materials and rediscovery of the joy of using them.

An education that attends to all aspects of a person provides opportunities for direct experience of our innate inner wisdom and our collective interdependence, thus generating pervasive human kindness and peace.

The aim of UEA is to bring into existence, nurture and disseminate such an education for all the peoples of the planet.

○

Principles of universal education III

Constance L. Miller



T. Yeshe

This is the third in a series of articles by Ms Miller on the principles and methods of universal education.

In the previous articles in this series two fundamental assumptions, basic to a universal education, have been presented: belief in the intrinsic goodness of human beings, and an understanding that we are all personally responsible for our own lives. On the basis of these two we began an examination of universal education in the light of three primary characteristics of human existence:

the first, that all human beings possess an immense capacity to deal with hardship and change in sensitive, ethical and responsible ways, and to progress beyond those unsatisfactory states;

the second, that they possess the ability to respond to others with compassion and altruism;

the third, that they possess the ability to comprehend clearly and dispassionately the way the world exists and functions, their own nature and that of all other phenomena.

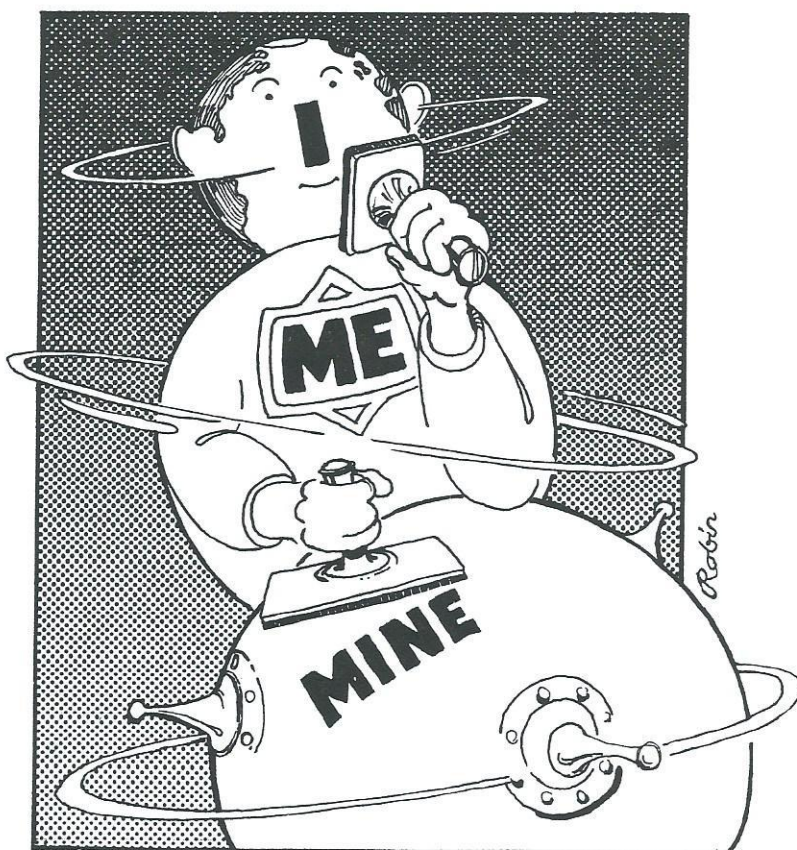
We have explored the first two characteristics, and in this article we shall look at the third.

Fundamental to the realization of the potential inherent in the first two characteristics is the understanding implicit in the third. In order to fully appreciate our individual condition, as 20th century beings on this planet, we must also understand the way in which that world exists, and how we function in it. And, certainly with regard to our relations with others it is necessary to understand not only the nature of external phenomena, but also that of ourselves and the mind. Only with this understanding is it possible to grow into compassionate and altruistic relationships. The reason for this is that our false projections of the way things and people are colour every relationship we have with them. As long as these projections remain, our relations can never be completely valid or genuine. The antidote to these spurious notions, which can damage our relationships by creating unwarranted emotional responses, is lucid knowledge of the true nature of things.

Much of philosophy and classical physics, since the Renaissance, is founded on a paradigm of distinctly existing entities. Since the birth of the Cartesian world-view and Newtonian mechanics, in the 17th and 18th centuries, Western culture has wholeheartedly adopted this conceptual reference, and based upon it developed a comprehensive outlook that permeates every aspect of our lives and thought. Our normal perceptual experience is based on a subtle conceptual framework which conceives of a world composed of separate, independent entities and unrelated events, linked only occasionally by local causality.

A mass of examples could be given demonstrating how our way of viewing the world and ourselves pervades our lives, right down to run of the mill daily experiences. For instance, if you have been unjustly accused of stealing in a large department store, 'Stop! *You* have been shop-lifting!' What is your reaction? '*I* didn't do it!' How does the '*I*' appear to you at that moment? '*I*' becomes a hard fact, incontrovertible. And, no doubt the store detective becomes the enemy, existing in his own right. Perhaps, this is a gross example, but if we seriously check the way others and '*I*' appear to us we will find that it is not only in obvious situations that this happens.

On the basis of this view, which includes the ways that we conceptually organize our perceptions into the sum total of our lives, we act, react to stimulæ, make decisions

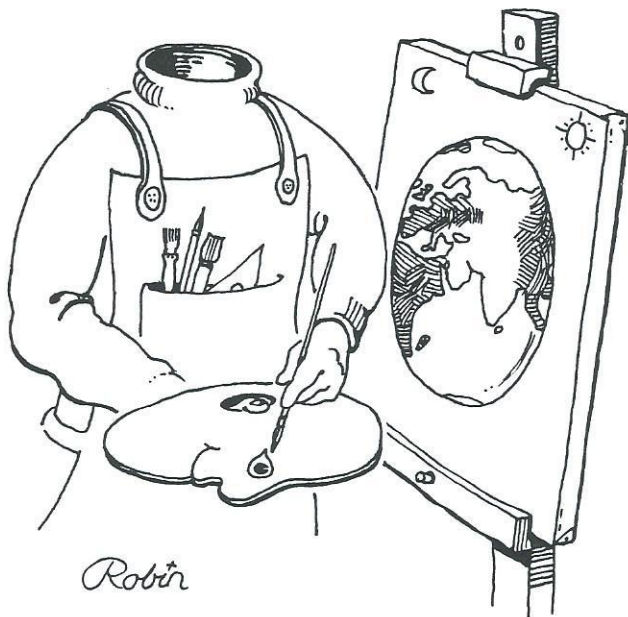


and conduct our relations with others. This is done in such a way that it accords with and upholds the underlying concepts. We are seldom, if ever, able to question or identify our perspective because of its extremely subtle, almost unconscious nature. Like a pair of coloured eye-glasses that we have put on and then forgotten, it modifies everything we see, and we are never able to step out of the limitations of this coloured view. In the words of some Eastern contemplative traditions, 'we are bound by our

conceptions in cyclic existence' – cyclic, precisely because of being self-perpetuating.

Recent years have brought two notable additions to the currents of Western thought. One is the strong influx of oriental philosophy and religion. The other is the birth and development of quantum physics. Both of these challenge the supremacy of the idea of independent entities, and therefore the very basis of our habitual way of regarding the world and ourselves.

A number of modern physicists have begun to posit an 'implicate order', an 'unbroken wholeness' out of which unfold the elements and events that we observe every day; others are beginning to discuss the relationship of consciousness to matter (Bohm, Sarfatti, Wigner, Muses, among others). Buddhism and other contemplative traditions of both East and West speak of an inexpressible experience of undifferentiated reality beyond the limits of our physical or mental senses. Each tradition defines this absolute in its own particular way, often metaphorically owing to the difficulty of expressing a non-dual concept with necessarily dualistic language. However, all are in agreement on one thing. Such an ultimate, non-dual reality does exist, and it can be experienced. This reality is not the same as the distorted world which appears to us through the physical senses, thus its comprehension can completely alter our view of and relations with the world we inhabit, and others in it.



So, what does any of this have to do with a universal education? We are discussing the possibility of educating people towards the realization of their full potential, taking them beyond all the limitations with which we ordinarily confine ourselves. We seek continually to understand ourselves, others and our environment. On the basis of our understanding, we act. If our understanding is limited or mistaken, the resulting action can only be restricted or inappropriate. Therefore, education must cultivate a fundamental awareness of our ordinary way of viewing the world and ourselves, as well as a deep understanding of the limitations of that view. Then, it must engender an attitude of questioning and investigation that seeks to transcend the conceptual and perceptual categories binding us up in a potentially mistaken apprehension of reality.

Interdependence (i.e. that all phenomena exist dependent on causes and conditions) is quite different to our habitual view that things are separate and autonomous. The non-duality of subject and object, or observer and observed, which presupposes active participation by an apprehending consciousness as an indispensable condition of phenomenal existence, challenges the roots of classical scientific method in which the scientist is a mere witness to natural events, having virtually no effect on them himself.

The involvement of many physicists in mysticism and the study of contemplative traditions, and the growing acceptance of the validity of much of the wisdom contained in many Eastern philosophies is important in this discussion. In the end, it matters little which reality is found to be 'real'. (If, indeed, such a discovery can be made.) What does matter is that each method – the scientific 'eye of the flesh' and the nonconceptual contemplative eye – is seen to be a valid way of dealing with questions regarding the nature of the universe. That these two may lead to different perceptions, from different perspectives, of an ultimate reality is not invalidating. It can only enrich our lives, giving us a 'more perfect' picture of the universe we live in. The two, while perhaps not mutually-inclusive (that is an ongoing debate), are certainly not mutually-exclusive, and knowledge and practise in each must enhance the other.

It is the job of education to give students the opportunity to savour both of these methods, without conflict, in order for them to be able to see through the systems and structures of thought that we are locked into – as individuals, nations and cultures. And, in order that they may begin to expand their vision sufficiently to develop a new world-view including interdependence, non-duality and all that would imply in our perception of ourselves, and in our relations with others and our surroundings.

For compassion to be strong and stable, it must be firmly rooted in a clear understanding of interdependence, and devoid of the vagaries of obsessive, emotional involvement. To free ourselves from afflictive emotions and other negative states of mind, it is necessary to develop a penetrating insight into the causes for the arising of these mental states, their changeability and dependent nature. Then it is possible to emerge into a state of calmness and clarity necessary to an unwavering concern for others.

The foundations for a universal education, outlined in these three articles, present one way in which we can approach a more peaceful and harmonious world. By developing the three characteristics that we have been discussing, it could be possible to attain our true humanity, and the universal responsibility that this implies. ○

Errata

Our apologies for making the following mistakes in *Educaré* September 1984.

The author of *No Diamonds, No Hat, No Honey*, from Book Reviews, is Andrew Harvey. *A Journey in Ladakh* by Andrew Harvey is published by Jonathan Cape, London 1983.

The author of *Children Working Together*, from the features section, is Patrick Jones, as appearing on the article, and not Paul Jones as we stated in the contents.

magic had started to wear off. But listening to Emma, the last book must have been very good because she talks about the characters as they are, not just as a story. She must have got right into it. It sounds like it was the best story.'

Emma added, 'I think they were all good. Some parts you like, some you don't. That always happens, doesn't it?' Emma thought that the books should definitely be read as a trilogy, one after the other.



I asked whether they would recommend the books to their friends.

Emma, 'My friend who sits next to me, she's already asked if she can borrow it.' Matthew, 'None of my friends are readers. But they must have thought it was good, just to see me reading!'

Emma added, 'I would have thought that the trilogy would have been famous, like *The Hobbit* because in its

different way, it's a lot like it, isn't it? It's real but it's fantasy. Whereas *Snowwhite*, that's just fantasy.'

'What about the age-group of the readers, then?'

Matthew, 'It's not really a question of age; it's more a certain character. If you like fantasy, then it's for anyone.'

I asked Matthew whether what he had said earlier about the book trying to influence the reader had put him off.

'Yes, it did actually. It can't be that subtle if I can see through it. I only thought that because Mum does psychology and she's talked to me about how the mind works. You can see that the book is telling you that good overcomes evil. Just about every book that's written for children is like that.'

'Do you think that's a bad thing?'

'It's not good or bad. It's just boring.'

Emma agreed, but said that in this particular book she had been so involved with what was happening at the time that she didn't think about how it would turn out.

'A last question. If either of you could meet Ursula Le Guin, what would you like to ask her?'

Matthew: 'I'd like to ask her to end her stories better. The end of the first one is really bad. Like falling off the edge of a cliff.'

Emma: 'I'd like to ask her why she wrote the book. How did she get the idea?'

The discussion had been fairly intense and both Emma and Matthew made a rapid exit, leaving me to ponder on some of their responses.

Emma's question was still ringing in my ears: 'Yes, why did you choose this book?' Certainly I had been impressed by Le Guin's skilful portrayal of human emotions and relationships. Ged, for all his wizardry, does not leave the reader behind on his journey through life to greater wisdom and insight. His problems are largely solved within himself by facing evil rather than suppressing it, by transformation rather than confrontation.

Virginia, the children's mother who till now had consciously kept out of the way, came into the kitchen and sat down. She listened to some of the tape. 'Isn't it surprising?' she said, 'I'd have thought that Emma would have picked up on the book's meaning, more than Matthew.' I had the feeling that we'd all learnt something in the process. ○

Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea Trilogy* is published in paperback by Penguin Books.

UEA symbol

Many of our readers have expressed interest in the UEA symbol so we asked Robin Bath, who designed the symbol almost three years ago, to explain its meaning.



The UEA symbol has been humorously described as 'artichoke head' and before it was served up underwent a considerable amount of cooking. There was no set recipe, although the main ingredients were procured from the 'visual dictionary' of shapes widely understood. There are certain cultural predispositions to geometry, but agreeably, symbols can overcome barriers of written language.

The particular ingredients that seemed appropriate came together after many attempts. My main concern was to express not

only our vast human potential but also its growth. I chose the youthful head to represent the individual and the open lotus flower our wisdom. A channel flows up and around the flower but does not contain it. The individual is not sealed and wisdom can emerge into the outer shape described by a heart — our potential to love. Compassion was graphically elusive and I intended both sides of the head to give an impression of gently cupped hands.

Perhaps that downward-curving shape within the heart is a teardrop? Or is it part of the 'yin-yang' symbol for balance and equanimity? And surely, the downward-curving shape on the left (that positive/negative encounter of the child-like face with the outer line of the heart) is an embryo; it's the unborn, it's the.....

Robin Bath