# *Holistic Education:*
## *Its Philosophical Underpinnings and Practical Application*

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Thesis submitted to the University of Oxford in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Loosely organised across the globe through organisational networks and particular schooling philosophies such as Montessori and Waldorf/Steiner, many parents and educators have united under an umbrella term known as "holistic education" (HE) to define themselves in juxtaposition to what they see as public educational establishments with very different values. Given HE's predisposition to emphasise many of the personal and social aspects of student growth that critics of mainstream schooling find lacking within England's state school system, there has been a growing interest in ways to make these approaches available to children within the state system.

Unfortunately for those hoping to engage in such a learning process, dialogue between independent holistic schools and the mainstream sector has been very limited. In particular, the theoretical literature examining HE is geared primarily toward those in the field, defining the intellectual roots of the movement in a manner that does not provide general principles easily understood or adopted by those in the state school sector.

My study is in two parts. First, I examine the philosophical underpinnings of the holistic worldview and its implications for education through an analysis of the work of the three main HE thinker/practitioners, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Jiddu Krishnamurti. With regard to the holistic ontology and epistemology, I argue that the HE thinkers' ideas parallel and can be understood through the lens of the absolute idealist framework, a fairly well-developed philosophical tradition, in a way that allows for a more critical examination of holistic theory and practice. With regard to the aims of education, I argue that one of HE's defining characteristics is the emphasis it places on the development of persons through the vehicle of community and relationships. Out of my philosophical examination, I identify the ways in which the holistic philosophy affects the work of schools in five main areas: growth as a person, development of community, notions of authority and discipline, the development of knowledge and understanding (curriculum), and modes of teaching and assessment.

I then turn to an examination of the challenges involved in implementing holistic principles and practices in a state school through a case study of an English secondary school which has been adopting a holistic model. The school's experiences, including the results of a state inspection by *Ofsted*

during its second year, provide some insight into the process for other schools wishing to adopt a holistic model; these include, the importance of working with a coherent theoretical framework including specific principles for practice, and of engaging in particular approaches to professional development. The school's experience also demonstrates the need for changes to be made to the *Ofsted* inspection process if the government is serious about supporting schools adopting innovative approaches to education.

For "my kids"
because I could not do and be more for you as your teacher

and

for Sachin
because the thought of you inspired me long before you arrived

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The children I worked with and think about when I imagine how we can improve our schools are often those who do not have the gifts of love, opportunity and an abiding faith in my capacity to achieve whatever I set my mind to that my parents and family have always given to me. With deepest gratitude I thank my family and say that I can think of no better tribute to you than to aspire to provide what you have always given to me for other children less fortunate than I.

And finally, I hunt for words to express my feelings for the two people who bookend my life and my growing family. To my husband Chris: words are inadequate. From the first time we met you saw in me what I could not see in myself, and I am the person I am today because of your ability to cherish me each step of the road we have travelled since that night. This thesis is just one of the many accomplishments that have been made possible because you are my lover, my friend, my partner and my spouse. I am, as always, WYSHING. And to Sachin – you are born of the best in me, and if the work of this thesis has done nothing but make me better able to be your mother and your first teacher then it will have been well worth the journey.

*Your children are not your children.*
*They are the sons and daughters*
*of Life's longing for itself.*
*They come through you but not from you,*
*and though they are with you,*
*yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love but not your thoughts.*
*for they have their own thoughts.*
*You may house their bodies but not their souls,*
*for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,*
*which you cannot visit,*
*not even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them,*
*but seek not to make them like you.*
*For life goes not backward*
*nor tarries with yesterday.*

*You are the bows from which your children*
*as living arrows are sent forth.*
*The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,*
*and He bends you with His might*
*that His arrows may go swift and far.*

*-- Kahlil Gibran*

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# Chapter One—Background and Overview

## 1. introduction

The experiences that led me to undertake this thesis project began while I worked as a teacher in an inner-city school in America's 1992 murder capital, Newark, NJ. I had just completed my undergraduate degree with a concentration in philosophy, specifically, with a focus on educational philosophy, moral education, and ethics. My first week as a teacher was a shock for which I was unprepared despite my completion of a teacher training course. I was armed with ideals of igniting children's imaginations, of supporting their development as young people and students whose curiosity would be inflamed by the mysteries of science, the pleasure of communication through writing and performance, and the joys of salsa dancing. My plans were waylaid within the first few days when we were told that instead of planting seeds there were to be morning drills in multiplication and test taking skills. Instead of performing plays, there would be worksheet assignments with a focus on grammar and punctuation. And dancing? No. We would have to settle for weekly standardised evaluation tests. It was for the best, really, because all of the accountability paperwork left little time to plan anything creative anyway. It was my welcome to the world of education in 20$^{st}$ century America.

I could not stay in the classroom for long. I wanted to find approaches to teaching and learning that fit the broad needs of my students. Yet, the system within which I worked was so bent on accountability that it forgot to whom it should be accountable. I took a job with a philanthropic organisation that worked to "encourage those educational, cultural, and social values that contribute to making our society more humane and our world more liveable." I loved the Foundation and I loved its ideals. We did our best to fund creative projects including schools that operated outside of the state system norm. I became interested in exactly how some of these independent schools operated. Given that parents were willing to pay to send their children there, there had to be some merit to their approach. My first visits were to Waldorf Schools, which captured my interest immediately with light-filled artwork that covered the walls. Seeing the dynamics of a classroom of students and a teacher who had been together for seven years was a far cry

from my feelings of barely getting to know my students. Learning about a curriculum which was based on very specific ideas of child development and the importance of matching curricular content to developmental issues made me wonder why I had not been required to think more about such issues as a teacher in training. I moved on to reading about and visiting Montessori schools, having gotten to know several Montessori graduates who impressed me with their thoughtfulness and commitment to social justice. In these multi-aged classrooms, I was bemused to find that within the chaos of thirty to forty young bodies engaged in self-directed learning, there was a subtle order that made more sense the longer I watched.

When I decided to embark on a doctoral project in England, my interest in these alternative methods seemed an ideal place to begin developing a project. As I read more about the Steiner philosophy, I discovered that it was part of a larger movement, holistic education (HE), that had been growing in the United States and Europe since the 1960s. During this time parents and educators began challenging the purposes of state educational systems, drawing in part on eastern philosophical traditions stressing the unity of body, intellect and spirit and the importance of nurturing all three. The HE movement, which identifies Rudolf Steiner, Maria Montessori and Jiddu Krishnamurti as three of its defining thinkers, offers an alternative approach to the task of educating young people.

As someone who enjoys working at the point where multiple academic disciplines come together, I was intrigued by several aspects of the HE movement. What was distinctive about this approach in terms of its philosophical principles? How did the principles differ from those underlying mainstream approaches to education? What could explain these differences? How did these philosophical principles translate into practice? Was there a set of principles that could be distilled and brought into the discussion about general educational reform currently raging in England? Would it even be possible for such a system to be adopted by schools working within the state system? The literature on HE was relatively sparse, and no one had yet addressed most of my questions directly. Moreover, it seemed that the HE movement as a whole was quite insular. Discussions took place on internet sites, in one journal dedicated specifically to the issue of HE which is now out of print, and at small conferences attended primarily by the converted.

Yet, if the ideas were worthwhile, why could they not be brought into the mainstream? From my perspective and the vantage point of growing numbers of discontented parents and educators, it seemed clear that "more of the same" would not be the most effective approach to education reform. And thus, a project was born.

I should state up front that I do not consider myself a convert to the HE school of thought. Although I find merit in many of the complaints members of the HE community levy at aspects of state schooling as it currently operates, I did not attend an HE school, nor do I think that all children would benefit from the specific educational approaches adopted by some holistic schools. Where I do agree with the approach of HE, is in the effort it makes to look at the child as whole person with personal, intellectual and emotional needs that must be served by all parties with whom she comes in contact including schools and teachers. The state school sector as I have experienced it could bear to be more humane in this way generally. People often ask me whether I would send my son to an HE school and I must honestly answer that I don't know. First, I am not sure whether his personality would suit any of the main HE school models. Second, I am a firm believer in the state school sector and am reluctant to take my child and my involvement as a parent out of that system. My interest in HE and this project reflect my desire to work towards a state school sector that can serve the diverse learning needs of students by making room for schools that operate in diverse ways, including those following an HE approach.

The rest of this chapter will serve two functions. First, it will provide a more extensive rationale for this project and its approach, including a brief overview of the main work already done within HE. And second, it will provide a brief overview of the organisation of the project itself and its presentation within this thesis.

## 2. educational reform in England

England's 1988 Education Reform Act was passed at the end of several decades of political wrangling around the state of the country's educational system. The 1944 Education Act had made secondary school compulsory for all students, changing the

size, ethos and structure of schools, as well as the role of teachers and the curriculum, but without providing adequate support to schools struggling to cope, particularly with teacher shortages and the changing needs of students. However, this period saw, in many schools and certainly in the teacher training colleges, the growth of both the theory and the practices of a child-centred approach to education in primary schools. This was reflected in the words and recommendations of the Hadow Report of 1931 which noted that "in framing the curriculum for the primary school, our main care must be to supply children between the ages of seven and eleven with what is essential to their healthy growth—physical, intellectual and moral … Schools … have been compelled to broaden their aims until now it might be said that they have to teach children how to live" (Hadow 1931, 92). The influential Plowden Report, 'Children and their Primary Schools', also recommended that 'children need to be themselves, to live with other children and grown ups, to learn from their environment, to enjoy the present, to get ready for the future, to create and to love, to learn to face adversity, to behave responsibly, in a word, to be human beings" (1967, 188).

Without a national curriculum, the door was opened to experimentation, with the result that some innovations and some schools fared better than others. While claims of utter chaos reigning were far from true, the reality was that the 1960s and 1970s were periods of uncertainty for many teachers. Doubts about the purposes and proper methods of education for a wider range of pupils sometimes resulted in the advocacy and adoption of some methods more fashionable than educationally valuable. However schools and teachers were often taking the blame for many of the problems of a changing industrial society and the failures of its social structures.

By 1979 there was a push among Conservatives to fight for major reforms of the education system due to mounting concerns that teachers were lax, schools were in chaos, and students were leaving school with poor-quality skills. The time had come, they argued, for schools to return to a focus on the basics with less time spent on liberal frills. Margaret Thatcher's autobiography provides some insight into the attitude which was driving much of the reform effort:

> I believed that too many teachers were less competent and more ideological than their predecessors. I distrusted the new 'child-centred' teaching techniques, the

> emphasis on imaginative engagement rather than learning facts, and the modern tendency to blur the lines of discrete subjects and incorporate them in wider, less definable entities like 'humanities (1993, 590).

Nearly a decade later, at the end of much political manoeuvring, in-fighting, and ideological wrangling, the 1988 Act was passed. It called for several changes, including the implementation of a government-mandated National Curriculum for all primary and secondary schools, and corresponding national assessments for students at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. The early 1990s also saw changes to the nature and evaluation of teacher education programs, which, while not specifically part of the 1988 ERA, emerged out of the attitude of those who had promoted and were now implementing it including Thatcher and her successor John Major. At a 1992 Conservative Party Conference Major urged changes to the system of teacher education. "I want reform of teacher training," he said. "Let us return to basic subject teaching, not courses in the theory of education. Primary teachers should learn how to teach children to read, not waste their time on the politics of gender, race and class" (Lawton 1994, 74). Thus, as reforms were passed, it was at the expense of important aspects of educational theory such as theories of human development, psychology and a consideration of educational philosophy.

Following the highly-publicised critiques of educational practices and poorly performing schools during the 1980s, the passage of the 1988 ERA was followed by an increased public focus on the outcomes of the new curricular standards and assessments as a means of holding school administrators and teachers more publicly accountable. In England, this led to the publication of test scores and league table rankings of state schools, as well as the reports of quadrennial inspections of all schools. Not surprisingly, schools have felt immense pressure to ensure that their students perform well on national tests, often to the detriment of teaching practices and student learning in areas not directly covered by high-stakes tests (Darling-Hammond 1990; Montgomery 1997). Britain's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority reported that testing of 11-year-olds has changed the way in which eight out of ten primary schools teach. "Out of 400 schools surveyed, the majority reported that national testing had changed the focus of their curriculum delivery, and that quality of teaching was being sacrificed as they were forced to cover more curriculum content in less depth" (Robinson 1999, 33). The increased public focus on students' performance on standardised measures has also led to a growing trend of narrowing the

focus of teachers' and schools' activities to those directly covered by high-stakes tests. Those subjects covered directly by national exams take higher priority than those areas of the curriculum deemed optional or not assessed at all.

If we believe, as many philosophers of education have argued, that education is more than simply the transmission of facts and figures from one generation to the next; that education should be a social endeavour designed to help nurture both the intellectual and personal traits necessary for individuals' participation in a broader social community (Whitehead 1962; Noddings 1992; Oakeshott and Fuller 2001), then these current trends in English education should be worrisome. At what cost are schools, teachers and parents focusing on the need to impart fragmented curricular areas and improve test scores? What is being sacrificed in the ongoing race to improve student performance on the fairly narrow standardised academic measures that have been devised?

That there is some concern about the personal, social, and moral development of pupils is reflected in conversations and policies in England that focus on citizenship education, moral education, personal health, community service, etc. There seems to be recognition that the current system is missing out on some key elements of the educational package; evidence of such concern is reflected in the emergence of academic papers, forums and proposals that have attempted to deal with some of these issues. Individual schools and teachers are making efforts to balance out official requirements with their professional sense that the education of children must be a priority. Regrettably, the pressure for standardised quick fixes leaves little room for the majority of school practitioners to discuss, consider and integrate those difficult-to-define and hard-to-measure areas of student development that are nonetheless an important part of an educational experience.

## 3. holistic education—its relevance today

While many policy-makers debate the best ways to continue reforming the current educational system, growing numbers of educators, parents, and scholars are engaging in broader philosophical conversations examining the very nature and purposes of state educational systems as they are currently structured. For many individuals and groups,

close examination of current pedagogical practices and the social values out of which they stem has resulted in a dissatisfaction that demands alternative educational choices.

Loosely organised across the globe through organisational networks and particular schooling philosophies such as Montessori and Waldorf/Steiner, many parents and educators have united under an umbrella term known as "holistic education" (HE) to define themselves in juxtaposition to what they see as public educational establishments with very different values. Given HE's predisposition to emphasise many of the personal and social aspects of student growth that critics of mainstream schooling find lacking within England's state school system, there has been a growing interest in ways to make these approaches available to children within the state system. It seems the government has finally picked up this interest as well.

*The Independent* reported in 2005 that the British government had announced plans to support both a Montessori school and a Steiner school as part of an effort to expand its drive toward school diversity (Wilce 2005). There is a sense from those working with the government on these plans that children in state schools could benefit from the practices of these two alternative approaches that allow pupils to learn and grow in a supportive, developmentally patient environment. Phillip Woods, a professor of education at the University of the West of England who has just completed a major study on Steiner schools commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, believes that there "is definitely scope for two-way learning" (Wilce 2005).

Unfortunately for those hoping to engage in such a learning process, dialogue between independent holistic schools and the mainstream sector has been very limited within the body of school reform literature currently available. Literature on state school reform often tends to focus on practical ways in which schools working within the state system can produce better results among students, while not fundamentally advocating a change in the nature of the schooling system itself. Proponents of HE argue that what is needed among reform efforts is a re-examination of many of the most fundamental elements of schooling, including use of time, assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, and the appropriate roles of students and teachers within the learning environment. Within the field of HE, the literature is even more limited, with the majority focusing on

the work of schools calling themselves holistic sharing practices with others within the movement. The theoretical literature is also geared towards those in the field, seeking to define the intellectual roots of the movement in a manner that does not provide general principles easily understood or adapted by those in the state school sector.

With this thesis I aim to add to the literature on both school reform and HE by exploring the point at which the two topics overlap, namely, the ways in which the philosophy and practices of HE may be able to help in the improvement of state schooling. Before discussing the specific ways in which my project is designed to address this issue it will be helpful to consider the theoretical literature that currently exists.

## 4. significant theoretical works in HE

The literature that currently exists within the HE movement is limited. One of the most extensive databases of current research and literature is an online site called "Paths of Learning" (www.pathsoflearning.net). The site contains copies of papers, summaries of past and ongoing projects, articles, and book reviews, and is accessible through the worldwide web. In many ways it is the perfect medium for a movement with branches around the world, and for a movement in which many of the primary works have been published in limited runs by small, independent publishers in obscure locations, making the process of locating and purchasing materials more challenging than might be expected.

Paths of Learning currently lists a dozen research projects in the field of holistic education, most of them case study projects of specific holistic schools and the approaches taken by teachers within classrooms. There are only three listings of "meta-projects" in holistic education, all of which have been published as books, and form the core of the theoretical work undertaken in HE. The authors, Scott Forbes, Ron Miller and John Miller, are currently the most prolific authors in the field, and their works are used as the basis of most other writing. What follows is an overview of the work they have undertaken and the way in which my project has been designed to include, challenge, or in other ways build off the work which they have done.

### A. *Ron Miller and John Miller*

Educational historian Ron Miller published his seminal work examining the sociological and intellectual roots of HE in America in 2000. Ron Miller's work builds on ideas developed by John Miller who has done work on the characteristics of a holistic curriculum. Taken together, Ron Miller and John Miller, who are unrelated, identify four distinct orientations of education that have emerged in the past century: transmission, transaction, transformation, and self-direction. Although in practice most educators engage in practices belonging to more than one of these educational orientations, Ron and John Miller argue that distinguishing between them allows us to consider which of the four might form the foundational approach of a given educational system.

#### i. four educational orientations

The "transmission" orientation asserts that the world is made of individual pieces, and thus that the curriculum can be divided into separate units (Miller 1996). Education is the process of teachers transmitting knowledge, beliefs, values that are accepted by society. Students are the recipients of information, and learning is the process of memorising information or acquiring skills. This orientation is especially associated with the "back to basics" movement as well as with E.D. Hirsch's popular books on cultural literacy. While transmission is an important element of formal education and some students do thrive in structured settings, Ron Miller argues that most schooling in the modern age is heavily influenced by this understanding of education, to the point where it has become authoritarian and rigid (Miller 1988).

The "transaction" orientation discussed by John Miller and accepted by Ron Miller asserts that the world is made of ever-changing pieces, "an ongoing stream where everything is in a state of flux" (Miller 1996, 69). Education is the process of experimental problem solving in which teachers help students learn the scientific method through application. Whereas teachers were seen as the authority in the transmission approach, in this approach they are guides who encourage students in dialoguing, questioning, and engaging in thoughtful reflection. Students are viewed as inquisitive critical thinkers and problem solvers. This pragmatic orientation is especially associated

with Dewey and the progressive education movement, and encompasses some of the progressive reforms and school change movements in mainstream education as well.

A third orientation identified by Ron Miller is that of “self-direction.” This orientation assumes a basic trust in human nature and a worldview that is similar to that adopted within the transactional orientation (Miller and Drake 1990). Miller qualitatively differentiates self-direction from the transactional perspective because its primary concern is with learning, and proponents often repudiate education as a distinct profession. In fact, advocates of self-direction are noted for doing away with most structures of schooling such as grades, lesson plans, age groupings, and teaching strategies. Teachers serve as neither guides nor facilitators unless requested to do so by students, rather they are primarily resource persons; students are responsible for initiating and directing their own education. Authors and educators most associated with self-direction are John Holt and A.S. Neill. The alternatives most associated with this orientation include free schools as well as the unschooling and de-schooling movements.

The "transformation" orientation asserts that the world is not made of pieces at all, but is comprised of interactive and interdependent wholes within wholes (Miller 1996, 57). It further asserts that we are all evolving and that there is a cosmic source to our existence, which some have called God or the Tao. Unlike in the other three orientations, there is an emphasis on the spiritual development of both child and teacher. Both John Miller and Ron Miller describe this orientation as supporting "holistic education." Some of the authors whom both Ron and John Miller identify within this orientation include Jiddu Krishnamurti, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Joseph Chilton Pearce, as well as philosophers such as Emerson and Whitehead (Miller 1988; Miller 1990).

Within the four orientations outlined above, authors, practitioners and researchers have a tendency to be drawn toward one or another orientation, a variety of social, cultural, and political reasons, in considering the practices, and purposes of education. Ron Miller builds on these ideas in his book *What Are Schools For*, presenting and addressing two major sets of questions about the historical context and cultural/philosophical foundations of contemporary American public education (1990).

- In a diverse community like the United States how is it decided which facts, skills, beliefs and values should be perpetuated through schooling? Who makes these decisions and why? Whose interests are served, and whose are not?
- Should education be defined as the endeavour to impart an established body of facts and skills or should it aim to draw forth the intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual qualities that lie within the human personality? Is any predetermined curriculum capable of nurturing the fullest human possibilities?

Although Miller's questions and his work focus specifically on the United States and the development of its educational system, it is worth examining his conclusions in some detail. As will be discussed further in Chapter Two, most of the social, political and intellectual issues he identified as influencing the development of American culture and education affected Europe and England as well. Thus, in trying to understand the emergence of the holistic worldview and the rise of holistic education in England, Miller's work provides a good foundational set of considerations.

## ii. themes of American culture

Miller begins by pointing out that both questions he raises have already been asked. Social historians of education have attempted to address the first question in recent years, and Miller builds his response off arguments and positions taken by a group of historians that Miller considers more balanced in their work. Specifically, they are neither the more conservative "laudatory" historians who tend to view public education and its founders as the benefactors of prosperity and democracy in America, nor are they radical revisionist historians who claim that public schooling was a deliberate attempt by those with social and economic power to protect their interests and impose their values on the mass public.

Drawing on the work of these social historians, Miller expands their ideas through his own work into cultural history. Culture, as described by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, is the set of basic assumptions about reality, nature, and human nature through which a group of people makes sense of the world; webs of significance that give meaning to experience and determine our social reality (Geertz 1973). Psychologist Charles Tart

(1986) adds the concept of "consensus consciousness", namely, that the ways in which we understand and interpret our experience is largely determined by implicit, often unstated and unconscious, preconceptions that we derive from our social group.

Miller argues that there appears to be an emerging paradigm shift in American and global civilisation today. A paradigm is technically defined as an implicit, fundamental interpretation that governs understanding within a particular field of thought, particularly in science. In physics, for example, a particular paradigm involves a set of assumptions regarding foundational concepts such as gravity, matter and physics. "If we stretch the concept a bit, we can see culture as the basic underlying paradigm of paradigms: the unifying worldview from which particular interpretations arise" (Miller 1990, 5). Although a particular paradigm is only one possible interpretation of experience, it is often closely guarded because it is at the core of a particular way of life. A paradigm changes only when new experiences and information so severely contradict a particular way of understanding the world that we are forced to change our assumptions. Miller asserts that:

> we may have reached such a cultural crisis today. The massive social problems of drugs, crime, corruption and poverty; the growing awareness of impending ecological disasters; the struggles of third world peoples … have all dramatically shaken the implicit assumptions of the scientific/nationalistic worldview that has dominated the modern era. There is mounting evidence that a new paradigm which is more ecological, global, spiritual, and in a word, *holistic*, is rising to meet the challenges of the late twentieth century (1990, 5).

Miller argues that although mainstream scholarship has largely ignored this emerging paradigm, though conservatives, particularly religious fundamentalists, have scorned it as "New Age" heresy, the growing body of literature that has emerged in the last twenty years deserves attention. Miller goes on to apply the holistic cultural analysis to the problems of contemporary education, and concludes that "if the analysis is correct, then surely the education reform movements of the past few years have been woefully short-sighted and inadequate. Our nation is not 'at risk' because the schools are failing; schools are failing because our nation and our culture have entered a period of serious decline. If the holistic analysis is correct, then educating our youth with the assumptions and methods of the industrial age is dangerously obsolete" (1990, 6).

With these ideas in mind, Miller begins by trying to understand the “consensus consciousness” of middle class Americans, and the ways in which these shaped the educational system which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century and continues in a modified form today. He does this by first coming to a better understanding of the major themes of American culture. Though American culture is obviously complex, he identifies primary and interrelated cultural themes which he believes have demonstrated their profound influence on educational thinking and practice, influencing the evolution of schools towards the transmission orientation that he argues we now accept as "mainstream" in education: Protestant Christianity; scientific reductionism; restrained democratic ideology; and capitalism (1990). Understanding these cultural themes, says Miller, is necessary to understanding the underpinning assumptions for the adoption of the model of state education developed in America around the turn of the twentieth century.

### *a. Protestant Christianity*

Protestantism brought with it some important assumptions about the nature of humankind, notably, the “Fall/Redemption” theology of St. Augustine. As accepted by most Protestant Christian denominations, this theology maintains the utter separation between the material and spiritual realms—between natural and supernatural, human and divine, person and God. Sin is an inborn corruption of human nature, and human beings have no ability to redeem themselves; they must simply wait for God to bestow Grace as He chooses. Despite some challenges to this Protestant worldview, and the emergence of small dissident sects within American Christianity, such as the Unitarian and Quaker movements, Miller asserts that no serious efforts have been made to challenge this natural/supernatural dualism, and reclaim the spirituality of the whole person. The latter, he argues, is at the core of holistic approaches to education. Protestant Christianity influenced education in two related ways, discussed further in Chapter Two: first, by supporting the notion that schools need only address some aspects of children’s development; and second, by encouraging attitudes and methods in schools based on the idea that children are inherently sinful and need to be forcefully fixed.

### b. scientific reductionism

As will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, principles of scientific reductionism hold that the world operates according to particular sets of laws, and that it is possible to understand phenomena by applying the scientific method and an understanding of these natural laws. Miller argues that scientific reductionism is a secularised extension of Protestant religious ideology, maintaining a separation between a material and spiritual existence. It influenced education most obviously in the development of the curriculum, where knowledge came to be seen as consisting of discrete units of knowledge which could be transmitted to students.

### c. restrained democratic ideology

American culture, suggests Miller, has always harboured a tension between radical Jeffersonian ideals and more conservative principles. Conservative elements are oriented to commercial expansion, traditional morality and obedient citizenship. Liberal elements inspired by Jefferson, Jackson and various populist movements tend to emphasise personal freedom and opportunity. Although both tendencies are represented among mainstream Americans, Miller argues that the differences between the two should not be taken lightly, for they are very different ideals of social order based on different images of human nature. In conservative/republican thought, human excellence is limited to a select few who naturally tend to rise to economic and social prominence and who should be entrusted to guide the affairs of state and society. The masses, especially immigrant masses unschooled in national traditions, are feared as subversive elements. Gratning excessive liberty to individuals is seen as a dangerous threat to social order; therefore, freedom must go hand-in-hand with discipline. The welfare of the community, the common good, supersedes the personal freedom of the individual.

Liberal democratic ideology, on the other hand, asserts that most, if not all, people have the potential to conduct their own lives and do not need to be controlled from above. If people were free from economic, social and religious injustice they would willingly be hard-working and moral citizens. This ideology is at the core of the American dream myth, yet there can be no doubt that it is held in check, and at some periods of history seriously compromised, by the more conservative tradition. Large numbers of people

throughout American history, notably, women, African-Americans, non-Anglo Saxon immigrants, Native Americans and children, have been denied the "natural rights" promised to them under Jeffersonian ideology. Conservative attitudes towards poverty and other social problems, strongly influenced by Puritan Protestantism, tend to be moralistic rather than sympathetic towards those who fail to attain prosperity or power. This ongoing tension between conservative and liberal interpretations of democracy is reflected in, and played a major part in the development of, the state education system. According to Miller, it was this restrained democratic ideology which influenced early efforts at mass state education to focus on inculcating approved "American values" into students, making them fit into American culture rather than becoming their own persons, and to uphold a separation between the haves and have-nots of society in terms of access to high-quality education. Again, this theme will be explored further in Chapter Two.

### *d. capitalism*

Miller asserts that the near universal acceptance of capitalist ideology, by workers as well as by entrepreneurs, by followers of Jefferson and Jackson as well as the more conservative Alexander Hamilton, is one of the most defining features of America. But, argues Miller, capitalism also places significant limitations on human experience. As a worldview it supports the notion that nature is to be used for the benefit of human beings, and rewards those who can most quickly convert raw products for human use in the form of the gross national product. Technological growth, seen as the means for such conversion, is almost uncritically welcomed. Capitalism is also a worldview based on meritocracy, or an unchecked competition between individuals for social and economic status. The means of measuring success are overwhelmingly materialistic, meaning that vast swathes of human experience, notably the aesthetic, emotional and spiritual, do not count as qualifications for the job market or emblems of success. Capitalism promotes individualism and self-assertion in social and economic terms, but places far less value on self-understanding, critical intelligence or spiritual discovery. Just as the religious tone of the country encourages practical moral discipline rather than mysticism, capitalism demands tangible results, not inward-seeking or self-realisation.

Capitalism is closely entwined with the other themes of American culture, including the restrained democratic ideology. On the one hand, capitalism promises and often provides opportunities for social and economic advancement, yet it cannot be denied that the competition for wealth and status results in some highly undemocratic consequences. Under corporate capitalism only a small number of people can reach the pinnacle of success no matter how many people are motivated to succeed. These people enjoy more actual democracy in the form of greater access to quality education, more influence on economic and political decisions, more freedom to pursue happiness and personal meaning, and more opportunity to acquire still further wealth. The conservative version of capitalism accepts these effects as perfectly natural, adopting an almost Darwinian survival of the fittest attitude. The liberal version of capitalism has been more generous, asserting that there is room for everyone to succeed—if not an individual then at least her children. Society's responsibility is to provide education in order to equalise economic and social opportunities. Significantly, both views of capitalism accept the belief that social problems and cultural discontent are best solved by stimulating personal ambition and increasing individual opportunity and success, rather than by radically questioning the cultural values that may be the root cause of the problem. Thus, the use of education as a panacea for social and cultural problems is a consistent pattern in American history.

### iii. cultural themes and American education

The remainder of Miller's work is devoted to an overview of the political, social and economic climate in which the concept and practice of mass schooling in America was developed. He begins with an overview of the earliest attempts at formal schooling in the colonies, and goes on to describe the influence of the industrial revolution and the prevailingly materialistic and mechanistic worldview of the time in shaping the aims, structure and practice of educational establishments. Asserting that Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel were the intellectual forerunners to the HE movement, a theme developed by Forbes, Miller goes into some detail about their educational approaches and practices. He also discusses the work of Montessori and Steiner, whose concerns with education as a transformative undertaking he felt placed them at the centre of the holistic tradition. Finally, he examines the work of thinkers like John Dewey whose works he categorises as "somewhat holistic in their approach" (1990, 53) but not fully a part of the HE

movement because of their lack of concern about transformation as a central concern of education.

Miller's work does deserve some critical analysis, not much of which is to be found in the existing literature. Because Miller's work is one of only two theoretical works in a field which is quite insular in its academic scope, his work has been somewhat uncritically adopted as a defining work within the field. It would have been beyond the scope of my work to critique all of his ideas thoroughly; however one issue concerned my project and it is to this that I limit myself here.

Millers' sweeping approach to summarising key themes of American culture gave me pause, though it must be said that the summary provided here could not possibly convey the rigour with which he builds off the work of credible social historians. I was genuinely curious about the extent to which other scholars agreed that these themes can be said to define American culture. More importantly, I was concerned about whether he was justified in using these themes as a foundation upon which to build a picture of education to which he argues HE was a response. I also knew that it would be necessary to determine whether or not similar themes could be said to have influenced the development of the English education system. To address the latter issue, I turned to the work of respected historians of English education and found that their analysis of the development of mass education in England was quite similar to Miller's, right down to identifying similar cultural issues as being of importance in shaping the ideology and practice of schools. In Chapter Two I provide an overview of the development of mass education in England, accepting Miller's conclusion that HE did indeed emerge in response to a particular set of trends in education, an important part of defining the movement's philosophical and practical principles.

### *B. Scott Forbes*

Scott Forbes' work focuses on developing a detailed analysis of the sociological and philosophical precedents of holistic education (Forbes 1999). As in the case of Ron Miller, his work is considered particularly important to the field of HE research because it gives some theoretical grounding for a general study of holistic education as an

independent pedagogical approach. This allows students of the topic to see how different schools fit more or less within the broader framework of HE at large instead of looking at solitary and unique expressions of holistic education as seen in various types of schools. Because of its pioneering nature, Forbes' work suffers from the same lack of critical analysis as Ron Miller's. More so than in the case of Miller, I take exception to some of Forbes' assumptions and conclusions, and respond directly to these concerns in the development of my thesis. These issues will be addressed following an overview of his theoretical model and conclusions.

In his 1996 doctoral dissertation, Forbes sets out to develop a coherent account of what HE is, first, by examining the principal thinking that distinguishes HE; and second, by describing the distinctive activities of HE. He begins by saying that he understands that it would be difficult to develop any fully encompassing account which has room for the variation between different HE approaches. He thus seeks to develop a model which fits the "family resemblances" notion. Just as members of a family will not all have every characteristic in common, they will have enough overlap from among a set of characteristics to allow them to be seen as part of one family. Similarly, Forbes seeks to articulate a variety of related indicators for HE such that different HE models may fit most but not necessarily all of them.

The thinking of HE is approached through an examination of six thinkers who he claims most HE literature credits with being the founders of HE thought: Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Jung, Maslow, and Rogers. What HE does is examined through a framework developed by a sociologist of education, Basil Bernstein. Forbes claims this allows the distinguishing elements of HE to be located within the field of pedagogy as a whole. Forbes begins with an examination of the intellectual principles common among these writers. In developing any approach to education, Forbes says, three basic questions need to be asked: What is the goal of education? What needs to be learned? What facilitates the needed learning? Forbes addresses these questions by looking at the commonalities in the responses of "the Authors" he chose to study.

With regard to the goal of education, Forbes argues that HE's primary concern is the attainment of "Ultimacy," a term he borrows from Paul Tillich to refer to two related

goals. Ultimacy refers to "the highest state that a human being can aspire to—either as a stage of development such as enlightenment; a moment of life that is the greatest that it can be such as a state of grace; or a phase of life common to the population as a whole, but rare for an individual such as Maslow's 'peak experience'" (1999). Ultimacy also refers to a "concern or engagement that is the greatest that a person can aspire to" (1999).

Although Forbes spends a great deal of time attempting to define this concept it must be frankly noted that there remain questions about what exactly he means to communicate with the term "Ultimacy." Others who refer to his works and cite this notion of Ultimacy generally fall back on quoting his definition and continuing with their own interpretation of the term. Having read the work of three of the six Authors myself, I can suggest only that Forbes is arguing that holistic educators share the common goal of helping students to be the most that a human being can be. Forbes chooses to interpret this as an internal and very individual process of attaining self-knowledge and change, one which is not and cannot be communal. He asserts that the fulfilment of this process has been described in varying ways from both psychological as well as religious perspectives, including the state of *atman*, self-actualisation or peak experience.

Forbes continues by considering the issue of what HE's response would be to the question of what needs to be learned as part of the process of education. Here he focuses on the need to develop "sagacious competence," which he defines as "a knowledge associated with wisdom" (1999). In other words, HE strives to develop in students such competencies as enable them in their goal of attaining Ultimacy. Building off the work of Basil Bernstein, Forbes identifies six distinct aspects of sagacious competence:

- Freedom—here defined as a complex concept of independence, psychological freedom or "inner-liberation";
- Good judgment—this allows for the development of autonomy and self-regulation;
- Meta-learning—the ability of students to learn how they as individuals learn
- Social Ability—this moves beyond mere sociability, to develop the capacity of students to be "in society but not of it";

- Ability to refine values—here students become able to develop character and their own individual qualities, not merely adopt the school's values or ethos;
- Self knowledge—a complex concept which involves not only learning about oneself, but also learning about the nature of oneself.

A second related set of competencies that education must help students to acquire should assist students in meeting the challenges of life, ensuring that they are not "book bright and life dumb" (1999, 89). So, education must enable students to be out in the world, seeing and doing, not merely engaging in book learning that leads to no practical outcomes with regard to their ability to engage with the world at the end of their schooling. Education of this sort will provide students with knowledge that:

- contains procedures for engaging with and constructing in the world;
- is intrinsically creative and tacitly acquired in informal rather than formal interactions;
- adheres to the elements of social logic described earlier.

Forbes then turns to the question of how such learning is facilitated. The Authors identify various characteristics of teachers and students which assist in the process of succeeding in the educational endeavour. Acceptance and development of these characteristics and practices are essential to HE, says Forbes. On the part of students, there must be an inherent motivation to engage in the learning process. Teachers have a more difficult task in that they must gain an understanding of the needs and abilities of their students, and have a grasp of the proper pedagogical processes to use to address these areas of need and ability. This knowledge includes a grasp of ways in which to develop proper relationships and authority while engaging in the learning process.

Finally, Forbes comes to the question of what HE does. He seeks to develop a more complete sociological understanding of HE, again expanding on the work of Basil Bernstein who had developed a model for competence-based pedagogy (CBP). CBP stands in contrast to performance-based pedagogy exemplified by the current model of education in most schools, which is concerned in large part with measuring the outcome of student learning through performance on standardised tests. CBP as a model is broad

enough to include most philosophical alternatives in education. Bernstein identified five areas of social logic that make competence-based pedagogy unique which Forbes accepts:

- Universal democracy of acquisition—an acceptance and announcement that all students are inherently and equally competent, and possess the common ability to achieve; in such an environment, there are no deficient students.
- Students are active and creative in constructing meaning out of their experience of the world.
- There is an emphasis on self-regulation; meaning structures need no shaping. Students must find meaning in their own way and time, and this cannot be regulated or organised.
- Scepticism towards hierarchical relationships—the teacher's function should not go beyond facilitation, accommodation and management.
- Shift in time perspective to focus on the present—the present is where competence and meaning can be obtained, therefore it is the focus of all activity.

Forbes asserts that HE should be considered a mode of CBP; however, he adds two elements of social logic to Bernstein's model which he feels distinguish HE from other competence-based approaches and makes it a unique approach to identity construction:

- "Being precedes doing"—education's main focus should be about developing the nature of a person's being.
- Everyone engaged in the learning process must be actively learning, not only the students.

### i. critique of Forbes' theoretical model

As was the case with Miller, Forbes' work requires a level of scrutiny and critique which has been lacking in a field that has such a small base of theorists. As a consequence, Forbes' framework has been adopted rather unquestioningly as a basis from which to continue defining HE, a trend which I find problematic. While I agree that Forbes provides a starting place for HE researchers to build on, I question several of the assumptions upon which his work is based, leading me to find some of his conclusions

rather more limited than the HE literature acknowledges. Some of my concerns about his starting assumptions formed the starting point for my own research, so should be elaborated upon here.

First, I must wonder at Forbes' selection of the six Authors examined in his dissertation, a group which remains un-expanded in his later research. It is somewhat unclear why he chose the six men he did for the basis of his study, particularly when his intent was to develop a defining framework for HE theoretical principles and practice. My review of the HE literature prior to Forbes' study turned up references to Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, but very little mention was ever made in the HE literature of Maslow, Jung and Rogers, men whose involvement in education is limited at best. The references I found relating to Maslow, Jung and Rogers generally placed them within the field of humanistic psychology, a topic which is certainly of interest to those wishing to understand the influence of holism on various fields of study, but which should not be conflated with HE specifically. The references I did find to the three psychologists within the HE literature were either by Forbes himself, or were discussions of Forbes' work. Lacking any other explanation, I concluded that Forbes defined the field of HE thinkers more out of the interests of his acquaintances and himself than through a deeper consideration of the movement's literature. The literature on HE is far more focused on the works of individuals such as Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Jiddu Krishnamurti, all of whom wrote theoretical works on education, and started schools in which these ideas were tested and refined. His omission of three individuals so central to the HE literature leads to questions about whether or not his analysis of HE, and as a result his theoretical framework, can be considered complete.

Because of Forbes' omission of three important HE practitioners from his analysis, and his focus instead on three psychologists, there seems to be a bias in his conclusions towards the psychological aspects of HE's work. His claim that Ultimacy is the defining aim of HE, for example, does not seem consistent with the positions taken by the three thinker-practitioners. Ultimacy as defined by Forbes is a psychological and/or spiritual attainment, and the journey towards it is seen very much as a solitary, inwardly-directed endeavour undertaken by an individual. Even a cursory examination of the writings of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti indicates a great concern on their part for the

social aspects of education, not merely as a useful tool on the path to Ultimacy, as Forbes seems to describe it, but rather as an important aspect of education in its own right. This seemed to me to be a topic that needed further consideration as part of developing a more balanced theoretical framework for HE.

My next critique concerns Forbes' choice of conceptual language and focus. Reading his works, it is clear that he intended his theoretical framework to be used primarily by others in the field of alternative education and HE, as opposed to being accessible and useful to those outside of these fields. His basic perspective was drawn from within the alternative educational movement, as is reflected in his use of language and concepts familiar to and accepted by many within such movements as being sufficiently "non-mainstream" enough; the terms "Ultimacy" and "sagacious competence" are two examples of his apparent desire to appeal through his language to peers within non-mainstream educational movements. While there is nothing wrong with examining HE from such a perspective, it has destined the work to remain within the movement itself, rather than allowing it to be accessible and useful to others coming to HE from outside the movement. This choice has two important consequences.

The first consequence, which I admit cannot be easily addressed, is that Forbes has tried so hard to be inclusive of a range of alternative schools that he has developed a model which, when examined carefully, is so broad as to say very little. This is a common criticism of progressive political and social efforts: those involved put so much focus on inclusiveness that they fail to set parameters which limit their scope in a meaningful way. In attempting to develop a framework which fits the "family resemblances" model, Forbes ultimately provides a description of the aims and practices of HE that is quite vague and, arguably, allows too much space for interpreting his conclusions to include a huge variety of non-mainstream educational approaches in its fold. Even with the inclusion of Ultimacy as the ultimate aim of HE, the scope of what Ultimacy could actually be could vary according to an individual educational perspective. Forbes' failure to provide any details about the specifics of what a curriculum in a holistic school might look like, and his lack of specificity in discussing issues of the development of children and their capacities seems to leave so much room for interpretation that a vast array of pedagogical approaches could fit within the model. Does critical educator Paolo

Freire working to liberate the minds of his fellow citizens get to claim to be assisting them to attain Ultimacy and thus fit into the HE framework? Is deschooling advocate Ivan Illich who aims to replace formal education with an informal learning "curriculum," thereby removing students from the socialising influence of schools, actually assisting students to attain a peak experience, thereby making him an HE educator? Would a group of monks retreating to the forest in pursuit of enlightenment fit many of the HE criteria listed by Forbes in his model? To have a definition of HE so broadly encompassing that it includes a large swathe of marginally-related alternative educational movements could arguably compromise the utility of the model.

A current study led by Forbes illustrates the difficulty of using his model to say truly meaningful things about holistic schools. He surveyed the literature of 72 schools claiming to be holistic and analysed the literature using his model as a framework. The aim was to determine how holistic schools talked about themselves. The researchers concluded that there were so many different types of schools calling themselves holistic that it might be necessary to consider that there are sub-categories of schools within the HE movement and that a consideration of HE would be strengthened through a system of taxonomy which would allow for consideration of the different types of holistic schools. While I accept that different holistic schools may have distinctive features, if there is such a range of schools still represented within the umbrella of HE even after using a model such as Forbes' to try and narrow down the pool to only holistic schools, it seems fair to ask whether the model is sufficiently narrow.

It is fair to say that this particular critique assumes that the purpose of developing a framework for HE is to try and narrow the definition of HE such that meaningful things can be said about the movement and its approaches, not necessarily to try and encompass more alternative approaches within the umbrella of the HE movement. If Forbes' purpose is the latter, namely, to try and raise the profile of HE by being able to include a greater number of schools in the HE movement, his approach may be adequate. I am inclined, however, to follow Ron Miller's approach of willingly seeing similarities between HE and other approaches such as those of Freire and John Dewey, but considering them outside the scope of HE, which Miller did on sociological and

historical grounds that he felt influenced the respective purposes of the educational approaches.

A second consequence of Forbes' decision to examine HE from a perspective grounded inside the movement itself, is that his work has remained inside the alternative educational movement and has not been of much use to mainstream schools wishing to learn more about holistic approaches in a way that allows them to adopt the principles and practices into their own work. This tendency to focus within the movement itself rather than looking outwards to engage with mainstream education is endemic within the HE movement generally. The majority of HE literature is written for and shared with others only within the movement. The irony is that HE, an educational movement which Ron Miller identified as having at its roots the desire to challenge and change the mainstream educational system, has seemingly closed in on itself.

When the HE movement first organised itself sufficiently to hold a Conference on Holistic Education in 1990, the stated goal of the event was to offer those working on the "many strands of progressive, humanistic, and holistic education to come together to join in a common cause. Educators who had been working in isolation from one another, often unaware of each other's existence jumped at the chance to find out about one another's projects" (Purpel and Miller 1991, 51). One year later, an article by Ron Miller and David Purpel challenged the one-sided nature of the vision statement for HE drafted at the conference, and questioned what the responsibility of those within the movement should be toward engaging with broader social contexts and conditions.

> It is clear that the Chicago Statement [vision statement for HE] has a far greater emphasis in matters relating to the personal and the individual, with special attention to the inner life of the person … This is not to say that sensitivity to the importance of culture and society is absent, but that it is muted, almost perfunctory … We believe that those working in the holistic tradition have neglected the often enormous significance of cultural, political, and social contexts and their impact on our lives (Purpel and Miller 1991, 34).

Five articles appeared in response to Miller and Purpel's article with three authors trading responses which ranged from arguing that HE was by definition a counter-cultural movement that could obviously not successfully engage with mainstream education, thus necessitating its very existence (Gelb 1991); to one expressing a vague

agreement with Miller and Purple's overall point, but stopping short of stating that HE should actually move actively in the direction of engagement (Clark Jr. 1991). However, at that point, the dialogue stopped with no clear resolution of the issue.

I believe that Forbes' approach to the development of his theoretical model, particularly his lack of effort to frame it in a way that makes it accessible to those outside the alternative education community, reflects an acceptance of the position that HE can remain immersed in its own community of thinkers and schools, with little need to work actively toward the reform of the larger system of education. Yet, this isolationist approach seems to stand in stark contrast to the work of those holistic educators described by Ron Miller and referenced in the HE literature, whose very purpose in developing new models of education was to provide a viable alternative to a system they saw as unsustainable—not for the elite, not for a chosen few, but for as many children as they could reach. Do their efforts indicate something broader about their belief in the responsibility of HE towards a broader society? This is a question left unaddressed within Forbes' definition of HE, but is a question I believe is well-worth asking.

The remaining body of literature in HE builds greatly off the work of the three men discussed in this chapter, though there is no one else who has contributed as significantly to the theoretical perspective of the field. Understanding the basic ideas of Forbes and Ron and John Miller allows for a foundational understanding of the theory behind the movement, and the aims of my project as discussed in the following section.

## 5. aims and organisation of the thesis

The aims of this thesis are twofold. First, I seek to develop an understanding of the philosophical characteristics underlying HE approaches in order to apply the general principles without necessarily referencing the specific agenda of the movement as a reaction to the mainstream. While there may be nothing inherently wrong in examining HE from the inwardly focused perspective adopted by Forbes, it has destined the work to be of no real use to educators outside of the movement. My ultimate interest is in considering whether the principles and practices of HE can be adopted into the state

sector of education. In order to do this, I believe that it is necessary to approach the movement as an outsider, without referencing the very language and anti-establishment stances that have distanced the movement from the mainstream for the last fifty years. Second, I seek to explore the challenges faced in implementing an HE model in the state system. I do this through a case study of an English secondary school which has adopted a holistic approach to education. The thesis is divided into three sections for the purposes of delineating the separation between the theoretical and empirical aspects of the study.

### *A. section I: chapters one and two*

The remainder of Section I is devoted to providing background on holism as a philosophical position and its gradual influence on educational thinking. Chapter Two has two main parts. In the first, I draw on the work of others more grounded in the subject to introduce holism as a philosophical stance by discussing its emergence within science. The basic tenets of the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview were found to be inadequate to explain scientific discoveries being made in the latter part of the nineteenth century; holism first emerged in the fields of evolutionary biology and physics as a challenge to those basic tenets. It has since grown to become an integral part of systems theory, influencing fields as diverse as ecology and management.

The second part of Chapter Two is rooted in Ron Miller's example of laying the socio-political background against which to understand the rise of the HE tradition and its influence in England at the beginning of the twnetieth century. Having studied the work of sociologists and historians of educators better qualified than myself to understand the development of systems of mass education in England, I believe that parallels can fairly be drawn to the process in America, setting the stage in a very similar way for the development of HE towards the end of the nineteenth century. I draw on the work of Forbes and Miller to provide an overview of forerunners to HE such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel. The chapter concludes with a justification of my choice to focus on the work of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti for the purposes of this thesis, discussing the ways in which this will allow for the development of a different and important perspective on the HE movement not yet undertaken in the literature.

### B. section II: chapters three through six

Section II is more theoretical in nature and is devoted to answering the first two of the research questions set out for the study:

- What are the underlying philosophical characteristics of holistic education?
- How do these philosophical foundations influence the practical aspects of schools working within the holistic paradigm?

Chapters Three, Four and Five are devoted to an examination of the ideas and practical work of the thinkers central to the work of the modern HE movement, Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti, respectively. The introduction to each Chapter will provide more detail about the specifics of my approach to the summarisation and presentation of their educational ideas. Based on my examination of their writings and work within schools, I compiled and refined a list of philosophical issues addressed explicitly by the thinkers, as well as practical aspects of schooling informed by their philosophical stances on these issues. In Chapter Six, I draw on the discussion of holism in Chapter Two and the work of the three HE thinkers, to present an analysis of the philosophical and practical characteristics of HE schools. My aim in this chapter is to discuss these characteristics in a way that moves away from the insular language of the HE movement itself, and tries instead to generalise in a way that is accessible to a broader audience of schools and educators interested in understanding what it looks like to operate in a holistic manner outside the rigid parameters of the HE movement.

### C. section III: chapters seven through ten

Section III is concerned with examining the issues involved in trying to carry HE ideas into schools operating within the state system. Three research questions guide my work in this portion of my thesis:

- What is the school doing with relation to the areas of education that emerge as practically relevant to the work of holistic education?
- What facilitates the adoption of holistic education practices by a school working within the state system?

- What hinders the adoption of holistic education practices by a school working within the state system?

Chapter Seven discusses the methodology used to collect and analyse the data for an empirical study that was developed to begin answering these questions. The case study was conducted in an English city where the failure of two existing secondary schools had persuaded the local education authority to begin a school based on alternative principles. I spent six months at the school trying to understand the challenges faced by a Head and teachers trying to be innovative within the restrictive educational climate currently existing in England. In order to understand whether schools operating fully within the HE model faced similar issues and, if so, how they responded, I also spent nearly five weeks visiting a Steiner school and a Krishnamurti school. An introduction to and overview of the three schools is provided in Chapter Eight, providing information about each school's organisation which should serve as a grounding for the presentation of my data and analysis in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Nine takes a more narrative approach to presenting and discussing my findings, a choice which I hope helps preserve the integrity of the data, and the complexity of the realities of teachers, administrators and students trying to adopt a holistic approach to education. I conclude Chapter Nine by drawing together the major themes and issues arising out of my analysis, offering some thoughts as to the implications of my findings.

Finally, Chapter Ten draws together the work of Sections I and II to explore some implications of my study as a whole. The discussion includes an examination of potential areas for further study, and some speculation about what my overall findings might have to offer educators and policy makers. Specifically, I discuss the implications of this study for the work of schools within the HE tradition seeking to expand the influence of their ideas, for educators in mainstream state schools hoping to learn more about HE and its potential adoption within the state system, and for policy-makers and educators seeking to support the diversification of the state school system in order to try and achieve high standards of attainment for all students.

# Chapter Two—Holism: An Emerging Paradigm

## 1. introduction

The holistic education movement did not develop in a vacuum over the course of the last three decades. Although the term "holistic education" has only been popularised since the 1970s, the values and ideas themselves have a long history in the tradition of educational thinking. However, in order to understand holistic education as a movement and in order to differentiate it from various other progressive movements in education that have been popular throughout the last 100 years of education, it is first necessary to understand the concept of holism as it first arose in science.

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the two important sets of ideas necessary to understanding the basic roots of holistic education as it exists in England today: holism as an emerging paradigm in science, and the development of England's system of mass education during the nineteenth century, a system similar to one developing throughout Europe at the time and to which three primary HE thinkers responded around the turn of the twentieth century. In the case of both topics, I cannot claim credit for the underlying thinking. I have relied on the work of academics more fully versed in both topics to compile a summary of ideas.

## 2. emergence of the holistic paradigm in science

When I first began to peruse the HE literature, I constantly encountered critical references to the "Newtonian-Cartesian worldview." It became clear that the community's primary thinkers strongly believed that their views were a challenge to a prevailing worldview that had at its roots particular assumptions about the nature of reality. Their use of the phrase presumed a universal understanding of why the worldview in question ought to be regarded as inadequate and, in their eyes, partly to blame for the weaknesses of today's western societies. My first reaction was to find the notion that scientific beliefs could have profoundly affected broader aspects of society such as education seemed a bit far-fetched. I decided to take some time to familiarise myself with the literature exploring

the history of ideas in science, to gauge for myself what scholars more familiar with the ways in which ideas shape cultures had to say. What I discovered surprised me in some ways, yet I found the ideas intuitively sensible.

As was discussed in Chapter One, a paradigm is an implicit, fundamental interpretation that governs understanding within a particular field of thought, particularly in science. A paradigm changes only when new experiences and information so severely contradict a particular way of understanding the world that we are forced to change our assumptions. Many scholars during the last three decades, including Miller, have argued that there appears to be an emerging paradigm shift in western civilization today. They have termed this new paradigm the holistic paradigm, adopting the term "holism," to refer to a worldview whose roots they claim reach back as far as the mystical traditions of the East, and the writings of Aristotle and Plato (Smuts 1926; Huxley 1970; Kesson 1991).

In the western philosophical context, the underpinnings of what is now referred to as holism have been evolving for about three centuries, most rapidly during the last hundred years, primarily as a response to a prevailingly mechanistic worldview which underlay much of western thinking in science during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Understanding the social and intellectual climate during which holistic ideals began to emerge and develop in scholarly discourse in the West is central to understanding the ways in which disciplines such as holistic education juxtapose themselves to the prevailing culture. Any attempt to reduce the history of science into a matter of pages will necessarily be simplistic in its explanations. Nevertheless, a basic overview of some key discoveries in science and their impact on larger cultural perceptions from the middle of the sixteenth century through the early twentieth century is all that can be accommodated as part of this chapter. Though concise, I hope that it will provide a useful context within which to understand philosophical arguments made in Chapter Six.

### *A. the embedded paradigm*

Before 1500, the dominant worldview in Europe was organic, characterised by the interdependence of spiritual and material phenomena (Wardle 1976). The framework of medieval science was very different from that of contemporary science. It was based on

both reason and faith and its main goal was to understand the meaning and significance of things. The worldview and value system that lie at the basis of our modern culture were formulated in their essential outlines during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a result of the Scientific Revolution when there was a dramatic shift in the way people conceived of their world. The notion of an organic, living and spiritual universe was replaced by the notion of the world as a machine, a metaphor that continued to be dominant throughout the modern age (Russell 1961, 512-526).

> The new mentality and the new perception of the cosmos gave our western civilization the features that are characteristic of the modern era. They became the basis of the paradigm that has dominated our culture for the past three hundred years (Capra 1983, 37).

The Scientific Revolution began with the work of Nicolas Copernicus, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei who, collectively, overthrew the geocentric view of Ptolemy and the Bible that had been accepted dogma for more than a thousand years, thus unseating man from his proud position at the centre of God's creation. Galileo, in particular, played an important role in the Scientific Revolution by being the first western scientific figure to combine scientific experimentation with the use of mathematical language to formulate laws of nature. He argued that scientists should restrict themselves to studying measurable and quantifiable properties of material bodies—shapes, numbers and movements. Other properties, like colour, sound, taste or smell, were merely subjective mental projections, which should be excluded from the domain of science (Crosland 1971, 97). "Out go sight, sound, taste, touch and smell, and along with them has since gone aesthetics and ethical sensibility, values, quality, form; all feelings, motives, intentions, soul, consciousness, spirit. Experience as such is cast out of the realm of scientific discourse" (Laing 1982, 173).

While Galileo worked in Italy, Francis Bacon set forth the empirical method of science in England. Bacon was the first to formulate a clear theory of the inductive process, namely, to conduct experiments and to draw general conclusions from them that could then be tested in further experiments. Bacon also adopted the view that in order to pursue empirical methods of investigation, "nature must be 'hounded in her wanderings,' 'bound into service,' and 'made a slave;' she was to be 'put in constraint,' and the aim of the scientist was to 'torture her secrets from her'" (Capra 1983, 40-41). Eco-feminist

scholars like Carolyn Merchant have argued that such dominating, controlling views towards nature represented the first serious moves away from the ecological, integrative attitudes toward nature adopted during the medieval ages, and toward the anti-ecological view of nature as a resource for humans to manipulate that dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Merchant 1980, 3). As the Scientific Revolution progressed the organic view of nature was replaced almost entirely in scientific discourse by the metaphor of the world as a machine. This shift was initiated and completed by two intellects of the seventeenth century: René Descartes and Isaac Newton.

René Descartes spent his life pursuing his goal of constructing a complete science of nature about which he could be absolutely certain; this science, like mathematics, would be based entirely on self-evident first principles. The belief in the certainty of scientific knowledge lies at the very heart of Cartesian philosophy and of the worldview derived from it. The Cartesian belief in scientific truth is still widespread today and is reflected in the scientism that has become typical of Western culture. Many people in our society, scientists and non-scientists alike, are convinced that the scientific method is the only valid way of understanding the universe. The crux of Descartes' method for reaching scientific truth is to establish certain starting points, through a process of radical doubting, and then to proceed by strict deductive reasoning. He doubts everything that he can manage to doubt until he reaches one thing he cannot doubt, the existence of himself as a thinker. Thus he arrives at his celebrated statement, '*Cogito ergo sum*,' 'I think, therefore I exist.' From this, Descartes deduces that the essence of human nature lies in thought, and that all the things we conceive of clearly and distinctly are true. Descartes' method is analytic and it is perhaps his most important contribution to science. It consists of breaking up thoughts into pieces and arranging them in their logical order. The analytic method has become an essential characteristic of modern scientific thought and practice.

> It was Descartes' method that made it possible for NASA to put a man on the moon. On the other hand, overemphasis on the Cartesian method has led to the fragmentation that is characteristic of both our general thinking and our academic disciplines, and to the widespread attitude of reductionism in science—the belief that all complex phenomena can be understood by reducing them to their constituent parts (Capra 1983, 44).

Descartes' *cogito* made mind more certain for him than matter, and led him to conclude that the two were separate and fundamentally different. This Cartesian division between

mind and matter has had a profound impact on Western thought. "This partition has penetrated deeply into the human mind in the three hundred years following Descartes and it will take a long time for it to be replaced by a really different attitude toward the problem of reality (Heisenberg 1959, 163-164). For Descartes the material universe was nothing but a machine: there was no purpose, life or spirituality in matter; nature worked according to mechanical laws, and everything in the material world, including living organisms, could be explained in terms of the arrangement and movement of its parts (Russell 1961, 442-451). Using his method of analytic thought, he attempted to give a precise account of all natural phenomena in one single system of mechanical principles. He was unable to fulfill this ambition during his lifetime, and it was left to another great mind to realize the Cartesian dream: Isaac Newton.

It was Newton who developed a complete mathematical formulation of the mechanistic view of nature, and thus accomplished a grand synthesis of the works of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon and Descartes. Newtonian physics provided a consistent mathematical theory of the world that remained the solid foundation of scientific thought well into the twentieth century. His theory was found to be valid throughout the solar system and thus seemed to confirm the Cartesian view of nature: the universe was indeed one huge mechanical system, operating according to exact mathematical laws. The basic underpinnings of this Cartesian/Newtonian worldview, which continued to shape the work of natural and social scientists for the next three centuries and which became the focus of the challenge presented by nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers can be summed up as follows:

- It is an acceptable ethic of science to view Nature as a resource that is to be understood and controlled for the benefit of mankind.
- Scientific knowledge can be accepted as certain.
- Knowledge is a building with solid foundations. Scientists can speak about and strive to attain *fundamental* laws; refer to the *fundament* or *basis* of the building of knowledge. Knowledge should be built on solid and firm *foundations*; there are *basic* building blocks of matter; *fundamental* equations; *fundamental* constants; *fundamental* principles.

- Scientific descriptions can be objective, that is, independent of the human observer and the process of acquiring knowledge.
- There are fundamental structures and there are forces and mechanisms through which these structures interact. It is these interactions that lead to the processes that can be observed in the world.
- In any complex system, the dynamics of the whole can be understood from the properties of the parts. Once the parts are understood – their fundamental properties and the mechanisms through which they interact – the dynamics of the whole can be derived, at least in principle. In order to understand any complex system, therefore, it is first necessary to break it up into its constituent parts.

It is important to note that the impact of Newtonian ideas extended beyond simply the realm of the natural sciences, as thinkers of the eighteenth century applied the principles of Newtonian mechanics to the sciences of human nature and human society. The newly created social sciences generated great enthusiasm, and some of their proponents even claimed to have discovered a "social physics" (Capra 1983, 166-172). The dominant figure in this development was the English philosopher John Locke. Strongly influenced by the thinking of Descartes and Newton, Locke's work had an enormous impact on eighteenth-century thought in many of the social sciences. Following in the path of Newtonian physics, Locke developed an atomistic view of society, describing it in terms of its basic building block, the human being, and tried to reduce the patterns observed in society to the behaviour of individuals. He tried to apply the principles of human nature to economic and political problems, guided by the belief that there were laws of nature governing human society similar to those governing the physical universe. As the atoms in a gas would establish a balanced state, so human individuals would settle down in a society in a "state of nature" (Cranston 1957, 196). This idea, in particular, would come to influence work in education.

### *B. limitations of the Newtonian/Cartesian Worldview*

Although the enormous success of the mechanistic model was widely accepted by physicists throughout the eighteenth century, it was less than two hundred years later that aspects of physical reality were discovered that made the limitations of the Newtonian

model apparent and demonstrated that none of its features had absolute validity. The first of these developments was the discovery and investigation of electric and magnetic phenomena, which could not be described appropriately by the mechanistic model and involved a new type of electromagnetic force, the force field. In the Newtonian view, forces were rigidly connected to the bodies upon which they acted. Suddenly the force concept was replaced by the much subtler concept of a field that had its own reality and could be studied without reference to physical bodies. This was a profound change in the conception of physical reality.

While electromagnetism was dethroning Newtonian mechanics as the ultimate theory of natural phenomena, a new trend of thinking was arising that went beyond the image of the Newtonian world-machine and was to dominate not only the nineteenth century but all future scientific thinking. It involved the idea of evolution: of change, growth and development. Charles Darwin was the first to present an overwhelming mass of evidence in support of biological evolution, establishing the phenomenon for scientists beyond any doubt. He also proposed an explanation based on the concepts of random mutation and natural selection, which was to remain the cornerstone of modern evolutionary thought. Its role in the life sciences was similar to that of Newton's discoveries in physics and astronomy two centuries earlier in that it forced scientists to abandon the Cartesian conception of the world as a machine that had emerged fully created from the hands of its Creator. Instead, the universe had to be pictured as an evolving and ever-changing system in which complex structures developed from simpler forms. While this new way of thinking was elaborated in the life sciences, evolutionary concepts also emerged in physics which could not be explained by the laws of Newtonian mechanics. The mechanistic conception of the universe as a system of small billiard balls in random motion suddenly seemed far too simplistic to deal with the evolution of life.

At the end of the nineteenth century Newtonian mechanics had lost its role as the fundamental theory of natural phenomena. Electrodynamics and theories of evolution in both biology and physics involved concepts that went beyond the Newtonian model and indicated that the universe was far more complex than Descartes and Newton had ever imagined. It was during this period that developments in evolutionary and physics theory would introduce a new paradigm of thinking in science.

### *C. quantum physics and holism in evolution*

At the beginning of modern physics stands the extraordinary intellectual feat of one man: Albert Einstein. Einstein believed in the inherent harmony of nature, and throughout his scientific life his deepest concern was to find a unified foundation of physics. His special theory of general relativity unified and completed the structure of classical physics, but at the same time involved radical changes to the traditional concepts of space and time, thus undermining the foundations of the Newtonian worldview. Einstein's work in the field of electromagnetic radiation was completed in conjunction with an international team of scientists including Niels Bohr, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg; it was a period in science which would radically change the worldview of those involved.

The conceptual frameworks which emerged from this new work in physics were by no means easy to accept. Its effect on the physicists' views of reality was truly earth-shattering, grounded as the men were within a particular worldview. The new physics necessitated profound changes in concepts of space, time, matter, object, and cause and effect; and because these concepts are so fundamental to our experience of the world, their transformation came as a great shock. In Einstein's words: "All my attempts to adapt the theoretical foundations of physics to this [new type of knowledge] failed completely. It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built" (Capra 1983, 66).

The work of physicists including Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg and Schroedinger in the early part of the twentieth century astounded the scientific community because of the implications of their work (Capra 1983; Zukav 1991; Gribbin 1995; Caracciolo 2000). These included assertions that:

- There are no such things as absolute space and time; one cannot be measured without reference to the other, shattering assumptions central to classical understandings of 'reality' and its ability to be accurately measured and explained.
- Completely objective knowledge of reality does not exist. A phenomena known as wave/particle duality challenges the notion of objective knowledge of reality by demonstrating that an object being observed cannot be separated from the

observer; for example, whether an electron manifests itself as a wave or particle correlates directly with what is being looked for.

- The universe is connected by webs of connection that cannot be measured in a traditional sense, and appear to allow matter to be affected by "non-local causes." Experiments testing action-at-a-distance have confirmed that objects, at the very least elementary particles, are affected by connections that exist invisibly across space and times; paired or correlated electrons will continue to act as one electron even when separated by large distances.

Quantum physics opened the door to new assumptions about the nature of the universe and its structure, and challenged many of the entrenched beliefs of the eighteenth through twentieth centuries.

At around the same time these notions were challenging physicists, evolutionary biology was having its own revolution in thought. There is general agreement that the earliest use of the term "holism" in western literature was by South African Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts in 1926 (Phillips 1977; Miller 1990; Kesson 1991; Miller 1996). Having studied the work of Darwin and his contemporaries, Smuts coined the term 'holism' to describe what he saw as a "whole-ward" tendency in nature, something he felt was inadequately addressed in the theories of evolution presented by Darwin and others.

> The whole is not merely a mechanical system, that is, a system of parts externally related to each other … A whole, which is more than the sum of its parts, has something internal, some inwardness of structure and function, some specific inner relations which constitutes that more. (Smuts 1926, 100).

Smuts argued that the worldview that underlay many scientific theories of evolution and biology were inadequate to explain the immense complexity of biological life and evolutionary change. By taking into account only organisms as a sum of their parts these theories of evolution were not taking into account the way in which the various parts were working together according to some type of purpose that was beyond the specific needs of the individual parts. This was an insufficient way to conceive of organisms because it neglected to take into account the richness of the organism as a self-organizing system.

Although Alfred North Whitehead (1925) had independently come to similar conclusions around the same time, Smuts argued that Whitehead's theory of organisms did not allow for a broader theme of systems and holism to emerge in the same way. Whitehead did not believe that the theory of organisms could be applied to non-organic systems or to the spiritual realm, while Smuts argued passionately for the application of holistic thinking to these realms as well as those of science, thus drawing holism into the realm of a worldview rather than simply a scientific theory of evolution. Arguing that the world itself is a whole operating in a similar manner to that of individual organisms, Smuts concludes that

> we arrive at the conception of a world which is not a collection of accidents externally put together like an artificial patchwork, but which is synthetic, structural, active, vital and creative in creating measure all through, the progressive development of which is dominated by a unique holistic character from the humblest inorganic beginnings to the most exalted creations and ideals of the human and of the universal Spirit (Smuts 1926, 13).

The debate between Smuts and Whitehead was never resolved in the literature of the time. It remained for thinkers in other fields to develop and expand many of the concepts introduced within the debate about holism. The ideas of holism had enough appeal to be carried on, though the term holism would not be commonly adopted until well into the latter part of the twentieth century.

What follows is a summary of the view of the natural world adopted within the holistic paradigm:

- *Relationships rather than building blocks.* The relationship between parts and wholes in nature is more symmetrical than was acknowledged within the Newtonian-Cartesian framework. The universe is not comprised of fundamental building blocks, but rather is seen as a network of relations. While the properties of the parts contribute to an understanding of the whole, at the same time the properties of the parts can only be fully understood through the dynamics of the whole.
- *Process becomes primary.* There must be a shift from thinking in terms of structure to thinking in terms of process. In the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, it was believed that there were fundamental structures, and then forces and

mechanisms through which these interacted, which resulted in processes. In the new paradigm, it is believed that process is primary, that every structure observed is a manifestation of an underlying process.

- *Greater importance of epistemology.* There must be a shift from the pursuit of objective science and knowledge, to epistemic science and knowledge. Epistemology must be included in the description of natural phenomena, for this acknowledges that what we see in the world is an outcome of how we have looked at the world.
- *Networks rather than foundations.* Knowledge should be viewed as a network of information rather than as a building with solid foundations. Just as reality is seen as a network of relationships, our descriptions of this reality—our concepts, models and theories—will form an interconnected network that represents the observed phenomena. In such a network, nothing will be primary or secondary, and there will be no foundations. The material universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire web.
- *Scientific concepts and theories seen as limited.* All scientific concepts and theories are limited and approximate. Since all natural phenomena are ultimately interconnected, in order to explain any one thing, we need to understand everything else, which would seem to be an impossibility. Rather than searching for absolute truths, we must deal with limited and approximate descriptions of reality.
- *Ecological ethics gain importance.* If nature is ultimately interconnected, then the harm done in one part of the dynamic system will necessarily have consequences for the other parts of the system. The ethic in science that has viewed nature as a resource that is to be understood and controlled for the benefit of mankind must be replaced with a more ecological ethic of cooperation, sustainability and non-violence.

This new paradigm of thinking in science, which has been much more widely reflected in the literature during the last three decades, has influenced the work of thinkers in areas as far-ranging as psychology, ecology, medicine and organizational management (Cobb

1988; Lovelock 1988; Chopra 1989; Wheatley 1999). It should come as no surprise that in a discipline such as education, in which aspects of biology, human health, psychology and organisational theory all converge, the holistic paradigm has been adopted as a lens through which to view the work of educators.

## 3. mass primary education in England

It was in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that the question began to be seriously mooted of providing mass elementary education in England (Wardle 1976). The scientific ideas discussed in the first part of this chapter can be used to understand some of the assumptions about human nature that informed the development of mass education systems, and the educational methods that were adopted in this endeavour. As Wardle notes, "Educational systems do not grow up by chance. They reflect contemporary notions about social organisation, the nature of knowledge, the possibility of human improvement, the function of government, etc." (1976, 1).

Numerous factors influenced the decision to provide education for the masses in England during the nineteenth century: concerns about the need for social discipline during periods when established values were being challenged; an interest in education as a cure for social problems during the early part of the industrial revolution; and a period demand for political discipline were all factors that influenced the development of state school provisions (Simon 1960; Simon 1965; Lawson and Silver 1973; Wardle 1976). Before examining the actual practices of the mass state schools which emerged at this time, it will be useful to understand the climate in which these schools developed. Educational historians David Wardle, Denis Lawton, Peter Gordon and Brian Simon identify several interrelated religious, intellectual, scientific and political trends of the day which contributed to the development of the state school agenda (Simon 1960; Wardle 1976; Lawton and Gordon 2002). It will be useful to examine the primary issues within each of these themes, in order to understand the deep-seated reasons for the adoption of particular educational approaches as part of the state education system.

## *A. intellectual trends*

### i. enlightenment thinkers

The eighteenth century is often referred to as the period of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason. Imagery of the light of knowledge shining through the darkness of ignorance was quite popular, and in keeping with many of the trends discussed in Chapter Two, reliance on reason to solve complex social problems was seen as a potential solution to the difficulties of the era. By the beginning of the eighteenth century a combination of scientific and philosophical thinking was beginning to produce new ways of thinking about the world. Gradually, the Enlightenment provided by science was consciously extended to political, social and economic issues.

During this time, a new class of industrialists and professional men arose in chief manufacturing regions of England; they were heavily influenced by their belief that science could be used to create societies free of the problems of the past. A strongly held belief, adopted from materialist philosophers such as Hobbes, Descartes and Locke, was that man was a rational being and therefore capable of advancing to perfection. The resulting need to form children's minds led to a strong interest in the field of education, most notably on the part of thinkers including Joseph Priestly and his associates. In particular, they adopted the ideas of David Hartley, whose work in the psychology of associationism extended the ideas of materialist philosophers and many scientists into the work of educating children (Wardle 1976, 82-84).

#### *a. associationism*

Hartley's theory of associationism provided a rational, materialist theory of human learning, which led logically to the conclusion that man's mind is formed by his circumstances, education in its widest sense. Locke had advanced the view that the mind is a blank slate at birth; Hobbes had argued that the foundations of all knowledge are to be found in sensations caused by the action of external objects on the senses. Hartley went on to show that ideas, originally arising in this way and developing from physiological processes in the brain, inevitably become "associated" together in a certain order in the mind. From this it followed that by organizing a child's experiences

according to a particular pattern, it was possible to exercise a formative influence on his mental development (Simon 1960, 45-50; Wardle 1976, 82-84).

Priestley adopted Hartley's work and built upon it in a way that was to mark educational endeavours from that time forward. Hobbes had argued that nature is governed by laws and that these laws can be discovered through scientific hypothesis and experimentation. There must also be then, argued Priestley, laws governing the working of the human mind. Taking Hartley's theory as a basis, further laws could be discovered by observation and experiment, elevating education to the status of a science.

### ii. the Radicals

In the post-French Revolutionary period, a new class of reformers known as the Radicals emerged in England led in thought by James Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Democracy was a key element of Mill's thought; his definition of democracy implying that a mass of the population should unite behind the middle class to try and undermine the power of the ruling oligarchy (Simon 1960, 75). The demand for educational reform emerged as an essential aspect of this political reform process, for the Radicals were savvy enough to recognize that educating members of the working class and gaining that group's allegiance would be an important element of success. The approach they would take, however, would be grounded in a fundamental theory of the time, utilitarianism. The aims, values and practices of this utilitarian approach inform many underlying assumptions about the purposes and practices of state education even today (Simon 1960,126-129; Wardle 1976, 91; Lawton and Gordon 2002, 115-132).

#### *a. utilitarianism and education*

In its original formulation, utilitarianism is quite simple: the foundation of morality rests on the notion that actions are "right" insofar as they produce happiness or pleasure. Thus actions are judged by their consequences and the amount of pleasure that all concerned derive from those consequences; the aim is the greatest happiness for the greatest number of individuals (Russell 1961, 740-741). During a period of history when the lines between philosophy, political theory, economics and sociology scarcely existed, utilitarianism soon grew to be a driving motivator of the Radicals of the day (Russell

1961, 742-747). It was the guiding aim of the English utilitarians to transform the closed society controlled by hereditary landlords acting in their own interests, into a "free" society directed by those most qualified to govern in the interests of all. According to Mill, it was the middle class that was best capable of bringing about the unification of the interests of all members of society, and so of promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As part of their struggle against the upper class, the Radicals were among the first to put forward the idea of universal elementary education.

Though a seemingly benevolent gesture, the motivations underlying their actions can be better understood by considering their broader political philosophy. Radicals believed that workers must come to understand that their interests coincided with those of the industrial capitalist members of the middle class; that their prosperity, like that of the middle class, depended on the institutions of private property and the free movement of capital. Such an appreciation of the harmony of interests, argued Mill, was the inevitable outcome of the spread of enlightenment. It was within this context that the utilitarians pushed for the provision of universal education (Wardle 1976, 3).

The schools in which workers and workers' children were educated during this period reflected many of the educational writings of both Mill and Bentham and were based on the theory of associationism. Bentham's educational principles were simple: various fields of knowledge should be reduced to a logical order, and taught in the order he believed most advantageous in light of two principles: utility and facility. Those subjects with the clearest utility in common life should be included, while the principle of facility required that development should be from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general. The educational process should be systematic, he said, and the body of knowledge to be learned should be imposed by the educator. He also insisted on frequent testing, in order to ensure a grasp of the materials (Simon 1960, 80-81).

Bentham also defined management principles which he believed would help create the conditions necessary to ensure that learning took place with maximum efficiency. It is interesting to note how many of his proposed ideas would become standard practice in schools in the centuries following. A great emphasis was laid on individual competition as a main incentive for work; setting pupils according to their abilities in various subjects

was advocated; the "distraction prevention principle" provided that all windows should be of a height that no child could look out; while the "tabula exhibition principle" required that all walls be covered with instructional materials so that students looking around the classroom idly could not help but imbibe knowledge (Simon 1960, 80-81). Although Bentham's ideas were never put into practice in the form of an actual school, we shall see that his ideas and well as those of Mill were eagerly adopted into the development of schools for workers during the nineteenth century.

### *B. political movements*

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a growing movement among workers which would cause deep political and social unrest. Workers too were interested in universal enlightenment and the diffusion of knowledge, but from a perspective that would further the interests of the working class. Workers' political understanding had been heightened during their participation in mass popular movements in the late 1700s. Tom Paine's work, *Rights of Man*, gained currency in the upheavals accompanying the French Revolution. Paine stressed that all men are created equal and free, and that power must be derived from the people (Russell 1961, 742-745). He also criticized prevailing religious beliefs, attempting to open the eyes of workers to the ways in which political and religious indoctrination and control were barring the way to change. The leaders of the workers' movements were politically aware enough to recognize that the interests of other classes would not necessarily align with the needs and desires of workers.

It was also during this period that there was a rapid increase in the rate of social mobility. This was due partly to the spread of consciously egalitarian doctrines, and partly to the industrial revolution, which necessitated a large increase in the geographic mobility of labour, and at the same time threw open many new occupations which could not easily be classified within the existing social framework (Digby and Searby 1981, 21). Some people welcomed the decreasing rigidity of the class structure, while others found the phenomena frightening, both because of a fear that culture and class would be distilled with the lowered standards of participation; and because of a fear that an upsurge of mobilized workers might lead to upheavals of the sorts occurring in America and France. The latter concern was not necessarily unfounded.

Many workers were reacting violently against industrial developments, which dislocated their patterns of work and life. An instinctive reaction was to feel that it was the monopoly of production instruments by factory owners and large landowners which was leading to the current upheaval, and that political reform and the inception of a democratic government would lead to the equitable distribution of property and a return to simpler society (Digby and Searby 1981, 24). Organized clubs began to form in which workers educated themselves in the complex social, political and economic issues of the time.

> This process of self-education was of great significance. It helped materially to develop, from among the rank and file of the workers, men who were able to comprehend and master the most advanced political and social thinking of the time; men capable of acting on and communicating their knowledge, and so of leading the nascent working-class movement at both a local and national level (Simon 1960, 181)

The significance of these political movements was not lost on the government of the day. The Parliament of the time comprised members entirely from the upper class, and this period of change was decidedly unsettling in terms of their future prospects. For the first time, there appeared to be some momentum behind the middle class reform movement. Members of the establishment realized that keeping the reformers from winning over the minds and hearts of the middle and working classes was imperative in maintaining their position of power, and education of the masses on government terms was one way to do so.

### *C. religious evangelism*

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the effects of industrialization and rapid social change were beginning to be felt quite acutely. Mobility, industrialization, and the introduction of new political ideologies all combined to create some wobble in the existing social order (Digby and Searby 1981, 43). The time was ripe for a reminder of the security and solace to be found in the power of religion. Evangelicalism was the result of a strong religious revival in the latter half of the eighteenth century, partly a response to the very rational, intellectual flavour of the Age of Reason. The advance of knowledge undermined many of the existing beliefs and values of individuals devoted to the infallibility of the Bible, particularly with regards to theories of creation and the

workings of the physical world. Rapid scientific progress was uncomfortable for many who sought unquestionable foundations upon which to rest their beliefs, for it was the basic axiom of the scientific method that no assumption was unquestionable (Wardle 1976, 5-7). The upsurge in religiosity was accompanied by a strong sense of social responsibility that led its followers to show a powerful missionary zeal.

> At times of rapid social change people often feel that moral decline has set in, that the lower orders or the young no longer know their place and are disobedient and lacking in respect. Established systems of values are being challenged and the social order is in danger. Under these circumstances education is called in so that the young may be inoculated against the contagion of subversive doctrine and made into pillars of the establishment. Such education has always, in the past, been aimed at the children of the poor, and has, naturally, emphasized the importance of contentment with one's station in society and of a sober and industrious life (Wardle 1976, 23).

The evangelicals offered the opportunity to return to biblical principles of education. There was still general agreement with the notion of original sin (Wardle 1976, 9; Digby and Searby 1981, 7). Children, by their very nature, were thought to be essentially biased toward evil, and education was considered to be part of the redemption process. If left to themselves children would, of necessity according to their nature, fall into vice and crime, since they lacked any inbuilt resistance to temptation. Education was seen as instilling some element of resistance and judgment.

Such concerns, along with the desire of working class parents to educate their children, made the time ripe for the development of Church-based education, and the Sunday School movement would prove enormously popular well into the middle of the nineteenth century (Digby and Searby 1981, 9-10). In view of the fact that children began to work at an exceedingly young age it seemed sensible to use the one day of the week when they would not be at work to provide them with education.

### *D. schools for the working class*

The schools established to educate the masses of the working class during the nineteenth century thus faced the task of reconciling some primary, and sometimes conflicting, issues. Were children inherently sinful with no hope of redemption as the evangelicals claimed? Or were they blank slates which education could mould to the height of perfection as the enlightenment thinkers proposed? Should education adopt the tenets of

associationism, which was both atomistic and mechanistic, picturing the mind as a machine in which atomic particles of meaning helped develop understanding? Should the goals of education be those advocated by members of the upper class and the Radicals, namely to reconcile members of the working class to their station by explaining the political and economic advantages of such an approach? How could this be balanced with the desire of the working class to take advantage of the emergence of class and social mobility?

Ultimately, teaching at the schools which emerged to provide education to the masses was mechanical and relied to a great degree on rote learning. Discipline was rigid and repressive, and the curriculum generally restricted to the rudiments. With the push for the provision of schooling for the children of workers, the most efficient solution to the problem of accommodating such a large number of pupils was to expand an already-existing approach to schooling, which had proven to fulfil the criteria of efficiency and economy, and was already grounded in the ideas of associationism. This approach was the monitorial system, popularised by Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, and its only truly original feature was its applicability to schools (Wardle 1976, 86-88). The defining feature of the system was that a teacher would not instruct the vast majority of pupils directly; rather he selected older pupils to serve as “monitors.” These monitors would be instructed by the teacher directly at some convenient time and each monitor would be responsible for the instruction of a small group of pupils while the teacher acted as a supervisor, examiner and disciplinarian. Devised from a point of view which equated education with the acquisition of a collection of knowledge, all work was sub-divided into units of work, and upon completion of a unit of work, a group would be examined by the teacher and allowed to progress to the next unit. There was a complex system of promotion and relegation, both within each group, and between groups, and outstanding achievements and lapses were met with rewards and punishments.

There were glaring shortcomings to the monitorial system, but negatives aside, it was difficult within the circumstances of the nineteenth century to avoid using it. In addition to upholding the philosophical and psychological assumptions discussed earlier, it also coincided with industrial considerations and the rising economic and social emphasis on efficiency. Of his approach, Bell wrote:

> The advantages of this system … in its economy of labour, time, expense and punishment … can only be ascertained by trial and experience, and can scarcely be comprehended by those who have not witnessed its powers and marvellous effects. Like the steam engine it diminishes labour and multiplies work (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 117-118).

Monitorial schools were, in essence, factories put into an educational setting. Every characteristic was there: a minute division of labour; an assembly line on which children were passed from monitor to monitor until they were graduated "complete" from the top of a class; a system of incentives to reward good work; an impersonal system of inspection; and an attention to cost-efficiency and the economic use of space.

The advent of the Payment by Results system in the 1860s only served to strengthen the similarities between monitorial schools and factories. The system made a schoolmaster's salary dependent on the performance of each pupil at an annual examination on a range of subjects, and was based on two basic notions. First, there was an industrial-like insistence on measurable outputs with an emphasis on quantity and, hopefully, quality (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 119). Secondly, it was assumed that competition would ultimately bring about the best in business, industry, and now, in schools; and that examinations would have a stimulating effect which would produce the best efforts in pupils. A further benefit was that as certain standards were set in ability for basic subjects comparability could be achieved and targets set (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 119). Thus, although the monitorial system had been developed long before factories became a common feature of industrial organisation, it was hardly surprising that its characteristics would appeal to the business men and capitalists who were pushing for mass schooling at the time.

For about three quarters of the nineteenth century, the schools, particularly elementary schools that were provided for the vast majority of pupils, did not change significantly. Though various Education Acts affected the administration of schools and the enforcement of attendance, these were changes of detail within the system. The same assumptions about the nature and purposes of schooling continued to be made throughout the nineteenth century, and it was in reaction to this that a new generation of progressive thinkers and educators began to speak out.

## 4. dissenting voices: forerunners to HE

In response to the post-Enlightenment society emerging at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the development of mass schools during the nineteenth century, there were voices throughout Europe that warned against the development of a society based so thoroughly on scientific reason, urban life and the view of human beings through the lens of utility, on the grounds that it would snuff out vital human qualities which need emotional expression, freedom and natural surroundings in order to thrive (Miller 1990, 11). While there is not time to devote to all of the thinkers who contributed to this movement against the values of the time, some stand out in terms of their relationship to the HE movement.

### *A. the Romantics*

The period of the Enlightenment was characterised by a belief in the power of scientific reasoning; faith in progress, freedom of thought and enquiry; and the desire to promote education as a means of furthering the 'enlightenment' of the masses. The Enlightenment was followed by a radical change of values during the latter part of the eighteenth century, what Isaiah Berlin has called "the greatest shift of consciousness of the West that has occurred (Berlin as quoted in Lawton and Gordon 2002, 101). This shift reflected a return to a more mystical view of human nature and the universe.

There have been numerous difficulties in defining the term Romanticism. However, broadly speaking, Lawton and Gordon argue that:

> Romanticism can be said to be concerned with some aspects of the following: the modern contrast to classicism; a union of love, religion and chivalry; an escape from the Industrial Revolution; a bourgeois revolt against the aristocracy; a desire to soar into the infinite; an emphasis on individuality and self-assertion; and the secret and inexpressible delight of the soul (2002, 101).

Isaiah Berlin might also include in a description of Romanticism the joy of everyday Nature, novelty, revolutionary change, energy, force, and will, a sense of alienation, toleration of eccentricity, and the rejection of past, present and future knowledge (Lawton and Gordon 2002). The Romantic movement was a period of change in art, literature,

architecture and music, a new way of looking at and experiencing the world. The influence of key Romantic thinkers on education was also significant.

One main difference between writers of the Enlightenment and those of the Romantic period was exemplified in their attitude towards Nature. Enlightenment writers, following in the tradition of Francis Bacon and others, saw Nature as a universal mechanism operating according to a set of natural laws. When these were discovered, claimed these thinkers, man would be able to control his own destiny. Romantics, on the other hand, believed that Nature could not be analysed but was to be accepted as a mysterious, brooding force whose whims were to be interpreted. More important for education was the contrast between the Enlightenment view that man could control his destiny through the use of reason, and the Romantic view, which stressed that the human condition was a much more complex process and that feelings rather than reason were of paramount importance. Rejecting the argument that man had progressed in history through the use of reason, Romantics argued that man was linked to the past by an unbroken flow of experience (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 104-105).

The Romantic religious faith is also distinguished from more traditional sects in that the spirituality of the Romantics sees each person as a manifestation of the divine creative source, and asserts that spiritual truth may be revealed directly to each human being without the dogmatic authority of churches, texts and ministers. “What God will have a man do, He does not leave to the words of another man, He speaks Himself; His words are written in the secret hearts” (Rousseau as quoted in Miller 1990, 76). In advocating this belief, as well as rejecting a belief in original sin, Romantics spoke against the orthodox Protestant separation of human and divine, material and spiritual. They also dismissed the Fall/Redemption theology which was such a driving religious ideology of the period.

While it may be somewhat useful to contrast Enlightenment and Romantic views in order to illustrate their main differences, in practice, the dividing line between the two philosophical positions is often blurred. Nevertheless, historians generally acknowledge that the work of Rousseau and other Romantics was most often adopted in the spirit of more human-centred approaches to education and social endeavours.

Ron Miller and Forbes have argued that Romantic thinkers Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel pioneered what would become the ideals of HE. There can be no doubt that the work of these Romantic thinkers did begin to elucidate ideas that would re-emerge, be better defined and more intentionally adopted into the work of education by later HE thinkers such as Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti. Among these ideas were the following:

- Children are born naturally good, but become infected by the evils of society unless measures are taken to keep children away from those corrupting influences.
- The source of the unfolding human personality is the creative power of the universe itself, God, in the language of theists.
- Human development progresses according to an inherent order, direction and wisdom that transcends human and cultural ideologies. Human welfare and happiness can only be achieved if we remain in harmony with this organic development.
- Growth occurs in distinct stages, each with its own contribution to the personality of the individual, and thus each deserving of respect.
- Education must achieve a balance between freedom and obedience.
- Education should be more concerned with the needs and characteristics of the learner than with the requirements of the subject matter. It is the human nature of each person that must be at the heart of education.
- Emotional security is necessary for personal growth and learning.
- Coercion and corporal punishment, and traditional methods of rote memorization and recitation need not be used to educate. Education is the process of assisting natural development. It is the role of the teacher to allow the child to develop complexity in her own way. In such a learning environment the intrinsic joy of discovery makes extrinsic rewards unnecessary.

Though many of these ideas may not seem revolutionary, it is important to see them in the context of the types of schools these thinkers were familiar with, and in the context of the prevailing social and political ideas of the time. Unfortunately, their ideas, while influential in a theoretical way for decades to come, were short-lived in influencing the actual practice of education. Miller explains that Rousseau was disinclined to implement

his theories in practice; that Pestalozzi was unable to find the political and economic support needed to keep his schools in operation longer than five years; and that Froebel's ideas on child-centred education were most likely too far ahead of their time to survive. Education in England continued to move towards the monitorial system and later modified versions.

### B. *dissenting voices in England*

The one notable effort to challenge the monitorial system in England was made by the British Idealists, led by T. H. Green. Green's work in moral philosophy was strongly influenced by both Kant and Hegel, and his interpretation of Idealism was a reaction against the Utilitarian ideals of the day (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 136). Green believed that democracy needed to be grounded in a new conception of human nature and the world, which embraced both true individualism as well as the emerging role of the state in the life of a nation. For Green, "an individual's good cannot be treated as something apart from the good of others within the community. And the 'good' therefore, cannot be identified with pleasure, as the Utilitarians believed: it is nothing less than the spiritual perfection of man" (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 137).

Unlike many other Idealists, Green extended his notions of moral philosophy into a fairly well-developed philosophy of education, which would ultimately have a considerable influence on education particularly at the University level. Green's concept of God, like that of many other Idealists, was equatable with thought or reason. As an individual's consciousness is raised, he becomes more of a vehicle of God. Green reasoned that it is an individual's moral duty to raise human consciousness in a collective manner throughout the community. An obvious method is education. Green and many of his followers became involved in efforts to promote the aims of Idealist philosophy. Green joined the Oxford school board, promoted secondary education in the city, started a coffeehouse and evening school in the poorest part of Oxford and stood for election to the City Council. He worked to promote the development of adult education cooperatives to promote adult learning. His followers worked on university extension and reform efforts.

Between the two World Wars, however, the influence of Idealism on English educational thought and practice declined considerably. Some scholars have attributed this decline to the rise of the Realist school of thought, which placed greater faith in philosophical positions congenial to empirical science. Some have also suggested that Idealism's alignment with Hegelian thought and the antipathy for all things German which arose after the first World War was a significant factor in the decline of Idealist influence. Finally, interest in a systematized system of education declined after the first World War, when educational institutions, particularly Universities, began to demand more academic freedom (Lawton and Gordon 2002, 142-143).

After World War I, a new nexus of child-centred advocacy was to be found in the work of the New Education Fellowship (NEF) which was founded in 1921 out of the Theosophical Educational Trust and eventually became a gathering point for many thinkers and educators who were critical of traditional ways. NEF's reputation grew such that it could command an audience of 1,800 delegates to its bi-annual conference in 1929, including a delegate by the name of Maria Montessori. The NEF made its presence known through the work of its affiliated schools and the sheer scale of its conferences to the point that its influence was to be found in the influential Hadow Report of 1931 (Darling 1994, 37-39). By the time of its eventual decline after the end of the second World War, "the persuasiveness of the child-centred case had been felt in influential places: the demerits of traditional teaching no longer needed to be argued" (Darling 1994, 37). Nevertheless, the years following World War I were hardly conducive to implementing the ideas of the NEF or Hadow, and it would take the work of three international thinkers to provide an eventual resurgence of interest in and acceptance of educational approaches rooted in more holistic ideals during the twentieth century.

## 5. conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the underlying scientific, cultural and educational ideas to which holistic thinking emerged as a response during the first part of the twentieth century. The historical intellectual movement now referred to as the Enlightenment had been driven by thinkers who advocated rationality as a means of establishing an

authoritative system of aesthetics, ethics, and logic. The intellectual leaders of this movement sought to lead the world into progress and out of the long period of doubtful tradition, irrationality, superstition, and tyranny, which they imputed to the Dark Ages. These empirical philosophical ideas were soon being applied to areas of social science such as political economy, government and education.

Philosophically, the holistic approach to understanding the world diverged significantly from Cartesian-Newtonian assumptions about the nature of reality and the nature and accessibility of knowledge. Holism rejected the notion of the universe, the world and nature generally as mechanical entities operating merely as the sum of individual parts. It embraced instead the notion of nature as a complex organism—understood only as a whole, more than just the sum of its parts, living, changing, imbued with a life force which cannot be understood only through the use of rationality. Holism questioned the possibility of purely objective knowledge of reality, believing it was not possible to have knowledge of the world with no reference to the psyche of the observer. It embraced instead the importance of recognizing and accounting for the subjective experience of the observer or participant in the world. These and other significant characteristics of the holistic paradigm will be more closely examined in Chapter Six.

The exact ways in which holism influenced the development of an approach to education is still being debated and is the focus of the remainder of this section. There is no doubt that holistic thinkers in education were responding to the highly depersonalized, regimented approach to education being developed in England and throughout Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The work of Ron Miller and Scott Forbes indicates that the work of the Romantic thinkers served as an initial framework for the future development of holistic thinking in education. However, in his work examining the philosophical foundations of holistic education, Forbes chooses to jump from these three Romantic thinkers to three other thinkers whose work emerged in the 1960s. In doing so, he overlooks the work of three thinkers who arguably did far more for the development of holistic educational thought and practice due to their efforts to create and sustain operational schools: Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Jiddu Krishnamurti. The practices and principles of the schools these thinkers founded as well as their theoretical works are widely cited and discussed within the holistic education community.

Any effort to understand the theoretical and practical underpinnings of holistic education would be incomplete without the incorporation of the works of these three thinkers.

The three chapters which follow provide an overview of the background and educational ideas of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti. These chapters draw largely on the writings of the thinkers themselves in the hope of providing some insight into the personality, motivation and underlying beliefs motivating the development of each education approach. Where necessary, I drew on the work of other scholars whose interpretations have been widely accepted as accurate. I leave critical analysis of the ideas themselves until Chapter Six where I undertake an analysis of the philosophical and practical characteristics of HE generally.

# Chapter Three—Maria Montessori

## 1. introduction

Montessori was a well-respected physician and scientist and, as such, was remarkably prolific due to her many opportunities to publish, lecture and teach around the world. Her public materials include dozens of published works including books and papers, collections of observational notes from her work with children in schools and, most importantly, especially in the last two decades of her life, transcripts of innumerable lectures given around the world, lectures being her preferred method of publicising her recent findings. The vast majority of those materials were never translated from the original Italian making for a more limited selection of works from which to draw upon for the summary presented in this chapter. An additional problem related to the translation of her works also presented itself. Between 1900 and 1952, the year of Montessori's death, her popularity around the world led to the publication of dozens of English translations of her work, the vast majority of which Montessori found to be rife with "myths and pre-conceived notions that stubbornly opposed the effective practice of her work with children" (Standing 1998, xi). It was difficult to gauge which of the English translations of her works were accurate. I therefore turned to the work of E.M. Standing, a student and colleague of Montessori's for over twenty years.

Montessori encouraged Standing to publish a book on her life and method, trusting him to continue her work in dispelling the many misunderstandings and incomplete interpretations of her methods. Although she died before she could write the book's introduction, she read and approved the majority of the book before her passing. Standing's book is particularly useful because it draws directly from unpublished lectures and notes, providing access to Montessori's actual language and expression. In addition to Standing's book, I relied primarily on translations of half a dozen books written by Montessori and used by Standing; two books by Mario Montessori, Jr., Montessori's grandson, a trained psychologist and a student of his grandmother's methods; and Rita Kramer's biography of Montessori. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are the words of Montessori.

## 2. background

Maria Montessori was, in many ways, a woman ahead of her time. The only daughter of a respected Italian military officer and his wife, Montessori's independent nature, strong Catholic faith and mystically-based convictions about her purpose-driven life formed a foundation upon which she built her life's work. A physician, anthropologist, psychologist, lecturer and outspoken advocate for the rights of those cast down by society, her legacy became her work persuading individuals worldwide to join her in "unfolding the human soul and watching the rise of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society" (Kramer 1976, 356-357).

Born in the town of Chiaravalle in the province of Ancona, Italy on August 31, 1870, Montessori passed through her state school experiences unremarkably. What was more striking about her than her academic performance was her independent spirit, her propensity to take an interest in the plight of those marginalised within her community, her desire to resolve conflicts, and a striking maturity and sense of personal dignity which often stood her apart from her peers. At the age of twelve her parents moved with her to Rome to offer her a chance at a better education than Ancona could offer. Despite the wishes of her father that she become a teacher, Montessori felt driven to pursue medicine. What made her so determined was not entirely clear even to Montessori, but she reported that one day while walking down the street she chanced upon a woman holding a baby who in turn was holding a long, narrow, red strip of paper. In that moment, she reported, the decision came to her to study medicine. A devout Catholic throughout her life, it was not the last time she would explain a crucial life decision in terms of an intuitive or mystical process rather than a rational one. At that time, and for many years to come, Montessori had no idea that she would find her life's mission in the sphere of education. Yet her life, taken as a whole, demonstrates the principle she was to preach in later years: "The preparations of life are indirect … We are not born simply to enjoy ourselves … there are results from what we are and what we do which are not chosen by us as we choose so many things on the surface of our lives." When she was

taken ill at around this time and her friends were anxious about her recovery, she said, "Do not be alarmed; I shall not die; I have work to do" (Standing 1998, 65).

Montessori became the first woman in Italy to take the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1896, the same year that she was chosen to represent the women of Italy at a feminist conference held in Berlin. Here she continued her record of being an outstanding public speaker, championing the cause of working women. Soon after graduating, she was appointed an assistant doctor at a psychiatric clinic in Rome. Part of her duties involved visiting the insane asylums in Rome to collect people for the clinics. It was here that she had her first contact with the 'idiot' children who were classed along with the insane in these asylums. In one such asylum she came across a tiny room in which unhappy children were herded together and looked after by a nurse who did not bother to disguise her contempt for them. Montessori asked why she held them in such contempt. The nurse answered, "Because as soon as their meals are finished they throw themselves on the floor to search for crumbs" (Kramer 1976, 65). Looking around Montessori observed that the children had no toys or materials of any kind, no objects which they could manipulate. She saw in their behaviour a craving for something much more than food. "There existed for these poor creatures one path and one only towards intelligence and that was through their hands. Instinctively, the poor deficient mites had sought after that path by the only means in their reach" (Standing, 28).

She longed to help them, but beyond her heartfelt feelings were her keen observations of their surroundings and behaviours. The more she came into contact with these so-called "deficients", the more strongly she came to disagree with the prevailing views regarding them and their potential. Her clinical observations led her to believe that social and intellectual deprivation in childhood, rather than organic defect, was the leading cause of these children's difficulties and that with special educational treatment their mental condition could be greatly ameliorated. In 1900, as a result of her efforts, an institute was founded to train teachers to work with these children and Montessori was appointed its first director. To the school were brought all those children from the various day schools in Rome who were regarded as hopelessly deficient. Not long after, all of the idiot children from the insane asylums in Rome were also transferred in.

Montessori gave herself up entirely for two years to the actual teaching of her students, working with them during the day and spending the nights reviewing her notes, comparing, analyzing, and preparing new materials. "Those two years of practice," she once said quaintly, "are indeed my first and only degree in pedagogy" (Standing 1998, 29). Her work with these children was so successful that a number of the students who had until then been classed with the hopeless lunatics, learned to read and write well enough to sit public examinations with students from normal schools. While she was lauded for her work, Montessori found in her success a new concern:

> Whilst everyone was admiring my idiots I was searching for the reasons which could keep back the healthy and happy children of the ordinary schools on so low a plane that they could be equalled in tests of intelligence by my unfortunate pupils (Standing 1998, 30).

The more deeply she pondered this question, the more certain she became that the cause lay in a deficiency of educational principles. "This feeling, so deep as to be of the nature of an intuition, became my controlling idea. I became convinced that similar methods applied to normal children would develop and set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way" (Standing 1998, 30).

In 1906, factors conspired to bring to Montessori the opportunity to pursue her interest in the education of normal children. A local building society in the San Lorenzo district of Rome was having difficulty with the young children of working parents who, unable to attend formal school because of their age, instead wrought havoc on the buildings. After much consideration, the authorities concluded that it would be cheaper for them to collect the rabble of children together in one room of the tenement house and pay someone to look after them than it would be to continue making repairs to the building. A room was set aside, and Montessori's reputation made her a natural candidate to direct the work.

Factors beyond her control led to a series of decisions which paved the way for the emergence of what would become the Montessori Method. Having accepted responsibility for the children she now set about to fit up the room which had been provided for them. She could not furnish it with desks like an ordinary classroom because her expenditures were being borne by the building society and had to be put

down to the general upkeep of the building; instead, she had child-size tables, chairs and armchairs made. She also had some scientific materials prepared which were similar to those she had used in the institution for defectives. All in all, her room had "nothing about it which should be considered school-like" (Standing 1998, 37). The stage was set: a room in a tenement house in a slum quarter of Rome. The players comprised

> sixty tearful, frightened children, so shy that it was impossible to get them to speak, their faces expressionless, with bewildered eyes as though they had never seen anything in their lives … poor abandoned children who had grown up in dark tumble-down cottages without anything to stimulate their minds—dejected, uncared for (Standing 1998, 37-38).

On the day of the official opening of what would come to be known as the *Casa dei Bambini*, or "Children's House," Montessori overheard a Roman lady ask with little hope, "I wonder if there will be any change visible in these children in a month's time." She recalls feeling differently: "I had a strange feeling which made me announce emphatically that here was the opening of an undertaking of which the whole world would one day speak" (Standing 1998, 38). Within six months she was proven right. When she had worked with backward children, she had found the materials she used in the classroom of benefit to her as a means of arousing interest, although she had been obliged to use great force of will to persuade the children to use them. However with these normal children things progressed differently. It was the materials which proved "to be the Aladdin's lamp which opened my eyes to the concealed treasures within for it was the children who chose and worked with them spontaneously" (Standing 1998, 40).

Montessori's earliest notes and observations of the children and their behaviour are significant; they not only informed her on-going adaptation of the methods used in the school, but also became the basis upon which her later theories of child development would be based. More often than not, these observations were made possible by some indiscretion or oversight on the part of Montessori or another teacher, occasions when "our discretions sometimes serve us well where our deep plots do pall" (Standing 1998, 42). In the interest of space, it is not possible to give the details of Montessori's discoveries, i.e., those anecdotes she recorded as having helped her in better understanding the nature of her students. However, for the interested reader, her works

are well-worth reading to gain insight into her 'discoveries.' Of particular note are the following observations about children:

- *A love of order*, which extends down to the smallest particulars and which is expressed in very young children by a love of their environment and a corresponding desire to preserve the order within it. It is a characteristic not usually associated with young children, and not shared by older children.
- *Love of work.* Work in this sense means any activity which involves the child's whole personality and which has as its unconscious aim the construction of personality. If given the opportunity to choose between playing with toys and doing "work" in the form of somehow purposeful tasks, children will usually choose work over play.
- *Profound spontaneous concentration.* This concentration, which is so complete that it often "isolates the child from his environment" (Standing 1998, 175), is a biological phenomenon of growth. The child's intelligence is concentrating, constructing itself naturally through involvement with the outside world. Repetition of activities is often a part of this concentration, though not always.
- *Attachment to reality.* The mind constructs itself through contact with reality, not with the projections of make-believe. The external world is taken in first through the senses and movement, and later by the reason and imagination.
- *Power to act from real choice and not from curiosity.* Children become motivated in their actions by real choice and not merely by curiosity.
- *Obedience.* Normal children display remarkable obedience, progressing in stages until they are not only obedient, but *will* to be so. To carry out the command of another becomes a form of self-expression because it involves the exercise of the will. It is not blind obedience to suggestion or submission to a stronger will. This is proved by the fact that it goes hand-in-hand with a higher degree of independence.
- *Independence and initiative.* The child will attempt to gain as much independence as possible within each stage of development. In the right environment mutual aid will take the place of competition, leading children to assist one another according to their own initiative and abilities.

- *Spontaneous self-discipline.* When given the opportunity to become independent personalities with the power to choose and carry out their own acts children, even those like the pupils in the first Children's House who had been placed in Montessori's care because of their undisciplined behaviour, will demonstrate spontaneous self-discipline. This discipline is a fruit of liberty—the two cannot be separated (Kramer 1976, 118)
- *No need for rewards and punishments* in working with children because children set little store by them. In general children will behave well when they learn and are given the opportunity to work properly, and naughtiness is generally a result of having the child's constructive energies diverted from appropriate and useful channels (Montessori and Simmonds 1917, 82)
- *Self-dignity.* Even very young children have a profound sense of self-dignity which, if neglected by adults, can cause "their souls to remain wounded, ulcerated and oppressed in a way adults seldom realise" (Standing 1998, 47).
- *An explosion into writing* will often occur in children without their ever having been taught if they are allowed the opportunity to engage in activities that seem to allow "certain inner elements of preparation to fuse together in a psychic synthesis" (Standing 1998, 49). Writing will develop before reading in the sequence of children's development, often several months earlier.

What would ultimately become known as the Montessori Method of education was developed based upon Montessori's scientific observations of these children's almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials. Every piece of equipment, every exercise, every method Montessori developed was based on what she observed children to do "naturally," by themselves, unassisted by adults. Children teach themselves. This simple but profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, psychology, teaching, and teacher training, all based on her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child (Montessori and Gnana Prakasam 1989, 23).

Visitors ranging from Queen Margherita of Savoy to academics from as far away as London began streaming to the slums of San Lorenzo starting in 1907 to see the work being done in Montessori's two schools. Schools based on her principles were set up in

London, Australia and the United States within the next five years. Montessori made dozens of visits abroad, welcomed warmly in America particularly, by a public excited by the prospect of a highly disciplined, accelerated learning classroom model based on scientific observation and development. However after 1915, the popularity of her methods declined rapidly for a variety of educational and cultural reasons and remained relatively unknown until the 1950s when its re-emergence was aided by the American desire to begin competing with the Cold War enemy. The country's belief that the efficient and accelerated learning boasted by Montessori schools might assist in the achievement of pupils (Miller 1990) soon resulted in the re-energising of Montessori Associations worldwide. By the end of the 1990s there were more than 4000 Montessori schools in the United States alone, and hundreds of others worldwide, with many more kindergarten and early childhood centres taking methods and principles of Montessori practice as part of their educational programming for young children.

## 3. conceptions of childhood

In her later years, Montessori would come to sound more like the mystic she had gradually become over the years than the positivist she had prided herself on being in her earlier years. She would write and speak about the child as a "psychic embryo" endowed with a capacity to "create himself" spontaneously by means of a mysterious inner psychic force. Nevertheless, her basic observations of children and their development continued to be at the heart of her training for teachers and her admonitions to parents in helping them to understand the best way to provide an environment for children in which they are free to create themselves.

Montessori was committed to developing a science of education, the foundation of which would be knowledge of the laws of the development of the body and mind of the child.

> The child from the beginning of life has a body as well as a mind, and the child has both a physical and mental life. If education is to help life, it must help development both in the physical field and the psychic field. This brings us to the problem: what is the nature, what are the conditions, what are the needs of the psychic life of the child in its early stages? It is the answer to these questions with which the Montessori System is first concerned (Montessori 1989, 2-3).

Montessori believed it was imperative for adults and educators to understand that children are fundamentally different from adults, and should not be treated merely as miniature adults. After a child is born, its first two years of life are a period unique to children when enormous physical growth and mental growth take place simultaneously. To thwart either physical or mental growth at this stage is seriously detrimental to a child's well-being; yet this is just what adults inadvertently do.

According to Montessori, the laws of child development compel children after the age of about two to become serious about two fundamental things. First, is the child's need to learn about the world and how to engage with it (Montessori and Gnana Prakasam 1989, 15). Until this time, she has been restricted in her movement to wherever she was placed by adults, and her scope of interest lay within that sphere of existence. This changed when she became able to crawl, walk and otherwise exist within the adult world. Suddenly there emerges in the child a love of activities coupled with a desire to accomplish concrete things. She begins to imitate adults, trying to understand and mimic the ways in which she can engage in the world. At this point, however, life becomes more about restrictions than anything else, thwarting the child's efforts to explore a new world that she can just begin to comprehend.

A second fundamental need of the child is a need for independence. All efforts of growth are efforts to acquire independence. It is vitally important to individuality that the child feels able to function on her own. Yet, once again she finds herself impeded by well-meaning adults who are keen to give too much superficial assistance. Just as the child is able to begin asserting her independence, she is impeded in her efforts either by the need of adults to be efficient, or by adults' lack of faith in her ability to be independent. The solution to this conflict of interests, says Montessori, is to create a space in which children can carry out their activities without being hindered, and without creating problems for others. Naturally, these activities must be carried out under the direction of a teacher who understands and appreciates the need for the children's activities and is able and willing to assist them. The child's desire to be independent and to imitate adults should be facilitated in this space by providing him with the articles needed to carry out these activities: a small mirror and comb to brush his hair, a small

sink and towel with which to wash himself, small plates and utensils with which to eat. Self-activity thus forms a basis of education.

### A. *sensitive periods in development*

Montessori's background in biology led her to identify one more important law of development to which she paid special attention—that of the law of sensitive periods. She took her inspiration from the work of biologists who had identified sensitive periods in the development of certain organisms. These periods are transitory; and serve to assist an organism in acquiring particular functions or characteristics. Once the aim is accomplished, the special sensibility dies away, often to be replaced by another and quite different one. Montessori took note of patterns of development in children which seemed to indicate a similar phenomenon in human development. Interestingly, the intense and prolonged activity aroused and sustained in the child during such sensitive periods generally does not cause fatigue; rather the reverse.

> Children pass through definite periods in which they reveal psychic aptitudes and possibilities which afterwards disappear. That is why, at particular epochs of their life, they reveal an intense and extraordinary interest in certain objects and exercises … Such attention is not the result of mere curiosity; it is more like a burning passion. A keen emotion first arises from the depths of the unconscious, and sets in motion a marvellous creative activity in contact with the outside world, thus building up consciousness (Standing 1998, 120).

Montessori identified a number of key sensitive periods in the development of children:

- *Sensitive period for language*: One of the earliest sensitive periods is concerned with the acquisition of spoken language. Without the help of reason, without lessons and without conscious effort a child learns to pronounce the language or languages he hears around him with perfection. This sensitive period begins in the child long before it can walk or speak and lasts longer than any other sensitive period due to the intricate nature of all that must be absorbed by the child.
- *Sensitive period for order*. Montessori was the first to draw attention to this stage of children's development. This sensitive period begins around the age of two and lasts for about two years, being most marked during the third year of life. During this time, the child displays an almost passionate interest in the order of things both in time and space. For the child of this age, order and stability in the

environment are a necessity because she is constructing herself out of the elements of the environment.

- *Sensitive period for the refinement of the senses*. This sensitive period works in tandem with the interest that children between the ages of two and a half and six display in sensorial impressions of all kinds—colour, sound, shape texture, etc. This is the stage at which Montessori found that children could refine their senses in astonishing ways, developing the ability to: distinguish between the nuances among sixty-three colour tablets simply by sight; match and grade notes by pitch; compare the dimensions of objects by sight and feel.
- *Sensitive period for learning good manners*. Between two-and-a-half and six, children are also interested in their own bodily actions, desiring to learn and perfect precise movements. Montessori suggested this as an excellent period during which to introduce to children some of the fundamentals of grace and courtesy. This is not done in order to force the child to behave in particular ways but rather to prepare children for situations which might arise in which they might wish to introduce themselves, greet a visitor to the classroom, or apologise to another child. "The child should not be left in a lurch. He must not be abandoned in his rude and uninstructed condition" (Standing 1998, 189).
- *Sensitive periods for reason and moral development*. These sensitive periods are part of the second stage of human development discussed later in this chapter. Montessori's work with children after the age of eight or nine was limited, however, and she has less specific theories of development to offer concerning these stages than strategies with which to harness these periods.
- *Sensitive period for the development of a social life*. The most essential feature of the third stage of development, post-adolescence, is the birth of a sensitive period which reveals itself in a greatly increased sensitiveness to all facts and experiences which relate to his life as a social being. The specific impact of this period will be discussed further in the section related to the third stage of development.

Because sensitive periods do not last forever, but are by their very nature transitory phenomena, it is important that educators and parents recognise them in order to profit by them in helping the child to develop. While it is true that a child will grow up without

having made proper use of her sensitive periods of development, he will “be a diminished individual compared to what he could or should have been. With each sensitive period that we miss, we lose forever an opportunity of perfecting ourselves in some particular way—often forever” (Standing 1998, 171).

### *B. stages of development*

There are particular stages in the mental and psychic development of children which are of particular importance for parents and teachers to understand, and Montessori expounds upon these quite clearly in her writings and lectures.

#### i. first stage: 0 to ~6 years—the absorbent mind

This first period, taken as a whole, makes a complete life in itself. There are definite changes which mark two specific sub-divisions of the period, but the whole period is characterised by the same type of mind. It is a form of mind which is quite different from that of the adult and which Montessori describes as the Absorbent Mind. There are two distinct phases within this stage.

##### *a. 0-3 years—the absorbent mind (unconscious)*

In this first phase, teachers and parents deal with a mind that is constantly absorbing impressions from the environment but without knowing it is doing so and without willing it. It is during this first stage of childhood, ages 0-6, and during this first phase in particular, that intelligence and other psychic faculties are being constructed.

> The newly born infant must possess a different type of mind from ours, endowed with different powers. This is not done with the conscious mind. We adults are conscious that we have a will; and when we want to learn something we deliberately set about it. But there is no consciousness in the small child, no will: both have yet to be created … Now an unconscious mind does not mean an inferior mind. You will find this type of intelligence everywhere at work in nature (Standing 1998, 110).

Montessori goes on to assert that in the first few months of a child’s life, before he is able to move, he takes in the whole of his environment by means of the absorbent power of the unconscious mind. The child seems to take these things in “not with his mind, but

with his life" (Standing 1998, 110). As an example of the workings of the unconscious mind Montessori points to the way in which the child absorbs his mother tongue, simply by living in the environment where it is spoken. Still in darkness the information is fixed and, finally, brought up to the light of consciousness, where it remains fixed and unalterable.

### *b. 3-6 years—the absorbent mind (conscious)*

In the first years of life a child takes in the whole of his environment unconsciously. In this way he accumulates the materials from which he will eventually build up the whole of his conscious life. It is an immense operation, the existence of which was little known and is still largely underutilised.

> When the child begins to move, his absorbent mind has already taken in the world unconsciously. Now, as he starts to move, he becomes conscious. A small child of two or three is always manipulating something. While he is manipulating with his hands, he is bringing into consciousness what his subconscious mind has already taken in. It is through this experience of objects in his environment, in the guise of playing, that he goes over the impressions he has already taken in with his conscious mind. It is by means of this 'work' that he becomes conscious and constructs himself (Standing 1998, 111).

Speaking generally with regard to this first period of childhood, then, we can say that in the first three years there is a creation of faculties which is followed in the second three years by a further development of the faculties so created. This second period is also a period of construction, but a conscious one, because the child now takes in information consciously from the environment. Now when things he acquired unconsciously in the first phase are brought to the surface through the work of his hands, they are remembered because memory is now there to receive them.

It is also true of the will. In the first period the child was a contemplative creature, observing from the environment and taking from it without effort what was needed for his growth, in the second period he continues this process of self-construction but using his own will for that too has come into being. Before, it was as if a force outside him had moved him; now it is the child's own ego which guides and directs.

### *c. implications for education*

When educators understand the work of the unconscious mind, a mind which must achieve consciousness through work and experience carried out with objects in its environment, they must realise that they cannot reach it to teach directly. It is a process independent of outside assistance, and education can only help by providing the best possible conditions. What he needs most of all is the possibility of acting freely on his own initiative without the intervention of the adult. The specially prepared environment for the child of this age should include (Montessori and Carter 1936; Montessori 1969):

- An environment of protection. By the very nature of the Montessori classroom fostering independent movement, it is imperative that the whole environment be within the purview of the teacher's eye and that the materials in the classroom conform to standards of safety.
- An environment conducive to independent activity including child-sized "lilliputian" materials, sinks, stoves, equipment, windows, cabinets, etc. Everything should be labelled and orderly such that children are always able to find and replace any materials with which they wish to work.
- A prepared environment which contains the mental food necessary for the development of the psychic embryo. These include the myriad physical materials developed by Montessori over the years to assist the child in mastering basic skills and introducing them in a sensorial way to experiences which will later be conceptualised—colour palettes, geography puzzles, beads with which to explore abstract mathematical concepts, etc. These teaching materials are designed to be self-correcting so as to allow for independent use, and to maximise the involvement of different functions and aspects of the personality.
- Materials which allow children to engage in practical life activities including cooking, washing, cleaning, dusting, sweeping, etc. to allow them to develop an understanding and an experience with the adult world in which they operate.
- A beautiful environment, but not at the expense of providing children with the right kind of activities.
- Order in the environment. Order should pervade the classroom down to the smallest detail, and while the children should be responsible for maintaining this

it is one of the primary responsibilities of the teacher to ensure that everything is always and absolutely in the correct place.

- Multi-age classrooms allow children to constantly learn from one another. Younger children will learn from more experienced children how to use materials; children of similar abilities will form spontaneous groups in order to work on a specific activity; while more experienced children will often give other children informal presentation lessons in order to pass along knowledge.
- A director or teacher who understands her place within the environment and in relation to the children—as a facilitator of the educational process. She must maintain the classroom environment; teach children the use of objects and the way to do the exercises of practical life; observe the children constantly to see who needs support; respect those who are resting; be tireless in offering activities to those children who have refused them.
- A teacher who understands the nature of liberty and independence in the classroom, and who understands how to foster freedom within the prepared environment. This includes understanding when the freedom of children must be limited for reasons pertaining to their proper development.

### ii. second stage: ~6 to ~ 12 years—period of uniform growth

Compared with the first stage of development and the third period of development, this second stage is one of great stability. Although there is much growth occurring, this growth continues for a long period of time along the same lines, preserving the same group of psychological characteristics in the child.

> The epoch we are now considering is one of great strength and robustness of body and mind … It is a period of comparative calmness and serenity. During these years children are capable of accomplishing a great deal of mental work. It is their "years of plenty"; and if given the right opportunity and the right means, they will lay up a great store of cultural information (Standing 1998, 113).

Although she did not formally divide this stage into two periods of development, Montessori did distinguish between the first and second half of the stage. Children's characters at this age become stronger and more self-conscious. They begin to transition out of a temperament that worked well within the structured environment of the first stage classroom, looking with more interest at the world outside of the classroom.

This period is marked by what Montessori terms "the herd instinct;" girls and boys of this age tend to band together in groups, preferring the companionship of others to complete solitude. "This is the child's need to associate with others, not merely for the sake of company, but in some sort of organised activity. He likes to mix with others in a group wherein each has a different status. A leader is chosen, and is obeyed, and a strong group is formed. This is a natural tendency, through which mankind becomes organised" (Standing 1998, 357). Small secret societies and gangs become prevalent among children in this stage, which often, for lack of proper direction, may come into conflict with authorities. Such escapades are often put down to moral badness, whereas Montessori argues that such behaviour is an attempt to escape from a mode of living that has become restrictive. The root of the problem is that these young people have arrived at a psychological moment when they feel a strong need to widen their contact with the outside world. This particular characteristic can be used to good effect in the process of education as long as educators accept the fact that methods which worked well in the first stage of development cannot simply be transferred into this stage.

As the child approaches the second half of this stage, around the age of nine or ten, particular characteristics become more pronounced. Mentally, this phase is marked by a strengthening of the child's ability to reason. On the moral plane, development shows itself in the child's marked tendency to examine and question the rightness and wrongness of other people's actions, thereby building an awareness of her conscience.

> The child is no longer receptive, passively absorbing impressions with ease, but wants to understand for himself; and is no longer content with merely accepting facts. As moral activity develops he wants to use his own judgment … An inner change has taken place: nature now arouses in him not only a hunger for knowledge and understanding, but also a claim to mental independence, a desire to distinguish good and evil *by his own powers*. In the field of morality the child now stands in need of his own inner light (Standing 1998, 356).

For this stage of development, Montessori does not offer very much more in terms of theories of development. Her unique contribution lies in the originality of her suggestions on ways to deal with the changes taking place in the child.

### *a. implications for education*

As mentioned earlier, it is important that educators and parents be comfortable in the knowledge that the same strategies for education employed to teach younger children cannot be brought into the classrooms of older students. Although principles such as respect for the child and her personal journey into development must remain alive in any interactions, Montessori offers specific suggestions for working with children of this age.

- *Education as a preparation for going out*: The natural urge of the child of this age is to go out into the world, and the prepared environment within which she has operated freely until this point will become restrictive. "What we have to realise now is that going out into the world requires preparation." Thus, activities of the junior school should be related to the wider life of the community.
- *Moral training through the organised group*: Preparing the child to go out into the world entails more than physical readiness. Montessori was concerned that children be able to move with certitude and independence in the moral world as well. She suggests making use of children's sensibilities towards moral issues and their natural instinct to band together in groups to further this process of moral development. She suggests the formation of a special form of youth organisation, "a moral union of boys (or girls) who have consented to form part of a society which has a moral aim, and which requires its members to live up to a certain moral level" (Standing 1998, 37). As an example, she cites the code and activities of the Scouting movement.
- *Focus on the development and application of reason*: "We are confronted with a considerable development of consciousness that has already taken place, but now that consciousness is thrown outwards, intelligence being extraverted; and there is an unusual demand on the part of the child to know the reasons of things" (Standing 1998, 359). As physical development was made paramount in the first stage classroom, now the focus must become to "feed the hungry intelligence and open up vast fields of knowledge to eager exploration" (Standing 1998, 360). A particular need of this stage is to see things in relationship to one another, to see the *insieme di conoscenza*, or "a number of things known together as part of a whole." This can be achieved by use of:

- A cosmic curriculum: "Let us give the child a vision of the whole universe … The Universe is an imposing reality and an answer to all questions. We shall walk together on this path of life; for all things are a part of the Universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. This idea helps the mind of the child to become fixed, to stop wandering in an aimless quest for knowledge" (Montessori 1989, 121). The curriculum of this stage must build on the fact that children of this age have acquired the basis of culture—learned about science, literature, mathematics and the world—and are eager to build upon it. They should not be taught branches of knowledge as subjects, rather the teacher should sow in them the seeds of culture—as many as possible. These seeds will later germinate into real culture. Through use of research-based activity such as that mentioned below, the student will be aided in allowing the seeds of interest to germinate.
- A centre of interest and radial lines of research. In every subject that lends itself to such treatment the teacher must present, not isolated facts, but groups of facts related together in a logical whole or unity. These will form "centres of interest," from which will lead out "rays of interest"—radial lines of research along which the reasoning mind may travel, discovering fresh details and new problems. In this way, knowledge can be built up in a proper way. "For what is the difference between a man of culture and a man who is simply a mine of unrelated information—like a dictionary? … It is in the way the knowledge has been built up. In the case of the former it has been through a vital mental process, coming from within from the 'centre', set going, and kept going by a living interest. That is why the man of culture possesses a vitality organised, ever-expanding system of knowledge—all parts of which are united" (Standing 1998, 359).

Montessori reminds us that three things are still of primary importance even in this second stage of development: the child must learn by his own activity; he must be granted the mental freedom to take what he needs; and he must not be questioned in his choice since the teacher should answer the mental needs of the child and not dictate

them. This having been said, the students' freedom of choice must still be based on knowledge and not just curiosity. The teacher's task is to prepare a large amount of knowledge with which to satisfy the children's initial hunger and to introduce them to the scope of what is possible. Out of this, each student will develop areas of interest, at which point it becomes the teacher's task to assist in developing those specific areas of interest while still helping the student to make the links between that area and others in which he might not be as naturally interested.

Lastly, Montessori reminds parents and educators to beware of cultivating the intelligence at the expense of the imagination, and the faculty of reason at the expense of the "total functioning of the whole personality—including the obedient will. This is the realm of revealed truth, and it yields up its secrets neither to deductive nor inductive reasoning, neither to the syllogism nor to scientific research" (Standing 1998, 361). For to be human, in Montessori's eyes, was more than the sum of knowledge and abilities; it was a faith in and fervent feeling for the unity and mystery of the world which can only be felt with the heart and spirit.

### iii. third stage: ~12 to ~ 18 years—period of transformation

The third epoch of development, particularly the first period of adolescence between twelve and fifteen, resembles the first epoch of childhood in that it is one of great physical and mental transformation. The advent of puberty marks the end of childhood as nature makes it evident that a new stage of development has begun through marked physical changes. Montessori warns that it is a mistake for parents and educators of children of this age to believe that just because the child is getting older and bigger, that he is also getting stronger in both body and mind. In fact, she argues, to some extent it is just the reverse.

> That period of life in which physical maturity is reached is a dangerous and difficult time because of its rapid development and the changes which take place in the organism as a consequence. There often occurs at this period a special liability to certain weaknesses and diseases, sometimes called 'adolescent complaints (Standing 1998, 116).'

The new psychological characteristics of this stage of development are just as noteworthy as the physical changes. Among these, Montessori mentions doubts,

hesitations, violent emotions, discouragement and an unexpected decrease in intellectual capacity. Other traits she mentions are "a state of expectation, the tendency toward creative work, and a need for the strengthening of self-confidence. This is sometimes accompanied by a tendency toward indiscipline and revolt against authority, especially if the latter lacks sympathy and understanding." Whereas the child of the second epoch tended toward extroversion, the adolescent tends to look inward. "It is a mysterious period when something is being formed which does not yet exist; a mystery of creation which is taking place within him independently of his own will—the creation of the socially conscious individual" (Montessori and Joosten 1989). Herein lies the crux of the adolescent's development: a sensitive period in which she is becoming conscious of herself, not simply as an individual member of a herd or gang, but as a separate member of human society. She feels the need to be treated with a new kind of dignity and respect; becomes acutely sensitive to all forms of criticism and ridicule; takes note of differences in social status and their outward expression. For the child it is a period rather like that of a crab newly out of its shell without the protection of a new hard casing.

### *a. implications for education*

> It is because this is the time when the social man is being created that many defects in adjustment to social life take their origin. A feeling of inferiority at this period may give rise to an 'inferiority complex' and … a repugnance to social life which may endure for years. Here—in the problem of social adjustment—lies the really vital problem of education for the adolescent, far more so than the passing of examinations (Montessori and Joosten 1989, 113).

Montessori proposed that the life of the adolescent be organised in a manner that responds directly to his need for right social adjustment, the need to develop a new form of independence—that of economic independence. For the adolescent, the task is to be born again as a conscious member of a society beyond the narrow circle of family life. To accomplish this Montessori suggested the development of a new specially-prepared environment, a form of communal living in the country away from dependency on parents, and "in contact with nature and on equal terms with his fellows" (Kramer 1976, 136). Academic lessons would be replaced by real work on the land and in the workshop, with the young selling what they were able to produce, thus learning the

meaning of economic independence. They would learn the meaning of money not just as a promise to pay but as a medium of exchange of goods produced by their labour, a means of linking the members of society together. In addition to being useful from an educational standpoint, this miniature society would be a means toward the reform of society at large—a lifelong goal of Montessori's work within education.

Montessori had a strong faith in the potential to transform human society through the transformation of the individual. Her writings on peace education and the need to nurture the development of individuals who respected their role in furthering the aim of a peaceful society are extensive, and an enormous amount of her time, energy and work was devoted to these ends. To this day, Montessori schools consider the work of peace education to be a central part of their work with all children, particularly adolescents who are old enough to understand the state of the world today.

## 4. themes in Montessori's work

Several important themes emerge from Montessori's work, which are worth noting here. As laid out below, the broad themes subsume philosophical assumptions as well as implications for the practical organisation of the learning environment. These will be disaggregated further and discussed in more detail in Chapter Six when we examine the philosophical and practical characteristics of the holistic approach to education.

- *Children are deeply spiritual beings.* While her training as a scientist led her to write about children in quite a straightforward manner, Montessori had a deeply spiritual belief about the nature of the child and emphasised the importance of recognising and nurturing the spiritual aspects of children. Healthy adults are those who have learned to nurture and appreciate the intellectual, physical and spiritual aspects of their nature. This process begins in childhood and is an important part of the educational endeavour.
- *Children are natural learners.* Children do not need to be coerced to learn. They are naturally curious and interested in life and, given the proper environment, they will naturally engage themselves in the world in a purposeful manner.

- *Knowledge must be made personal through experience.* Children, particularly young children, learn through observation and repetition. They cannot grasp purely theoretical ideas; rather, they must be allowed the opportunity to make choices about how to engage with the world in order to gain knowledge.
- *Development progresses in stages which must be acknowledged and respected.* In order to maximise learning and development, it is important to understand stages of development and to provide opportunities for learning that are appropriate for each stage. The aims of and approaches to formal education should evolve with each stage of development.
- *The aims of education must be deeply understood and embraced by educators.* Formal education has several important purposes. First, it should facilitate a child's instinctive desire to learn and help to enhance a natural process which would occur nevertheless, but perhaps not as optimally as is possible with the proper educational environment. Second, the educational environment must foster the development of a child's sense of self-worth, self-sufficiency, independence and dignity. A child is an individual from the moment of birth and must be treated as such and allowed to grow into the person she is destined to be. Educators serve to facilitate that process. Finally, education should help children to understand their place in the world at large. To be human is about existing in relationship to others, and children must learn about their place in and responsibility towards a larger community.
- *The relationship between teacher and child is critically important.* Since children are naturally interested in learning, the role of the teacher is as a facilitator of the learning process for each individual child. How the role is defined specifically depends on the needs of the child.
- *The classroom is a community.* The classroom is comprised of three sets of players—the child, other children and the teacher. These three parties must learn to co-exist and the relationships formed as a result are critical to both the academic and social development of the child.
- *The role of freedom and democracy is central but defined in relationship to other considerations.* The freedom and independence of the child are highly valued but must be exercised within a fairly structured framework. Freedom entails

responsibility and the child must learn to accept and live out both, for her sake as well as for the proper functioning of the learning environment as a whole.

- *Education is a transformational endeavour.* Properly undertaken, education can be a vehicle for change on both the individual and societal level. All persons could achieve their highest potential if given the proper environment in which to grow and develop. More importantly, if individuals could learn to truly understand their own potential and their own role in the world, education could ultimately be a vehicle through which to achieve social transformations.

In closing, it is worth pointing out some of ways in which Montessori's work will compare and contrast with the work of Steiner and Krishnamurti. Although the majority of Montessori's work was done with children between the ages of birth and twelve, she nevertheless had strong ideas about appropriate educational organisations for older students which will be echoed in many ways in the work of both Steiner and Krishnamurti. Similarly, although Steiner and Krishnamurti, in particular, have less fully developed suggestions on the specific nature of the work to be undertaken with children before the age of seven, their actual practices with children of that age are quite similar. The reader should note the similarity in the descriptions of the stages of early childhood development proposed by Steiner, down to an emphasis on free play and a focus on the development of the physical body. The purpose of presenting Montessori's ideas first among the three was to provide a more straightforward description and summary of ideas which, in a modified form and with very different language, will be presented in the next chapter on Rudolf Steiner.

# Chapter Four—Rudolf Steiner

## 1. introduction

Rudolf Steiner was a man of many inclinations and interests who wrote prolifically. His works on the subject of education alone comprise nearly fifty volumes most of which have been translated into English. Steiner's work is challenging to read, understand and summarize due to his less-than-engaging writing style coupled with a tendency to meander, and his use of mystical language with roots in Steiner's philosophical stance called Anthroposophy. It might have been simpler for the reader to be presented with a summary of his educational ideas presented in the same straightforward language used by Montessori; however this would have eliminated Steiner's efforts to convey in his writings his belief in the true spiritual nature of children. For this reason, preserving his language seemed important. It is my hope; however, that understanding why Steiner chooses to use the language he does will assist the reader in seeing past its unfamiliarity in order to consider the merit of his ideas on human development and education.

The summary presented in this chapter draws primarily on Steiner's writings in his autobiography and the books referenced throughout, as well as several articles on Steiner's methods. In addition, I found Torin Finser's book on his experience as a Waldorf class teacher useful in the way in which it described the ways in which Steiner teachers translate Steiner's writings into their work with students. The book was recommended by half a dozen teachers at the Steiner school I observed as part of my empirical study, and is recommended reading for Steiner teacher training.

## 2. background

A 1938 report drawn up by His Majesty's Inspectorate after visiting one of the few existing British Steiner schools at the time contained the following observation:

> We have visited many different types of schools in this country. The ethical colourings in those schools might be different according to whether they were state, public, private, denominational, progressive and the rest, but the actual education offered was essentially the same in all of them. This is the first school

> we have met in which the philosophy of the school has totally altered the character of the education offered (Stewart and McCann 1967, 24).

Steiner or Waldorf schools worldwide are best known for the distinct philosophy that underlies all major pedagogical and administrative actions. The founder of the schools and the man out of whose life experience this philosophy emerged was an Austrian by the name of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's collected works fill more than 350 volumes, covering theology, history, psychology, political theory, medicine and education. His insights came from two sources: he was a scientist and philosopher, thoroughly versed in the scholarly literature of the time; and he was a mystic (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 34). Any understanding of his ideas must take both sources into account.

Steiner was born on February 27, 1861 in what is now Yugoslavia, the only son of a minor railway official. The modest village schooling available to him in his early years made little impression on him, but he would write years later in his autobiography about his intense awareness of Nature. He wrote too of his early conviction as to the reality of the inner life, "a soul space in man," which manifested itself in some clairvoyant experiences he experienced at the age of seven (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 43).

He found more to interest him during his secondary school years, a period when he immersed himself in formal study of geometry and the sciences, while teaching himself the classics and tutoring other pupils in the humanities. He continued tutoring as a way to work his way through university at the Technical College of the University of Vienna, where he laid the foundation of the extraordinarily wide-ranging knowledge for which he would later become renowned. Officially, Steiner took a degree in mathematics, physics and chemistry; however he studied and later wrote a doctoral thesis in philosophy, and took a keen interest in literature and the arts.

This unusual combination of scientific and artistic interests led him to study the works of Goethe, and at the age of 23 he was hired by a famous Goethean scholar to edit the scientific works of Goethe for a new complete edition. This exposure to Goethe's ideas had a profound influence on Steiner's thinking. Goethe highly opposed the prevailing intellectual conceptions of materialism, the view that physical matter is the only reality and fixed natural law the only "purpose." Rather, Geothe saw nature as God's living

garment, creation as an ongoing natural process, and "subjectivity, individuality, and volition [as] a positive force in the process of attaining scientific knowledge" (Wilson 1985, 57). Steiner's long-held skepticism of materialist philosophy began to emerge more strongly during this time, and would develop into an elucidated philosophy of his own in the coming years.

The roots of Steiner's doubts about philosophical stances such as materialism and his attraction to the view of the mystics stemmed from his early encounters with the mystical. At the age of seven Steiner had a vision, which he claimed "made me aware of the reality of the supersensible [spiritual] world behind the physical world" (Committee for Steiner Special Education 1998, 69). Clairvoyance and intuitions of spiritual realms beyond everyday awareness continued throughout his adult life, and a great deal of his time between the ages of 27 and 40 was spent grappling with the philosophical and spiritual implications of the debates about materialism and scientism going on around him. He struggled to find a way to reconcile his knowledge of the supersensible world with the world that he shared with his contemporaries (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 99). As he worked to understand his growing spiritual awareness during his early 30s Steiner decided to move to Berlin, which was a center of activity for many radical groups and movements. During this period, Steiner described an emerging self-awareness which he described as "a transformation of my soul life, [a moment when] my destiny began a completely different direction" (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 216). He found himself more unsettled by the condition of the world around him, and his inability to feel a connection between the work he was doing and a manifestation of his inner soul life.

Steiner gradually became aware that his view of the world was different from the prevailing sense of materialism, which maintained that existence and reality were comprised entirely of what could be seen and sensorily experienced. He had always sensed, and now felt he knew for certain, that this was not the case, that the material world is actually a manifestation of the spiritual, and that true knowledge could emerge only out of an acceptance that human beings are not mere observers separated sharply from the outside world. Rather, it would only be by developing an awareness of the "occult," defined by Steiner as that which is inaccessible to us through our physical senses, that human beings could truly understand the world and our place within it.

These ideas would emerge gradually over the first decade of the twentieth century during which time he would write and lecture endlessly on this subject, explicating a philosophical position which he would term anthroposophy (from the Greek words "anthropos" and "sophia", "man" and "wisdom”).

In 1899, Steiner’s writings attracted the attention of a Count and Countess Brockdorff, who invited Steiner to speak to one of their gatherings of a theosophical circle. The Theosophical Society had first developed in America in 1875 but its ideas began to spread to Europe shortly thereafter. The goals of the society were simple: without regard to race, creed, color or caste, it sought to form a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, and to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science. It also fostered investigation into the laws of nature and of the powers latent in man. The Theosophical Circle gave Steiner the opportunity to speak openly and directly of the inner facilities of spiritual perception he had known since childhood and had been quietly nurturing and disciplining ever since. Quite soon, Steiner was speaking regularly to groups of Theosophists, and he would go on to have a ten-year connection with the Theosophical Society, serving as General Secretary to the Society’s German branch.

He reserved the right, however, to speak of his own spiritual investigation. He was already lecturing on "An Anthroposophy" and in l909, being totally opposed to the promotion of Jiddu Krishnamurti as the most recent incarnation of Christ, he broke with Theosophy and founded the Anthroposophical Society. Speaking of the Anthroposophical movement Steiner said: "Anthroposophy has its roots in the perceptions—already gained into the spiritual world. Yet these are no More than its roots. The branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits of Anthroposophy grow into all the fields of human life and action” (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 236). The remainder of Steiner’s life was spent refining his theory of anthroposophy, lecturing on “spiritual science” throughout Europe and attempting to put his theories to practical use within a range of areas including psychology and education. Of particular significance around 1910, Steiner began to add to his work a growing activity in the arts, seeing the arts as a crucial bridge for translating spiritual science into social and cultural innovation. It was during this time that he was developing eurythmy, an art of movement, based on the gestures latent in the sounds of speech and in the tones and intervals of music.

As the First World War neared its end, Steiner began to work more widely and deeply for a renewal of life and culture in many spheres. Europe was in ruins and seemed to him ready for quite new impulses. Steiner believed that human beings could not expect to build a healthy social order except on the basis of a true and deep insight not only into the material but also into the spiritual nature and needs of human beings as they are today. These needs are characterised by a powerful tension between the search for community and the experience of individuality (Steiner 1999). Community, in the sense of material interdependence, was the basic fact of economic life and of the world economy in which it was embedded. Yet individuality, in the sense of independence of mind and freedom of speech, was essential to every creative endeavour, to all innovation, and to the realization of the human spirit in the arts and sciences. Without spiritual freedom, wrote Steiner, our culture will wither and die. Individuality and community can be lifted out of conflict only if they are recognised as a creative polarity rooted in the essential nature of human beings. These insights were the basis from which Steiner began to respond to a great variety of requests for practical help from doctors, farmers, businessmen, theologians and teachers. From these beginnings grew the many Steiner activities which were to spread round the world.

## 3. anthroposophy

By the age of forty, Steiner had successfully woven together South Asian/Indian and Theosophical ideas with his interpretation of Christianity and the contents of his clairvoyant experiences to arrive at the basic hypotheses of Anthroposophy, a term he used to refer to “the inwardly strengthened and practiced consciousness by which a human being can experience himself as a citizen of a spiritual world” (Carlgren and Klingborg 1990, 164). Key among his teachings was that Western scientific materialism is too narrow to encompass the full reality of the universe. There is a spiritual, supersensible reality, which only seems occult and inaccessible because we have not developed the latent ability to perceive it.

> There slumber in every human being faculties by means of which he can acquire for himself a knowledge of higher worlds. Mystics, Gnostics, Theosophists all speak of a world of soul and spirit which for them is just as real as the world we see with our physical eyes and touch with our physical hands …. This esoteric

> knowledge is no more a secret for the average human being than writing is a secret for those who have never learned it (Steiner and Stebbing 1999, 173).

Steiner defined anthroposophy as "a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe" (Steiner 1996, 195). It advocates that people are more than mere observers of the physical, material world. According to Steiner, reality only arises at the juncture between the physical and the spiritual, "where concept and precept meet" (Steiner 1996,195). He spent a great deal of time critiquing prevailing materialist tendencies, arguing that an unwavering reliance on knowledge gained only by the basic senses prevented human beings from attaining full knowledge of themselves and of the world. It is only by developing a manner of engaging with the world which allows human beings to be simultaneously scientific and spiritually cognitive that human beings will overcome this barrier to right understanding.

To distill the many nuances of Steiner's anthroposophical teachings would be the work of a thesis in itself; however, certain basic principles regarding the nature of human beings and the universe formed the foundation upon which Steiner's later work would be based. What follows is a brief summary of the most basic principles of anthroposophy, followed by a more extended examination of those principles upon which Steiner's theories of human development and education are grounded.

- The universe is not constituted just of physical matter and energy reducible to pure physical-chemical processes. Anthroposophy maintains that there is a spiritual world structured in complex forms in various levels.
- Physical substance is a condensation of the spiritual, non-physical "substance." Therefore, it is a "state" of the spiritual being. In this sense, anthroposophy represents a monism—there exists no paradox of the spirit acting upon matter because the spirit is the origin and permeates everything.
- Human beings exist on four levels: the physical, the etheric, the astral and the spiritual.
- To each of these four levels of human nature, there corresponds a level of human cognition: to the physical body corresponds perception; to the ethereal body, imaginative knowledge; to the astral body, inspirational knowledge; and to the spirit, intuitive knowledge. Perception generally entails perception of the senses

as well as that body of information which we generally understand to be 'knowledge' in standard English usage. Imaginative knowledge allows an individual to be aware of the etheric/super-sensible forces at work within the world among minerals and plants. Inspirational knowledge is understood as knowledge of one's astral body, thought of as capable of existing independently of one's physical body and as what makes thought, memory and a sense of personal identity possible. Intuitive knowledge involves experiencing one's entire life backwards and includes encountering beings of higher intelligence. It is through the development of all four aspects of an individual's humanity and the correspondingly broader means of obtaining knowledge that earlier psychic skills are retrievable.

- Moral development should be undertaken individually, based upon the knowledge of the essence of the human being and the universe. Moral development grounded in unselfish love is the mission of the human being present on Earth. Moral attitudes should preserve individual freedom; they should not depend upon external commandments, dogmas or laws, but rather radiate from unselfish love and individual knowledge in full freedom.

Steiner's life from the age of forty was spent expounding upon and practically applying these ideas in a range of social, artistic and scientific endeavors; however he faced many critics and anthroposophy continues to be regarded with skepticism in many circles.

The primary criticism levied at followers of anthroposophy is that it has an almost cult-like status among many of its adherents. In fairness to Steiner, his insistence on the need for individual freedom was absolute, and his exhortations to students of anthroposophy to question everything he said rather than taking his ideas on faith and authority is well-documented in his writings and speeches. Nevertheless, many anthroposophists elevate Steiner's personal opinions—even those at odds with views generally held in current science and the humanities—to the level of absolute truth. It may be argued, however, that the fault for this lies with individual students rather than with Steiner's teachings.

Insofar as the content of Steiner's teachings is concerned, there is enough in his choice of vocabulary and assertions to warrant cause for reflection, primarily due to the influence

of mysticism on his ideas. His notions of psychic ability, higher beings interacting with humans and the evolution of the world certainly are not in keeping with generally accepted positions within western society. However, to dismiss all of his ideas out of hand on the basis of discomfort with some of his descriptions and assertions about the nature of the world and human beings would be equivalent to dismissing the teachings of the Bible because of the seemingly ludicrous conclusions reached by some fundamentalist literal interpretations of its content. It would seem fair to say that there is no author or thinker whose works have never contained some assertion which provokes scepticism; certainly even the greatest ancient philosophers made assertions imbued with a mystical flavour. Insofar as Steiner's work within education is concerned, which is the focus of this thesis, it seems fairer to take the ideas on their own merit, making some allowance for his mystically imbued language.

With regard to their work with students in Steiner schools, anthroposophists insist that anthroposophy has no place in the formal curriculum of the schools, and students are never exposed to anthroposophical ideas. While all Steiner teachers must undergo a teacher training course during which they are expected to become familiar with Steiner's anthroposophical basis for education, this is more for the purpose of setting a common foundation upon which all teachers in a Steiner school can draw, and teachers are actively discouraged from discussing anthroposophical ideas with students.

## 4. anthroposophy and an "art of education"

Steiner's first opportunity to apply his theories on human development and education in a practical manner came in 1919, a time of immense political and social devastation in Europe following the first World War. The owner of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany had decided to provide education for the children of his workers, and he asked Steiner to lead the effort. The Waldorf school grew out of the social ideal held by Steiner that

> we develop an art of education, which will lead us out of the social chaos into which we have fallen. The only way out of this chaos is to bring spirituality into the souls of human beings through education, to meet the deepest aspirations of young people, which the education of the time can only ignore or trivialise (Steiner 1998, 92).

In criticizing existing models of education at the time Steiner had this to say:

> The whole of human life contains within it the germs of its own future; but if we are to tell anything about this future, we must first penetrate into the hidden nature of the human being. And this our age is little inclined to do. It concerns itself with the things that appear on the surface, and thinks it is treading on unsafe ground if called upon to penetrate to what escapes external observation … For the question of education we shall not set up demands nor programmes, but simply describe the child nature. From the nature of the growing and evolving human being, the proper point of view for Education will, as it were, spontaneously result (Steiner 1965, 43).

In his work *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*, Steiner undertakes to apply the general principles of anthroposophy outlined earlier to the process of human development, and draws conclusions about the correct nature of the "art of education." He begins by presenting to the reader his theory of the four elements of a human's being: the physical/material body; the life/etheric body; the sentient/astral body; and the ego/spirit. It is important to understand Steiner's conception of all four elements of the human being in order to follow his arguments about the proper means of educating a child.

The physical body, argues Steiner, is subject to the laws of physical existence, and is built up of the same substances and forces as the "whole of the external world which is commonly called lifeless. Man has the physical body in common with the whole of the mineral kingdom … [thus] it is the physical body alone in man which brings the substances into mixture, combination, form and dissolution by the same laws that are at work in the mineral world as well" (Steiner 1965, 62).

The life or etheric body of man is that element of man's nature which he has in common with plants and animals. By etheric, Steiner refers to what was in its earlier conception by men assumed to be the life or vital force in human beings, plants and animals which differentiated them from minerals. "The life-body works in a formative way upon the substances and forces of the physical body, thus bringing about the phenomena of growth, movement, and inner movement of the saps and fluids. It is therefore the builder and moulder of the physical body, its inhabitant and architect" (Steiner 1965, 69).

The third member of the human body is the sentient or astral body—the vehicle of pain and pleasure, of impulse, craving and life, all of which Steiner argues are absent in living forms consisting only of physical and etheric bodies. Thus, man has a sentient body in common only with the animal kingdom, and it is this body which is the vehicle of sensation and sentient life.

The fourth member of the human being is shared with no other earthly creature. It is the vehicle of the human "I" or the Ego-body or spirit.

> The little word 'I' is a name essentially different from all other names. To anyone who ponders rightly on the nature of this name, there is opened up at once a ways of approach to a perception of man's real nature. All other names can be applied, by all men equally, to the things they designate. Everyone can call a table a 'table' … but it is not so with the name 'I.' No one can use this name to designate another … In designating himself as 'I' man has to name himself within himself. A being who can say 'I' to himself is a world in himself (Steiner 1965, 78).

For Steiner, this Ego body or spirit is the vehicle of the higher soul of man. It is the Ego which acts upon the other members of the human being, ennobling and purifying them such that men move beyond merely following their passions and impulses like animals. When a man's ego is only just kindled, he is still like an animal as far as the lower members of his body are concerned. His etheric body is simply a vehicle for the formative forces of life, the forces of growth and reproduction. His sentient body gives expression to those impulses and desires which are kindled by the external world. Once the ego has had the opportunity to properly work upon those other members, however, they are transformed:

> The sentient body becomes the vehicle of purified sensations of pleasure or pain, refined wishes and desires. And the etheric body also becomes transformed. It becomes the vehicle of the man's habits, of his more permanent bent or tendency in life, of his temperament and of his memory (Steiner 1965, 116).

Steiner believed that the growth and development of civilization were closely connected to the evolution of man and that different facets of cultural life could be tied to the development of different members of man's nature. According to Steiner, the development of these four aspects of a human being takes place differently in the different ages of a man's life. The educator works on these four members of the human

being, and a right understanding of the nature of these members and their development is critical to ensuring the proper work of the educator.

> So for the art of education it is knowledge of the members of man's being and of their development which is important. We must know on what part of the human being we have especially to work at a certain age, and how we can work upon it in the proper way. There is no doubt that a truly realistic art of education, such as here indicated, will only slowly make its way (Steiner 1972, 47).

Contrary to what we might think, cautions Steiner, at the moment of a human being's physical birth all four members of a man's being are not equally developed. The role of formal education and of the educator is to ensure that all children are helped to grow into themselves in a way that ensures the proper development of each aspect, ultimately preparing them to enter the world as healthy adults able to continue the work of growing into their personhood alone. "Throughout the whole succeeding life, growth is based on forms which were developed in [these] first life periods. If true forms were developed, true forms will grow; if misshapen forms were developed, misshapen forms will grow. We can never repair what we have neglected as educators in these first years" (Steiner 1972, 88). Steiner elaborates in dozens of works the ways in which these specific periods of human development should be nurtured. What follows are summaries of his main thinking on each of the stages of development and his general thoughts on the appropriate ways in which educators can meet the child's needs during each stage. It is worth noting that, Steiner's choice of vocabulary and language aside, the three stages of development described below, the approximate age range of the developmental stages, and the discussion of the appropriate focus of activities and the curricula are remarkably similar to those identified and described by Montessori.

### *A. ages ~0-7—post-birth of physical body*

- During the first seven years of life, the foundation is laid for the development of a strong and healthy *Will*, which must have its support in the well-developed forms of the physical body.
- The two most important ways in which a child engages with her environment during this period are through *imitation* and by *example*. Aristotle called man the most imitative of creatures, and Steiner agrees that at no other stage in life is this

truer than during these first years when the child imitates what goes on in the surrounding environment. It is not moral talk or admonitions that influence a child during this stage. Admonition moulds the forms of the etheric body, which during this period is still encased in its etheric envelope. Thus, any effort to influence the child must be through example, visible before the eyes of the child.

- Just as the muscles of the body grow strong by performing the work for which they are designed, the brain grows stronger if guided in the right lines of development through the physical environment. Thus, for example, providing a child with a ready-made doll which requires little work of her imagination is less fruitful in developing the brain and imagination than giving her a simple folded napkin in the general shape of a doll, which is not as aesthetically pleasing but which requires her to fill in details out of her imagination.
- It is good for children to engage in activities such as painting and scribbling written signs and letters or imitating speech even before the meaning of such activities is clear to them. "Imitation speaks to this period when the physical body is developing; while the meaning speaks to the etheric part of the child, and the etheric body should not be actively worked on until [later]" (Steiner 1972, 58).
- For early childhood, it is important to realise the value of children's songs and dances as a means of education. "They should be aesthetically pleasing, making a pretty and rhythmical impression on the senses, for the beauty of the sound is to be valued more than the meaning.
- Generally speaking, the healthy physical body desires what is good for it. Since the educator is most concerned with the physical body during this period, special attention should be paid to what the healthy body requires. "Pleasure and delight are the forces which most rightly quicken and call forth the physical forms of the organs. Thus, the joy of the child in and with his physical environment most be reckoned as an important factor in the success of the educational environment" (Steiner 1976, 56).

### i. implications for education

- Because this is a period when children are physically forming and living very much in their imagination, their great capacity to enter into imaginative pictures and stories through free, creative play should be actively encouraged.
- At this age, children are discovering how to relate socially with a peer group and to take part in fundamental life tasks. Through meeting and playing creatively together, children learn vital interpersonal skills. The teacher plays an important role in enabling relationships between children to strengthen through play.
- The teacher should endeavor to create an environment that gives children time to play, encourages them to exercise their imagination and assists them in learning to conjure up ideas from within themselves. Observing and performing simple homely tasks and artistic activities should be balanced with story telling, singing games and generous play times. Providing a rich supply of natural materials gives scope for imagination in play as opposed to refined, pre-packaged toys which deny the child an opportunity to freely exercise the imagination.
- Activities offered for four to six year olds can be based on the work adults would do around the house and garden, and can include sweeping, gardening, cooking, and looking after animals. Practical experience helps the child develop confidence and capabilities.
- The educator must nurture the senses through water-colour painting, singing, and modeling from beeswax and clay.
- This is an age when young children develop primarily by doing, learning through imitation and physical activity. The role of the teacher is to provide a model for the children and a secure space in which to discover the world. They are not yet ready for more formal classes. Thus, the teacher reserves the formal teaching of numbers and letters for the child’s next developmental stage.

## *B. ages ~7-14—post-birth of etheric body*

- The formation and growth of the etheric body means the moulding and development of the child’s inclinations and habits, the conscience, the character, memory and temperament.

- This is the period of development during which the development of the child's *Feeling* is most in the mind of the educator. It is not abstract conceptions that work in the right way on the growing etheric body, but rather what is seen and perceived—not with the outward senses but with the eye of the mind. Abstractions understood primarily through the intellect should be related to the child in ways that speak to their inner feelings.
- The etheric body is best worked upon through pictures and examples. Just as before the age of seven it was necessary to give the child an actual physical pattern to copy, between the change of teeth and puberty the child should be exposed to things fraught with deep meaning, stories, tales and pictures that work through images and allegories.
- In the first years of childhood imitation and example were the key words for education; in this stage of development it is *discipleship* and *authority* which matter most. "Veneration and reverence are forces whereby the etheric body grows in the right way. What the child sees directly in his educators must become authority, not authority compelled by force, but one that the child will accept naturally and without question. By it the child will build up his conscience, habits and inclinations, and bring his temper into an ordered path (Steiner 1965, 49)"
- Besides living authorities who embody for the child intellectual and moral strength, children should also be exposed during this period to those she can only apprehend with the mind and spirit. Outstanding figures of history and the stories of the lives of great men and women "should all be placed before the child in order to arouse the spirit of emulation in the soul" (Steiner 1965, 83).
- Parables are important for the child of this age because through parables teachers can speak not only to the intellect but also to the feelings of the child. Through the parables he divines and feels, rather than grasps intellectually, the underlying law in all existence. A child who has experienced this will approach subjects with an altogether different mood of soul when issues are taught to him in the form of intellectual concepts.
- A force of the soul on which particular value must be set during this period of man's development is memory. "If what is due to the child at this stage is

neglected, the memory will forever have less value than it might otherwise have done" (Steiner 1965, 77).

- Educators should not condemn those things which are mastered merely by memory for fear that what is committed to memory has not been intellectually understood. The intellect is only one means by which we can understand the world; feelings, sentiments and inner disposition can also be used to understand. We would not condemn speaking to a one-year-old child in language beyond her immediate intellectual comprehension because we assume that there is understanding beyond an intellectual command of the law of language formation. Similarly, there is much that the child of this age can learn for the cultivation of memory which may not and perhaps cannot be mastered by intellectual understanding until years later. "It is necessary for man not only to remember what he already understands, but to come to understand what he already knows" (Steiner 1976, 112).
- During this time the child should be "storing up in her memory the treasures of thought on which mankind has pondered; afterwards it the time to penetrate with intellectual understanding what has already been well impressed upon the memory in early years" (Steiner 1976, 115). So, for example, a teacher might focus first on the assimilation of historical events through the memory, then on the grasping of them in intellectual concepts; first on the faithful committing to memory of the facts of geography, then on the intellectual understanding of the relationship between them.

### i. implications for education

- When a Class 1 is formed, the teacher must commit himself to the care of those children for eight years. The benefits of this commitment become obvious as the relationship between the teacher, the children and their families grows. A central part of this teacher's task is to intimately understand the needs of each child, and to nurture the development of a real spirit of sharing and community within the class. In a loving, structured environment, with the encouragement of their classmates and teachers, the children develop and appreciate their strengths and

work at their difficulties. The social and moral learning that takes place in childhood is as important as the academic.

- Until about Class 4, all subjects should be introduced through artistic mediums. This promotes abilities such as creative and flexible thinking, imagining ideas and problems from different perspectives and layering one thought upon another as part of a process of problem solving.
- Mastery of oral communication is integral to all learning. Hearing, re-telling, acting and illustrating stories enriches the child's imaginative life and grasp of language.
- The Main Lesson is one of the basic elements of the Steiner curriculum. It involves the thorough working of the main subjects (such as geography, science, history, mathematics or literature), taught in main lesson blocks of about two hours per day, over several weeks. The topics are approached through a variety of means, including stories, painting, recitation, a physical group project or a game, until the children have made some connection to it with every part of themselves. It is then set aside to 'digest' and a further topic is taken up.
- There are no textbooks in the primary school years. All children have 'main lesson books', which are workbooks which they create during the year recording their experiences and what they have learned. Students in Classes 5 and 6 can use textbooks to supplement their main lesson work.
- Reading and writing are taught formally beginning in Class 1. Children first learn to write using the shape of the letters to suggest meaning, i.e. M for mountain, V for valley, W for waves. In addition, they may walk the shape on the floor in the classroom and draw pictures that include the shape. This allows a deeper connection with, and an understanding of the letters, rather than just memorizing the abstract shapes. The children write words and read their own writing before working with printed literature.
- An understanding of numbers is built on the basis of concrete, real-life tasks such as dividing a cake to share, estimating and measuring, as well as through counting aloud, chanting of tables, musical rhythms and skipping games. These learning experiences are real and meaningful. The children may also learn games such as chess, which enhance thinking and mathematical ability.

- Teachers aim throughout the classes to share the finest literature with the students, which is appropriate to their age. The stories told by the teacher change as the child develops, correlating the era of human history with the developmental stages of the child. For 6-7 year olds the teacher may draw mainly on folk and fairy tales, moving on at age 8 to fables and legends and to Old Testament and other religiously based stories at age 8-9. Norse stories and sagas are presented at age 10, Greek myths and legends at age 11 and the Roman period at age 12.
- Music is a very important form of expression and brings balance to the day. Exercises for training the musical ear are practiced, providing a solid base for subsequent musical accomplishment. Singing and choral work are developed throughout the school years. Children learn the recorder from class 1 through to class 6. Individual tuition of a stringed instrument and music notation is taught from class 3, and by class 4 children participate in orchestral work.
- Arts and craft are an integral part of the curriculum and are used as a way of engaging the children in the current topic from every angle. This complements and enhances the intellectual aspects of the class work. Learning through the arts promotes multiple skills and abilities and nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies. Art includes recitation and drama, wet-on-wet painting, form drawing, beeswax and clay modeling, and handcrafts such as sewing, knitting, weaving, woodwork and carving. The training through art in school is not for the purpose of producing artists but in order to educate young people for the art of living, based on disciplined exercise.
- One or more foreign languages are introduced in the early years, mostly through singing, rhymes and games. Teaching continues in an oral format for the first few years, with emphasis on songs, recitations and practical situations. In classes 5 and 6, classical languages such as Greek and Latin may be introduced.
- Eurythmy is a dance-like art form involving the expression of sound through movement; specific movements correspond to notes or sounds. It enhances coordination, strengthens the ability to listen and reinforces social connections. Eurythmy is introduced in kindergarten and continues throughout school.

- Computers and electronic media are generally not introduced until secondary school unless many children will be entering mainstream secondary school.

### *C. post ~14—post-birth of astral body*

- It is now that the *Thinking* aspect of a child's nature can come to the foreground. During the previous period of development thought has been developing, the faculty of judgment ripening in among the other experiences of the soul.
- With puberty, the time has arrived when the child can be approached by all that opens up the world of abstract ideas, the faculty of judgment and independent thought. Nothing more harmful can be done to a child than to awaken his independent judgment too early, for man is not in a position to judge until he has collected in his inner life material for judgment and comparison. If he forms his own conclusions before doing so, those conclusions will lack foundation. In addition, once having pronounced judgment concerning a matter, we are forever after influenced by this judgment. We no longer receive a new experience as we would have done had we not already formed a judgment in connection with it.
- In order to be ripe for thought one must have learned to be full of respect for what others have thought. Thus the thought should take living hold in the mind of the child that he has first to learn and then to judge. What the intellect has to say concerning any matter should only be said when all the other faculties of the soul have spoken.
- It is during this period and after that young people are best able to take responsibility for collecting, evaluating and judging information around them without the constant guidance of their educators or other adult figures. If the first stages of education have formed a proper foundation for the assimilation and assessment of information, this stage will open the door to a healthy exploration of the power of judgment and independent thinking

#### i. implications for education

- At this stage of her education, the student leaves her class teacher and begins to study academic materials in a more subject-based way. Classes of pupils will be assigned a class mentor who will take primary responsibility for the students'

academic and personal welfare. Teachers and pupils are given more leeway at this stage to create the type of relationship suited to their needs and personalities.

- The job of the subject teacher, who will have had experience as a class teacher, is to assist students in drawing together intellectually the wealth of experience they have had with each subject as part of their Class 1 through 8 main lessons in order to begin building up a clearer picture of the subject matter being studied. In teaching about the differences in reproductive strategies between different species, for example, the teacher might ask students to recall the experience of growing seeds in cups in year 1, the class trip to an aviary in class 5, and the birth of a classmate's younger sister in year 3. This would give students concrete experiences off of which to draw as they begin to thinking intellectually about why such different strategies might be a part of nature's strategy.
- As needed in these upper years, students can be introduced to electronic media and tools such as computers as ways in which to facilitate their learning; however, emphasis is still placed on the aesthetic quality of the work produced, and care is taken at this age to still encourage students to draw in their workbooks, take notes by hand and be as independent of unnecessary tools as possible.

## 5. discipline in Steiner schools

One final area of significance in applying Steiner's ideas to the classroom, regardless of the age of students, pertains to the area of behavior management and discipline. Steiner expected his teachers to see the child as consisting of body, soul and spirit, and believed that the acknowledgment of an indwelling soul in a child would evoke within them a reverence and sensitivity for that child's being. Teachers should accept the premise that a child deserves respect and dignity, and that it is the responsibility of parents and teachers to guide the child during the early years of life. Three principles form the basis from which discipline procedures should be determined: respect for all human beings (including oneself and others); respect for all living creatures and plants; and respect for school and personal property.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to promote a harmonious atmosphere beneficial to growth and learning through being worthy of imitation, re-directing children to other activities if one is not working, i.e., changing tactics in a lesson or having a student work alongside an adult. Behavior management in Steiner schools includes reflection on the part of the teacher on how she manages the children. Could she have handled a situation more effectively? What positive strengths in the child can be built upon?

If a child is not responding well to a lesson or is otherwise acting out, Steiner teachers are encouraged not to assume that the child is lazy or 'bad', but rather that the lesson or learning environment is not working for the child. In the younger years, it is the responsibility of the teacher to know the child well enough to address the situation in a manner best suited to the child, be it a time-out, a change of activity, or an attempt at conversation. As students become older, the expectation is that they will be mature enough to take responsibility for their own learning, either asking for assistance or working through issues on their own as appropriate.

When confrontations arise, teachers are encouraged to remove children from potentially dangerous situations and to support both aggressor and victim by giving a few minutes 'time out'. This allows the children to recover and regain their grounding before trying to address the underlying issue. Teachers are encouraged to use verse or song to lighten and heal the situation. On a broader level, teachers work with parents to understand what external factors might be influencing a child's disposition at school, and to create links between home and school that can support the child through challenging periods.

## 6. themes in Steiner's work

As was the case with Montessori, several themes emerge from Steiner's work, which are worth noting. Here too, the broad themes identified encompass both philosophical assumptions and implications for the practical organisation of the learning environment. Having been outlined as anthroposophical tenets, Steiner's theoretical/philosophical assumptions with regard to education are far less expansive than specific discussions about the implications of these assumptions about human nature for the development of a

proper "art of education." These will be disaggregated further and discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

- *Human beings are essentially spiritual creatures.* Although human beings generally live their lives within the physical realm, their capacity for transformation and fulfillment lies in the recognition and development of the spiritual aspect of their nature.
- *Knowledge encompasses more than sensory information.* Steiner maintains that knowledge is a vastly more complex phenomena than the prevailing materialist worldview of his time acknowledged. One part of knowledge is information about the world which we can receive through our senses, either directly or through the intake of information in written or oral forms. Beyond that, human beings have the capacity to feel emotions and tap into spiritual parts of themselves that are connected to a much more intuitive form of knowledge and understanding. By embracing such forms of knowledge, human beings can better understand their own natures and their connection to something larger.
- *Human development occurs in stages related to the maturation of four distinct "members" or aspects.* Human beings have four "members": the physical, the etheric, the sentient and the Ego. The Ego is constantly present in the individual and provides the ability to identify oneself as a unique entity. The Ego works on the individual from the time he becomes aware of Self. The other three elements of the human being develop in stages, with each stage requiring an emphasis on particular facets of development. The process and content of education must be in line with the appropriate stage of development.
- *Children must be actively engaged in the learning process.* Active engagement requires different approaches at different stages of development, however, without such active engagement, the child is not truly learning.
- *The development of relationships is a critical component of education.* Whether through the use of free play with other children or through the development of relationships through the use of the Class model, a child's development requires relationships with others. The Self cannot exist except within the context of these relationships and what they teach us about both ourselves and our place within a larger community.

- *The role of the teacher in providing a proper learning environment is critical.* There is a need for educators to be deeply aware of and attentive to the process of the child's development in order to create the proper environment for the child's growth.
- *Children need freedom and independence to grow; however, the level and type of freedom must be adjusted according to the developmental stage and needs of the child.* During the first stage of development, the child must be given the freedom to develop his will. However, the second stage requires more structure than the first and third because of the teacher's role in facilitating learning during that stage. Nevertheless, the child must be given adequate opportunities to exercise freedom even within this more structured context in order to develop independence. The third stage sees a return to almost complete autonomy in the child's choice of activity and learning.
- *Education is a transformative undertaking.* Many of the problems of the world emerge out of human beings' inability to understand their true nature and their relationship to a broader existence. Steiner's art of education was developed in order to nurture the ability of human beings to exist within this part of themselves. Beyond transforming themselves, this ability should ultimately enable them to transform human society.

As mentioned at the conclusion of Chapter Three, the stages of child development described by Steiner are remarkably consistent with those described by Montessori, although in the case of young students Montessori's ideas are more developed. However, Steiner's practical advice for classroom practice with students between the ages of seven and fourteen are rather better developed than Montessori's, though the theories underlying both have important similarities. Moving on to consider Krishnamurti's educational ideas in Chapter Five, it is useful to bear in mind Steiner's general assertion that students at around the age of fourteen need to begin to develop their capacity to think critically and make judgments about the world. The development of these critical thinking skills is in many ways the primary focus of Krishnamurti's educational work.

# Chapter Five—Jiddu Krishnamurti

## 1. introduction

For a number of reasons, less has been written analyzing and summarising the works and thoughts of Jiddu Krishnamurti than was the case for both Montessori and Steiner. By his own admission, Krishnamurti was not an academic man with either an interest or a talent for writing books or essays. What he left to the world were numerous essays, letters to schools, and videos of talks given around the world, as well as the practical application of his ideals in centres and schools around the world.

This presented a challenge for me as I sought to organise his ideas in a manner that lent itself to systematic investigation of his educational philosophy. Lawrence Holden's 1972 dissertation on the structure of Krishnamurti's phenomenological implications, Tom Cavanough's 1978 thesis on Krishnamurti's philosophy, and Mary Lutyen's 1975 biography of Krishnamurti provided some assistance in this endeavour; however all were slightly dated given that Krishnamurti lived and worked until 1986. I focused my efforts on half a dozen of his essays on a wide variety of topics and seven anthologies containing lectures on educationally related topics. I also reviewed all of the issues of the *Journal of the Krishnamurti* Schools, a journal which has been published since 1997 and features articles written by Krishnamurti teachers, both theoretical and practical. Finally, I spent part of my fieldwork time at Brockwood Park observing classes and talking with students and teachers, several of whom had attended or taught in multiple Krishnamurti schools worldwide. I was also able to watch videotapes of Krishnamurti's discussions with students and teachers at the school. The summary which follows draws primarily on these sources. Unless otherwise attributed, all of the quoted statements and terms are Krishnamurti's. I would also like to make clear that references to "traditional" schools and education are all reflective of Krishnamurti's observations and in no way reflect my own opinions or observations about current practices in schools.

## 2. the one

Krishnamurti was born on May 1, 1895 and his biographer writes that a renowned astrologer assured the boy's father early on that "his son was to be a very great man" (Lutyens 1975, 2). This was not entirely evident to his parents or teachers upon his enrolment at a nearby school at the age of six. Krishnamurti was judged to be "as vague and dreamy as his brother Nityananda was sharp (Luytens, 3)" to the extent that his teacher felt he might be retarded and abused him physically to prompt some response. He did display an interest in religious activity, and when his interest was aroused by this or other activity, he showed himself to be keenly observant. Shortly after his tenth birthday in 1905, Krishnamurti's mother was taken ill and died, a blow which stayed with him for the rest of his life. "Her death deprived us of the one who loved and cared for us most …there was really no one to look after us," he wrote in an autobiography at the age of eighteen. He goes on to mention mystical experiences that suggest he might have shared a trait with his mother who was "to a certain extent psychic" (Lutyens 1975, 5).

> I may mention that I frequently saw her after she died. I remember once following my mother's form as it went upstairs. I stretched out my hand and seemed to catch hold of her dress, but she vanished as soon as she reached the top of the stairs. Until a short time ago, I used to hear my mother following me as I went to school. I was the only member of my family, besides my mother, to see these types of visions [and] the auras of people (Lutyens 1975, 5 ).

Two years after the death of his wife, Krishnamurti's father retired from the Civil Service and moved to the compound of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. Narianiah had belonged to the Society since 1882 and Mrs. Annie Besant, the head of the group, took him on as an assistant to one of the Society's secretaries.

## 3. theosophical society

It is necessary to pause here in the biographical sketch of Krishnamurti's life to say a little about the Theosophical Society because Krishnamurti's experience with the Society and its teachings would have a profound effect on his character, future actions and attitudes. The goals of the Society were simple and rather praiseworthy. Without regard to race, creed, colour or caste, it sought to form a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity,

and to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science (Lutyens 1975, 11). Within the Society there existed an esoteric section originally under the direction of Madame Blavatsky to which Rudolf Steiner once belonged. If the teachings of Theosophy were themselves relatively simple, those of the esoteric branch were extremely cumbersome. It was believed that through reincarnation man can spiritually evolve to perfection. When the soul arrives at this state of perfection it qualifies for membership in the Great White Brotherhood of perfect beings who control the world. A few of the Brotherhood had chosen to retain human forms in order to assist the evolutionary progress of those on the path to perfection. Two such Masters had made the Theosophical Society their special province—the Lord Maitreya, "the World Teacher—the Christ in the West, the Bodhisattva in the East" (Lutyens 1975, 11). A majority of the Theosophists believed that from time to time the Lord Maitreya would manifest himself in human form by taking possession of a body specially prepared for him. It came to be believed that Krishnamurti was the vehicle through which Lord Maitreya would act by founding a new religion, a belief which would change the course of the Society and Krishnamurti's life.

## 4. truth is a pathless land

Madame Blavatsky died in 1891 followed by Olcott in 1907. Leadership of the Society then fell into the hands of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, both of whom were to become Krishnamurti's mentors, guardians and teachers. Shortly after his arrival in Adyar in 1909, Leadbeater met Krishnamurti who was thirteen and a half at the time. Leadbeater became convinced that Krishnamurti was a great spiritual leader and might be the vehicle which Lord Maitreya had chosen for his next coming. Mrs. Besant concurred, though for slightly different reasons. She was seeking to create within the Theosophical Society a role for a World Leader, and in Krishnamurti she saw a potential candidate for the leader. She and Leadbeater spent a large amount of time working with Krishnamurti in the realm of mystical training. The aim of this was to groom the boy for the coming role that was conceived for him as World Teacher. In 1911 Krishnamurti was named Head of the Order of the Star in the East, and was formally inducted into

occult life. The Order of the Star was the organisation founded for the purpose of preparing for the Coming of the World Teacher.

After several years of unsuccessful study in England and France, Krishnamurti and his brother were sent to California for quiet study and recuperation. On September 2, 1922 Krishnamurti wrote to Lady Emily Lutyens, his foster mother in England, saying that he had undergone a spiritual awakening that had caused his entire life to change. For nearly three days, he lay unconscious and when he was awake he physically shook and appeared to be in a delirious state. On the third day, he went out of the house in a weakened condition and sat under a tree in a meditative position. He described the profound experience which followed:

> I felt myself going out of my body …In front of me was my body and over my head I saw the Star, bright and clear. Then I could feel the vibration of the Lord Buddha; I beheld Lord Maitreya … I was so happy, calm and at peace … nothing could ever disturb the calmness of my soul. Nothing could ever be the same. I have seen the Light. I have touched compassion which heals all sorrow and suffering; it is not for myself, but for the world … The fountain of Truth has been dispersed … I have drunk at the fountain of Joy and eternal beauty. I am God intoxicated (Lutyens 1975, 159-160).

This event was interpreted by Leadbeater and others as further proof that Krishnamurti was to become the vehicle for Lord Maitreya. They urged Krishnamurti to return from California to continue his institutional work.

Over the course of the following two years, Krishnamurti continued to take on a larger role in the Order of the Star; however, he was developing a sceptical attitude towards systematic philosophy and institutional religion which was working against Besant and Leadbeater's desire to make him the Head of the Order. He began encouraging his listeners to seek their own truth and not rely on him.

> Until now you have been depending on … someone else to tell you the Truth, whereas the Truth lies within you. In your own hearts, in your own experiences, you will find the Truth, and that is the only thing of value (Lutyens 1975, 193)

Beginning in 1927 Krishnamurti distanced himself more and more from the tenets of Theosophy and on August 2, 1929 after 18 years of serving within the Order Krishnamurti declared the end. On the opening day of the annual Camp Star in Holland, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order in front of 3000 people reminding them all with the title of his talk that "Truth is a Pathless Land."

> I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect … Truth cannot be organised; nor should any organisation be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path … I do not want to belong to any organisation of a spiritual kind, … I do not want you to follow me. The moment you follow someone, you cease to follow Truth. I have decided to disband the Order, as I happen to be its Head. You can form other organisations and expect someone else. With that I am not concerned … My only concern is to set men absolutely, unconditionally free (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1990, 5).

Thus began a 56-year journey, one which would take Krishnamurti around the world many times over. Even the most cursory glance at the topics covered by Krishnamurti in his lectures and discussions reveals an incredible range of interest touching on many aspects of human thought and life: death, hate, sex, loneliness, gossip, the quest for God, truth and knowledge. It would be fair to claim that what characterises the list of topics handled by Krishnamurti is a clear absence of systematisation. A student of his works could not approach them with the hope of finding some definite position that runs consistently throughout like a thread. Aldous Huxley said of Krishnamurti's writings that they are "a clear contemporary statement of the fundamental human problem, together with an invitation to solve it in the only way in which it can be solved—for and by himself" (Cavanaugh 1978, 26). The one constant that does appear continually throughout his works is his persistent questioning of all assumptions made by others, and his encouragement to his listeners to listen, not to him, but to their own inner selves.

## 5. the core of Krishnamurti's teaching

When Mary Lutyens, Krishnamurti' biographer, asked him to convey the core of his message, he did so in a short essay, a summary of which I believe will serve as enough of a foundation upon which to discuss his educational philosophy.

The highest aim in life, says Krishnamurti, is to find Truth, yet "truth is a pathless land" so man can only find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the content of his own mind, through observation of himself, his reactions, and an acceptance of the background and experience which leads to those particular reactions. Lacking the security that comes from an understanding of truth, man has developed images of truth—religious, political, personal. These manifest as symbols, ideas and

beliefs, and the burden of these dominates man's thinking, relationships and daily life. These are the causes of our problems, he says, for they divide man from man in every relationship. A man's perception of life is shaped by the concepts already established in his mind. The content of his mind is this consciousness of concepts, and it is common to all humanity. The uniqueness of the individual does not lie in the superficial culture, name and form he acquires from his environment; the uniqueness lies in the total freedom from the content of consciousness. According to Krishnamurti, freedom is a connection with one's own spirit, and the realisation of the self as eternal, a unity between reason and love.

> When man becomes aware of the movement of his own consciousness he will see the division between the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed; the experiencer and the experienced and discover that this division is an illusion. Then there is only pure observation, which is insight without any shadow of the past. This timeless insight brings about a deep and radical change in the mind. Total negation is the essence of the positive (Krishnamurti 1996, 59).

Krishnamurti's ideas as laid out above, primarily in his own words, are found by many to be completely unintelligible. The difficulty with providing any type of interpretation or critique of his ideas is that it creates the very problem which Krishnamurti identifies as needing to be solved: allowing one person's interpretation of his words to become in any way definitive or authoritative. Nevertheless, I will attempt a translation of his ideas here—with the disclaimer that my interpretation is merely my own.

Krishnamurti's primary concern with the human condition is people's disconnection with the true essence of themselves, an essence which he believes is an extension of Truth, ultimate reality, or God—though he himself abstained from using either of the two latter terms. This unchanging Self is eternal and incorruptible, a balanced and pure state of being in which each person would come to recognise her connection with and relationship to all other beings. It is the inability to recognise our true nature which leads to the state of war, conflict and separation, which characterises the modern world. What is needed, says Krishnamurti, is for people to reawaken to their true natures, to recognise their interconnectedness with others, to realise that the differences which seem to divide us from others are merely illusions which we have been conditioned to believe are essential and real. Only by coming to such a state of awareness, will human beings succeed in creating a more peaceful, more unified world.

However, such awareness is not easy to achieve. From the moment of our birth, we are conditioned to see ourselves as being distinct and separate from others. We are taught that the differences we perceive between ourselves and others are real. Though this may not be the case ontologically, our perceptions become our reality and our cage, separating us from any other understanding of the world. We embrace political, social and religious institutions which strengthen this illusion. So, says Krishnamurti, the only way in which to be free, is to learn to see the world differently. We must learn to observe the world anew, setting aside our prejudices and conditioning. Only by doing this will we be enabled to recognise ourselves for who and what we truly are—part of an unchanging ultimate reality. True freedom can only begin once we have come to this recognition of ourselves. We will return to a fuller examination of Krishnamurti's ideas in Chapter Six, but for now will explore his specific ideas on education.

## 6. Krishnamurti's educational philosophy

In considering Krishnamurti's educational philosophy one does not leave behind his core message or his general philosophy. In his study of Krishnamurti's works Cavanaugh notes that:

> Krishnamurti's educational philosophy reflects the same concerns articulated in his general philosophy. His criticisms of the quality of modern life, which he describes as violent and stultifying of real human progress, serve as the jumping off place for the development of a philosophy of education … All of the threads that run throughout his works converge to make one all important and positive point. It is within man's reach to change [the state of the world] and 'real education' is the means to do it (Cavanaugh 1978, 115-118).

Krishnamurti's works in the field of education present any reader with the same problem as his writings on general philosophy: it is largely unsystematic. His ideas appear under a variety of headings and in only a few cases are they presented together in a single volume. Nevertheless, four main themes can be identified in Krishnamurti's main writings and lectures on education:

- Goals of education
- Role of the teacher
- Knowledge and the curriculum

- Freedom and responsibility

It should be noted that, as was the case with Montessori, the development of his thinking in each of these main areas was shaped very much by his experience with the students and teachers in the five schools which he founded during his lifetime. What follows is an examination of the ideas expressed around each of the major themes above, as they occur in Krishnamurti's writings and lectures at his schools.

### A. *goals of education*

Krishnamurti's thoughts on this topic can be further subdivided into two main sub-themes: his criticisms of traditional education and his thoughts on the aims of "right education." One of the major elements of Krishnamurti's general philosophy is his criticism of contemporary life. Modern man, he says, is caught in a sea of violence and confusion from which he attempts to escape by looking to traditional and outmoded philosophies for answers.

#### i. criticism of traditional education

Having lived through the most tumultuous part of a century that saw two world wars, the splitting of the atom, the breakdown of ideologies, the savage destruction of the earth, and the degeneration of every aspect of human life, Krishnamurti left little in doubt when he spoke about the shortcomings of current approaches to education and his vision for a better system.

> Our present education is geared to industrialisation and war, its principal aim being to develop efficiency; and we are caught in this machine of ruthless competition and mutual destruction … Of what value is it to be trained as lawyers if we perpetuate litigation? Of what value is knowledge if we continue in our confusion? What significance has technical and industrial capacity if we use it to destroy one another? … If education leads to war, if it teaches us to destroy or be destroyed, has it not utterly failed? (Krishnamurti 1981, 15)

In Krishnamurti's opinion, there were several reasons for the failure of educational systems of the time. First, he felt that education stressed primarily the acquisition of factual knowledge, and had been little concerned with life's real problems. Education, he said, imparted onto children facts and information, but did not encourage them to think for themselves. Instead, it encouraged them to depend on the authority of

knowledge. They were capable of building bridges and bombs, yet they had not been encouraged to ask why they were building bridges and bombs. In short, education was focused on the acquisition of knowledge rather than the development of intelligence, a distinction explored further in the next section on “right education.”

Krishnamurti also observed that the process of education had encouraged people to conform, instilling in them a fear of thinking “… contrary to the established pattern of society.” Education often encourages young people to respect authority and tradition for their own sake without reason or purpose. Such educational tactics, Krishnamurti feels, discourage creativity and run contrary to the inward nature of man, forcing him to conform out of a fear of being different.

Krishnamurti also noted that traditional modes of education have created division and antagonism between people by emphasising their superficial differences rather than their essential similarities. Competition rather than cooperation is encouraged and rewarded. Such competition forces us to compare ourselves with others. The aim is to be successful and get ahead, winning while someone else is losing, being a success while someone else is considered a failure. Such approaches, Krishnamurti maintains, only produce conflict within and between individuals. Under such circumstances love, which is an essential element in what he considers “right education” cannot come into being.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, current education has caused us to escape from ourselves, disregarding or perverting man’s inward nature. It has fragmented living by dividing knowledge up into academic compartments and times for learning into one hour sessions. Instead of encouraging us to pursue our own interests, education dictates the interests that we should pursue. We become bored with this dull routine, full of requirements and dictums, and the joy of learning becomes drudgery. Nowhere, observes Krishnamurti, does he see a healthy interest on the part of educators in cultivating an integrated view of life. As a result, he concludes that the education system is heading in the wrong direction and contributing directly to the process of fragmentation in the mind and society.

### ii. right education

If Krishnamurti rejects an education designed to accommodate man to an "insane and materialistic world" what then does he consider the proper aims of education to be? In order to answer this question we must remember that Krishnamurti considers man's conditioning to be the root cause of his problems. The conditioning experience of family, culture and ideology moulds man's worldview and causes him to see reality from a limited perspective; it is this impaired vision which prevents individuals from seeing the state of the world accurately. It is these conditioning forces which converge on an individual, creating tension which ultimately finds expression in society. In Krishnamurti's estimation, this unwholesome state cannot be permitted to continue and the only way out is for education to seek a more noble aim. "The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole (Krishnamurti 1996, 25)" although "this does not deny the academic disciplines which have their proper place in life" (Krishnamurti 1981, 17)

To free the mind from conditioning is more difficult than it sounds, for the impact of environmental conditioning on the individual is immense. All of man's experience, says Krishnamurti, is uncritically ingested and used by the mind to screen each new encounter with the world. The forces of the past work against the development of the whole and open-minded perception of "what is."

> You are the result of your past—your body, your feelings and your thinking. Your body is just a carbon copy. Any feeling, for example, envy or anger, is a result of the past. So you're really moving within the circle of experience rather than experiencing *what is* (Krishnamurti 1996, 69).

In practice, Krishnamurti feels that schools are a major agent in the conditioning process. Referring to the practices and activities of a typical state school in England at the time, Krishnamurti concludes that it is easy to see that the school is a microcosm of the larger society, responsible for socialising the young and inculcating them with a value system. The various streams of academic, commercial and technical subject matter manifest how the school serves society as a sorting agency for social roles.

Krishnamurti goes on to discuss the characteristics of "right education." Surely, he observes, schools should be places where individuals are able to learn about the

importance of knowledge but also its limitations; about the totality and wholeness of life, rather than fragmented pockets of information. While academic achievement should be considered a worthwhile endeavour, it should not be seen as the totality of the school's role and purpose. Rather, the experience of school should include a deep exploration of Self; helping the student sustain an extended exploration of her own conditioning and how this conditioning has distorted her thinking, and in recognising this, taking the first step towards overcoming the fear that conditioning has led her to embrace.

> It is a place where one learns to look at the whole of man's endeavour, his search for beauty, his search for truth and for a way of living without conflict … From the ancient of times, man has sought something beyond the materialistic world, something immeasurable, something sacred. It is the intent of this school to inquire into this possibility, to bring about naturally a psychological revolution, from which arises inevitably a totally different order in human relationship, which is society. The intelligent understanding of all this can bring about a profound change in the consciousness of mankind (Krishnamurti 1984).

In essence, right education develops in us the capacity for self-understanding. In right education students are encouraged to face their problems rather than escape them; to question their own values as well as those of their society in order to find out what is true instead of simply accepting what is regarded as true.

In particular, Krishnamurti cites the development of intelligence as one of the primary goals of "right education." He distinguishes between knowledge and intelligence. Knowledge has different forms—scientific, collective, personal—yet it is always related to experience. Experience gathered and collected is knowledge. Intelligence is defined by him as "the action of immediate perception" (Krishnamurti 1989, 36).

> Intelligence uses knowledge, intelligence being the capacity to think clearly, objectively, sanely, healthily. Intelligence is a state in which there is no personal emotion involved, no personal opinion, prejudice or inclination. Intelligence is the capacity for direct understanding. So there is knowledge, which is the past continually being added to, and there is intelligence (Krishnamurti 1989, 21).

Through the use of intelligence, individuals are equipped to confront aspects of "what is" such as greed, envy and hostility without resorting to justification, resistance or condemnation, and as a result can become free of their influence.

Krishnamurti suggests that education should help to develop in students a proper balance of two particular states of mind: the religious mind and the scientific mind. "These are the only two states of mind that are of value, the true religious spirit and the true scientific spirit" (Krishnamurti 1996, 18). The scientific spirit is one that "moves from fact to fact" and "has nothing to do with individual conditions, with nationalism, with race, with prejudice" (Krishnamurti 1996, 16). Its only concern is to see reality exactly as it is. The religious spirit, the second element of an integrated mind, is characterised by innocence and pliability. Such a mind can "experience that which you call God, that which is immeasurable" (Krishnamurti 1996, 18). If education can successfully cultivate a mind which manifests both spirits, a new mind will emerge. It is the development of this new mind, the transformation of the individual and through the individual the broader world, which Krishnamurti sees as the goal of right education.

### *B. role of the teacher*

In his discussions at the various schools he founded, Krishnamurti made clear the important responsibility a teacher took upon herself.

> The first thing a teacher must ask …is what exactly he means by teaching. Does he want to condition the child to become a cog in the social machine or help him to be an integrated, creative human being, a threat to false values? And if the educator is to help the student to examine and understand the values and influences that surround him and of which he is a part, must he not be aware of them himself? (Krishnamurti 1996, 26).

The import of these questions is clear: teachers are assigned an expanded role in which they are to be interrogators of all experience, their own as well as their students'. In this capacity, as agents of change, they are expected to nurture critical investigation of all thought, feeling and experience, acting as midwives to the birth of a new human being. The function of the true educator, Krishnamurti suggests, is to point the way to wisdom and truth. He must help his student to understand the influencing factors around her so that she can become free of her conditioning. The true educator understands himself enough to be able to see the students without his own interests, desires and selfish motives entering into the educational process. He is concerned solely with the freedom and integration of the individual student, and seeks to assist all of his students in facing life intelligently rather than with confusion.

Krishnamurti's discussions with teachers at his schools frequently concerned the topic of the role and authority of the teacher. In these talks and in his writings he refused to make an arbitrary distinction between the role of teacher and student, for in his eyes the teacher and student must mutually work to investigate the world, "awakening the other" as they do so. "You are the teacher and you are the taught. So there is no pupil and no teacher … There is only teaching and learning which is going on in me. I am learning and I am also teaching myself; the whole process is one" (Krishnamurti 1996, 27). This should not be taken to mean, however, that Krishnamurti strips educators of all authority. A limited amount does accrue to them by virtue of the fact that they are trained specialists in a specific discipline. What he cautions against is the tendency for authority to expand from a narrow field and become generalised authority over the student. "The teacher is not on a pedestal. The relationship should be non-authoritarian" (Cavanaugh 1978, 154).

### *C. knowledge and the curriculum*

Krishnamurti himself never used the word "curriculum" in his discussions of schools; however for the purposes of discussing his views on the proper activities of a school we shall make use of the term, though acknowledging it to include everything that takes place under the auspices of the school. This definition corresponds more accurately to Krishnamurti's primary educational goal, i.e., the total transformation of the student.

In considering what we traditionally refer to as the curriculum of a school, what first comes to mind is a list of subjects, knowledge of which is considered central to the development of well-rounded citizens. Given his criticisms of traditional knowledge it is not entirely unexpected to find that Krishnamurti gives virtually no consideration to the content of the various disciplines that make up the curriculum in his writings. While he acknowledges that part of the work of the school will be to expose students to knowledge, his more pressing concern is the process whereby this is done. Are students encouraged to actively engage with the knowledge they are presented with? Are they encouraged to ask about why things are the way they are in nature, or to consider what led to historical events in a critical manner? For him, the goal is to allow subject matter to be a medium through which to help students learn how to exercise and develop their intelligence.

Krishnamurti is far more expansive in discussing other aspects of schools in which right education can be fostered. It is of particular importance to him that schools have a positive physical and psychological atmosphere; and that there are good reciprocal relationships between students and teachers. The development of "right relationships" and the creation of a carefully developed atmosphere in the school could contribute greatly, he felt, to eradicating the deleterious effects of conditioning. Great care and attention should be given to the details of atmosphere, he wrote. This means that attention should be paid to the type and location of the building selected to be a school. A sense of security must be fostered by the older members of the school who, by every word and deed, "create this sense of welcome, friendship, affection, love; which will offer the student the feeling of being completely secure" (Krishnamurti 1996, 37).

Krishnamurti does not consider right relationship to be something apart from atmosphere; rather it is concomitant to it. "Right relationship" according to him, is manifested by the teachers' deep and sincere concern for the student's total being; his physical and moral attributes and his intellectual capacity, the way he walks, talks, eats and relates to others and his environment are all of interest to the teacher. Developing out of his teacher's concern for his well-being is the realisation by the student that "at last he has somebody in whom he can put his trust" (Krishnamurti 1996, 37). Without these elements of atmosphere and right relationship which are at the heart of a school and its activities, Krishnamurti warns the teacher: "You will be fighting him all of the time. He'll be all the time resisting you" (Krishnamurti 1996, 37). Atmosphere and right relationship provide the fertile soil in which intelligence emerges.

One particular issue related to curriculum which is also a great focus of Krishnamurti's writing and discussions is the role of meditation in learning. In his letters to schools he wrote: "Meditation is part of life … It is part of existence, so you must know about it as you know about mathematics, electronics or whatever it is" (Krishnamurti 1975, 76). To Krishnamurti, meditation is essentially an awareness of the entire process of living. When we are meditating, we are watching the entire movement of what is. The meditative mind, says Krishnamurti, "looks without any distortion" at what is actually occurring (Krishnamurti 1968, 64). It does not concentrate or focus on something to the exclusion of something else; instead it is watching the totality which includes itself.

> When you learn about yourself, watch yourself, watch the way you walk, how you eat, what you say, the gossip, the hate, the jealousy—if you are aware of all that is in yourself, without any choice, that is part of meditation (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1969, 116).

> The meditative mind is seeing—watching, listening, without the word, without comment, without opinion—attentive to the movement of life in all its relationships through the day (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1970, 19).

Meditation involves observing oneself and the movement of life. Out of such observation comes self-understanding and understanding of life itself. "It has no technique and therefore no authority" (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1969, 116). There is no system or method by which one can meditate, nor is a guru or other authority figure necessary to tell us how to meditate. All that is necessary to meditate is to observe the movement and process of life with complete freedom.

Krishnamurti stresses that meditation is not an escape from reality. Meditation does not mean retreat from life; instead it occurs only when we are in direct contact with life. To isolate ourselves by retreating to a convent, monastery or mountain top does not lead to meditation. However, though meditation does not involve running away from what is, Krishnamurti indicates that meditation does involve "wandering away from this world; one has to be a total outsider" (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1970, 9). The mind must be psychologically alone and still, allowing itself to be empty of the known with all of its accumulated experience and knowledge. Then, though the meditative person lives within society encountering hundreds of people daily, she is free of the psychological influences of her society. In meditation, the student disposes of his need to refer to his past as a reference to help him interpret his thoughts or experience. It is also necessary for him to lay aside rational thought. He must resist all temptation to control his mind or suppress the unpleasant in himself. Krishnamurti writes that meditation

> is a way of putting aside everything that he has conceived of himself and of the world so he has a totally different kind of mind. Meditation also means awareness, both of the world and of the whole movement of oneself, to see exactly what is, without choice, without any distortion (Krishnamurti 1975, 203).

Meditation enables the student to engage in the process of developing self-knowledge. It is a vehicle that enables the student to look at his greed, anger, and a myriad of other things dispassionately and unsentimentally. In attending to these unadmirable traits, the meditator is urged not to make an effort to suppress or forcibly change anything.

Instead, he is encouraged to focus on what is, to understand it, and in understanding it to be equipped to change it. Meditation is both the means of understanding and the means of transformation of the individual.

### D. freedom and responsibility

Krishnamurti's position on the question of freedom, order and discipline in school dismisses the traditional notion that all three are acquired as the result of learners imitating good examples and being trained in the rules of conduct. His educational philosophy strongly encourages a process whereby the self awakens to a sense of individual responsibility. He rejects as superficial those definitions which equate discipline with submission to authority, or conceive of freedom as only the right to express an opinion or to move about from place to place unrestrained. "Surely this is a rather limited freedom," he says.

When Krishnamurti says, "Freedom does not exist without order. The two go together. If you cannot have order you cannot have freedom" (Krishnamurti 1975, 25), he is not advocating the imposition of external discipline or conformity to a prescribed concept of freedom. He rejects, however, a "do your own thing" notion of individual freedom. For him, compulsion and externally imposed authority are replaced by a process of individual awareness and a sense of responsibility.

> The word responsibility should be understood in all its significance… A human being psychologically is the whole of mankind … On this actuality various cultures have imposed the illusion that each human being is different … [Yet] if one observes closely the whole psychological structure of oneself one will find that as one suffers, so all mankind suffers in various degrees. So responsibility has a totally different meaning … If one grasps that one is psychologically the world, then responsibility becomes overpowering love (Krishnamurti 1981, 26).

Students allowed the freedom, space and time to nurture their individual sense of responsibility, and to develop an appreciation of their place in a larger community will emerge into kindness, attentiveness, punctuality, consideration—all of which are aspects of discipline. With no need of external authority or imposition, out of right relationship and an awareness of what that relationship represents, responsibility will grow.

In order to nurture a sense of individual and collective responsibility, Krishnamurti suggests the development of schools with particular characteristics. Among the issues discussed most often are school size, school composition, and school administration and organisation. Krishnamurti was a strong advocate of small schools with a diverse population of students and teachers. Allowing individuals to develop relationships with others from different national, racial, religious and political backgrounds is essential in helping to break down conditioned ideas about personal superiority. Small schools also allow for the development of relationships out of which right education can flow. Schools should be democratically organised with teachers and students being given the opportunity and responsibility for sustaining and maintaining the school on all levels, from its physical upkeep, to matters of discipline and personal issues.

## 7. theory applied

Krishnamurti began to establish schools in the late 1950s.

> We are trying in all these schools to cultivate a mind, a brain that is holistic, acquiring knowledge for action in the world, but not neglecting the psychological nature of man, because that is far more important than the academic career. Here we are trying to do both … We may succeed, we hope we do, but also we may not. (Krishnamurti 1981, 3).

Krishnamurti's educational philosophy was gradually put into practice in the schools which he founded during his lifetime. While he did not write specifically on every facet of school organisation, particularly with regard to primary school classrooms, he lived at each of the schools he founded and made frequent visits, engaging in conversations with teachers about their work. By reviewing the literature of these six schools, as well talking with teachers who worked with Krishnamurti teaching on all levels, it is possible to identify some general characteristics common to the nine Krishnamurti schools which now exist around the world. Of primary importance in the schools generally is:

- A concern with the freeing of the individual from: conformity, fear of punishment for lack of conformity, and assumptions and pre-conditioned habits of mind;
- An emphasis on the development of self-knowledge;

- An absence of authority structures, particularly between adult and child, and the development of authentic, loving relationships and mutual concern not dependant on the existence of reward and punishment systems;
- An emphasis on the creation of new values when appropriate rather than conformity to old values.

### *A. characteristics of schools*

- Small co-educational schools with small classes;
- Attention to the creation of beauty in the school's atmosphere;
- Diverse student body in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religious background;
- Non-competitive environment;
- Lack of authoritarian structures, reward/punishment schemes;
- Democratic administration of the school including a student/teacher council responsible for making decisions appropriate for the age group;
- Shared responsibility among students/teachers for school's overall maintenance;
- Use of authentic assessments based on portfolios, teacher reports, and discussions with students about progress;
- Integration of time during the school day for personal activity/meditation;
- Provision of and emphasis on crafts, sports, horticulture, and practical arts;
- Emphasis on physical well-being including provision of a vegetarian diet from the school kitchen, and the use of organic food grown in the school garden.

### *B. early childhood*

- Primarily based on group/individual self-guided activity;
- Emphasis on play and the development of imagination;
- Developmentally appropriate activities provided, beginning with the manipulation of concrete objects and moving toward more abstract skills;
- Use of stories, art, nature, indoor and outdoor activities and movement to support children as they explore the world and become more independent;
- Balance of small group, whole group, and individual activities;
- Balance of active exploration and periods of quiet work or non-activity;

- Emphasis on nourishing a sense of wonder and reverence for all life.

### *C. primary school*

- Class teacher teaches most core academic subjects, allowing for flexible use of time and presentation of an integrated curriculum. Specialist teachers introduced to supplement with lessons in music, art, physical education, etc.;
- During later primary years students become responsible for choosing subjects to emphasise through project work;
- Students introduced to the concept and practice of meditation/stillness/awareness;
- Comprehensive, semi-annual written student evaluations and monthly parent meetings provide a complete picture of student's academic, social and emotional development. Written grades introduced in later years.

### *D. secondary school*

- Either boarding schools or providing a boarding option to create a sense of independence on the part of students;
- Changing relationships between students and teachers to reflect age-appropriate interactions;
- Increased emphasis on self-assessment which places value on student's taking time to reflect on her own performance and to consider means of improvement;
- Organised "K-time" during which students explore the writings of Krishnamurti and other thinkers, reflecting on questions about self-awareness;
- Students take on additional age-appropriate responsibilities in the school such as cooking, washing, working with younger students etc.;
- Students engaged in discussions related to school policy, disciplinary matters etc..

## 8. themes in Krishnamurti's work

Several important themes recur in Krishnamurti's work, which are worth noting here. The relationship with the themes emerging in Montessori's and Steiner's works, as well

as the broader implications of these ideas for defining a philosophy and practice of HE, will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

- *Human life has four main aspects: physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.* The goal of right living is to exercise excellence in each of these four areas. Education should assist students in learning how to develop habits and skills that foster such excellence.
- *The goal of education is freedom.* Education must teach children to how to live a life that is examined and free from the shackles of purely conditioned responses. This includes learning how to evaluate information and to make decisions on the basis of such evaluations.
- *The proper approach to education changes over time in accordance with the abilities of the child.* Factors to be taken into account include age, cognitive abilities, physical and emotional maturity, and developmental considerations.
- *Fear is the greatest enemy to proper development.* Fear is an impediment to the emotional health of the child. Therefore, the school must be an environment in which the student feels cared for and secure in herself. Right living and right education cannot be based on fear or on intimidating assertions of authority on the part of teachers. Rather, children must be assisted in understanding and accepting for themselves the reasons for their desires, emotions and reactions. This will ultimately enable them to make decisions even without the presence of intimidation and external authority.
- *Children must be encouraged in their independence.* The nature of this independence changes with age, maturity and the child's stage of development. Independence of thought, action and feeling are all important.
- *Meditation and self-reflection must be an integral part of school activity.* The nature of such time and the specific activity will change with a child's age, experience and capacity. The goal is to create time and space in which to engage with one's own thoughts, reactions, and beliefs, both alone and through engagement with others.
- *Freedom and self-regulation should be encouraged.* Even the youngest child should be encouraged to question and to try and understand the reasons behind particular activities or rules. With age, such questioning should increase and

children should be involved in developing rules and making governance decisions.

- *Teachers must be the models of what they teach.* Specifically, teachers must be particularly engaged in a process of self-reflection and awareness in order to be in touch with their own fears, insecurities and shortcomings. They must accept that they are not the authority in the school; rather, they are partners with students in a learning process, and learners themselves.
- *The role of community is central to the life of the school.* Although students must learn to be independent in their thoughts and actions, an important part of such learning occurs within a community and in relationship to others. Schools must be communities in which such engagement and growth can take place.
- *Education as transformative.* Properly undertaken, education is transformational. In realising one's own nature and achieving freedom from the illusory political and social barriers that divide us from others, each individual becomes a vehicle for change on a societal level. Right education could ultimately be a vehicle through which to achieve social transformation.

In many ways, Krishnamurti's educational philosophy and his application of it in his schools worldwide develop ideas mentioned but less fully developed by both Steiner and Montessori, particularly the latter. Krishnamurti's emphasis on creating a school environment that allows students to live a more independent existence mirrors Montessori's ideas that students in the third stage of development need to develop economic independence and exist in a manner that allows them to make a healthy transition into the world as fully social beings. Although Krishnamurti's reasoning for such an environment focuses more on the need to allow students space from the world and its conditioning influences, he would no doubt agree with Montessori's concerns about the development of healthy relationships. Krishnamurti's emphasis on assisting older students to become more critical thinkers, who are able to make right use of their judgment, echoes Steiner's concerns about the same issue. As mentioned in Chapters Three and Four, Krishnamurti's work with younger children, while not an explicit part of his written works, is based on principles similar to those laid out by Montessori and Steiner with regard to his beliefs about both the content of the formal curriculum as well as the manner in which such a curriculum should be presented to children.

## 9. moving forward

Before moving on to Chapter Six where we will consider how to use the philosophical and practical characteristics of the work of these three thinkers to speak more generally about the distinguishing characteristics of HE, it is worth noting a few points. First, it would be fair to say that while all three thinkers were concerned with the intellectual, social and spiritual development of children in schools, each thinker emphasises a certain aspect more heavily in his/her work, no doubt as a result of unique background experiences. Krishnamurti demonstrates a particular interest in the development of students' intellect and their ability to think critically about their experiences; Steiner's writings and schools place a heavier emphasis on the development of the artistic and spiritual side of children, and Montessori spent much effort developing educational approaches that strengthened the ability of children to manage and benefit from strong social interactions.

Second, it became clear to me during my readings and analysis that certain philosophical issues arose in the work of all three thinkers that cannot be ignored in considering the unique characteristics of their educational approach. Similarly, the three writers all took special care to address certain issues of practical importance to the work of educators and schools, which relate closely to these philosophical areas. It is less clear whether the practical work informed the philosophical thinking or vice versa, though most likely the answer is unique to each thinker. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, it is the approach of these three thinkers with respect to these philosophical and practical issues that constitutes the distinguishing characteristics of HE. In Chapter Six I will bring together issues related to holism as a philosophical stance as discussed in Chapter Two, and the works of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti summarised in the last three chapters in order to lay out a justification for this position.

# Chapter Six—Holistic Education: Philosophy and Practice

## 1. introduction

This chapter focuses on elucidating those philosophical and practical characteristics which can be said to distinguish HE as an approach to education. I do this by summarising and discussing the defining characteristics of the holistic worldview as discussed in Chapter Two as they relate to the philosophies and practical aspects of education developed by Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti, presented in the earlier chapters of this section.

In undertaking this examination of HE, I am loosely following the approach taken by Forbes as described in Chapter One. Like Forbes, I believe that adopting a “family resemblances” approach to the task of defining HE is the best way in which to be fair in the representation of HE as an approach. By using the term “family resemblances,” I wish to convey that there is a heterogeneous set of ideas and practices that have come to be grouped under the umbrella term of holistic education. The movement is not a homogenous block of ideas; there is no formula or ideal representation of HE. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some basic characteristics that are more or less common to any educational undertaking presuming to call itself holistic, some of which have already been explored by Forbes, and some others which I present and argue for in this chapter.

In writing this chapter, I am assuming a familiarity on the part of the reader with the overviews of the work of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti in Chapters Three, Four and Five. In the interest of space, therefore, I will not be repeating quotations or expanding on the positions of the three writers on the issues discussed in this chapter; but would rather refer the reader back to the individual chapters for more detailed background information.

## 2. philosophical characteristics

Through my analysis of holism as a philosophical position, as well as the works of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti, I developed a list of philosophical issues related to education on which holism takes a unique stance. Figure 6-1 summarises the philosophical areas and the questions each undertakes to address.

**Figure 6-1**
**Defining Philosophical Issues of HE**

| **Philosophical issues** |
|---|
| |
| Ontology<br>• What is the nature of reality?<br>• What is Man's relationship to reality? |
| Epistemology<br>• What constitutes knowledge and how can we access it?<br>• How do we measure knowledge? |
| Ethics and Values<br>• What are the aims of education? |

It is important to note that none of the three thinkers' works explicitly addresses each philosophical area listed above. Montessori, concerned as she was with developing a practical approach to working with children, spends little time discussing the philosophical ideas underlying her work. The same can be said of Steiner. Krishnamurti alone explicitly addressed issues such as the nature of Reality and the aims of education in some detail, although his works are hardly models of cogent philosophical discourse, being rather disorganised and vague in offering any true defence of positions he takes or descriptions he offers.

Given the realities of their writings, it was not possible to simply examine the written work of the HE thinkers and from there discern their philosophical positions. Particularly with regard to their ontological and epistemological positions, though to a

certain extent with regard to their ethics and values, I have worked backwards, trying to understand how the personal experiences of each thinker, and the ideas and practices which each developed, reflect his/her beliefs about broader issues such as the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge, and the aims of the educational endeavour.

I will address the three philosophical areas identified above in two parts. I begin by discussing the ontological and epistemological foundations of holism together given the way in which one influences the other. We will then examine how the ideas of the HE thinkers can be seen to fit into a philosophical account of the holistic ontology and epistemology. Finally, I will address the ways in which the holistic worldview and the work of the HE thinkers especially, point us towards particular ideas of what it means to live an ethical life, and how this influences any discussion about the aims of education.

## *A. the holistic worldview*

An examination of the philosophical underpinnings of the holistic worldview led me to the work of thinkers such as Hegel and those influenced by his work, most notably the British absolute idealists. The ontological and epistemological arguments they set forth have been widely criticised by subsequent analytic philosophers who found their theories and justifications lacking in rigour and sense although, ironically, philosophical versions of absolute idealism are re-emerging today as philosophers attempt to make sense of developments in science such as quantum mechanics. Because the ontological and epistemological theories of the absolute idealists are so closely related, we will first examine the basic philosophical arguments laid out in defence of both. I will then seek to demonstrate how the absolute idealist/holistic position formalises much of what the HE thinkers discuss in their works.

### i. holism's account of the nature of reality

As we saw in Chapter Two, holism in science moved away from a Newtonian-Cartesian understanding of the world which was dualistic and reductionistic, and towards an approach that was monist and relational. Holism's idealistic monist framework is an assertion that the universe is comprised of one basic substance which is arranged in different ways, but is always connected in its essence. Holists reject the notion of the

world as being comprised of material building blocks, arguing that the world is comprised of networks of relations between parts and wholes. While the properties of the parts contribute to an understanding of the whole, the properties of the parts can only be fully understood through the dynamics of the whole.

Epistemology and ontology are quite closely related, and we saw in Chapter Two that the holistic worldview changed conceptions of knowledge and human access to it in three important ways. First, scientific concepts and theories came to be seen as limited and approximate. Since, in the holistic worldview, all natural phenomena are ultimately interconnected, in order to explain any one thing, we would need to understand everything else, which would seem to be an impossible task. Thus, rather than searching for absolute truths, holistic thinkers argued that we must deal with limited and approximate descriptions of reality.

Second, there was a shift away from the pursuit of objective science and knowledge, to more epistemic science and knowledge. In contrast to the prevailing views of science and society at the time of holism's emergence, holistic thinking posited that knowledge of reality is not separable from the observer, thus no knowledge can be considered completely objective. With the exception of the ultimate nature of being, both reality and knowledge are dependent on the experience and construction of the observer. Thus, subjectivity ceased to be relegated to the sidelines of knowledge. Awareness of the process of individual thought and perception also became important. If observers partly create the world through their perceptions of it, knowing the way in which they are interpreting or filtering their perceptions, their "conditioning" to use Krishnamurti's term, helps them to understand their perceptions more accurately.

Finally, the holistic tradition threw into question the assumption that rational thought is the only means of acquiring knowledge. The Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm had embraced a belief that knowledge derived from rational thought was superior to the results of intuitive means of understanding the world, largely due to the belief that rational thought could somehow be objective. However, if knowledge could be derived through subjective experience, the rational mind ceased to be the only means of

obtaining knowledge, and areas of human experience such as the emotions and the intuition could be seen as legitimate means of acquiring knowledge.

If we take this view as it first emerged in science and extend it out to a broader worldview, we come to a view of the universe as a whole which asserts that the entirety of creation is made up of one substance arranged in different forms, and in which all parts are interconnected and interdependent, rather than existing independently in separate spheres. This aspect of HE has not been examined in HE literature, although Scott Forbes' notion of Ultimacy as a spiritual or psychological state does seem to refer to such an understanding of the world (Forbes, 1999). Within the HE literature, discussions of this aspect of the work of HE educators and thinkers tends not to be debated or explored in ways that would meet the criteria of rigorous western philosophical discourse. By its very nature, the worldview presented within the holistic literature does not lend itself to adequate description using the language of logic and reason that has been a hallmark of the western philosophical tradition after the rise of analytic philosophy. Rather, the worldview lends itself to description using the language of eastern mystical and ancient western philosophical traditions which, though diverse, all have corresponding psychologies that are based upon the possibility of experiencing a pure, undifferentiated reality.

The relationship between the ultimate and the individual is of paramount importance within the mystical or holistic view of the world. Since consciousness, the individual, is not separate from objective or ultimate reality, existence is a dialectic process which culminates in a union or identification of the self with the ultimate. One traditional technique of coming to understand the ultimate is through a process of negation in which the subject successively disassociates the "I" feeling from the various objective layers of the self—the physical body, the sense organs, the emotions, and finally, thought itself. If this process of negation is carried through to completion, one enters into the realm of consciousness in which there is only ONE. The mystics of eastern traditions identify the limitations of the rational mind, which functions by separating subject from object, knower from known, and which is incapable of handling paradoxical information. Their view differs from many other conceptions of the relationship between subject and object

in that it concludes that the mind's tendency to separate subject from object is a limitation of the rational mind, not an indication of the nature of the universe.

One of the unfortunate consequences of using mystical and non-western philosophical language to discuss the worldview posited by holism is that the movement can and has been linked with New Age and other fringe movements, and is thus often dismissed as having little substantive to contribute to academic debates about education and educational philosophy. I would argue, however, that the worldview described within the holistic literature can be grounded in a western philosophical tradition, namely the ideas of Hegel and later absolute idealists who built upon his works. In the sections that follow I will lay out the basic metaphysical and epistemological arguments advocated by absolute idealism and argue that this philosophical position provides a vehicle through which to better understand and critique the work of the HE thinkers.

### ii. absolute idealism and the nature of reality

The possible reconciliation of the subject/object divide as described by many mystics has been addressed in the modern western philosophical tradition, most notably in the writings of Hegel and British Idealist philosophers such as F. H. Bradley who were influenced by Hegel's writings. The German and British Idealist traditions emerged around the middle of the nineteenth century, in large part as a reaction to the ideas of John Locke, John Stuart Mill and other empiricists and utilitarians. The *zeitgeist* of the era may explain its emergence as a philosophical movement around the same time that holistic ideas were emerging in scientific discourse (Allard 2005, 6-12).

Hegel believed in the existence of just one thinking substance, one subject, the term "subject" being used here to refer to an agent who thinks of certain things—the objects of the subject's thoughts. However, this idealist stance led Hegel to the universal question faced by idealists: if everything is in the mind, how can one distinguish between the subjective and the objective; the truth from what is false? Hegel's response is that "The true is the whole." To Hegel, the truth is a unique and complete system. He argues that any single proposition or set of propositions that is less than the complete system of propositions will turn out to be self-contradictory. Only within the complete

system are contradictions reconciled and falsity removed. This complete system does not correspond to reality; for Hegel it *is* Reality—the one Reality, the one Subject, or God.

In discussing the nature of man and man's relationship with God, Hegel sought to bridge the medieval chasm between the finite and the infinite by positing a surmountable degree of difference between them. Hegel was committed to the concept of God as Absolute Idea engaged in a circular process of alienation and de-alienation. God, he argued, externalises Himself in nature and in the finite mind of man. The essential contradiction present in humans is that of infinite spirit being counter-posed to the experiential state of finitude. The truth consists of understanding that this contradiction is merely an illusion. Such understanding is obtained by successively transcending the limitations of knowledge by engaging in a dialectical thought process through which the limitations of beliefs are realised and replaced with gradually more accurate and internally consistent views of one's true nature—divine and inseparable from the essence of reality. This dialectical process involves proceeding beyond the limited capacities of sense perception and gaining understanding via the restoration of the intuitive factor in knowledge (Russell 1961, 701-709; Gadamer 1976, 165).

The absolute idealist position set forth by Hegel was to influence the work of later thinkers such as F. H. Bradley, and it is to the works of Bradley that we will turn to gain a better understanding of the nuances of the absolute idealist metaphysics which, I would argue, is at the heart of the holistic philosophy. Fully elucidating and defending the nuances of Bradley's metaphysical position would be the work of a thesis in itself, and is a task which has already been undertaken by others. Nevertheless, an examination of Bradley's most important arguments will provide a foundation upon which to build our examination of the holistic philosophy.

Bradley's metaphysics arises from his rejection of the claims of empiricists that there is an external world upon which the senses work. He shared with Hegelian writers the conviction that Reality is one coherent whole; but from the outset it appeared to him that there was more in reality than could ever be included in the "thinking principle" which they had postulated. The aim of thinking, he argued, is to reach truth, and truth consists

in qualifying or characterising existent facts ideally, a process based on creating relationships between ideas. Relatedness, he argues, is the distinctive product of ideality: our minds grasp bits of the world around us (ideas) and try to make sense of them, but these ideas, although they *appear* real to us, are necessarily abstracted from actual *reality*. We try to make sense of these pieces by understanding them in relationship to one another. This is perfectly acceptable and indeed is the only way in which we can make sense of the world given our inability to know the whole of Reality at once. However, because relations arise out of ideality, and because ideality is itself an artificial construction, relations themselves must be artificial. Thus, "thought in its very nature is inadequate to its pretensions as the vehicle of truth," Bradley says, because thought is relational whereas reality exists as a non-relational whole (Wollheim 1969, 179).

Crucial to Bradley's whole metaphysical argument is his denial of categorical (subject-predicate) propositions. These he splits into three aspects: (1) the abstract idea; (2) the external reality to which the abstract idea refers; and (3) a judgment that evaluates the idea as referred to reality. The abstract idea may simply be a statement such as "Jane is tall." We will assume that the external reality is our everyday world of experience. The judgment applies "Jane is tall" to the real world and determines whether it is true or false. "Yes," we conclude after thinking about it, "Jane is tall." We have made a judgment.

It may seem that this is a categorical judgment. It states that "Jane," a something in the world, is "tall", a feature of the world that Jane has. But Bradley says no, in fact, all judgments are conditional, not categorical. If we say "A is B" it is only because we are being imprecise. "Jane" and "tall" are universals, not particular things in the world (Bradley 1962, 62). We may like to think that, while "tall" is universal and applies to more than one thing, "Jane" is surely particular. But in fact, says Bradley, "Jane" as an object separate from the rest of the world, maintaining her identity through time, is an abstraction; we have taken part of reality and ignored the rest. So judgment is a process of bringing abstract ideas together into a conditional: If "Jane" then "tall."

The conditional part of this judgment—"If Jane in this world, then"—is more than just a static idea of what Jane is, Bradley argues. As an abstraction it is necessarily a

description of a process. "This world" is part of the abstract idea "Jane." Yet, it cannot be a complete and static description of the world because we cannot possibly know the world so completely. It is an abstraction, and as such refers to a possible world that exists, but not necessarily the world in front of me which I think actually exists. This is clearer for a judgment that is more obviously conditional and causal than categorical such as "If I drop the glass, it will break." This is obviously causal, involving a sort of mental experiment. Bradley offers an extensive set of arguments in favour of his assertion that all judgments involve mental experiments of the kind we admittedly undertake for conditional statements. He concludes that a judgment is actually an inference, combining existing ideas to produce new ideas. But the relegation of seemingly foundational empirical observations (those which we would like to think are obviously categorical) to mere conditionals, leaves the ontological status of our real world in grave jeopardy. If all of our statements about the real world are really only asking "What if this was the real world …?", then we can never actually judge the real world to exist at all.

Given the nature of the process of thinking which he is describing, Bradley concludes that we cannot take it as given that Jane is in the world, or that our "real world", which is itself an abstract idea, is the one true reality. Through an elaborate set of arguments, Bradley concludes that in making statements about the world, what we are actually doing is having an idea of an "Otherworld." We do not have the particular thing in mind, but rather we have an abstraction that describes something external to our minds. This idea of "Otherworld" automatically refers to an external reality, simply because it is an idea, an abstraction. Although the world to which we refer may be far more underspecified than when we think of our "real world," there must surely be possible worlds that correspond to the "Otherworld" abstraction. The set of all such possible worlds that fit my internal description is the "reality" that my idea refers to. "Every possible idea therefore may be said to be used existentially, for every possible idea qualifies and is true of a real world. And the number of real worlds, in a word, is indefinite. Every idea therefore in a sense is true, and is true of reality. The question with every idea is how far and in what sense is it true" (Bradley 1914, 42). Note the striking similarity between Bradley's metaphysical position and the "many-worlds" interpretations of quantum mechanics.

Of course, since all judgments refer to possible worlds that have equal absolute status, the only Absolute Reality must be the totality of all possibilities. The essence of a judgment, however, is to abstract from this Absolute Reality a part of it, a part that we take to be reality for the purposes of a thought experiment, though for it to actually be Absolute Reality would be logically impossible. It is the mistake of human beings that we take these appearances as actually being reality, and in doing so we inevitably fall into contradictions, contradictions which are not serious in the course of everyday affairs, but which become highly problematic when engaging in philosophical discourse. Because we are holding ourselves up to a standard of consistency in thought, Bradley concludes that "everything which appears must somehow in the long run be real in such a way as to be self-consistent. The character of the Real is to possess everything partial or apparent in a harmonious form" (Bradley 1962, 123). Thus, the Real or the Absolute, must be an *individual* which embraces all the content and diversity of the world in one inclusive harmony.

What, then, is the nature of this one reality? Bradley maintains that the nature of the content or material which makes up the absolute is that of Experience. He suggests trying to take any piece of existence, anything that can fairly be called a fact or to which we can attribute being, and to try and discover a sense in which we can continue to speak of it when feeling, thought and volition, the constituents of experience, have been withdrawn. The attempt will fail, he says, because it is an impossible task. Although the Absolute may indeed be more than the feeling, thinking and willing with which we are familiar, the "more" must still be of the same nature. Reality is to be a unity, and unity is only intelligible as a unity of differences, or a multiplicity of elements. And where, save for experience, is such a unity to be found? In experience there is no consciousness, no awareness of subject in relation to object. "What we discover rather is a whole in which distinctions can be made but in which divisions do not exist, … [no] separation of feeling from the felt, of the desired from desire, or of what is thought from thinking" (Bradley 1962, 127-128).

Bradley identifies experience with sentience, and sentience, while including, after a certain stage of development has been reached, thought or consciousness, includes much else. For the life of the finite individual does not start as the life of a self-conscious or

thinking subject. In the order of temporal sequence, what comes first for the newborn child is feeling—a state in which subject and object are as yet undifferentiated, a state of simple immediacy, where the experiencing and the experienced are one. We can psychologically trace the way in which, out of this undifferentiated whole of feeling, the discriminative activity of thought gradually arises, and the way in which it then proceeds to break up the whole by consciously distinguishing the different elements which the whole contains. And as the individual grows, while a background of feeling always remains, the mediating function of thought continues the process of distinguishing and relating the pieces of experience, attempting, but never quite succeeding, in bringing them back together again into the whole from which they were first distinguished. The primitive condition out of which thought emerges suggests to us, says Bradley, a totality which, while possessing the immediate character of feeling would nevertheless, unlike feeling, go beyond distinctions; would simultaneously lose none of the richness and fullness which thought brings to light, while also being free from the limitations of thought. The more limited concept of feeling provides a clue as to the nature of a higher unity in which the discordant elements of the apparent world are reconciled and fused into a single, all-inclusive and harmonious whole.

Bradley suggests that the detailed constitution of the Absolute, the way in which within it all contradictions are overcome, the transformations they must undergo to be overcome, are all beyond our grasp (Bradley 1962, 162). However, it is certain that in perfect Experience, in the Absolute, no partial reality or finite object survives unchanged and in the exact form in which it appears to us. All objects as we apprehend them must suffer some transmutation, dissolution or re-blending in order to be brought into connection with an entire network of content. Yet, since the exact amount of change is different in each case, appearances differ widely in their degrees of truth and reality (Bradley 1962, 327). The more an appearance must be suppressed or negated in coming into the Absolute, the less genuinely it can express what is real. And since the Absolute is the one and only self-sustained individual, it follows that whatever in our realm of appearance approaches most nearly to individuality is more true and real than what clearly falls short of individuality. Thus, for example, a human mind is more real than a stone or a rock because the human mind contains within it more of that which is the nature of the Absolute.

Such a doctrine enables us to see that an idealistic interpretation of the world is nearer to the truth than a naturalistic interpretation, says Bradley, for spirit can comprehend and perceive Nature, whereas a naturalistic account of reality has no room for Spirit. The principle that the abstract is the relatively unreal drives us upwards. It forces us first of all to reject bare material qualities, and it compels us in the end to credit Nature with the contents of our higher emotions (Bradley 1962, 439). And the process can only end where Nature is absorbed into Spirit, though at every stage of the process we find an increase in reality. Yet even in Spirit we have not reached to the Absolute; even Spirit must be transmuted in some measure as it is absorbed in the higher unity of perfect sentient Experience. The interpretation of the universe as spiritual may be the highest truth about it to which the intellect can aspire, but even truth itself is not reality (Bradley 1962, 441-442). Truth is only one aspect of reality and it falls short of perfection by what it fails to include—feeling and volition. The intellect can only know the universe in its general character, not in its concrete individuality. The universe can never be known as a whole in the sense that knowledge of it would be identical with experience of it.

It is worth acknowledging here that Bradley's metaphysical position and the epistemology which arises out of it have never been accepted by many philosophers for reasons far too extensive to even begin to cover here. However, it has been noted that this refusal to accept his arguments arises in part because the nature of his conceptions has been criticised for being too heavily imbued with his personal conviction of a higher unity, a conviction which, in another context, might have made him one of the world's revered religious mystics (Wollheim 1969, 276-280).

### iii. absolute idealism and the limits of knowledge

The doctrine of the degrees of truth was a cardinal principle of Bradley's work, and it is to a deeper exploration of how this doctrine influences the issue of epistemology in the holistic worldview that we will now turn. What does it mean for us to say that we know something? Can we ever truly know anything? Philosophers agree generally that in order for S to know x, it must be the case that: (1) x is true; (2) S must believe that x is true; and (3) S must have good grounds for believing that x is true (Ayer 1956, 33-35).

The holistic ontology as explored through the idealist ontology laid out by Bradley addresses two of these conditions of knowledge in a way that relates them back to one another: ‘x is true’ and “S must have good grounds for believing that x is true.” This requires us to first define what it means for something to be true. Broadly speaking, philosophers have offered two general ways in which something can be said to be true. Some have argued that the truth or falsity of a statement is determined by how it relates to the world, and whether it accurately describes or corresponds with that world. This theory presupposes an objective world and is thus at odds with the metaphysical position of holism in which the nature of reality is experience and thus non-material.

A second response to the question of how to determine whether something is true is offered by those, like Bradley, whose metaphysical stance leads them to conclude that the correspondence theory's view of facts as real and mutually independent entities is unsustainable. They would argue that the impression of the facts’ independent existence is the outcome of the illegitimate projection onto the world of the divisions through which thought must work, a projection which creates the illusion that a judgment can be true by corresponding to part of a situation. As discussed in the previous section, for idealists, at most one judgment can be true—that which encapsulates reality in its entirety. All other judgments are false in the sense that they fall short of this vast judgment by abstracting a part of reality from the whole. To some extent, however, even the judgment that encapsulates reality in its entirety cannot be true under an idealist framework such as that discussed earlier. For the very reason that a judgment remains a description, it will be infected by falsehood unless it ceases altogether to be a judgment and becomes the reality it is meant to be about. This claim arises out of a fundamental objection to correspondence as a theory of truth: for there to be correspondence rather than identity between judgment and reality, the judgment must differ from reality and insofar as it does differ, to that extent it must distort and so falsify reality.

Thus, we come to our condition of knowing that requires that “S be justified in believing that x is true.” According to an idealist or holistic definition of truth, it would seem that we may never be justified in believing that any proposition is true, for when truth is attained, judgments disappear and only reality is left. What is interesting about Bradley’s work and the holistic epistemology as it emerged in science, however, is the

adoption of the idea that there are degrees of truth: that judgment is the most true which is the closest in nature to the whole of reality. Although the consequence is that all ordinary judgments will turn out to be more or less infected by falsehood, there is nevertheless some place for false judgment and the possibility of distinguishing worse from better.

Idealism asserts that the nature of the Absolute is Experience, Experience being comprised of feeling, thought and volition in their most primitive states. Thus, acceptance of the worldview posited by the holistic philosophy makes clear that the parameters of what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge can be attained must be broader than what is usually asserted by empiricists. Knowledge and the means of obtaining it must be seen to include all levels of our experience: our "observations" about the world around us are only one means of obtaining knowledge, and being grounded in a process of abstraction, holists would assert that it is a relatively imperfect means of acquiring knowledge. Our feelings, emotions and intuitions would all be seen as legitimate and necessary means of acquiring an understanding of the world; being closer to the "primitive" state of being described by Bradley, we might even argue that they are better ways of acquiring knowledge. At the very least, using as many modes as possible for acquiring information and making judgments is more likely to result in judgments which are truer, in the sense that they will encompass more of the nature of Reality.

### iv. holism and the work of the HE thinkers

As I stated at the outset of this chapter, it would be a bit disingenuous to try and find much explicit discussion concerning ontological and epistemological stances in the works of the HE thinkers. Not being philosophers, but rather thinkers concerned with bettering the situation of their fellow human beings through educational practice, the extent to which any of them fully explicated a complete ontological or epistemological position is quite limited. For me to try and construct a position for them would be dishonest to their work.

Nevertheless, using the framework of the absolute idealist position, and accepting that more mystically oriented language can be, and in the history of man often has been, used to convey many of the ideas formalised in the idealist account of the world, we see that several of the basic themes of the idealist ontology and epistemology emerge in the works of all three writers: that the world of our experience is at best a limited representation of the whole of reality and not to be confused with Absolute Reality; that human beings are of the same nature as the Absolute and strive always toward a complete re-identification with the Absolute; that thought and the intellect are incapable of providing complete knowledge of the world; and that the truth of reality and of our own natures can only be obtained by learning to be fully present in the world and by engaging with the world in ways other than through the intellect alone. Let us examine these issues individually.

As we learn from their life stories, all three HE writers were mystics in one form or another, and believed that reality comprised more than what the majority of human beings engaged with on a daily basis. This is most clear in their discussions of the nature of the child and the ways in which education must relate to that spiritual being. Montessori and Steiner, in particular, convey their notions of the nature of the child and the child's relationship to the universe more mystically than rationally. In discussing children from about birth to six, Montessori and Steiner both speak of the divinity of children, of children as spirits manifesting themselves in the physical world. For both thinkers, children in this earliest stage of development are physical manifestations of the divine or absolute reality. They note that children are far more present in the world in a spiritual way, what an idealist like Bradley might refer to as living though Experience. It is a spiritual state aspired to by those seeking to re-discover the sense of existing entirely in the present, unfettered by the past or future, filled with awe, wonder and joy, intent on the moment. While children are developing into their physical bodies, part of the work of the educator is to recognise the existence of the spirit and to allow it to emerge naturally into the world unconstrained by imposed separations.

Montessori's educational works are infused with a profound respect for the cosmic life force of the children with whom she worked. She speaks explicitly about the need for children to be allowed space in their "children's house," to be away from the oppressive influence of adults who fail to recognise the universal purpose of this early period of

development and seek instead to lay their own agenda onto children. "Children move from the unconscious to the conscious," said Montessori in a lecture on the importance of allowing children at this stage of development to immerse themselves in their natural respect for and fascination for nature as a whole. This fascination, she said, arises naturally from their being in touch with their true spiritual nature unfettered by consciousness of socially constructed divisions between themselves and the rest of the world (Montessori, 1936). Note in her writing the striking similarity of language and justification as that used by Bradley in his description of the process whereby thought intrudes into a primitive state of feeling.

Steiner's understanding of the nature of man is far more explicit and is quite obviously grounded in a sense of man as a part of the divine. We may recall that Steiner considered man to be an ego, a drop of the divine, encased inside three protective bodies: the sentient body, the life body, and the physical body. The ultimate work of the ego, says Steiner, is to drive the other aspects of an individual's nature back into a relationship with the divine, which is the essence of man. However, the ego is most powerful after the final stage of development. All that comes before this stage prepares the body for the ego's work. The task of all educators is to recognise the centrality of the ego, and to seek to nurture it even while providing appropriate developmental activities for the other three bodies as they are birthed. Of primary importance to understanding Steiner's ontological stance is recognising that all other development is in support of the nurturing of the ego, the divine aspect of each human being. This is done by seeking to preserve the child's natural sense of reverence and instinctive relationship to the natural world.

Thus we see that the works of Montessori and Steiner are easily seen to reflect a belief in and respect for the beauty and wonder of the child's divine nature. It is Krishnamurti alone whose works more explicitly address the nature of Reality and the relationship of human beings to the Absolute, although he too resorts to more mystical language at times. An examination of his notion of 'Truth,' an oft-quoted phrase in his writings and discussions, is necessary to gain an understanding of his ontological position, one which bears remarkable similarities to that of the idealists.

References to the 'Truth' abound in Krishnamurti's writings and lectures, yet it is a concept never explicitly defined by him. Krishnamurti believed that Truth is not a concept approachable through the intellect, but rather than an understanding gained through personal experience: "truth is a pathless land." He feared that offering a definition of the Truth would serve as an excuse for others to not attempt to seek the experience for themselves. However, his understanding of Truth is closely tied to his ontological perspective and to his views on education and its purpose. We will recall that Krishnamurti's primary concern with the human condition is people's disconnection from their true nature, a nature which he believes is an extension of Truth. But what is Truth to Krishnamurti? He offers some insight: "Truth is in the what-is" (Krishnamurti 1968, 24). We will remember that the "what-is" for Krishnamurti is all that which actually exists in our world and our universe. According to him it represents the truth and fact of all human experiencing—both what we are able to see when we observe clearly, without any distortion, as well as any phenomena actually occurring in the universe at any given moment in chronological time. The what-is to which Krishnamurti refers is always in the present moment. Because the present moment is constantly changing, the what-is is never static. The what-is of the present moment instantly becomes the new moment's what-was. If we are not continually aware of the changing nature of the what-is from moment to moment, says Krishnamurti, then we begin to see each new what-is from a perspective that has become the what-was. Hence our experience of the present moment becomes conditioned and distorted by the what-was. The only way to eliminate such distortion is to psychologically put aside the what-was so that one can be in actual direct contact with the what-is of any given moment.

The Truth is thus closely tied to the ability of the individual to be in the what-is, the now, the present, the ever-changing, motion-filled present which is reality. It is this which individuals cannot see when they are caught up in the conditioning of society and the limitations of their past. When we recognise the falsity of conditioning, we can come to recognise the truth of what-is. What-is, in Krishnamurti's phenomenological structure, is God. Not God as the term is generally understood, but rather as the one ever-changing reality which is the what-is and to which we all belong and relate.

> When the mind is completely quiet, silent, undisturbed by any thought, when the observer is completely absent—then there is unity. There is a feeling of

> complete non-being in which the division between you and another ceases … This state is the expanse of mind that has no boundaries, no frontiers within which the I and the not-I can exist (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1970, 168).

Examining Krishnamurti’s admittedly opaque statements in light of the idealist position laid out earlier helps make sense of some of his descriptions of what he ultimately asserts is indescribable. Krishnamurti’s “what-is” seems to be the Absolute reality of the idealist philosophy. Just as the Absolute encompasses all possible worlds at all possible moments, reconciling differences and contradictions, so too does Krishnamurti’s “what-is” encompass what Krishnamurti describes as the “ever-changing what-is.” Krishnamurti appears to be attempting to describe a reality which can hold all within itself; however, because of his personal concern with emphasising the temporal nature of the world and the need for people to move beyond their past “conditioning”, he speaks of the “what-is” in a more temporally-oriented manner than the idealists.

He speaks often of “conditioning”, the artificial overlays, divisions, and distinctions which human beings apply to the world and accept as truth, but which are merely artificial distinctions that prevent us from experiencing the “what-is.” Here, Krishnamurti seems to be referring to something similar to the process of abstracting or breaking apart of the world which idealists assert is the way in which the mind makes sense of the Absolute. In the same way that the process of abstraction creates “appearances” which we mistake for reality, so too does the process of conditioning or being tied to our past conceptions or fragments of experience, prevent us from experiencing the what-is or the Absolute. Thus Truth, for Krishnamurti, seems to be a state in which such conditioning has been overcome, and the individual is experiencing the what-is in the moment—an experience akin to nirvana in which the self and the Absolute are one. This seems quite similar to the idealist conception of what it would be to live fully in a state of Experience, to be subsumed by the state which Bradley described as one in which all differences, contradictions and separations disappear. It is a “pathless land” in that it is the ultimate individual experience—no thought or description could be adequate to convey the nature of it, for the state is beyond the limits of such inadequate processes. It is this to which we imagine Bradley refers when he describes the primitive state of Existence to which thought aspires but can never achieve.

Krishnamurti articulates a belief shared by Montessori and Steiner that the goal of any individual wishing to be free of the illusions which shackle him is to understand the truth of reality and his relationship to the infinite. Human beings are not separate from the infinite present that is the nature of reality; they are a part of it, with the potential to recognise and live out that unity. This is the ultimate, the path of freedom, the key to living in the world in a whole other way, and it is to this end that education strives to assist all human beings. In asserting that it is possible for human beings to recognise and live out their true nature, the HE thinkers seem willing to go beyond what an idealist like Bradley would explicitly claim possible. This is, perhaps, a reflection of the mystical experiences all three claim to have had, although in asserting the possibility it is by no means clear that they believe such self-realisation to be either easy to achieve or very likely to occur.

How then do the HE writers suggest that human beings come to attain this awareness of their true natures? It is clear that all three believe that human beings have access to a different way of knowing which transcends the limits of the intellect. They believe that there is another component of knowing which is related to the intuition, the spiritual side of man's nature, a way of knowing which transcends the limits of thought. All three are explicit about the inability of thought alone to provide access to this aspect of knowing or being in the world. Their descriptions of this state of being, as well as their conviction that thought alone is insufficient to achieve it, echo much of what Bradley says.

Montessori described the initial period of growth of the child as a period of growth from unconsciousness to consciousness. In the beginning stages of life, she says, the child takes in the whole of her environment by means of the absorbent powers of the unconscious mind. But gradually, consciousness emerges, and the child is able to purposefully engage with the world through the vehicles of her physical body and her intellect. However, she must nevertheless be encouraged to use her imagination, to be aware of her feelings, to be silent and simply absorb the world around her. Only in this way, says Montessori, can she hope to encounter the "realm of revealed truth, which yields up its secrets neither to deductive nor deductive reasoning, neither to the syllogism nor to scientific research" (Standing 1998, 361).

Steiner, too, believes that the period after the birth of a child is one during which a child's senses open to the external world, thus interfering in the ability of the ego (the divine aspect of the child) to manifest itself. Education as a process, says Steiner, must be concerned with developing the capabilities of the child in a manner such that she is able to recognise and develop the spiritual aspect of her nature. For him, the development of the intellect alone is insufficient to reach this end, and Steiner details ways in which the child can come to a deeper understanding of the world than that available through the intellect alone, all of them linked with the emotional or feeling life of the child: experiencing the emotions excited by a beautiful poem or piece of artwork; submitting to the rhythm of music and eurythmy (dance); being immersed in the peace and tranquillity of the natural world.

Krishnamurti stressed the importance of the development of the religious mind, which is characterised by innocence and pliability and which he believed could experience the immeasurable, what some might call God or what he referred to as Truth. Though he is less clear about whether or not children are born in a state of being close to their divinity, he is clear that the "conditioning" forces of our lives are what prevent us from clearly knowing our true natures. His focus on the non-intellectual aspects of education is driven by his belief that the intellect alone is insufficient to enable human beings to develop a true understanding of the Truth, and that it is only when thought ceases that one can experience this state of being which is Truth.

Thus, for the HE thinkers, a more complete awareness of the world is possible through the engagement of feelings and emotions; by the use of the imagination and the stillness of silence; by being immersed in a task or activity to the point at which thought ceases and a state of focused being occurs; communing with nature.

> Silence often brings us the knowledge which we had not fully realised, that we possess within ourselves an interior life (Standing 1998, 227).
>
> All of nature begins to whisper its secrets to us through its sounds. Sounds that were previously incomprehensible to our soul now become the meaningful language of nature (Steiner 1965, 45)
>
> For the total development of the human being, solitude as a means of cultivating sensitivity becomes a necessity. One has to know what it means to be alone, what it is to meditate, what it is to die; the implications of [these things] can be

> known only by seeking them out. These implications cannot be taught, they must be learnt (Krishnamurti and Lutyens 1969, 197).

Krishnamurti's final point about the importance of personal experience relates to yet another defining characteristic of knowledge in the eyes of all three HE thinkers. In order for something to truly be called knowledge, it must be understood deeply such that it becomes meaningful to the individual. It is not enough simply to commit things to memory, although all three would acknowledge that the development of the memory and the commitment of information to the memory are useful and necessary at particular stages of development. Teachers must assist students to use information or knowledge in a way that makes it part of their lives and personal experiences, either through practical exercises or by engaging the feelings and emotions. It is this engagement with information in a variety of ways that enables children to make it a part of themselves, and makes it knowledge of the sort which will be useful to them. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this emphasis on owning knowledge has important implications for the curricula of schools within the HE tradition.

The emphasis on the need for education to focus explicitly on the spiritual development of children is, I would argue, one of the most important factors that distinguishes the work of holistic educators from the work of a well-respected progressive educator such as John Dewey. As will become clear throughout this chapter, there is much in Dewey's work that overlaps with the themes of HE, such as his focus on experience-based, "hands on" education and his belief in the importance of developing active learning communities in which children work together (Dewey 1938). However, as Louis Menand suggests in his work examining important intellectual trends of the twentieth century, Dewey was among a handful of thinkers who "helped put an end to the idea that the universe is an idea, that … there exists some order, invisible to us, whose logic we transgress at our peril" (Menand 2001, 5). In his attempt to avoid falling into the trap of religious dogmatism, Dewey emerged as one of the founders of the twentieth-century "secular" humanist movement. Because spiritual reality could not be captured by pragmatic, scientific methods, Dewey dismissed spirituality as futile speculation, "the optimism of romanticism, an optimism which is only the reverse side of pessimism about actualities" (Dewey 1944, 74). His defenders would respond that he replaces the notion of spirituality with his emphasis on the "aesthetic" or consummatory experience: the

spontaneous sense of wholeness and meaning which people may achieve at times of intense concentration or integrated activity (Geiger 1958). The spiritual aspect of education, for Dewey, is not a question of any overarching purpose in the universe but simply an exploration of how we pre-reflectively and pre-consciously engage with the world. Dewey does not consider the term 'religious' to imply a distinctive kind of experience; it is, rather, a quality of any integrated experience of the natural world. Holistic thinkers would argue that experience which is truly spiritual is distinctive, transcending our relationship to physical and social conditions. They believe that the human soul inhabits a spiritual environment which is as truly a part of nature as the physical and social environments, and that such experience is meaningful in its own right.

The HE conception of reality and man's relationship to it seems, at first glance, to be open to the same critiques levied against the absolute idealist stance by analytic philosophers throughout the twentieth century. To address all of the critiques levied against idealism would be far beyond the scope of this work; however, some general critiques are worth addressing.

One argument against idealism which has many variations can be summarised as follows: to believe that reality does not exist requires us to ignore our actual experience of the world in favour of some abstract metaphysical position. To accept this metaphysical position we must be willing to make many assumptions for which we have no rational basis or empirical proof. Thus, under the principle of Ockham's Razor, which states that the simplest hypothesis or explanation must be correct, idealism must be rejected. British analytic philosopher G.E. Moore was one of the first philosophers to levy this criticism with enough force to cripple idealism. This criticism is, however, more a philosophical criticism of metaphysics generally, in favour of a different way of addressing the issue of the nature of man, reality and the relationship between the two. This is a fair and ongoing debate in the philosophical literature and an extensive response would be beyond the scope of this thesis. From the perspective of the HE thinkers, however, their metaphysical assertions are grounded in their belief that the material, sensorily-accessible world with which human beings engage on a daily basis is not the full extent of reality; that things exist beyond the scope of our senses and perhaps even

beyond the scope of our limited human perception or imagination. This other aspect of reality must therefore be accessed through means other than our senses or our 'rational' minds. This rejection of the dualist stance which has dominated western philosophy since the time of Descartes is a central component of the work of HE thinkers, and will be discussed in greater detail during a later section examining notions of personhood, spirituality and the role of community in the work of HE.

A second argument against idealism levied by analytic philosophers is related to the epistemological position that emerges out of it, namely, that you cannot know one thing without knowing that thing's relationship to everything else. Bertrand Russell, in particular, found this to be an untenable position and argued vociferously against idealism on the grounds that such an epistemological position would make many abstract concepts such as space, time and numbers, unintelligible. However, once again, the HE thinkers do not seem to be arguing for the extreme position that no knowledge is possible without a complete understanding of the whole of reality. Rather, their position flows naturally out of assumptions about the nature of reality itself. It is possible, of course, to have knowledge about the world which we can experience through our senses; however, this knowledge is only part of a wider body of knowledge to which human beings can have access. This wider understanding or knowledge must be acquired through means other than our minds or our physical senses.

These first two critiques of the idealism reflected in the work of the HE thinkers reflect the difficulty of holding the holistic philosophy to the standards set out by one school of philosophy which has dominated western philosophical discourse during the twentieth century. Analytic philosophers like Russell and Moore emphasised the need for a clear, precise approach with particular weight being placed upon argumentation and evidence, avoidance of ambiguity, and attention to detail. While there is nothing inherently wrong with such a goal, the choice to embrace pure logic and a modified version of scientific reasoning and proofs as the primary tools of philosophers has arguably led to a focus on subjects which can successfully be discussed within that framework. There can be no doubt that the element of mysticism that infuses the work of all three HE thinkers and other pre-analytic western philosophers will strain the acceptable bounds of discourse for adherents of the analytic method. Yet, to dismiss the work of HE thinkers out of hand on

these grounds alone is, arguably, to hold them to a standard of proof or discourse which none of them wished to attain. On the contrary, their works reflect an intense desire to bring human beings back to the world of the spiritual, the mystical, the religious, believing that it was the move away from this very important aspect of the human experience which was the cause of so much tension and strife in the world. That their work is viewed as unrigorous by modern standards of philosophical discourse is perhaps as much a reflection of the shortcomings of particular modes of modern philosophical discourse as it is a reflection of the shortcomings of the ideas themselves. In moving so sharply away from the more mystically-oriented roots of western philosophy as exemplified in the work of Aristotle and Plato, the HE thinkers might argue that it is western philosophy which suffered a loss.

The third critique of idealism worth noting here was raised by Søren Kierkegaard late in the nineteenth century and become more popular throughout the course of the twentieth century. Kierkegaard argued that the absolute unity theory proposed by Hegel diminished the importance of the individual in favour of the whole unity, making it possible for totalitarian regimes to flourish by citing the need to consider the greater good regardless of the consequences to individuals. Whether or not this is a fair critique of Hegel's version of idealism, it does not seem a fair critique of the version of idealism exhibited in the work of HE thinkers. On the contrary, as will be discussed in far more detail in the next section of this chapter, the works of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti are replete with acknowledgment that the individual and the collective are mutually dependent, that neither can be sacrificed without harm befalling the other. The actual practices implemented in their schools and classrooms reflect their belief that neither individual nor collective is supreme, that each has an important role to play in the education of children and in the successful nurturing of healthy human beings.

## *B. ethics and values*

### i. the aims of education

We now move to consider a subject that has occupied educators and philosophers of education for centuries. Discussing the aims of education from the holistic perspective is

slightly different from discussing epistemology and ontology in that there is nothing about the holistic worldview which speaks directly to the issue. However, if we accept that the holistic worldview has implications for our understanding of the nature of the world and man's relationship to the world, then insofar as the aims of education are related to the task of assisting man to live fully in the world, these aims must be affected in some way by the holistic worldview.

How then does HE address the question of the aims of education? What comes out in the work of its thinkers as being the primary task of the educational endeavour? In his work Forbes proposed that Ultimacy, defined as the attainment of one's ultimate development as a person (Forbes 1999) is the primary aim of HE. Furthermore, as was outlined in Chapter One, he also argued that HE must work to develop the various competencies which support students in achieving this spiritual or psychological Ultimacy. While these two points seem valid, I would argue that his thinking with regard to the aims of HE did not extend far enough. Forbes seems confined to an understanding of HE limited by an appeal to the spiritual aspect of man. He essentially argues that while other aspects of education may be worthwhile, what distinguishes HE is its primary concern for the successful spiritual development of the individual. By confining his exploration in this way, he neglects to consider fully what it means to attain one's full development as a person, and the necessity of the educative endeavour to engage fully in that process, not just focus on the spiritual dimension of it.

It is worth pausing to consider more carefully what it means to "be a person", and here I draw on the work of those who have thought through this subject more fully (Langford 1970; Pring 1984). Persons are conscious and capable of thought. They possess "some set of concepts through which experience is ordered and made sense of" (Pring 1984, 11). Persons possess intentionality and are able to exercise choice in shaping their lives. Persons are also agents and as such are capable of rational choice. They must also have some concept of a person which makes it possible for them to engage in moral relations and self-understanding (Langford 1970, 62; Pring 1984, 12). Perhaps most importantly, it is generally recognised that persons are not born fully into a state of personhood. Some would argue that "the new-born baby is no more than a young specimen of the biological species *homo sapiens*. It has to learn to become a person after birth … There

are things which they have to learn to become; though, of course, [what] they learn to become depends on the social context into which they are born" (Langford 1970, 60). Others would argue that newborns are born as persons, but that they are not yet fully persons and thus must be assisted in achieving a more complete state of personhood.

> Education is a matter not of turning non-persons into persons, but rather of helping people to become more fully persons—that is, to acquire in a more complete way those powers of reasoning, feeling and acting responsibly which distinguish someone as a person and which, as a very young child, he or she possesses in a minimum and undeveloped way (Pring 1984, 14).

This latter conception of personhood and the aim of education seems more in keeping with the HE writers' conception of children. The writers speak of the child as a person, a divine individual who, even at birth, exhibits a unique character and disposition which the educator must acknowledge and respect.

Nevertheless, the HE writers' approaches to education and recommendations for particular practices speak to their belief that the goal of education is to develop persons who possess particular traits, attributes and capabilities. Their works collectively address all of the following attributes, many of which have been laid out by others in their discussions of what it means to develop into a person (Pring 1984, 21-27):

- *Knowledge of facts*: while they do not feel this to be the only or even the most important work of formal education, the HE writers acknowledge the importance of acquiring a factual understanding of the world with respect to history, politics, literature, the sciences, etc.;
- *Practical skills*: students must acquire skills which ensure that they can be contributing and useful members of society;
- *Intellectual excellence*: this relates to the development of mental dispositions such as a concern with knowing the truth; synthesising and using knowledge skilfully and flexibly; and giving the mind power over its own faculties;
- *Self-knowledge*: there is a strong concern with helping students gain an understanding of their own inner lives, mental as well as emotional; students are encouraged to understand their own reactions to the world and others, and to learn to control or mitigate the effects of their reactions;

- *Wisdom/understanding*: this relates to the development of the capacity of a person to apply or use knowledge in a way that is informed by some level of moral consideration;
- *Morality and discipline*: the writers are concerned with the development of moral sensibilities such as kindness, generosity, consideration of others, as well as with the development of character traits such as self-direction, self-discipline and perseverance;
- *Citizenship*: cultivating a sense of responsibility and duty towards a larger community is an important part of the work of the HE thinkers;
- *Spiritual development*: HE is concerned with encouraging realisation of one's true spiritual nature and one's connection with a larger reality;

As listed above, the HE thinkers' aims of education with regard to the general sort of person they wished to help develop is by no means singular. Similar lists of attributes are generally adopted by many schools and educators, not to mention parents, as they consider what types of people they would like their children to become. Thus, what distinguishes the holistic approach to education is perhaps not so much what the thinkers understood the outcomes of education to be, but rather the process whereby those outcomes were to be attained.

As we consider the work of Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti more closely in order to better understand what is characteristic of their approach to both the aims and the process of education, it is necessary first to remember the context in which their educational ideas developed. All three thinkers' lives spanned the latter part of the 19$^{th}$ century and the first half of the 20$^{th}$ century. It was a time of substantial social and political upheaval: two world wars, ongoing ideological and political struggles throughout Europe, widespread poverty, a change from a primarily agricultural economy to an industrial one with the ensuing social fluidity and its effect on individuals' sense of security. Among many other things, as we saw in Chapter Two, it was a time during which the place and role of children in society was changing: one the one hand, they were seen as developing people needing to be educated for their moral well-being; on the other hand they were seen as a potential labour pool. It was against this backdrop that all three HE thinkers were developing and promoting their educational ideas.

### ii. HE and development as a person

The backgrounds of each of the three HE thinkers indicate the extent to which the social, political and economic conditions of the turn of the century affected the lives and the work of each. Montessori was driven by the appalling image of neglected poor and handicapped children to pursue her work within education. Beyond that, however, she bore witness to what she described as "a crisis that can only be compared to the opening of a new epoch … If the sidereal forces are used blindly by men who know nothing about them—with the aim of destroying one another—the attempt will be speedily successful because the forces at man's disposal are infinite" (as quoted in Standing 1998, 80). Her writings on education leave little doubt of her concern about the state of the world and her belief that the right education of children would be an important factor in the renewal of society. Recall that Montessori believed that education was intended to allow the child to fulfil its "work," which, for the child, is the construction of the adult-to-be.

> The child and the adult are two distinct parts of humanity which must work together and interpenetrate with reciprocal aid. In the critical moment of history through which we are passing the assistance of the child has become a paramount necessity for all men. Hitherto the evolution of human society has come about solely around the wish of the adult. Never with the wish of the child … and because of this the progress of humanity may be compared to that of a man trying to advance on one leg instead of two. By changing the centre from the adult—and adult values—to the child and *his* values we should change the whole path of civilisation (as quoted in Standing 1998, 81-82).

Steiner, too, observed the events around the turn of the twentieth century and noted that, "one thing, surely, which the catastrophe of the World War has demonstrated is the inadequacy of the ideas which people applied to social questions in past decades" (Steiner 1999, 18). The immediate impetus for his efforts within education was a desire to provide educational opportunities for the children of workers after the first World War; however, Steiner had deeply held beliefs about how the work of education, properly undertaken, would contribute to social renewal.

> In recent times humanity has developed a life of the mind which is highly dependent on political institutions and economic forces. As children we are … educated in a manner which the economic circumstances of our times dictate … It is easy to believe that people become useful members of society by being educated [in such a manner] … however, confusion and chaos in public life is directly connected with the dependency on the life of the mind—of spirit and

> culture—on political and economic factors. The liberation of this cultural and spiritual life from such dependency is an important aspect of the burning social problems which beset us (Steiner 1999, 2-3).

Finally, Krishnamurti's entire adult life was devoted to the cause of helping human beings to be free from the conditioning forces of the world. Having lived through the most tumultuous part of the twentieth century—two world wars, the splitting of the atom, the savage destruction of the environment—Krishnamurti was in little doubt about the shortcomings of current approaches to education and his vision for a better system.

> Our present education is geared to industrialisation and war, its principal aim being to develop efficiency; and we are caught in this machine of ruthless competition and mutual destruction … Of what value is it to be trained as lawyers if we perpetuate litigation? Of what value is knowledge if we continue in our confusion? What significance has technical and industrial capacity if we use it to destroy one another? … If education leads to war, if it teaches us to destroy or be destroyed, has it not utterly failed? Education should help us to discover lasting values so that we do not merely cling to formulas or repeat slogans. Unfortunately, the present system of education is making us subservient, mechanical and deeply thoughtless; though it awakens us intellectually, inwardly it leaves us incomplete, stultified and uncreative (Krishnamurti 1981, 15).

For each of the three thinkers then, education was not to be regarded as a tool for individual betterment, whether economic, social or spiritual. Rather, the aim of education ultimately, was the development of human beings with a clear understanding of their true identity as a member of a larger community of man and earth. Out of such an understanding would naturally emerge a sense of their role within and responsibility towards the community at large. The writers also shared a common belief in the best way in which to go about developing this type of a person—through the richness and complexity of community.

It is here than my analysis of the distinguishing characteristics of HE divides most sharply with the work of Scott Forbes. As was discussed in Chapter One, Forbes' examination of three psychologists in defining HE led to a bias in his conclusions towards the psychological aspects of HE's work. Specifically, he claims that the defining aim of HE is the attainment of Ultimacy, which he described as a psychological and/or spiritual attainment, a solitary, inwardly-directed endeavour undertaken by an individual. Yet, it is clear that Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti all had great concerns about the social aspects and consequences of education—not merely as a useful

tool on the path to Ultimacy, as Forbes seems to describe it—but rather as an important aspect of education in its own right. While it is true that the HE thinkers did consider what Forbes calls Ultimacy to be an important aim of education, Ultimacy was itself not the goal. The goal of assisting human beings to recognise their true nature and their true relationship to the broader world was so that they would understand their role in transforming the world. Merely attaining Ultimacy is not enough. Part of attaining such a state, part of aspiring to such a state, must involve developing a sense of responsibility which results in acting upon that understanding. Thus, for the HE thinkers, to be fully realised as a person is not merely to have attained a spiritual enlightenment, but rather to translate that awareness into active living in the world. This conception of personhood, I would argue, is an important characteristic of the HE philosophy.

### iii. personhood through community

Scottish philosopher John Macmurray's work on personhood and community is a useful lens through which to understand both the theoretical work of HE, as well as its practical application in schools. It also addresses some of the critiques of the idealist worldview discussed earlier. Julian Stern has written of Macmurray's work that, "by his attempt to go beyond materialism and idealism, Macmurray provides a sound foundation for aspects of spiritual … development in our schools. Further, by describing communities as being personally rather than functionally or mechanically connected, Macmurray provides a sound foundation for understanding the wider, whole-school, context in which spiritual development may be placed" (Stern 2001, 26). As will be discussed later in this section, his account of the role of community in helping to develop persons puts into words many of the underlying themes and intentions of the communities of learning developed by the HE thinkers.

Macmurray rejects dualism, both ancient and modern. In his view, Descartes' starting point of systematic doubt "rests on an assumption, which should be made explicit, that a reason is required for believing but none for doubting. The negative, however, must always be grounded in the positive; doubt is only possible through belief … It cannot be true that I ought to doubt what in fact I believe, by a deliberate act of will" (Macmurray and Conford 1996, 50). Macmurray believed that philosophical systems based on

dualism inevitably fall into an atheistic materialism or an idealism based on a false view of the spiritual.

> Idealism seeks to escape from action into meditation; from the tensions of life in common into the solitariness of one's own spirit. The purely spiritual which it seeks is the purely imaginary, a ghost world without substance or shadow (Macmurray 1984, 59).

Macmurray advocates a different view of the spiritual, as a state of action, a state of active engagement with the world.

> The spiritual and religious is about action because it is concerned with the whole man. A religion which is concerned with only the spiritual life is a religion which leaves action out, and in which spiritual activity has no practical reference (Macmurray 1984, 65).

But action for Macmurray is not merely physical movement. It includes thought as one of its aspects:

> Whereas in reflection we are engaged quite literally in changing our minds, in action, we are engaged with changing the world. Action includes thought; it is not something which can be distinguished from thought. The life of reflection is not different from the life of action. It is a limitation of the life of action to one of its aspects. This is why we contrast ideas and real things (Macmurray and Conford 1996, 75).

Having dismissed a dualist idea of spirituality, Macmurray goes on to positively describe the spiritual as a communal or relational state of being. 'God' is, for Macmurray, the universal other, and religion is the expression of consciousness of community. Thus, he argues, it is in communities and through relationship with others that human being—becoming human—is enabled. "We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence" (Macmurray 1961, 211). "We become persons in community in virtue of our relations to others. Human life is inherently a common life" (Macmurray 1950, 35). To focus too stringently on internal personal development risks becoming disengaged from the very process through which spiritual becoming occurs.

With his definition of the spiritual as ultimately being the expression of individuality through a community, Macmurray stakes out a philosophical stance which is anti-dualist and anti-sceptic, a rare stance for a modern professional philosopher outside of religious circles (Stern 2001, 35). He rejects the legacy of Descartes and makes transcendence,

the ‘other’ implied by the self, rather than some nebulous, easily dismissed notion of a spirit world, central to his argument. In doing this, he allows for consideration of the spiritual in his work on schools and education. This position reflects many of the nuances of the HE thinkers’ positions about the balance between helping children to engage with the world around them, while also respecting and nurturing the spiritual aspect of their nature.

For Macmurray, to be educated today means to have learned to be human. If people learn to be human in communal engagement with others, and if it is part of the aim of education to help students achieve their humanness, schools would do well to be communities in which those being educated have the opportunity to engage in meaningful relationships with others. However, Macmurray distinguishes between two types of relationships: *functional* and *personal*. Both are necessary for our well-being, but the latter are far more important for our well-being. Functional relations are those relationships with other people that we enter into for a particular purpose. If I buy a plane ticket to England, for example, my relationship with the person from whom I made the purchase is defined by our respective roles and intentions; nothing more is demanded or expected of the relationship. If we were to change the purpose of this functional relationship, we would dissolve the unity. In contrast, personal relations are not instrumental. We do not enter into them for any particular reason, but rather simply to be ourselves. The relationships between friends or family members are good examples. In a communal relation of friendship a change of purpose would maintain and enrich the unity rather than dissolving it. While Macmurray acknowledges that these two types of human association are both necessary to each other he stresses that, “the functional life [which enables action] is *for* the personal life, and the personal life is *through* the functional life (Macmurray 1961, 82). Although action is what allows the personal life to be a lived reality, it is personal relationships that are at the heart of Macmurray’s understanding of the nature and possibility of the human condition.

Communities are grounded in personal relationships. Community is a relationship in which we “associate purely for the purpose of expressing our whole selves to one another in mutuality” (Macmurray 1935, 98). While Macmurray’s account of community is, in itself, important, he goes on to identify two fundamental philosophical

principles which are critical to the development and success of communities: freedom and equality.

> Equality and freedom, as constitutive principles of fellowship, condition one another reciprocally. Equality is a condition of freedom in human relations. For if we do not treat one another as equals, we exclude freedom from the relationship. Freedom, too, conditions equality. For if there is constraint between us there is fear; and to counter the fear we must seek control over its object, and attempt to subordinate the other person to our own power. Any attempt to achieve freedom without equality, or to achieve equality without freedom must, therefore, be self-defeating (Macmurray 1950, 74).

Michael Fielding, a Macmurrian scholar, has observed that with this observation about the central tenets of community, "Macmurray gives us not only an understanding of community with an emancipatory edge, but a powerful philosophical tool that has the capacity to take us beneath the surface of particular instances to the core of human association … [He] provides a means of interrogating actual examples of human unity" (Fielding 1999, 72). Community, by this definition, is not a thing. It is a way of being, a process through which human beings regard and relate to each other in a certain way. A nuclear family, a village, a classroom or a nation can all, in theory, be communities if its members undertake to live in a manner which promotes the freedom and equality of its members consistent with the account laid out by Macmurray.

In turning specifically to Macmurray's work on schools, treating all members of the school community as equals, as persons, has interesting implications for the nature of discipline or behaviour in school. Macmurray saw discipline, friendship and freedom as complementary ideas. "Discipline is the condition of all freedom in human life and all training is discipline. The discipline which a school exists to provide may be willingly and gratefully welcomed by its pupils or it may be enforced and imposed [through the assertion of authority]. If it is not willingly accepted it will have to be enforced. But this means that the motive for accepting it is fear, and to enforce discipline is to use fear as an educational motive … it implies a confession of failure" (Macmurray 1950, 33). This brings to mind both the emphasis on discipline demonstrated by all three HE thinkers in their work, as well as their belief that fear should not and would not be a necessary component of achieving discipline with students, assuming that proper relationships were maintained within the learning environment. "The most damaging possible result of failing to recognise a school as a community is what Macmurray might call the *defensive*

school, with managers or teachers acting as authority figures. This is likely to happen as a result of fear" (Stern 2001, 35).

> When people grow afraid, when there is secret hidden fear at the centre of their consciousness, they have lost faith in themselves, and they begin to clutch at anything to save them. And they turn always to power, especially to organised power. They want an authority to take the burden of responsibility off their shoulders, they become formalists … they want everyone to agree with them because then they feel safe in their beliefs. That is when the false morality of obedience to law becomes rampant (Macmurray and Conford 1996, 15).

With the development of a healthy community should come an end to authority as used in its traditional sense. Rather than authority or power over another needing to be asserted to achieve particular outcomes, relationship allows for the expression of needs and desires which a mutually caring relationship will seek to meet.

With Macmurray's notions of personhood and community in mind, we turn again to the work of the HE thinkers. It is clear from the examination of their work in earlier chapters that all three emphasised the value of community as part of the educational endeavour. Each worked to develop schools in which relationships between student and teacher were developed and nurtured. However, the educational endeavour was not seen to take place merely between student and teacher. Each worked to develop a method of establishing a community of learning in which students learned how to learn from each other as well. Education was not seen as being concerned merely with academic subject matter. Play and non-structured time were incorporated into the classroom, partly with a view to allowing relationships to form and grow. Mutual respect is fostered from the earliest ages, and a sense of responsibility for and towards one another plays an important role in the development of a classroom environment. Children are taught to respect the external world as well, to see themselves as being in relation with, and responsible for, other living beings. Within this framework of similarities, the specific mechanics of the way in which community is built and supported in each type of school are different.

Montessori focuses on multi-age classrooms with low student-teacher ratios and the promotion of student-to-student interaction in which teachers act as facilitators and the child drives the learning process. Discipline and order abound in a Montessori

classroom, yet Montessori notes that if teachers respect the nature of the child, the child will seek out and embrace opportunities to exhibit self-discipline. Here we see that the relationship between students and teachers is critically important; not grounded in fear, intimidation or assertion of authority, but rather in a respect for the nature of the child. In younger years, it is teachers who bear the burden of acting on their knowledge; with age and familiarity with the Montessori environment, the relationship develops into a mutual recognition of appropriate roles.

The role of relationship and community is even more explicitly addressed by Steiner and illustrated clearly in the Class model of teaching in which one teacher teaches a class of pupils for eight years. As was discussed in Chapter Four, such an arrangement is specifically intended to allow an extremely personal, almost familial, relationship to develop between a teacher and his class, and amongst the pupils themselves. To know that a relationship will be ongoing requires a move from a functional relationship to a personal one. Recognising and respecting the unique attributes of another person are facilitated by both proximity and time; the Steiner model enables both.

Krishnamurti intentionally developed residential schools in which teachers and students literally are all members of one community, partaking in the daily work and running of the school as equals. Although particular settings require assuming the role of teacher and student, the boundaries between the two are quite fluid. A student in science class might head dinner preparations or lead a music session in the evening. The focus is on the need to build an authentic sense of community. Students and teachers meet to make decisions about the running of the school. All are equally responsible for the maintenance of *their* collective home. In each school, specific arrangements serve to move relationships out of the domain of the functional—merely being part of a classroom for a few hours for the purpose of teaching—and into the realm of being in personal relationships for the betterment of all parties.

Ultimately, for all of the HE thinkers, to live is to live in relationship to other people and to the larger world. Part of the aim of their educational efforts was to help students to recognise and embrace this way of being in the world. To neglect this aspect of their work, as has been the tendency within the HE literature, and to some extent even among

practitioners; to focus too exclusively on the spiritual outcome rather than the process whereby it is achieved is to ignore something at the heart of the HE educational endeavour.

## 3. practical implications of HE for schools

Having identified philosophical elements that emerge from the ideas of holism and the works of the three thinkers, I went back to the writings and practices of Steiner, Montessori and Krishnamurti. It became clear that despite differences in the actual day-to-day organisation of the teachers and students within the schools, there were important approaches to key areas of practice that were common to all three and which relate to the philosophical themes explored earlier:

- Growth as a person
- Developing community
- Authority and discipline
- Growth of knowledge and understanding (curriculum)
- Modes of teaching and assessment

Chapters Three, Four and Five summarised many of the ways in which the theories of each thinker translated into the practical working of schools, so I will not spend a great deal of time discussing specific examples here. However, the chapter summaries did not organise the various practices into any logical structure which could be used to look at the work of other schools through a holistic framework, which is what I attempted to do through the case study portion of this thesis discussed in the next section. Thus, it is worth recapping salient examples of the ways in which schools operate within each broad category to serve as a reference point for the more extensive discussion of each topic in Chapter Nine.

### *A. growth as a person*

Guiding questions:

- How does the school define its primary aim?

- How does this stated mission/purpose relate to the holistic conception of personhood?

We saw earlier that the HE thinkers placed a great deal of emphasis on the development of persons in their schools. Chapter Two explored some of the trends in state schooling during the nineteenth century, a time during which formal education for the masses was focused in large part on achieving political, social and economic ends: the transmission of values which would support a socio-political status quo; and the acquisition of factual knowledge through economically efficient means which included the use of fear, competition and rewards. The development of the child as an individual was not considered a central part of the work of formal education.

Against this backdrop, the HE thinkers developed and promoted an approach to education which placed the child at the centre of the educational endeavour. They considered the primary aim of education to be to assist the child to grow into a person who possessed particular skills and attributes discussed earlier in this chapter. This required a focus on the intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of the developing person, and required a commitment on the part of the school and teachers to make the growth of the child as a person their primary objective. Although each thinker had a slightly different focus on the specific attributes to be developed, they included factual knowledge, practical skills, self-knowledge, wisdom, morality and discipline, citizenship and spiritual development. For all three thinkers, however, this emphasis on the development of the person was key, and it was the guiding principle behind their entire educational philosophies and the specific educational practices which each developed.

Of all the areas of practice to be considered under the rubric of HE, this is arguably the most difficult to fairly assess. Many schools claim to have as their focus the development of the child as a person, and many of those schools no doubt sincerely try to live up to that aspiration. The difference between aspiration and success lies in the details of the daily work: the general attitude of teachers and school leadership; the large decisions about how to organise the school, the curriculum, teaching and assessment practices; as well as the smaller daily and moment-to-moment choices about how to treat

children, how to prioritise conflicting demands of a teacher or the school. The remaining areas of practice discussed in this chapter must be understood as supporting this overarching aim of the development of the person.

### *B. developing community*

Guiding question:

- What role does the development of community play in the school?

As discussed earlier, it is clear that schools operating within the holistic framework place great importance on the development of a sense of community and the fostering of healthy relationships both inside and outside the school. Community and the quality of relationships become primary because of the way in which they foster recognition of our relationship to something larger than ourselves, and allow us to develop as persons. Since a community cannot function properly if everyone operates as an individual with no concern for others within the community, the need for self-discipline and a sense of responsibility towards others is instilled within members of the school. In all three HE schools, the notions of community and one's responsibility towards the larger community are presented in numerous ways from as early a stage as possible so that by the time a child emerges into a more self-centred stage of his development, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility toward the larger community are ingrained habits.

We explored in the last section on personhood and community the specific ways in which each thinker developed a school model designed to facilitate the development of community and relationship, whether through a focus on self-directed learning with teacher facilitation and multi-age interaction (Montessori); through an ongoing relationship within a long-term Class structure (Steiner); or a residential environment for older students (Krishnamurti). The goal of developing community guided the specifics of the school's organisation. Of note was a focus beyond just the relationship between student and teacher, and an effort to establish a community of learning in which students learn how to learn from each other, as well as self-direct their own education. Play, non-structured, and non-academic time are incorporated into all three school models, partly with a view to allowing relationships to form and grow. Mutual respect is fostered from

the earliest ages, and a sense of responsibility for and towards one another plays an important role in the development of a classroom and school environment.

### *C. authority and discipline*

Guiding questions:

- How are matters of authority and discipline handled in the school?
- For what purpose is discipline established?

Viewing a school as a community changes the way in which it operates as an organisation. In a relational concept of organisation where each individual's well-being is dependent on the well-being of others, no one is considered the authority figure or in a place of primary importance. In a holistic conception of community and personhood, the need for the imposition of authority in a traditional sense decreases as mutuality grows; respect, self-discipline, and recognition of the need for mutual responsibility obviate the need for traditional authority structures. The nature of the relationships begins to determine the overall strength of the organisation. The relationships themselves change over time to reflect the developmental capacity of students to engage in different ways with teachers and with peers.

The key to this view of authority and discipline in schools is grounded in relationship. If a student can be in relationship with other students or with a teacher, she will come to recognise the humanity of the other, the need to respect the other's feelings, attitudes and needs. What might quickly escalate into a conflict between two strangers can be addressed through the help of mutual history and understanding. Similarly, if a teacher can truly have a relationship with her student, she is able to re-frame "bad" behaviour and appreciate that a child might be acting out for reasons that have nothing to do with the teacher or the school, but rather with a fight with another student or an incident at home. Rather than feeling the need to assert authority in the interest of maintaining her power, the teacher is then in a position to listen, offer to help, or to otherwise engage with the student on the issue at hand.

### i. the role of teachers

The role of the teacher is addressed often and explicitly in the work of the HE thinkers, and HE schools place a great deal of importance on the development and training of teachers because of the highly specific ways in which teachers are expected to help build and maintain a community of learning within the schools. The work of this chapter has been informed, however, not only by an examination of HE theory, but also through fieldwork in schools. The role of teachers is an issue which, although addressed in the literature, was made much more concrete as a result of observations in Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti schools, and dozens of interviews with teachers. Two issues stand out, both of which will be addressed again in Chapter Nine but are nevertheless important to mention here.

First, the professional role of teachers in the HE schools is highly valued. Teaching is seen as a highly-skilled vocation requiring serious dedication on the part of practitioners. In exchange, there is a lot of trust in the judgment, training and decision-making of teachers. This is exemplified in many ways. There is a rigorous process of teacher education, both initially and in the form of ongoing professional development. The focus of this training is on understanding what underlies the method of teaching that will be used in the school. The writings of the thinkers, their approaches to child development, theories of learning and specific classroom approaches are studied directly, discussed, explored, and analyzed. Teachers learn not only what to do, but the reasons behind the practice. They work alongside experienced teachers for at least a year before becoming fully trained. There is a standardisation of the training, the texts, and in some cases, even particular facets of the curriculum which are presented to the teachers. But then teachers are left to do their work with children. There are no formal inspections by other teachers or administrators. However, the culture of the school is such that teachers engage one another about their work—issues, problems, challenges and questions. The assumption is not that motivation to be better must come from external pressure, but rather that being professionals, teachers will be internally motivated to improve themselves and their work with students. Teachers are highly involved in the running of the school; indeed at Steiner and Krishnamurti schools there is no formal administrator or head and it is teachers working via committees who run all facets of the school.

A second characteristic of the expectations of teachers within these schools is that they will be engaged deeply as persons in the process of helping students to develop by focusing on their own personal development. Overwhelmingly, there is a sense that in order to teach, a teacher must first understand herself. Beyond understanding how to teach subject matter and how to organise a classroom, she must also understand the personal, spiritual journey which her students are embarking on, not merely as an intellectual exercise, but as something visceral, something that is already a part of herself as a person and thus brought in an authentic way to her work as a teacher. Teachers are encouraged, supported and actively taught how to be highly self-reflective about their own teaching and learning, their own personal development. At Krishnamurti schools, for example, teacher have bi-weekly meetings during which they do no work for or with students, but rather spend time with a text, reading or question which serves as a springboard for meditation and self-reflection. At all three schools, it is normal to see teachers engaging one another about their own practice and work. Far from being perceived by them as a sign of weakness, it is seen as a useful and important part of the work they do with their students.

### *D. growth of knowledge and understanding (curriculum)*

Guiding questions:

- Does the school have a set curriculum? How is it organised?
- What are some of the reasons underlying its approach to subject matter content?

We have seen that holism views knowledge in three important ways. First, knowledge is a network of information, with nothing being foundational. Second, knowledge can only ever be limited and approximate. Finally, knowledge can be more complete if it can be obtained through the vehicle of "experience", the term being used to refer to ways of engaging with the world that go beyond the intellect, including feeling and intuition. The HE thinkers built on this epistemological position in their work in schools and addressed the importance of respecting both factual knowledge based on an understanding of the world through the intellect, as well as personal experience in the form of the feeling and spiritual life of the child.

A great value is placed on the importance of experiences and blocks of time that allow for individual exploration of an inner world—the self and the spiritual. Whether through unstructured play outdoors or quiet time spent in reflective or meditative activity, such work is considered an integral part of the work of schools. While it may seem that such time takes away from time spent on content, there is a recognition that schools cannot teach students everything that they need to know with regard to specific bits of knowledge and information. The curriculum of these schools tends to be narrow but deep, allowing for sustained engagement with ideas in the hope of developing students' ability to critically engage with the world and with information, to learn to be thoughtful human beings with the capacity and desire to keep on learning.

The HE thinkers also promoted the development of an integrated curriculum rather than one arbitrarily broken up into units of knowledge which would be presented to students as unrelated to one another. Part of the job of the teacher is seen as assisting students in making connections between the many experiences they have had and the vast amount of information they have learned. Thus interdisciplinary, thematic and "spiral" approaches to the curriculum are often taken in HE schools.

Finally, the HE thinkers also believed that the curriculum of a school should be rooted in an understanding of the development of children. Each felt that development occurred in stages; that different stages of development lent themselves to engagement with particular ideas, concepts and experiences; and that this should be reflected in the work of schools. In a related way, the topics covered by the curriculum should be derived from the life of the child, her experiences, and her understandings rather than from some abstractions that have no meaning for the child and her life.

### i. stages of development and the curriculum

All three thinkers recognised the significance of stages of development in guiding the capacities of children to gain knowledge and understanding of the world. In particular, they all suggested that it is important to develop some ways of knowing before others because of the way in which children develop into an understanding of the world. It is worth examining more closely the central role played by conceptions of development in

both the theoretical and practical work of the HE thinkers. This is a characteristic of their work which distinguished them at the time of their initial development and, I would argue, continues to do so now.

Understanding and respecting the stages of development of human beings was a central component in the work of all three HE thinkers. While this may not seem a remarkable insight to those of us today who are familiar of the work of twentieth-century developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Eric Erikson, it is important to remember that all three of the HE thinkers pre-dated any general recognition that children's development was an issue worth studying, and had developed their educational practices and theories well before Piaget's work was published in the 1920s and 30s, and Erikson's work was popularised in the 1950s and 60s.

> The old educators divided the life of the child at school in relation to the syllabus of instruction which was to be given to the child. The modern educator is more concerned with the natural characteristics and developmental requirements of the child than with any syllabus of instruction framed merely for the sake of tutoring the child in adult knowledge … The problem of education is how to provide suitable conditions and facilities for the development of the child at each stage (Montessori and Prakasam, 1989, 24-25).

As we will recall from Chapter Two, Montessori expresses most clearly the general recognition in the work of all three HE writers that developmental stages exist, stages which turn out to be remarkably similar to the stages described by later developmental psychologists. Each successive stage entails the further development of capacities established in a previous period, and the type of activities and the type of knowledge presented to children at particular ages should be in accordance with the capacities being developed during that developmental stage. Montessori and Steiner both speak explicitly about the need to take advantage of the opportunities for development presented by each unique stage in a child's life. Because these stages do not last forever, being by their very nature transitory phenomena, it is important to recognise them in order to profit by them to the fullest extent.

Figure 6-2 reminds us of the stages of development posited by the three thinkers and the corresponding development of human abilities.

**Figure 6-2: Developmental stages of children**

| Age | Development of which aspects | Montessori | Steiner | Krishnamurti |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Birth to age 6 | Will<br>Physical body | | | |
| Age 7 to age 12 | Feeling<br>Imagination | | | |
| Age 13 to age 18 | Reasoning, judging and thinking | | | |

Dark shading: primary focus of theories of development and/or practices

Medium shading: well-developed theories of development and/or practices

Light shading: some basic theories of development and/or implemented practices

There is a strong sense among the thinkers that doing things and knowing things physically is the earliest need of a child who is not conscious of feelings and emotions, and is instead driven naturally to develop the physical part of herself. The emotional life is the next to require attention, allowing us as it does to tap into the intuitive part of ourselves. This intuitive ability, if not properly developed during this stage of development, can potentially be marginalised after the development of the judging and reasoning part of human nature. Thus, say the writers, teachers must develop the intuitive aspect from an early age such that it becomes an integral part of the child's character, capabilities and approach to the world.

While the very fact that the HE thinkers elaborated on the concept of developmental stages is distinguishing in and of itself, it is of interest to note how well their elaborated theories of development match up to the work of psychologists in the last century. Montessori and Steiner, particularly, anticipated the work of Piaget in differentiating between the sensory-motor period of development, and later periods of concrete and formal operations during which children's cognitive abilities become successively less dependent on concrete experiences, and more able to handle abstract thinking and formal logic. While Krishnamurti did not explicitly develop a developmental theory as detailed

as those of Montessori and Steiner, his decision to work primarily with children from the age of about 13 onward is well-suited to his mode of dialogue and abstract conversation.

As becomes clear from a review of the work of all three thinkers, they perceive the task of education to be to create the correct environment for the necessary healthy development of children's emotional and social aspects. Their work is filled with specific recommendations for the ways in which such an environment can be created, and the specific content of the curriculum during particular stages of development. So keen were the thinkers to ensure that teachers knew of and applied the knowledge of developmental stages in their work with children that their courses of study for all teachers includes a strong grounding in theories of human development, and the appropriate role of the educator at each stage.

### *E. modes of teaching and assessment*

Guiding questions:

- What modes of teaching are used in the school? Why?
- What modes of assessment are used in the school? Why?

I address these two topics together because of the integrated way in which the HE thinkers address the topics. As we have seen, the distinction between teacher and learner is often blurred in holistic schools. Students are seen as being naturally curious, eager to learn, and, in many ways, their own teachers. Teachers are viewed as an important part of the process in their role as guides and facilitators, assisting students in the process of making knowledge their own in a meaningful manner. A student's inability to learn is not an indication of a student's failure, but rather an indication that the teacher should work with the student to try an alternative approach to learning.

Having said this, there are particular aspects of the process of teaching which are emphasised by the HE thinkers. First, children are individuals, and approaches to teaching must be tailored to the needs and capacities of students. This is facilitated in HE schools by the emphasis on teachers developing personal relationships with students which enables them to recognise the particular strengths and weaknesses of each child.

Teachers must also recognise that the ways in which children learn are influenced by their stage of development, thus, approaches to teaching will be different for different ages of students. Learning, for the HE thinkers, is a process whereby the student is able to make knowledge his own, a part of himself. Thus, the process whereby information is presented to students is just as important as the content being presented in ensuring a good outcome. Great effort is put into ensuring that the process whereby curricular content is presented to children is developmentally-appropriate and meaningful. Allowing students a variety of ways to understand and experience information will increase the chance that they will be able to make it their own. Adopting approaches to teaching that speak to both the intellect and the emotional life of the child are encouraged.

To discuss assessment separately from teaching and learning almost contradicts the main point of assessment as understood in these schools, namely that assessment is seen as an integral part of teaching and learning as opposed to being a way of sorting and ranking students. If the goal of assessment is not to sort, rank or somehow audit performance, then an “A” versus a “C” on an exam or at the end of a term means very little. Far more meaningful is a process of assessment in which it is clear to both teacher and learner what is important to learn, produce, perform, etc. from the outset. The student is then able to work toward specific performance measures and receives feedback on specific aspects of her performance that were strong or in need of improvement. In this way, she is empowered to change and improve her learning. Assessment in this view is seen as formative rather than normative; its purpose is to provide meaningful and on-going information about how to improve the learning process, rather than merely auditing a final performance. It is for this reason that HE schools shun standardised assessments in favour of more authentic assessments such as performance rubrics and narrative assessment reports that allow teachers to consider the progress of students according to their individual abilities, and tailor their approaches to teaching accordingly.

Finally, self-assessment is seen as being vitally important. Students must ultimately understand the ways in which they think and learn. This is a key step to becoming self-sufficient and independent in the world outside of school. Thus, students are engaged in

assessing their own performance and learn to use the outcome of the assessment to change the way in which they engage with materials.

## 4. conclusions: HE and the state system

The literature of the early 1990s had a spate of articles in which HE was critiqued as a movement. Of primary concern was the movement's tendency to prioritise process over product; the spiritual over the political; an adherence and faith in the power of a paradigmatic shift to transform society instead of engaging in the approach advocated by critical theorists who strive to actively engage with and transform the political, social and economic forces causing inequity in the world at present (Clark Jr. 1991; Heshusius 1991; Kesson 1991; Purpel and Miller 1991).

The critiques seem warranted. The nature of the HE undertaking necessitates, I would argue, an engagement with the world beyond the confines of an individual's private life, which has been the primary concern of the various holistic educators working with students in particular schools. First, as we saw in Chapters Two through Five, HE has its roots in counter-cultural movements that sought to challenge the political, economic and philosophical priorities of the era during which they emerged. Holistic educators have always sought, though not always successfully, to engage themselves in the evolution of society. From Rousseau and Pestalozzi as founding thinkers, to Steiner, Montessori and Krishnamurti, all of these thinkers sought to change the world as they saw it being threatened by particular forces or trends of the time.

Furthermore, as I have argued, the notion of personhood is central to the work of holistic educators, and personhood, by its definition within the holistic paradigm, requires an engagement with others; not a solitary meditation on others, but an active process of engagement and transformation. Miller has argued that there are "multiple levels of wholeness—the person, the community, the society, the planet and the cosmos," each of which is appropriate to particular intellectual, existential or practical issues (Miller 1991). In focusing so intently on the realm of the individual, and to a lesser extent

within schools, the realm of the HE community, the HE movement has tended to neglect any meaningful engagement with either of the other three.

By this argument, it is not enough to simply lock the ideas of HE within the realm of specialist independent schools that engage in little dialogue with the community of practice outside the holistic tradition. If we can agree that HE should bring its ideas out, what would that look like? What does it look like to bring these ideas out into the wider public? What would be the challenges to the ideas? How would the ideas be implemented? I sought to answer some of these questions through a case study analysis of a school within the state system that has been grappling with the process of trying to implement a holistic approach to education.

Understanding that HE has its roots in counter-cultural movements in terms of both its underlying philosophical assumptions, as well as the types of educational ideals it embraces, makes it understandable that its ability to influence the ideas and practices of schools operating within the state system might be limited. This is particularly the case in light of requirements and institutional structures in the state school system that seem at odds with the practical elements of HE: a national curriculum that fragments knowledge into subjects; standardised assessments that place a high value on the demonstration of objective knowledge; teacher training that often emphasises the managerial aspects of education at the expense of deep engagement with the philosophical or ethical aspects of education.

Luckily, the educational climate seems at least somewhat conducive to such an effort. Increased emphasis on National Curriculum requirements and the results of standardised examinations for placement on League Tables, and the cuts in curricular breadth and freedom that this emphasis has entailed have led to questions about the cost at which schools are being asked to fall in line with current educational requirements. Some proposed ideas for change include smaller schools, smaller class sizes, more democratic school practices, and the development of alternative forms of assessment—ideas similar to many of the ways in which schools grounded in the holistic tradition already operate.
The last section of this thesis presents the methodology and findings of a case study of a state school in England seeking to radically restructure its approach to teaching and

learning around holistic principles. The hope is that understanding the experience of this school in its efforts will provide insight for other schools seeking to do the same.

# Chapter Seven—Methodology

## 1. introduction

In undertaking a research study, one of the most difficult issues faced by all social researchers concerns their claims to knowledge and understanding. Is it possible to know with any certainty the "true" nature of the social world? If it is possible to attain such knowledge, what methods of gathering data about the world ensure an accurate representation of reality? Once the data have been gathered, we are then faced with the twin problems of analysis and interpretation, followed by the challenge of presenting these data in our findings. It quickly becomes clear that every stage of the research process, from the initial design to data collection, analysis and interpretation is fraught with challenging considerations. The aims of this chapter are accordingly threefold: first, to explain the rationale behind my empirical research design and to outline its methodological approach; second, to provide an account of how the research process evolved and how the data were elicited and gathered during the stages of fieldwork; and third, to explain the ways in which the data were analysed and refined, and to introduce the approach to its presentation.

## 2. research rationale and questions

Educational institutions working within the holistic education tradition in England, notably Steiner, Montessori and Krishnamurti schools, have historically been accessible only to the children of the most economically and intellectually elite members of society. By making the effort to select schools which work according to specific philosophical tenets and by paying tuition fees ranging from £8,000 to £14,000 per annum, these members of society proclaim their belief that the work of such schools is a worthwhile investment in their children's education and future. As the philosophical examination of HE in the first part of this thesis suggests, there is a case to be made that HE practices help promote the development of human beings more fully grounded in themselves and their communities, a worthwhile endeavour for any educational system, particularly that of a state seeking to raise its next generation of citizens.

The question which then begs to be answered is whether the adoption of such methods can be more widely promoted within state sector schools. The empirical work discussed in the last section of my thesis is aimed at gaining insight into how HE's educational approaches and practices can be brought into the schooling experience of students who might otherwise not have access to the private and independent sectors, by studying the experience of a school operating within the state system that is attempting to be innovative in its approach toward education. The three research questions in Figure 7-1 ultimately guided the development of the empirical study and my time in schools.

**Figure 7-1: Case Study Research Questions**

| |
|---|
| (1) In what ways does Kings Green School enact holistic principles? |
| (2) What facilitates the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices by Kings Green School? |
| (3) What are the barriers to the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices in Kings Green School? |

## 3. data collection

### *A. strategy*

Yin (1994) suggests that one of the primary issues to be considered in the beginning phases of research design is the development of research questions. My research questions, focused as they were on understanding the ways in which different factors facilitated or hindered the enactment of HE principles and practices in a state-sector school, pointed to the efficacy of using a case study methodology. Because the implementation of HE principles and practices constitutes a significant departure from more traditional methods of school practice, I would be undertaking to understand the way in which the school was building or rebuilding its culture and practices. Unlike other research strategies, a case study approach would allow me to study the complexity of a school environment and culture in order to gain a better understanding of the processes at work. As Stake writes:

> A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. We study a case when it is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake 1995, ix).

Conducting research on such a small scale ultimately involved sacrifices in terms of the nature and power of claims that could be made. However, the depth of the case study approach had the advantage of demonstrating the actual challenges of implementation of ideas on a practical level, and would help capture nuances unavailable merely from surveys and basic observations.

In order to answer the research questions set out earlier, I knew I would need to conduct at least one primary case study of a state school attempting to adopt a holistic education model. I planned to supplement this case study work by studying the work of HE schools in which holistic models were being implemented in as close to as "pure" a form as possible. As I will discuss later, the exact nature of the relationship between my work in the state school and the HE model schools would evolve over time into its final form.

My first decision was whether to study primary or secondary schools. I eventually opted to try for the latter for one important reason. Many of the HE principles and practices discussed in Section II of this thesis have, in modified forms, filtered into the ethos of primary schools because of a sense that they benefit younger pupils. It is more unusual to see such holistic practices in secondary schools, where the focus shifts to preparing students for exams and the "real world."

### *B. identifying schools*

My first task was to locate a potential state school site. From the outset, it was evident that finding a school in which to conduct my case study would be a challenge in and of itself. Despite some of my concerns about Forbes' theoretical model, I decided to adopt it as a measure against which to judge whether schools fit the general criteria of an HE model. I began my search by contacting individuals who worked within the field of alternative education in England, and discussing with them the characteristics of the school that I was hoping to find for my case study. My various conversations resulted in

the identification of two schools which seemed to fit the criteria both of being innovative in a manner that generally fit the HE criteria, and of working within the state system. I visited both schools, meeting with the Heads, spending time observing classes and talking to students and teachers. On the basis of these two visits, I eventually chose Kings Green School (KGS) as my case study site.

KGS is a state comprehensive school located in eastern England. As the third secondary school within an extremely economically depressed area, it serves a highly transient student population that faces significant challenges in both their home and academic lives. Because of the challenges faced by the student population, the Head of the school and the LEA were committed to making KGS a non-traditional state school by taking a highly pupil-centred approach to teaching and learning. The values expressed in the school literature, in my conversations with the Head, and in the policies of the school reflected many of the specific values identified by Forbes' HE model, as well as some others which I had been developing as part of the theoretical work discussed in Chapter Six. Recognising that it was easy for a school to talk about such ideals, I looked for the way in which these values were reflected in the school's operation. Many of the specific examples of KGS practice which impressed me during this visit are shared in more detail in Chapters Eight and Nine, so I will not repeat myself here. However, I left the school feeling that KGS fit my case study needs quite well. Although its unique history and development plan made it an atypical school, after much consideration I felt that its uniqueness would not be an impediment to my ability to answer the research questions set out for the project. On the contrary, because the school was in such a unique start-up position, I believed that the processes of critical self-reflection, growth and values clarification that were likely to help create and support changes in a sustainable manner might well be far more evident at KGS than in a more established school.

I found gaining access as a researcher quite easy. The Head, Tom, seemed eager to have me come and see the work that the school was doing. He expressed his feeling that, "the research sounds as though it will be win/win...there are many gains for us at KGS as well as for you" (email to the author, 18. Nov. 2002). It is interesting to note in retrospect, having come to better appreciate the leadership dynamic of the school, that once Tom had decided that my working at the school was acceptable, he felt no need to consult

with the Deputy Head or "colleagues," as teachers in the school were called. It was an issue which would have ramifications for my experience as a researcher.

I next identified HE schools in which to work. I knew I would be looking at Montessori, Steiner or Krishnamurti schools since my theoretical work had given me a good background upon which to build my empirical work. Because my state school site was a secondary school, it made sense to choose secondary schools for my HE sites as well. This eliminated Montessori schools since there are no secondary Montessori schools in England. There is only one Krishnamurti school in England, Brockwood Park School (BPS). As it fit my criteria of having a secondary school component and as the school was willing to host me, it became my first HE site. Choosing a Waldorf school proved more complicated, but the school I eventually contacted, the Rudolph Steiner School in Kings Langley (RSS), was open to the possibility of my working there. Both schools are described more fully in Chapter Eight.

## *C. research ethics*

This research project was designed bearing in mind the ethical codes of the British Educational Research Association (1997). These documents provide guidelines for ensuring that the dignity and confidence of all research subjects is maintained. I took seriously the responsibility that I as an individual researcher had of ensuring that each step of the research process took into consideration the interests of the school and the people with whom I worked.

I began with an understanding that the teachers, students and parents who would be allowing me into their schools, classrooms and lives were affording me a trust and privilege that must be maintained in the face of conflicts that might arise between my interests as a researcher and my presence as a guest in schools. I considered the issue of assuring anonymity in my writings and my presentation of findings, and discussed the issue with my contacts at each school. RSS and BPS were happy to have their school names used, though they asked that I be discrete in discussing individual students and teachers. The issue of KGS and the anonymity of the school and teachers was a bit more of a problem. I pointed out to the Head and teachers the very real possibility that the

insular nature of the alternative education community might make the school quite easy to identify. Simply a description of the school's unique elements—central to any reporting I did on the work of the school—would probably be enough for a persistent, web-connected layperson to identify the school. In an attempt to compensate somewhat for this difficulty in maintaining complete anonymity, I did assure all teachers that I would only directly quote or paraphrase their remarks during interviews after gaining their explicit permission.

Before I began working in each school, I tried to ensure that all immediate participants in my research were made aware of the aims of my study and could question me about the purposes and methods of the study at any time. At KGS I addressed all of the staff at a morning meeting and handed out information shortly after I began my fieldwork. I made myself available to answer questions at all times, and found that the longer I spent in each school, the more interested people were to understand the specifics of the research I was carrying out. Several people asked to read the summaries of the work of the thinkers which I had written. No one at either of the HE schools wished me to follow up with them about my work; given the number of visitors each school had, I felt my presence there was a far more routine event than I had initially realised. I did send thank you notes after my time at each school letting my contact person know what I had done during the visit and recognising any special efforts that had been made.

The issue of mutuality was different with KGS. When writing to invite me to study the school, the Head had written that he hoped the research would be a mutually beneficial experience, and I wished it to be so. I had sent him a copy of my initial research proposal and my first two chapters to give him a sense of what my research was about. We had agreed at the outset that he and I would have an interview at the end of my time at the school during which I would share with him my observations about the school, and some of the issues I saw arising, and would follow up after I had completed my analysis so that I could share some of my final thoughts. I also agreed to write up a general memo on my findings to send to him. All of these things were done; indeed, the Head and I continued to correspond occasionally well after my time at KGS was over so that I could keep up with the school's journey.

The nature of the school and my evolving relationship with the Head and teachers sometimes made it difficult to know exactly where the boundaries of my obligations to the school and its members stopped and my role as a researcher began. Throughout my study there were instances that arose which required me to pause and consider the best course of action: how being a participant observer would affect the data I collected; how I should respond when asked by the Head to take on a role in the operation of the school which I felt was inappropriate; how I handled teachers asking me to present issues to the Head on their behalf; how I handled being in the school during an *Ofsted* inspection. At each such juncture, I was forced to come back to a guiding principle of my work which was often harder to respect than to articulate: that although I was interested in understanding the experience of the school, it was not my place to interfere in the decisions of its Head and his colleagues. At moments, I felt paralysed by the sense that I was witnessing conversations and actions which felt fundamentally wrong; however, I forced myself to stay in my role as researcher. In writing up my research, I tried to respect the fact that I had been allowed to see and hear certain things because I had been accepted as a member of the school, and made it a point not to disclose sensitive information if it was not strongly relevant to my research findings.

### *D. data collection: an evolving methodology*

My research questions indicated that there were several issues I would need to explore through the information I gathered about each of my three school sites, its operations and its members:

- The ways in which the principles and practices of HE were being implemented in each school;
- Factors which facilitated the adoption of HE principles and practices by teachers, administrators and, to some extent, students;
- Factors which hindered the adoption of HE principles and practices by teachers, administrators and, to some extent, students.

It is worth mentioning here the way in which my theoretical work played a role in my data collection. In Chapter Six I discussed the ways in which the philosophical

characteristics of the holistic worldview affect practical aspects of schooling. Five primary areas emerged:

- Growth as a person
- Developing community
- Authority and discipline
- Growth of knowledge and understanding (curriculum)
- Modes of teaching and assessment

I anticipated using these five categories as a way to guide my data collection, primarily my observations, conversations and my analysis of the school's literature.

As I considered which methods of data collection to use, I tried to think about the ways best-suited to collecting information that would be relevant to exploring these issues through my analysis. I kept in mind the need to ensure my study's construct validity and reliability through the development of my methodology and my choice of data collection methods (Yin 1994). I chose my methods based on the degree to which they would facilitate my ability to gather information related to the points above. From previous job experience, I knew that I would be able to use methods such as structured observation and semi-structured interviews with a certain degree of confidence and consistency. Seeking to maximise the validity of the study initially through the processes used for collecting data, I used several methods to build an understanding of the issues affecting the schools (Robson 1993); these included observations, interviews and document analysis. Coincidental timing also resulted in my being at the school during an *Ofsted* inspection, and I used the team's final report and interviews with the Lead Inspector as an additional source of data.

My original plan was to spend three months at KGS as a non-participant observer for an initial data collection period involving semi-structured observation, interviews and document collection. I would then spend one month each at RSS and BPS collecting similar data using similar data collection methods. I would then spend an additional month at KGS seeing how the school was faring in its second year of operation with the integration of 120 more pupils and new teachers. My plans did not take into account one

key factor, which became evident to me within my first two weeks at KGS. With 120 students, six teachers and four Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), KGS was too small an institution for me to be able to go in as an outsider observer and just sit in the back of classrooms for three months. With adults scarce and the amount of work piled on teachers quite high, my presence as a non-participating outsider was conspicuous and I worried that this would compromise my ability to collect quality data. I could sense even during my first few days that teachers were tense around me and seemed to be suspicious about my motives, and I felt useless sitting in the back of classrooms doing nothing when teachers obviously needed support even if just to help students find pages in their books.

I also realised quite quickly that KGS was an evolving organisation, still working to find its own identity and methods of operating, making it very difficult for a researcher like me to come in and hope to find a relatively stable organisation about which to collect information. The combination of the Head's visionary nature and an undisciplined managerial style resulted in an institution that was constantly in flux. The rate of change in the teachers' understanding of the school and its mission made information a moving target. It became clear that what was most interesting about the school's work with HE were meta-issues rather than specifics about particular school practices and policies. KGS was an ideal institution through which to better understand the process of the adoption of HE principles, and given that it was so unique in trying to do this type of work, it seemed foolish not to accept it for where it was and adapt my research to better fit its stage of development. I ultimately decided that it would be more fruitful for me to take a more ethnographic approach towards my case study rather than the structured observation and data gathering process which I had originally envisioned.

### i. the change to participant observation

The decision to adopt a participant observer role at KGS raised some issues that needed to be addressed. My rationale for doing so was my belief that my presence as a non-participant observer would be quite distracting, and not conducive to the gathering of high-quality data. Playing a participant observer role would allow me to view the school

from a different vantage point more conducive to collecting the information needed to answer my research questions. As Robson points out:

> The fact that an observer is an observer is made clear from the start. The observer then tries to establish close relationships with members of the group. This stance means that as well as observing through participating in activities, the observer can ask members to explain various aspects of what is going on (Robson 1993, 197).

As a participant observer, I felt I would gain a much better sense of the school, the teachers, the students and the processes than I otherwise would have done. Researcher effects would have had an impact on the quality of the data I gathered in either case; by choosing to be a participant observer, I felt I would be minimising the detrimental effects of my presence. I anticipated, but could not prepare for the fact, that situations would arise when my dual roles of researcher and "useful adult in the school" would come into conflict. Such situations presented difficult choices. Should I allow conversations to occur with teachers on the level of two co-workers or would I need to constantly move conversations in particular directions suited to gaining data? I cannot honestly say whether I ever made the "wrong" choice in such situations, but I did try to note down when such situations arose.

I decided to begin again at the school. I spent my first week back floating through the school spending time with teachers, students and staff both in and out of classes. I attended morning assemblies, ran errands when necessary, and ate lunch with the other teachers and students in the school dining hall. In classes with teachers who were open to it, I made myself useful, passing out books, answering questions from individual students about procedures, or making my presence felt when students began to get rowdy. I took to spending time in the teachers' work area where I had been given a small desk and sitting in on conversations that were not private. I also spent a fair amount of time speaking with the Head, asking him about decisions he was taking, or clarifying my understanding of his thoughts on issues, particularly ones that came up with teachers.

This approach had two effects even within the first week. Teachers were more relaxed around me since I was less of an outsider and getting more involved with them and

pupils. The Deputy Head later told me that seeing that I was genuinely trying to understand things and willing to question the Head reassured the teachers that I was not simply Tom's lackey, but rather an independent outsider keen to understand what was actually going on. Gaining the trust of a few select teachers eventually cascaded into my relationships with the remaining teachers.

I began to take notes in a less formal way, something which seemed to feel less intrusive to teachers who were much more willing to talk when I did not have a notebook in hand. I was clear about the fact that I was taking notes generally, and many teachers would indicate to me that they would prefer if I didn't write down things which they said. I did respect these requests, writing down instead general issues which had been raised in a way that did not tie comments to particular teachers. I spent the next three months in the school doing my best to engage myself in its activities in a way that allowed me to begin to understand the process of development the school and teachers were going through. In addition to observing classes, I felt it was important to observe school planning and organisational meetings and I was invited to do so. I also asked for permission to attend team meetings since the school was organised into three separate teams of teachers who were fairly autonomous in planning integrated curricular work. In all cases, I tried to gauge my welcome, choosing not to attend meetings if I felt that teachers would not be comfortable with my presence. My developing relationships with the Deputy Head and some key teachers were useful in allowing me to judge how to approach these meetings.

In an early conversation with Tom about my work in the school he had suggested that I might find it easier to integrate into the school culture by taking on some type of teaching role. KGS had scheduled "club" classes—two-week classes in which teachers were free to offer seminars on issues of interest to them or students. Tom was eager to have me teach one or two club classes in order to help me be accepted by both students and teachers as a member of the school community. I had initially been loath to commit to this, fearing that such an involvement would influence my ability to collect data. However, in my new participant observer role, I felt better about adopting a more active role. I taught two clubs during the two terms I spent in the school, one with an LSA and one with an NQT.

Finally, in what often ended up being the most informative aspect of my field work, I collected data through my frequent informal conversations with teachers, LSAs and LEA administrators who visited the school. The longer I spent at the school, the more comfortable teachers felt talking to me about their reactions to decisions taken by the Head, their frustrations and triumphs with particular approaches to lessons or activities. By being in the teachers' planning room, spending early mornings and late evenings at the school and generally making myself available to assist when needed, I was often given opportunities to learn things I might not otherwise have done.

Over the course of my time in the school, which would eventually include time during two academic years, I observed almost all of the teachers in the school. I observed each of the first year teachers for a full week, so teaching six to eight classes depending on the weekly schedule. Due to time constraints, staff preferences and an *Ofsted* inspection in the second year, I observed only seven of the nine new second year teachers, and observed each for at least four lessons. Four of the teachers were observed six times. I took some notes during the class itself, but wrote down many of my observations during the next free period, writing down as many details of specific interactions as I could, noting my own sense of the teacher's style, lesson organisation, etc. I usually typed up my notes each night. I tried to keep my classroom observation notes tied to the notes from the day at the school because it felt important to keep the lesson grounded in the context of the whole day. As will be described in Chapter Nine, the pace of the school was frantic at times, and I wanted to remember what might have been happening on a given day or week that might account for some of what I was seeing in the classroom both from students and teachers. A sample of my notes is included in Appendix C.

Because of the large amount of documentary material sent out around the school, I found I also needed to make decisions about what documents would become part of my final document analysis. The Head was constantly sending around articles for teachers to read, memos about his thoughts on various issues, and drafts of longer articles in which he was trying to lay out a vision for the school. The school also put out a monthly newsletter to parents, and was in the midst of several media projects which included short articles about the work of the school. I wanted to have a core group of documents for my analysis that would not be overly repetitive, but would also be representative of

the thinking process of the school. In the end, I allowed the school to solve the problem for me by using as my core set of documents the materials handed out to new teachers during the staff inset for the second year teachers, and the documents given to *Ofsted* as part of the school's inspection process. The sets were similar, except that the staff inset documents included several pieces by the Head which were internal documents. I added older versions of the internal documents so that I could get a sense of how the ideas had changed over time. A list of the documents used for analysis is provided in Appendix D.

### *E. refining the focus of the study*

After having been at KGS for about eight weeks, I felt that I needed to re-think the way in which I was approaching my work in the school, and the relationship of my work there with my work at RSS and BPS. Two months had passed and I did not feel that the one month of the summer term I had left of my initial data collection period would be enough time to truly understand the growth process of KGS. There were a lot of interesting things happening with regard to the development of the school and its vision, the induction of new teachers and the development of the next academic year. The school had also been informed that it would have an *Ofsted* inspection during the first half of the upcoming autumn term. It seemed to me that there was too much potential to better understand the specifics of this case to cut my work short.

As I thought through my research questions and reviewed my notes and initial analysis, it occurred to me that there might be a far better use of my time at RSS and BPS than simply as additional case study sites. As I had observed and gained insight into the workings of KGS, I realised I was having difficulty with two recurring issues. First, it was difficult for me to determine what issues I was seeing had more to do with organisational issues than with the specific challenge of trying to implement HE principles and practices. Second, although I was beginning to identify issues that were problematic and which I suspected related to the HE focus of the school, I did not have any clear sense of why those issues might be problematic or how they might be resolved.

It seemed that a far more interesting angle to my time at RSS and BPS would be to use them as opportunities to see what schools working completely within the HE paradigm

did in terms of issues such as school structure, organisation, and professional development, areas that were emerging as challenges for KGS. Instead of getting a little information about three sites, I could go in-depth with KGS and use my access to RSS and BPS to try and understand KGS better through the HE lens. I also scheduled eight days of observation in the other two secondary schools in KGS's sending district, and my time in those schools helped me gain insight into what challenges any school in the KGS district would face in terms of pupil behaviour, academic skills, etc.

As a result of this change, I was able to participate fully in KGS's planning sessions for the upcoming year during the summer term holiday, including some intensive staff inset days and conversations about the successes and challenges of the school's first year. I used the autumn term at KGS to get to know the new teachers, see how they were inducted into the school culture, how they adapted, and what challenges they faced. This was particularly interesting in terms of the diversity of the incoming group of teachers, which included two newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and several teachers who had moved from other schools with very different philosophies of education. I conducted observations of as many new teachers as possible, and visited some of the veteran teachers whose development I found of particular interest. I also got to see how the school prepared for its *Ofsted* inspection. A lot rested on the outcome of the inspection; should the school be found unsatisfactory, it would be forced to give up its approach and revert to a more traditional model. I was there during the extremely tense period leading up to the inspection as well as for the duration of the inspection itself. I was also able to arrange for two interviews with the Lead Inspector of the team that inspected KGS, once during the inspection and once after he had finished drafting the team's report.

With a month left to go in my data collection period after the *Ofsted* inspection, I let all fourteen teachers and eight LSAs know that I would like to interview everyone who was willing to be interviewed formally. Although I had had informal conversations with all of them and knew a lot about their experiences, I had often assured teachers that I would not use any of their individual comments during daily conversations as direct quotations in my thesis, and I made clear that this would be an opportunity for us to discuss issues in more depth and in a way that allowed them more control over their comments. All but two of the teachers and LSAs agreed to be interviewed. I used these interviews to follow

up on some of the general issues that had emerged for me about the school, as well as to gain a better sense formally about each individual's specific experience with the school and its growth process. I formulated an interview schedule to use as a guide for my interviews with teachers and used the relevant questions for my interviews with LSAs; the interview schedule is included in Appendix B. The questions were geared towards getting a sense of each teacher's background, training, views on education and the role of a teacher, and her experience at KGS. Although I used this schedule as a guide, I tried to keep the interviews fairly unstructured and I followed the lead of each teacher and tried to listen to the issues that were important to her/him. I used this time to follow up on any questions I had about what I had seen in classes or other conversations we had had. I took notes during the interview, and often asked teachers to clarify or repeat statements in order to make sure I accurately recorded them. I typed up the notes from each of the twenty interviews as soon as possible to be used later in my analysis and write-up.

### *F. using data analysis to inform the fieldwork*

It became clear to me quite quickly during my fieldwork that there were recurring themes which were emerging in my notes on KGS: conversations among teachers and at staff meetings re-visited particular issues, the Head wrote papers to teachers on similar themes. Out of interest, I began to review my observation and field notes each evening after school and highlighted these recurring issues or themes, making a list of these issues for my own information. Themes that came up frequently in the initial few weeks included issues related to leadership, management, an understanding of vision and philosophy, and a desire on the part of teachers to see a balance between pragmatic issues and philosophical stances. As I identified issues over time, I began to pay particular attention to conversations or instances in the school that related to them. This furthered my understanding of each issue, helped me to refine what I focused on, and often brought up nuances within a larger issue that I might not originally have considered. As new issues emerged, I often tried to see whether or how they related to things I had already noticed, etc. Without realising it, I had begun my data analysis.

As was pointed out to me, in trying to organise my data and in focusing on issues that arose, I ran the risk of ignoring other issues that may have been important. My primary

response to this critique is that I was aware that this was a risk, and tried to be cognisant of a tendency on my part to not think to take notes on issues that were not immediately familiar to me. I consciously used conversations with teachers, LSAs and LEA administrators involved in the school to try and gain different insight into issues which others considered important. I am a human researcher, however, and cannot guarantee that I always caught new themes and issues that emerged. However, it was impossible for me to capture, even know about, all of the important issues related to the development of KGS given that I only spent six months at the school and was only one person able to be in only one place at a time. As will be discussed more in the next section on data analysis, I was aware that given the scope of this study and the developmental level of the school, my analysis was likely to focus on broader issues rather than very specific ones. I ultimately trusted that the issues most relevant to the experiences of the individuals at KGS would emerge over time if I was willing to pay attention to the events and people around me.

### *G. the holistic model schools*

I completed my fieldwork spending seven weeks between RSS and BPS, my two HE schools. I was partly interested in getting a better sense of how the theories of Steiner and Krishnamurti were brought into practice. I hoped to get a sense of which of the issues I had identified at KGS were also issues at these two "pure" holistic model schools, in other words, which issues were organisational issues having more to do with issues of school management, organisational change and human interaction generally, and which were related to the adoption of an HE model specifically. I compiled my data and notes from KGS beforehand, and had sets of issues which I planned to use to focus my observations and conversations at the HE schools prepared. Among these issues were:

- The intersection of theory and practice
- Professional development/staff training
- The role and inclusion of students in the vision of the school
- Organisational structure

My data collection consisted of observations, interviews with teachers and pupils, and document analysis. I modified my approach at each school, depending on what seemed to best fit the school.

BPS is a small school of 51 students, living with a staff of about fifteen teachers at a residential boarding school; it has the feel of a large family home. Given the structure and atmosphere of the school, as will be described in Chapter Eight, I was accepted as a part of the community for my three weeks there, eating meals with students and staff, relaxing with students in the common rooms, observing classes, sitting in at morning and weekly meetings as issues of concern were addressed. I found the teachers and students all very forthcoming, and all well-informed about the principles on which the school was founded and the reasons behind many of the distinctive features of the rhythm of the school.

RSS is a much larger day school with about 455 pupils. It follows a traditional Steiner curriculum similar to that laid out in Chapter Four. I spent my three weeks there working my way from the Year 1 class up through the Year 13 class. I felt this was important since Steiner schools build quite heavily on the continuity of experience of students. I adapted my observations in classes and engagement with teachers and students to the style of the individual teachers hosting me. As at BPS, I spoke to both students and teachers in the Upper School, and spent the majority of my time with pupils the same age as the students at KGS to try and compare them developmentally.

I continued to review my notes each night, and used my notes and observations to try and complete my understanding of how the schools operated as HE schools in their own right, as well as to inform my understanding of the issues arising at KGS.

## 4. data analysis

### *A. developing a methodology*

The first question that needed to be answered was the level of analysis I would be undertaking. There was a wide range described in the literature, but I knew that I needed

to decide exactly what type of information I hoped to extract from the data. As I re-visited my research questions, reviewed the data I had in front of me, and spoke with some experienced researchers in my department, I came to realise two things. First, being at such an early stage of its adoption of HE principles, what needed to be understood at this point in time with regard to KGS were general issues related to implementation. This is where other schools would be starting, and where they could best learn from the experience of KGS.

Second, the issues which had arisen during my fieldwork, and thus to which my data and my experience of KGS spoke, were broad issues requiring a broader level of analysis designed to identify and explicate the underlying issues rather than a more fine-grained approach to analysis. I had made the decision to alter my data collection strategy, thus changing the data collected. Rather than surveys and structured observation notes focusing on specific aspects of teaching approaches and styles, I had in front of me field notes and anecdotal information that covered broader issues. I had done so because I felt that an ethnographic approach was better suited to gaining an understanding of KGS's experiences. As with the process of looking at a slide under a microscope, it would be unfruitful to use a 1000x lens to conduct discourse analysis on this data, when the data I had gathered was best seen using a 100x lens. The content and structure of the anecdotal, ethnographic field notes I had collected would also be much more robust under this type of analysis than they would be if held up for fine-grained analysis.

The analysis of data, a necessity for extracting information from it, is often presented in terms of its characteristics. I was drawn to Coffey and Atkinson's description of it:

> Analysis is a cyclical process and a reflective activity; the analytic process should be comprehensive and systematic but not rigid; data are segmented and divided into meaningful units, but connection to the whole is maintained; and data are organised according to a system derived from the data themselves. … Analysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive. It should also be methodical, scholarly, and intellectually rigorous (1996, 10).

Their description served as an important reminder that although I must adhere to standards in my approach to analysis, there was a lot of freedom to approach the task in a manner that best suited my personal preferences and strengths. I found myself with a

wealth of data in the form of observation notes, field notes, interview data, documents and outside reports which would need to be reviewed. What I needed, I reminded myself, was a system of breaking down the information I had at hand in a way that allowed me to see patterns, anomalies, recurring themes, and subtle issues.

Of course, I was not just coming to the process of data analysis at that point in time. I had been analyzing the data every few nights, modifying my approach to my time at my school sites based on what I was seeing in and learning from the data. The approach I had used of identifying themes and sub-issues seemed to suit the data well, and had already enabled me to develop ideas and hypothesise about answers to my research questions. I asked myself why I couldn't just expand the approach to analysis I had been using rather than begin with a whole new process. It was a modified approach to organising data which I had used for years at my previous job when conducting organisational reviews, and it suited my learning style, allowing me to highlight things in myriad colours, see things posted on walls, and move things around physically in space. It was after presenting my approach to colleagues at a qualitative data analysis seminar at my department and receiving positive feedback that I felt confident enough to proceed.

### *B. analyzing the data*

I had used the five categories of issues developed in Chapter Six to guide my initial observations of the school. I thus had a wealth of data in front of me which contained information and examples related to those issues: approaches to lessons; conversations about what methods of assessment were best; incidents related to issues of authority; ways in which notions of community were being addressed; and ongoing conversations about the curriculum and the best way in which to present it. I had also noted down observations of incidents and conversations which did not relate to the five categories but which seemed relevant to understanding the overall experience of the school.

I made several copies of my interview notes, observation notes and field notes. I re-familiarised myself with the entire data set by spending a couple of days re-reading it all: the notes, documents, journal entries, interview notes. I then began with my five categories of issues, and read through the data with successive questions in mind:

- What was the role of community at KGS and how was it being developed?
- Were there issues arising related to authority? What were they? How were they resolved or not?
- Was curriculum being discussed? What were the questions being asked, issues being raised or points being made?
- What were the approaches to teaching being used by the various teachers?
- How was learning being assessed?

These questions emerged naturally out of the theoretical issues I had examined earlier, and in many instances I had a vague sense of the shape of the answer. I had been asking these very same questions throughout my time at the school, as I watched and listened to teachers grappling with the same questions using different language. I was thus able to compile a basic list of responses to my first research question about how KGS was enacting HE principles by drawing from what I was seeing in the data and my notes. However, this list was only a partial answer to the question. I could see that in some instances, the honest response was that KGS was not always successfully implementing holistic principles. To my mind, however, that did not mean that it was not trying to enact holistic principles at all. The question was, why was KGS sometimes successful and sometimes not? This brought me to my second and third research questions.

I now needed to move beyond simply examining what the Head and teachers were trying to do in terms of their adoption of holistic principles, and to consider the issues which were helping and hindering them. I approached my next stage of analysis with this in mind. I worked my way through the data once more, making notes for myself of themes and issues emerging repeatedly which related to the following questions:

- What was working at KGS? Why?
- What was not working at KGS? Why?

I developed a short list of issues, essentially codes. I collapsed some of the issues together under broader categories and eventually had a list of general codes which I thought captured most of what was happening at the school. Figure 7-2 lists the broad categories of issues that emerged from this initial overview.

**Figure 7-2: Codes from Round A of Analysis**

| |
|---|
| 1. Linking between the philosophy of the school and its practices, and other broad theories of education or human development |
| 2. Internal coherence/consistency of the KGS philosophy and its translation into practice |
| 3. Staff training or professional development |
| 4. External players: *Ofsted*, National Curriculum |
| 5. Personalities |
| 6. School organisation/management/leadership |

I assigned each issue a colour. Then armed with sticky notes and highlighter pens, I went back through the data and identified sections of interviews, conversations, documents, mail-list conversations, etc. which related to the six categories above, highlighting appropriate sections of text. When needed, I allowed sections of text to be multi-coloured. This essentially served to code my text in a fairly broad way. I then conducted a second read-through of the data, this time sorting the documents into the broad categories which had emerged during my ongoing review of the data during my fieldwork. The general categories of issues that I had identified during that period are identified in Figure 7-3:

**Figure 7-3: Analysis Round B—Fieldwork Observations**

| |
|---|
| 1. philosophical/theoretical foundations |
| 2. school organisation/practices/principles |
| 3. effectiveness of efforts |
| 4. external challenges and reactions |
| 5. internal challenges and reactions |
| 6. positive outcomes |

I once again allowed documents to fall into multiple categories if necessary. For example, if a transcript of an interview with a teacher included discussions related to the teacher's worries about school management, the outcome of the *Ofsted* report and its influence on the work of the school, and aspects of the school that he was very happy with, a copy of the transcript was put into piles 2, 4 and 6.

Once all of the documents had been assigned to relevant categories, I reviewed each of the six piles of documents, and noted key ideas and issues that emerged within each. For example, the pile for internal challenges and reactions included specific issues such as a lack of adequate managerial structure and decision-making, a feeling from teaching and support staff that there was never adequate time, confusion about the school's timetable, and concerns about how to balance the vision of the school with specific subject requirements. Having identified sub-categories of issues within each pile, I then looked for overlap between issues emerging from my first and second rounds of analysis, namely the colour-coded issues from round A and the sub-categories that emerged from round B. I was looking specifically for two things: first, for themes that were duplicated and could be collapsed into one broader category; and second, for issues that did not quite fit the categories that I had constructed.

Finally, I reviewed the *Ofsted* report which had been published for KGS and my notes from interviews with the Lead Inspector, looking for issues that the team had noted which may have not emerged in my data, of which there were none, and vice versa. There were actually issues which I had identified which the *Ofsted* team had not done; however, this was not surprising given that I had been in the school in a different capacity and for a much longer period of time.

I took all of the major issues that emerged from this part of my analysis, and re-assembled my documents into piles pertaining to each of the major issue headings. I then focused on understanding the myriad nuances of each broader issue. The best way to describe the process in which I then engaged is to illustrate the actual analytical process for one issue, which is done in Figure 7-4.

**Figure 7-4: Analytical Method Illustration**

**Broad issue**: Linking between philosophical position and the practical work of the school

**Level 2—Looked at:** KGS interviews, field notes and observation notes
RSS and BPS interviews, field notes and observation notes

**Level 3—Asked:** What was working at KGS with regard to this issue? What was not working? Was it working at RSS/BPS? Why?

**Level 4—Examples of what the evidence indicated:**

- KGS: Teachers who had accepted and were adopting the language and concepts presented by the Head in his papers and in-set activities (TAs) reported that they did not feel they were struggling in trying to meet the expectations of practice laid out by the Head
- KGS: Those teachers who had not accepted the promoted language and foundational principles (TRs) were the same teachers who said they felt they were struggling to meet the expectations of practice
- KGS: TAs were more consistent in the language they used in trying to communicate concepts
- KGS: TAs had more in common with each other in terms of their classroom practice, approaches to discipline than they did with teachers in the TR group
- KGS: TAs tended to have an easier time dealing with challenging situations arising with students and within their own practice
- KGS: TAs tried to use the Head's promoted strategies of dealing with issues when faced with challenges
- TRs often articulated frustration with not knowing why they were supposed to do things in a particular manner
- Two TR teachers who began to accept the school's principles of operation during the fieldwork reported having an easier time with their work
- RSS and BPS: Teachers (and sometimes students) overwhelmingly used similar language to discuss what they did and why. This language was grounded in the work of the relevant HE thinker.

**Linked to:**
Theoretical foundations
Professional development opportunities
Expectations of the teachers, school, students

As discussed earlier in this chapter, I had decided to use the data collected from my time at RSS and BPS to see how these HE schools addressed issues that were problematic to KGS, and to be reminded that some of the issues observed at KGS including personality

dynamics and organisational issues, were challenges faced by all schools in light of their nature as organisations. As I went through the final stage of analysis, I identified the nuances of issues faced at KGS, and then referred to my notes from RSS and BPS to see how the same issues had been addressed by those teachers and administrators. It was interesting to note how much my questions and observations at the two HE schools had been guided by my time at KGS; often I had specifically made notes or asked questions that were relevant to this part of the analysis.

I completed my analysis by looking over the categories and sub-categories of issues I had identified and making a judgment as to which of the issues were related to one another, which ones were particularly relevant to the HE component of change taking place at KGS, and which ones were issues that were more related to organisational change than HE. Since my research questions were specifically geared to the issue of how HE models affected the work of a school in the state system, this distinction seemed an important one to make as I presented my findings.

## 5. presentation of the data and findings

> The traditional research report of statement of the problem, review of literature, design, data gathering, analysis and conclusions, is particularly ill-fitting for a case study report. The case is not a problem or a hypothesis. It is useful for the writer to contemplate certain alternatives to work out his or her own approach to portraying the case (Stake 1995, 128).

I found myself thinking quite seriously about how best to present my data in this thesis. Perhaps I had been affected by my time in schools that reminded students regularly that beauty and aesthetics matter as much as content, or perhaps it is my perfectionist tendencies, but I was concerned that this topic which I found fascinating be accessible and enjoyable to others and bring the schools alive, an important consideration since I believe it was nuances of the schools that defined them in very special ways. Since specific events were what brought the school alive for me, I supposed the same would be true for those reading my description of the school.

I also felt it would be important to link my empirical findings back to the theoretical work I had done in the first half of my thesis thinking about very specific practical and

philosophical characteristics important to the identity of schools working within the holistic paradigm. It was a link which I could see existed in the data, but which I felt would not intuitively be made by readers who were not as familiar with the issues as I was. In short, I was looking for a holistic way of presenting the data which allowed the schools and teachers to speak for themselves as much as possible, and gave an integrated picture of the complexity of the institutions and their work.

I ultimately decided that I would introduce all three of the schools with a brief description of their history and organisation in Chapter Eight. I present the KGS experience in Chapter Nine through four sections, each dealing with the school through a different lens:

- Building a person-centred school
- Developing community and rethinking issues of authority
- Creative teaching and the development of curriculum and assessment methods
- Relationship of the school to the state system

Within each of these sections I try to present the recurring issues arising in the school with anecdotes, quotations, and illustrative events. I introduce examples of what I had seen at RSS and BPS in order to help illuminate the challenges or successes demonstrated by KGS and, in some cases, to illustrate how the HE schools dealt differently with a similar issue. In this way, I hoped to help readers understand the data in a contextualised way.

# Chapter Eight—Overview of the Schools

## 1. introduction

What follows is an introduction to the layout and organisation of the three schools used as part of my study. KGS will be described extensively in Chapter Nine so this background is merely an overview for the reader. As my interest was in the organisational, philosophical and practical efforts being made by the schools in implementing holistic ideas, I have focused on these aspects of RSS and BPS.

## 2. Kings Green School (KGS)

Kings Green School is a mainstream comprehensive school within the state system of England. Opened in 2002, it will be growing to house a community of students in years 7 through 13. As the third secondary school within an extremely economically-depressed area, it serves a highly transient student population that faces significant challenges in both their home and academic lives. School administrators estimate that at least a third of the 260 students have one parent who has been incarcerated over the last several years for drug use and/or dealing, theft or assault. Because of the challenges faced by the students and his own interest in social justice and equity, the Head of the school is committed to trying to make KGS a non-traditional state school experience for his pupils. At the time I began the case study, he had hired an initial core staff of six teachers along with five teaching assistants, and was working with them and students to create a more caring, pupil-centred approach to teaching and learning. By the time I left the school in late autumn of its second year, the school had fourteen teachers, nine LSAs and 260 pupils.

### *A. history of KGS*

KGS was the product of timing, vision and the needs of an educational action zone in an economically- and socially-deprived area of England. With two secondary schools already in the area and enrolment expected to increase by 2010, the local LEA determined that another secondary school was required. The committee decided that as

there was an opportunity to begin a school from scratch and because the success rate of the two other more traditional schools in the area was low (one of the schools was in special measures and the other had only a satisfactory rating from *Ofsted*), the new school would have as its primary goal the integration and application of the best available knowledge about teaching, learning, student success and personal growth. A Head was selected in March 2002 based on his embracing of these principles, and plans moved forward for the school to open in temporary accommodation in September 2002.

KGS is much smaller than average, with a fluctuating enrolment of 268 students in Years 7 and 8 for the 2003-04 school year. Each year the college will grow in size by 135 students until it reaches its expected capacity of 680 students aged eleven to sixteen housed in a new, purpose-built college campus, scheduled to open in September 2004. In the meantime, the school is based in a temporary two-story structure with a large atrium area and an open roof. According to figures reported to *Ofsted* in 2003, about 30 percent of students have special educational needs, with 3.3 percent having a statement of special educational needs, an above average proportion for England. The proportion of students taking free school meals, 40 percent, is above the national average figure. The number of students arriving at the college other than at the time of first admission or leaving at other than the usual time of transfer is very high, about 5 percent. The area around the college is socially and economically mixed, but well below average overall. The overall entry standard for students entering Year 7 is well below average due to the fact that the school is the institution of last resort for students who have been permanently excluded from the other two secondary schools in the area.

### *B. KGS school organisation*

The school operates on four primary guiding principles:

- Respect for students: all students must be respected as human beings with potential and needs that must be at the forefront of teachers' work with students.
- Development of community: the school should work to create small learning communities in which teachers and students have the opportunity to get to know one another very well.

- Integration of the curriculum: the world should not be fragmented into subject boxes since learning is most successful when information is synthesised and connected to prior knowledge.
- Inclusion of all students: excluding students from the classroom or school is unacceptable; their needs must be met at a level appropriate to them.

The school has translated its principles into several non-conventional ways of working with the timetable, the students, and the curriculum which are summarised below and will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Nine.

- "Schools within a school" model: The school is divided into three teams: Lighthouses, Windmills and Towers. Each team consists of a group of teachers that works exclusively with one third of the students in the school, allowing both pupils and teachers to develop strong relationships.
- Alternative ways of working with time: By allowing teams and teachers the flexibility of working with time in different ways, the Head hopes to allow teachers the flexibility to integrate the curriculum and make thematic and cross-curricular work easier to plan and implement.
- Policy of non-exclusion: The school holds teachers accountable for developing educational approaches that will work with and for pupil needs. The Head is committed to and vocal in his belief that it is not permissible for teachers to exclude pupils simply because they are challenging to work with.

## 3. Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley (RSS)

Rudolf Steiner emphasised an artistic-pedagogical method of teaching. He wished for education to be an art rather than a science, through which children could participate creatively in the unfolding of their individual potential. Based on the principles he laid out, Steiner Waldorf schools aim to offer a comprehensive education in a learning community where children can root themselves in their humanity as they live and grow through childhood. Children are taught in Year groups of mixed ability, in co-educational settings that are unstreamed with regard to social, ethnic or religious backgrounds, thus reflecting society at large.

## *A. RSS history and facilities*

RSS was incorporated in its present form in 1949 and has expanded to occupy about ten acres of an elevated site overlooking a rural landscape. The buildings are old but care has been taken to keep the grounds tended and to paint bright murals on the outsides of buildings in the courtyard so as to brighten the landscape. Once inside, walls decorated with the artwork of students bring the dark wood panelling to life. Colour and light play an important part in making sure that children "experience and create beauty," Steiner's wish for all human beings. As a visitor, I was immediately struck by the level of accomplishment in the arts demonstrated in the work of students as young as eight.

RSS has about 455 pupils, with approximately thirty in the Kindergarten, 235 in the Lower School and 150 in the Upper School. The school aims to support a harmonious development of the three human faculties of thinking, feeling and willing, taking full account of the physical and emotional growth phases of the child. While these three faculties are always interacting, there is a particular emphasis on the development of the will during the first seven years of home and Early Years education, during which time children learn most of what is worthy of imitation through activities. During the second seven years of the Lower School, the education of the feeling life is nurtured through the guiding authority of the teacher, integrating the artistic, imaginative elements into the learning process. During the third seven years in the Upper School the faculty of thinking is more directly emphasised by challenging the adolescents to individual judgment and to more conscious participation in their education. Teaching at all three levels is not done from a fixed syllabus or established tradition, rather the responsibility for each teacher is to create and recreate the curriculum for each group of students within the outlines developed by Steiner. The curriculum is geared to the physiological and psychological growth of the child.

The main school buildings contain twelve classrooms, Eurythmy (movement) room, school library, study rooms, and chemistry and physics laboratories. A corridor connects this building with the old School House which contains the Handwork and Music practice rooms. The Theatre is part of a complex of buildings which includes the Dining Hall and kitchens. Classrooms for years 1 and 2 are also included in this block and are

situated so that children have easy access to the gardens. The Long Room provides a good hall for chamber music, lectures and parents meetings. A detached block houses Arts and Crafts, with specialist rooms for art, needlework, woodwork, pottery and metal work. There is a separate Sports Hall with facilities for athletic and gymnastic activities.

### *B. RSS school organisation*

Based as it is on Steiner's ideas, RSS is very similar in its structure and organisation to the description of Steiner schools offered in Chapter Four. Children remain with a class teacher for the first eight years of school. This continuity of teacher for the main part of each day is aimed at fostering security and respect in the children, and allows the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of each child. At this age children are presumed to live strongly in their feeling life, and although they can readily learn what appeals to their artistic sense, they are not yet ready to comprehend purely abstract concepts. Thus, many activities are geared toward developing the memory and a strong foundation is given through material being presented, not intellectually, but in a living and pictorial way. All main subjects like English, Maths, History, Geography and the sciences are studied in-depth during two-hour block periods of 3-4 weeks in the Main Lesson which starts each day. The curriculum is structured so that children receive what they need at each stage of their development, and class outings are an important part of bringing the Main Lesson alive. In addition to the Main Lessons regular practice lessons are given in English, Maths, German and French. Practical subjects such as farming, building and gardening are experienced, and there are lessons in woodwork, modelling, handwork, painting, drawing and eurythmy. Music and drama play an important part in school life and classes regularly perform plays in the school theatre. Singing and recorder playing form an integral part of the Main Lesson in the younger classes, progressing to class orchestras.

When students leave their Class Teacher, they are entering a new phase in their development. At the approach of puberty, Steiner writes, the thinking intellect begins to predominate. Questions, discussions, criticisms, all the activities of the enquiring mind, grow in strength. Now education must foster the faculty of clear, independent thinking. Adolescents long for someone to respect and to ask for help, so in the Upper School a

sponsor takes on special responsibility for the class. The Main Lesson block-period system continues, but now the subjects are taught by specialist teachers. Since an intellectual quality obviously permeates the Main Lessons more strongly as the children grow older, the arts and crafts, singing, eurythmy, games, gym, etc. are all continued to provide an important balance.

Competitive exams play no part in the internal assessment of the school. However, each student is encouraged to follow his or her potential, thus the normal GCSEs and A Level are taken. Those leaving in Classes 11 and 12 also receive a Student Profile which gives an account of school life and their achievements.

## 4. Brockwood Park School (BPS)

The educational centre at Brockwood Park is located in the farmlands of southern England, two hours from London. The estate, with its large sprawling house and grounds, was originally given by a donor as a retirement home for Krishnamurti. Because of Krishnamurti's deep interest in education and his wish to set up a school in England, the donor agreed to the setting up of an educational centre for the study and application of Krishnamurti's ideas.

### *A. history of BPS*

BPS was established as an educational centre and school in January 1969. Its main purpose was to examine and apply Krishnamurti's educational ideas both to the operation of the school and to the daily lives of staff and students. The school is private and receives no state support; as a result, students pay fees of approximately £13000 per annum. However, there are provisions for full or partial scholarships for a limited number of students. The student body of sixty students is often drawn from as many as twenty countries and contributes a distinctly international flavour to the school in which students and teachers can be heard conversing in half a dozen languages over meals. A prospective student is sent a statement of the school's purpose and is required to write to the school providing a personal statement about herself and her particular interests. BPS staff also wants to know that each student feels able to comply with school policy.

Cooperation means that prospective students agree to follow a completely vegetarian diet, and to abstain from drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and irresponsible sexual behaviour while on school grounds.

### *B. BPS school organisation*

BPS complies fully with all of the standards that Krishnamurti felt were essential for the right kind of learning atmosphere. The main building of the school is a large, well-maintained neo-Georgian manor house set in exceptionally beautiful grounds. The interior is clean and attractive and radiates an air of warmth and intimacy giving the impression that this is more a home than a school. The main building contains apartments that were used by Krishnamurti, student rooms, the school library, the kitchen, a large dining room, a commodious common room, some classrooms, offices, and a new wing used for school and staff meetings. This large circular wing with a beautiful wood ceiling, reminiscent of California architecture, has the air of a chapel and it is therefore there that the community gathers each day for morning meditation. In addition to the main building, there are several outbuildings containing staff quarters and classrooms. The most recently constructed buildings are the cloisters. As the name implies, these are monastic in appearance and are built facing a central garden where all of the school's vegetables are organically grown and tended to by staff and students.

If some aspects of the school, particularly the staff and the student-body meetings, manifest an Experimentalist-like democratic interplay among participants, the organisation of the school day has a distinctively Realist feel to it. It radiates an affinity for order and regularity and its timetable is set up to try and ensure a harmonious and efficient living situation.

| | |
|---|---|
| 7:00 to 7:45 | Rising, showering, dressing, making bed and putting room in order.<br>Doing yoga, going for a run, swimming, etc. |
| 7:45 to 8:00 | Morning assembly of the whole school in the assembly room.<br>This is a period of silence together. |
| 8:00 to 8:30 | Breakfast |
| 8:30 to 9:05 | Doing allotted jobs or helping with washing up, preparing for class. |
| 9:05 to 12:50 | Classes with a mid-morning break |

| | |
|---|---|
| 13:00 to 14:00 | Lunch—students and staff share in washing up and re-setting of tables. |
| 14:00 to 15:00 | Rest period |
| 15:00 to 18:00 | Games, sports, work parties, music, meetings, classes (according to day). |
| 18:00 to 19:00 | Supper, washing up and resetting tables |
| 19:00 to 21:50 | Theatre workshop, television, dancing, films, discussion assignments |
| 22:00 | Bedtime |

BPS has its weekend from Tuesday afternoon till Thursday morning, and both Saturday and Sunday are normal school days. This unusual schedule serves to put the students slightly out of step with the mainstream rhythm of society, and therefore may help them to see things in a more detached and critical light. The schedule also provides for a silent meal once a week. Fridays are reserved for a school meeting open to staff and students at which any topic of general interest may be discussed.

Although BPS' official publications stress that the school does not overemphasise academic work, students are expected to study for a minimum of 30 hours per week if they are under 16 years of age, and 20 hours if they are older. In addition to their studies, students along with staff are asked to participate in the various work parties. A visitor might find one group taking care of the garden and another cleaning the kitchen—in fact, the visitor may well find herself taking part! Work parties reflect the ethos of the school, which is that all community members are collectively responsible for the school as a whole in addition to themselves.

At first glance, the code of conduct which students are expected to follow, as well as the schedule described earlier reflect a traditionalist concern for order and discipline. The difference, however, between traditional rules and BPS policies is the absence of coercion. BPS emphasises voluntary adherence rather than sanctions to force students to comply. Its philosophy of discipline is evident in the following statement written by Krishnamurti:

> You will probably not have experienced before what it means to live communally with others of all ages and nationalities, and so you may not know of the various situations that will arise in relationship which have to be met daily. These

> situations have to be faced here at BPS by us all together, and resolved in the spirit of consideration and affection for everyone … Many of the matters mentioned here are basic to orderly living and some may have to be reviewed as we move along. Please do not be misled into regarding them as an infringement of your liberty; on the contrary, if you look at them carefully, you will see for yourself that they are necessary for living and cooperating together. Freedom is responsibility in cooperation (Cavanaugh 1978, 122).

Despite the fact that all students at the school have ostensibly agreed to follow the general rules of conduct contained in BPS policy statements, there are inevitably problems here as there are in any other school or institution. School officials are candid in stating what they are, and students too seem to have a sense of where the tensions lie.

> One of the typical difficulties with students is that in questioning all authority, they often come to the conclusion that they cannot accept those rules and regulations needed for the orderly functioning of the school. The authority required by staff for doing their work properly tends to be resisted. What has to be made clear is that the kind of authority that is destructive is the one that arbitrarily imposes a certain set of beliefs, or certain ways of thinking and feeling. Such authority interferes with the art of learning, whether it comes from outside or from one's likes, dislikes, prejudices or desire for status and authority. On the other hand, the authority needed for the orderly functioning of a community, far from being harmful, is actually necessary for true freedom (Cavanaugh 1978, 132).

At BPS, it is assumed that students will come to regard rules as a necessary element that contributes to a smooth and orderly school. Once they can accept this fact, they will be intrinsically motivated to cooperate willingly. There is no published list of penalties, and in the years since its opening, expulsion from the school was invoked on only three occasions for exceptional behaviour that endangered the welfare of other students.

## 5. relationship of the schools to the research project

As was discussed in Chapter Seven, although I initially planned to use my time at RSS and BPS as individual case studies, my time at KGS led me to reconsider the direction of the overall project. KGS was a new school working through many issues as it sought to adopt holistic principles and practices, and I was having difficulty with two recurring issues. First, it was difficult to determine what issues I was seeing had more to do with organisational issues than with the specific challenge of trying to implement HE principles and practices. Second, although I was beginning to identify issues that were problematic and which I suspected related to the HE focus on the school, I did not have

any clear sense of why those issues might be problematic or how they might be resolved. It seemed that a far more interesting angle to my time at RSS and BPS would be to use them as opportunities to see what schools working completely within the HE paradigm did in terms of issues such as school structure, organisation, and professional development, areas that were emerging as challenging for KGS. My analysis of the KGS experience was ultimately informed by what I learned at RSS and BPS, as will be evident in Chapter Nine.

# Chapter Nine—What's Happening at KGS?

**Figure 9-1: Case Study Research Questions**

| |
|---|
| (1) In what ways does KGS enact holistic principles? |
| (2) What facilitates the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices by KGS? |
| (3) What are the barriers to the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices by KGS? |

The case study I conducted was guided by the research questions listed above. In this chapter, I have tried to present my findings in as contextualised and holistic a way as possible often drawing on the words of teachers to tell the school's story. All such quotations are referenced in Appendix A. As I tried to identify the successes and challenges of the school's efforts to adopt holistic educational practices, I did my best to focus on broad themes that seemed to underlie seemingly unrelated debates, and reflected on the ways in which these challenges might translate into lessons for other schools seeking to incorporate holistic principles.

As explained in Chapter Seven, my data collection and analysis were guided by the five general areas of practical application developed and discussed as part of my philosophical analysis of HE in Chapter Six. I assume the reader's familiarity with these areas of practice and, for the sake of continuity, have used them as a way to organise the presentation of my findings in the first three sections of this chapter, pairing some of the practice areas because of the inter-related nature of the issues arising. Where applicable, I have identified how my observations of the practices at the Rudolf Steiner School and the Brockwood Park (Krishnamurti) School influenced my analysis of the data and informed my conclusions about how KGS might have better handled the challenges it confronted in the implementation of holistic principles and practices. The fourth section of this chapter gives an account of the *Ofsted* inspection of KGS undertaken in October 2003, and discusses some of the insights drawn from that experience for both KGS and

the *Ofsted* inspection process. I conclude the chapter by pulling together some of the overarching themes and lessons.

It is worth reiterating here that the description of KGS contained in this chapter is my best effort at creating a sketch of the school in its second year, a period of rapid change and evolution in the life of the school. As many teachers pointed out in their interviews with me, one of the most challenging aspects of life at KGS was that it seemed always to be in flux. No sooner had one approach to the timetable or curriculum been adopted, then suggestions were being made about how to improve the process and things were in flux once more. Because my fieldwork was completed at the end of the first term of the second year, the findings in this chapter reflect only the work of the school in its first four terms of operation.

## 1. KGS as a person-centred school

On 29 June 2003, I sat in a circle staring at the faces of the teachers of KGS. Some faces brought forth vivid memories of the previous four months: a teacher in tears telling me, as the "researcher" who might have a voice that could be heard, about her frustrations with the students, the Head and the overwhelming demands of the school; a moment of triumph when a teacher who had been struggling to meet the expectations of the Head told her colleagues about her recent insights on how to reach a pupil; shared grief at an update on a student's family background and the child's ongoing traumas at home. Mixed into the circle were newer faces—teachers who would begin at KGS in August 2003 and who were eager to hear more about the school community they would soon be joining.

It was the end of term Staff Inset retreat, and I sat listening to Tom, the Head of the school, giving his talk on KGS and its vision. His strong voice commanded attention and I could see two of the new teachers rapt, drinking in his words: "moving away from a nineteenth-century vision of education focused on imparting formal and informal rules"; "teaching specialised knowledge and skills"; "keeping children contained"; "screening individuals for occupational pathways." He outlined the characteristics of the KGS

vision for education: "developing a sense of community, mutuality and shared responsibility"; "encouraging a sense of self-worth, contribution and personal dignity"; "acquiring a set of strategies/competencies for life-long learning, living and earning"; "promoting global awareness of contemporary issues." He concluded: KGS is trying to move "into a school model that has students at the centre of the process." (Notes, Staff Inset, 29 Jun 2003)

The words were familiar to me and I had only been at the school for about four months during its first year of operation. I knew that the veteran teachers of the school had heard some version of these words often enough to feel they were dreaming about them. One teacher said she felt constantly "preached at" (T2). Another admired Tom's "vision and passion" but felt that his "head was in the clouds" (T6). Two expressed admiration for his constantly pushing them to go farther: "I feel like I am on the same page as him but lose it … I intuitively understand what he is getting at but making it work moment to moment is hard. I often wonder if I am doing the right thing" (T8). I knew that Tom could be relentlessly hard on teachers who he thought were not on board with the spirit and mission of the school. He saw his primary job as creating a school that worked for students whose schools had often failed them, and in that context he felt it was teachers who needed to change their approach to their work rather than blaming students for somehow not being good enough.

In light of what I knew about the relationships between Tom and his veteran teachers, I was intrigued by who facilitated the portion of the morning entitled: "What is person-centred education?" Heidi was a veteran teacher of over 15 years when she agreed to come to KGS, and she had struggled through the first year. In theory, she liked the ideas KGS was founded upon, but she would admit that she had been trained to view herself as the centre of the classroom and that her approach as a teacher was quite traditional: leading lessons during which pupils were engaged but not driving content or process; assigning work; having work handed in; marking it; and giving it back. Heidi was open to changing her approach. She had chosen to come to KGS because of Tom's inclusion of the word "magic" in the job description. "I liked the sound of it, the feel of it. A Head who used a word like 'magic' had to have something going for him" (T8).

Yet, despite a commitment to the ideas of KGS, Heidi had found it difficult to give herself over to this new conception of a school, finding it hard to get beyond a number of her ideas of what the aims of a school were as articulated in an interview with me: "preparing students for the real world; getting them qualifications; instilling in them proper behaviour, reading, writing skills" (T18). She also mentioned "looking at kids as individuals" and "seeing what students need and making that happen" but her lessons reflected far more of the former list than the latter, with her at the front of the room doing most of the talking, admonishing pupils who disrupted the flow of her lesson, sending students out of the classroom frequently when they behaved "badly." (Observation, Heidi, 24-26 Mar, 9-11 Apr 2003) Of all of the teachers, she was the best example of how hard it could be to resolve a conflict between one's heart and one's mind in the move towards a different way of teaching. Her perseverance was reflective of the willingness of all of the adult members of the school community—teachers, learning support assistants (LSAs) and support staff—to keep engaging each other on the question of what it means to create a person-centred school in the face of many frustrations and challenges.

Heidi took the floor to talk about person-centred education, sharing some of her own experiences and reading from a handout that had been created for the school by a scholar-practitioner working on person-centred education:

> (1) Education is the main aim of schooling. (2) Education is about the development of human beings as persons. (3) We become persons in and through our relationships with others, and certain kinds of relationships help our development … (9) We are committed to the connectedness between what we do and how we do it (the outcome is as important as the process whereby we reach that outcome.) (10) Organisations and structures are the servants and not the masters of what we aspire to (Handout, Staff Inset, 20 Jun 2003).

Talking with the new teachers later that day, I could feel a sense of excitement about this radical way of approaching education. One newly qualified teacher (NQT) later remarked that it was refreshing to talk about these ideas. As a graduate trainee she observed that they hadn't talked much about the philosophical side of teaching.

> I think it is brilliant. I really do. [In my course] we talked more about the practical issues of teaching. There was no time for ideas like this because 90% of the timetable was focused on the practical stuff (T10).

Another NQT made similar observations commenting that the majority of his program had been "about the management of a class, dealing with student behaviour, and some lectures in science areas" (T18). They were justified in their excitement in the sense that KGS was committed, in both theory and its emerging practice, to the ideas being laid out. As an experienced educator of several decades and a self-described "radical" at heart, Tom considered KGS to be his chance to explore and implement a radical new vision of education within the state system. He had accepted the job at KGS knowing that he could call upon a network of past colleagues who shared this vision of education to act as advisors. He had also done his best to pull together a cadre of teachers who shared his vision or who, at the very least, were highly skilled teachers who he judged would be capable of meeting the demands of this new way of working.

The veteran teachers, while still committed to most of the ideas being discussed, were obviously tired after the hectic pace and gruelling demands of a first year during which KGS was being built from the ground up—both literally and figuratively. During this year they had been called upon to create an organisational structure that would serve to support the aspirations of a person-centred school. This entailed spending vast amounts of time planning and executing the details of issues ranging from the organisation of students and teachers into three separate houses or "schools-within-schools"; the content of an interdisciplinary, thematic curriculum that would meet the requirements of the National Curriculum yet not be reduced to "disjointed lessons in isolated subject areas" (Tom, Staff Inset notes, 29 Jun 2003); the best way in which to organise a timetable to allow for creativity in methods of teaching; the details of a new school building design that would house KGS and provide an environment in which to live out the values of person-centred education. All of this had been done on top of planning and teaching lessons in a creative way that engaged pupils coming into secondary school with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and capabilities, and trying to keep up with the flood of new information, readings, suggestions and occasional executive decisions that were passed down by Tom.

In spite of these challenges the core cadre of teachers was committed to working toward the vision of a person-centred school, believing that such a school would open new avenues of growth for both their students and themselves as teachers. The process of

moving from theory into practice had required them to focus on two main sets of issues. First, the teachers had to think about organising the school such that the development of community and relationships would be at the centre of the life of the school. This involved several sets of subsidiary issues including the dynamics that resulted from efforts to distribute responsibility and authority differently, and the challenges of addressing issues such as discipline and inclusion in the face of these changed authority dynamics. Second, the teachers were experimenting with new ways of organising the delivery of curricular content, including the adoption of a unique timetable, and the adoption of non-traditional teaching and assessment methods. Their experience of putting holistic educational theory into practice illustrates the rewards and challenges of such an undertaking, and may offer lessons to others wishing to do the same.

## 2. the challenges of building community

It was my first day of field work at KGS, and I approached the school with a mixture of curiosity and anticipation. I had only been in the city one other time when I had come to interview the Head and determine whether the school might be a good location for my research work. On that occasion, I had been startled at the hostility of the woman who ran the boarding house where I stayed. "Some Paki upstairs just arrived," I overheard her complaining on the phone. I was shocked to realise she meant me. What, if anything, did her hostility indicate about the city as a whole? What were the children who attended this school like? The Head and Deputy Head had told me that a lot of the pupils were attending KGS because they had been excluded from one or both of the other two schools in the city. These students were, in the words of Tom, the Head, "often victims of community, gang, or domestic abuse, in other words the most needy and vulnerable in society" (T17). It was bound to be interesting.

I walked through the doors of the school and, as I had been on my first visit, was struck by the picture before me. Although the school was being housed in a temporary building while plans for a permanent building were being completed, it was obvious that a great deal of care had been put into making even this temporary space attractive and serene, while maintaining important aspects of functionality. About 85 metres long and 45

metres wide, with a large parachute-like ceiling that rose about 50 meters high, this temporary building had been chosen for its aesthetic qualities. Two floors of classrooms ran the entire length of the perimeter, with the perimeter walkways and those connecting the two lengths of both floors entirely visible from the centre of the ground floor atrium, allowing for easy monitoring of pupils. The central third of the ground floor was occupied by trees, benches and tables for students to use for work, eating or socialising; and a greenhouse-like structure which teachers and pupils could use for meetings, or as a retreat from the noise of the atrium. The entire structure had a light, airy feel, quite different from my own memories of school buildings with long corridors, artificial lighting and a functional rather than aesthetic focus.

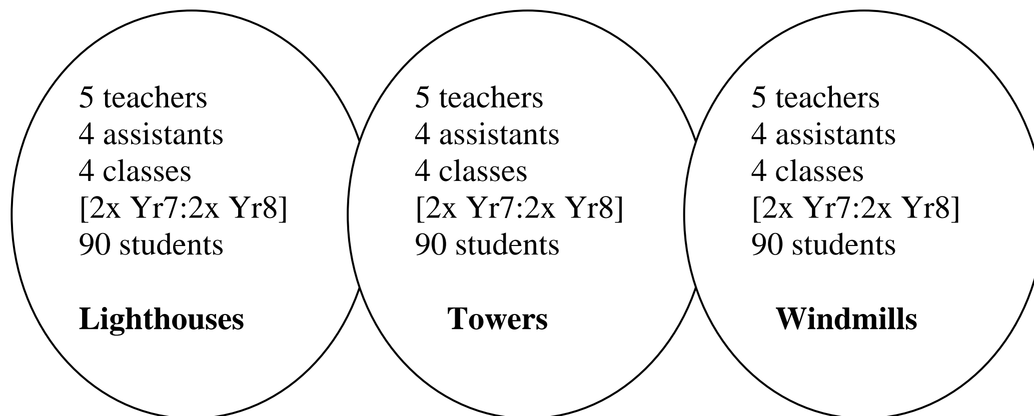
The care which had gone into the creation of this temporary space was being carried over into many other facets of the school's organisation. KGS had a wonderful opportunity to build itself from the ground up, and the Head and teachers were all excited about the host of options this left open for them. Having committed to creating a person-centred school, the first set of questions facing the team was how best to organise a school such that the people living and working within it would be at the heart of the enterprise.

## *A. organisation with a purpose*

Tom had come to the job with a vision of setting up a schools-within-schools model, in which students and staff would work together in three semi-autonomous schools—Lighthouses, Towers and Windmills. Each school would have its own dedicated team of staff, teachers and LSAs. Staff from the three schools would work together to ensure coherent planning, sharing of expertise and the pooling of best practices, but would have primary responsibility for knowing and teaching the students in their own school.

In its first year, KGS had about 130 students all in year seven, with the equivalent of six full-time teachers. The students were divided into six groups of approximately 22 pupils, and each group was assigned a mentor teacher. Because of the limited number of pupils, all teachers worked together to deliver the entire curriculum. During its second year, 2003-04, each school added two new classes of year seven students and was organised as illustrated in Figure 9-2:

**Figure 9-2: KGS Schools-within-schools Organisation**




The five teachers in each of the three schools were responsible for developing and delivering the whole curriculum. The teachers for physical education and music stood outside of the school structure and worked across all three schools. With the exception of these two teachers, each of the remaining fifteen teachers worked with only ninety students each week. The biggest drawback of the three schools model in the eyes of many teachers was that the limited ability to hire teachers meant that teachers were required to teach outside of their area of expertise. These issues will be discussed more fully in the next section.

This organisation of the school had been adopted for the purpose of making it easier for teachers and students to get to know one another. Students would be working primarily with five teachers who themselves were working with a total of ninety students. Tom and the teachers hoped that this would allow teachers an opportunity to get to know individual students as people and as learners, enabling them to more effectively build personal and academic relationships. Even once the school grew to its maximum capacity of 900 pupils spanning years seven through twelve, each school would only have 300 pupils, and the expectation was that a similar student-teacher ratio could be maintained. The building which was being designed to house KGS would house three self-contained school spaces, with common areas which could be used as needed.

In many ways, the efforts at building community were working. Teachers and students sat together in the dining hall for the school's healthy breakfast and lunch program, and many teachers found these shared meals to be a good time to engage with their students in a more social way. Mentor teachers enjoyed being able to get to know a small group of pupils well, and it became the norm at morning staff meetings for teachers to update each other on issues effecting particular pupils. When a Year 7 student was being shuffled from home to home following allegations of abuse by her father, her mentor teacher was able to keep other teachers updated on the girl's home life and help them to understand her erratic behaviour. Over the course of the first two years, students became more comfortable approaching their teachers outside of class time. Surveys of parents and students, both in-house and taken as part of the *Ofsted* inspection, indicated that students felt that their relationships with teachers was very good and that this resulted in their enjoying school more (*Ofsted* report, 11; KGS internal survey). As students became more comfortable with teachers and each other, many of them developed a proprietary attitude towards the school, demonstrating real pride in the building, their classes and their achievements. This was demonstrated in their efforts to keep the school clean; students were quick to self-monitor, often reporting students who were littering or making messes in the school's unlocked bathrooms. Students were often asked to show visitors around, a role many embraced.

The positive results of this relational approach were particularly apparent in the case of students with special educational needs. At one of KGS's daily staff meetings a long discussion took place about a Year 7 pupil named Billy. Billy was a boy with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties who had been excluded from both other schools in the area and was at KGS as a last resort. He had been particularly disruptive in classes for the last two days and his class teacher was soliciting help from colleagues. After a lengthy conversation, it was decided that Billy should be allowed to take time out of the one class he found most challenging, English, in order to assist the Head in hosting a group of visitors. Billy, whose academic level was not particularly high and who became frustrated during long class sessions that involved reading, was particularly keen on serving tea and biscuits. He even had a favourite cravat, which he insisted on wearing whenever he was given the opportunity to act as a host for the Head. As Tom later explained his thinking on the issue to me:

> Why not allow him the chance to develop an ability which he feels good about, which is useful and teaches him discipline, social skills and problem-solving, instead of having him wallow in a class which he finds overwhelming and makes him feel bad about himself? Having a success in this arena makes it easier for him to do the harder things he needs to do (T17).

His class teacher had tried to work with him individually on his reading skills, but she noted that the dynamics of a large class environment were often too much for him. Fiona, the school's art teacher and a favourite of Billy's, volunteered to work out an agreement with Billy about how his efforts in classes would be important in determining how often he would have the opportunity to play the role of host. One of the LSAs was assigned to work with Billy during classes he found particularly challenging, and it was agreed that if class sometimes became too frustrating for him, which happened on occasion, Billy could go to Fiona's classroom since she felt that she was often able to help him cope with his frustration. The plan was implemented and over time Billy made progress. Knowing that there was a support system to help Billy helped other teachers feel comfortable working with him, and many were able to get insights into how best to reach him from Fiona. Interestingly, some of the other students in his class picked up on the fact that Billy needed extra support and demonstrated more tolerance for Billy even when he was acting out. Several made efforts to work with him in classes when he appeared to be having a hard time. Over the course of a few months Billy matured both socially and academically. He relished his role as host, became better at making basic conversation and even bestowed an occasional smile. In the classroom he was able to recognise when he was becoming frustrated and became better about asking for help. Although he still had moments when he lost control, the instances decreased dramatically. I was impressed with the obvious perseverance with which the teachers and Tom tried to work with Billy rather than allowing him to simply roam the halls unattended, which I knew from my visits to the other two secondary schools in the city was the default solution to dealing with pupils who acted up frequently and were deemed "unteachable."

Billy's success at KGS was not unique. As the *Ofsted* report noted:

> Students with difficulty concentrating and low self-esteem are helped very effectively to develop positive, self-aware attitudes to learning. The good relationships with staff engender a willingness to try, and of tolerance to all

> students no matter what their ability or background. In its first two years of operation KGS had no permanent exclusions (*Ofsted* report, 11).

Although the lack of exclusions was partly the result of Tom's resistance to the idea of permanently excluding any child from the opportunity to get an education, it was in large measure a reflection of the fact that the school's overall culture dissuaded teachers from writing off students as failures, and encouraged them to explore different ways of helping challenging students to succeed in whatever ways possible.

### *B. authority structures and notions of discipline*

Despite an overwhelming acceptance of the benefits of smaller learning communities and the accompanying successes there were also significant challenges confronting the teachers of KGS. In theory, management and authority structures at KGS had been flattened, with the intent of giving both teachers and students more responsibility in the school. Tom hoped that it would help teachers become more invested in this new approach to education and spur them to be more creative in their approach to issues such as the organisation of the timetable and the content of the curriculum. He also believed that by allowing the three schools to experiment with different approaches, there would be greater opportunity for the development of creative new ideas. For the most part, teachers appreciated being able to shape the direction of the school, although the extra work involved weighed heavily on teachers who were already feeling overwhelmed by the new demands being made of them in the classroom.

Along with this devolved management, Tom pushed teachers to rethink their relationships to students, not only in terms of the issues discussed in the last section on the development of community, but also in terms of their role as authority figures in the classroom and the school as a whole. The widely divergent attitudes toward the new approach to relationships within the school, and particularly towards Tom's approach to discipline highlighted one of the biggest challenges to creating a school-wide culture that was truly "person-centred": the lack of shared vision of what such a school should look like in practice. In the words of one teacher, everyone at KGS was not "singing from the same song sheet" (T4). All of the teachers came to the job with their own conceptions of

what it meant to be a "person-centred" school, and what it would look like to put the child at the centre of the work that they did.

A student of Michael Fielding's work, Tom was convinced of the merits of building relationships through community, and believed that students were capable of taking responsibility for themselves, their learning, and their school to a far greater extent than most adults believed. The problem with most schools, Tom felt, is that students are never adequately helped to succeed and the fault for this often lies with teachers. Teachers then blame the students and resort to disciplinary measures to deal with the problems which they have created through their inability to properly engage students.

> What good does it do to take away something that a student enjoys or gets a sense of dignity from? How does that help, really? But if you punish based on something that doesn't matter then the punishment probably won't change behaviour. Who does punishment help, really? Students or teachers? (T17).

For Tom, the development of the person-centred approach he envisioned would follow a particular trajectory: the school would foster a sense of community and allow relationships to be formed between students and teachers; teachers would get to know their students as people and as learners; teacher would then be able to develop approaches to teaching and learning that would engage students; students who were engaged with school would value the community that provided them with these opportunities; students would take ownership of the school and their learning experience, thus strengthening the community of learning as a whole. Discipline as an issue needing to be handled through giving failing grades, exclusion or other punishments would cease to exist in the same way. He inundated staff with reading materials on these issues, and it was a topic he frequently discussed during staff meetings and inset days.

He was not shy about expressing his opinions when he felt that teachers had failed students, and I witnessed several instances of him scolding teachers for sending a pupil out of class, telling them in no uncertain terms that their effort to blame a pupil for bad behaviour or for failing to engage in class was unacceptable. "You are the teacher. It is your job to figure out how to make it work for the student. That is what you are here to do and if you can't do it then you don't belong here" (Fieldnotes, 14 May 2003). Unfortunately, he was not good at modelling what he expected from teachers. While he

did step in to assist with the occasional pupil, almost every teacher pointed out that he did not teach any classes and thus had no idea of the difficulties entailed in what he was demanding of them. "It makes you feel as though he has no idea what is going on when he is not doing what he says you should do" (T2).

While most teachers expressed their commitment to the idea of being "person-centred," they held widely differing views on what this should look like and most were doubtful that an approach such as Tom's would work well with the pupils at KGS. The first year cadre of teachers was overwhelmingly more conservative in their approach to classroom and pupil management. With the exception of Fiona, the art teacher, the rest of the teachers were much more like Heidi, the teacher who struggled to reconcile her desire to work within Tom's vision of the school with her strongly ingrained view of herself as the authority figure in classroom matters, and who was far more comfortable with more "traditional" modes of organising the classroom experience.

Sam was a relatively new teacher with three years of classroom experience who tried to conform to Tom's desire to give students more autonomy in the classroom, and more say in managing their own work. His lessons consisted of open-ended assignments which students could complete independently alone or in groups; he collected work but did not grade it, in keeping with Tom's expressed hostility to giving students grades. Unfortunately, the result of his efforts was not so much a well-run classroom of independent learners, but something more akin to chaos. His classroom was usually loud, though not productively so. Students quickly learned that his desire to provide them with independence would prevent him from disciplining them, and many took advantage of this freedom. It was acknowledged among the staff that Sam was one of the weakest teachers in the school.

In contrast, one of the first year advanced skills teachers (AST), Christine, openly disagreed with Tom's desire to renegotiate the balance of authority between students and teachers. Her maths lessons usually consisted of her giving notes to the students, at which point she would assign an activity or set of problems. Students were expected to remain in their seats working quietly and she would go around the classroom offering

assistance. She always assigned homework and gave out grades for completed assignments. As she noted to me after I had been with her for a series of lessons,

> Children, particularly children coming from backgrounds such as these, need to know the rules, they need structure, consistency and a sense that they know what is expected of them (T3).

What made her rejection of Tom's vision particularly tricky was that Christine was an extraordinary teacher, arguably the best in the school. Her lessons were well-planned, well-executed and the level of student engagement in her classroom was uniformly high. In addition, it was clear that students were learning the material she presented. The *Ofsted* inspection identified her subject as one of the school's strongest areas noting that

> achievement in [subject] is very good … Very good progress has been made over time as a carefully structured course has been followed … Evidence in students' very well kept files shows all students, including high attainers and those with special educational needs, achieve very well for their capabilities. (*Ofsted* Report, 9)

Teachers who were conflicted about Tom's aspiration to let students have more freedom and control observed the contrast between Sam and Christine and it reinforced their underlying sense that an approach such as hers was probably the best. Tom was aware of this dynamic undermining his efforts to shape the school's culture, but he also knew that he could not afford to lose a teacher of Christine's calibre in the first few years of the school's operation. Her role as a leader among the teachers was central to driving forward a lot of the organisational development that KGS so sorely needed. Her success with students was also important, particularly with an *Ofsted* inspection looming.

As a result of the divide among the staff in its first year, KGS often had half a dozen students wandering the halls during any given class. Teachers who were unable or unwilling to engage students in class could not punish them as they wished and viewed sending them out of the classroom as their only option if they hoped to work with their remaining students. Everyone knew that it was not a sustainable approach. Two things happened in the second year that helped shift the balance of opinion more in Tom's direction: the introduction of a new set of teachers to the school and an *Ofsted* inspection. The role of the *Ofsted* inspection in shaping the direction of the school will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter. The role played by the new

teachers was one of the most interesting aspects of this case study. Nine new teachers were hired for the second year of the school and unlike the first year core, they came into the school with a wider range of attitudes towards Tom's vision of KGS.

Four of the teachers—Matt, Anne, Martha and William—were more sympathetic to Christine's more traditional approach in the classroom, though none came anywhere near her in effectiveness. As William, a former law enforcement officer turned NQT, expressed it: being child-centred meant that his primary aim was to teach the child but for him teaching began with discipline. "They are children not adults and we have a responsibility to enforce discipline. Without it classes would be mayhem" (T18). These teachers struggled when faced with Tom's insistence that they find a way to work more successfully with difficult pupils. Martha ended up leaving mid-term out of sheer frustration with the way the school operated. Three of the new teachers—Mary, Gillian and Sean—were sympathetic to Tom's ideas but unsure of how it would work in practice. And two teachers—Elizabeth and Robert—were intuitively in line with Tom both in theory and in their classroom practice. Both were instrumental in moving KGS towards Tom's vision of the school.

Elizabeth, in particular, was an important addition to KGS. She was a very successful AST with ten years of experience whose success with students in the classroom rivalled Christine's, a fact noted by other teachers. She quickly embraced the non-specialist teaching that was necessitated by the three schools model, and her lessons in both her area of expertise and her non-specialty area were energetic and engaging, while nevertheless maintaining high expectations of academic excellence. She also recognised something instinctively that I recognised only after spending some time at the two HE model schools that were part of my fieldwork, namely that the students of KGS entered the school with no sense of how to engage at the level being demanded of them.

Although KGS was doing very similar things to the HE schools with respect to organising the school to support the development of relationships, and was trying to take a similar approach to issues such as discipline, there was one key difference. Many of the HE students had been in HE model schools for years and had thus gradually built up an understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the school community.

Students entering the school at an older age entered a set culture into which they were absorbed. In contrast, most of the KGS students were coming from primary schools that had not afforded them the opportunity to drive their own learning, or to have the freedom coupled with responsibility that KGS sought to provide. Elizabeth recognised this and was able to engage with students at a level appropriate to their skills, while also pushing them to become more independent and responsible in a structured manner that allowed them to learn these new skills in small steps. In this, she provided an excellent counter-point to both Christine, who was content to drive her classroom, and Sam, who arguably gave the students more freedom than they could handle responsibly. Within the first few months of her time at the school Elizabeth's popularity among students grew, partly because of her ability to connect with them on a personal level, and partly because students felt empowered by the skills she was helping them to develop.

Elizabeth was also keenly aware of the dynamics of the school. It was she who noted that not everyone at the school was "singing from the same song sheet" and observed that in order for the school to succeed in its aim it would take the full-hearted commitment of the entire staff. The problem with having dissent among the teachers about the best way to move forward, she noted, was that

> we are developing a group of children who understand that sanctions are far and few between but who are not able or willing to take on the flip side of responsibility that is necessary for that approach to work, and they are working the system. I am worried about that small nucleus of kids—we need to get them back (T4).

She recognised that all of the teachers needed to be on the same page but that Tom's approach of simply sending out reading materials and talking to staff during meetings and insets was not enough to make this happen. She made herself available to her colleagues, and worked particularly hard to reach out to colleagues who were on the fence about Tom's approach or those who simply could not see the ideas in practice. Mary and Gillian, both NQTs, soon adopted her as an informal mentor and mirrored her practice in their classrooms.

But Elizabeth's biggest success came with her work with Anne, an NQT who began the year convinced of the need to assert authority over students. Anne found it hard to

accept that students exhibiting the type of behaviour she was seeing in her classroom could learn to be self-disciplined. In particular, she took exception to Tom's attitude that the problem behaviour was somehow her fault, and she and Tom were often found arguing about the best way to move forward with a student. It seemed that she might follow Martha's example and leave the school. Elizabeth succeeded in engaging Anne and providing her with concrete examples of how this different approach with students could work. She invited Anne to come watch her classes and arranged for her to observe Robert, another AST whose work with students reflected the school's stated ideals; Elizabeth sat in on some of Anne's classes and provided concrete, constructive feedback on how to handle particular situations differently. Anne gradually came to appreciate that inviting students to take responsibility for themselves by ceding authority was not the same as ceding control entirely; rather, her role as a teacher was to create structured opportunities in which students could learn the skills necessary to be independent people—whether learners or members of the wider school community. Elizabeth's ability to visibly bridge the gap between a more teacher-centric approach such as Christine's that seemed to work well with KGS students as they entered the school, and Tom's seemingly utopian idea of a community of independent learners was important in helping a number of teachers to find their footing.

### *C. role of the KGS Head*

In light of the aspiration KGS had to have a flatter authority structure within the school, Tom's role as the Head is worth examining more closely. During my time at the school, I was often puzzled by the contradictions between Tom's words and his actions. On the one hand, he pushed for a school organisational structure that would allow teachers a great deal of autonomy. In reality, this autonomy resulted in highly increased workloads for teachers who were already feeling burdened. When the Deputy Head left the school at the end of the first year, Tom decided not to hire a replacement, and instead assigned various teachers the responsibilities that the Deputy had shouldered. This fact was not lost on teachers who consistently remarked on the amount of work they felt they were doing. Even teachers like Fiona, who was generally very happy at the school, remarked

> In the long run I know that I will be a better teacher for having done all of this work and the experience managing things and people. But right now it is really

> hard. There is so much that we are trying to do at once and the way we are organised without designated managers contributes to that (T6).

Yet, despite his talk of wanting teachers to be the drivers behind innovations and changes in the way the school operated, and his seeming eagerness to hand over the responsibility for making decisions, Tom could be very autocratic about how things needed to be done, and teachers expressed frustration at his unwavering stance on a number of issues. As discussed in the previous section, discipline was one of these issues, and the internal debate about the issue during the first year fractured the teachers into opposing camps in a way that did not seem to be particularly productive. Another example of Tom's inflexibility involved the school's developing timetable. I sat with teachers through three meetings in the first year during which the teachers agreed upon a timetable that I knew from my conversations with Tom did not meet his expectations for a high level of flexibility in the use of time. Each time, the timetable was adopted for a week or two, at which point Tom would re-open the conversation about the need for a timetable that allowed for more diverse ways of organising time and send the teachers back to the drawing board. With varying degrees of bitterness most teachers echoed the observation that

> It all goes back to Tom. At the end of the day it's his school. I felt like I had more ownership at other schools where things aren't so autocratic and the Head is more open to suggestions (T13).

This begged two questions: what was Tom's role as a Head and was the role he was taking on at odds with the aims of the school?

It was clear that despite their grievances about his approach, the staff uniformly acknowledged, if not always admired, his passion, vision and dedication. They knew that he was working hard to drive the school forward: working with architects to design the new building, writing grants to support additional programs the school wished to offer such as a high quality kitchen, field trips, and after school sports activities.

> I am a fervent believer that Tom has a vision and that we as his minions should be complementing that vision and getting it to function. A lot of people knew that coming in but still want a traditional school. But I would like to see him more in chalkface—around. It's one thing to plan a system and another thing to work the system … He needs to seen leading from the front for people who need inspiration and re-inspiration (T12).

> Tom is about the big picture, the vision. He's not good with details but he has a vision for what this school should be (T4).
>
> Tom is very inspirational. When he sells his philosophy he sells it heart and soul and believes in it (T14).
>
> Tom has a wonderful sense of vision about what this school could be, but his vision needs to be in line with everyone else's tune on vision (T18).

This last comment stayed in my head, and I wondered whether the teacher was right to suggest that in setting up a school that aspired to be about community, it was important to involve the players in the development of the vision in a more democratic fashion. I was still debating the issue when I visited the Steiner (RSS) and Krishnamurti (BPS) schools. On the surface, it appeared that both of these schools were operating in a far more democratic manner than KGS. RSS was run by a committee of teachers who made decisions about the direction of the school. BPS had a Head, but the school as a whole was run in quite a democratic fashion, including students as well as teachers in votes about issues such as school rules and major policies. In taking such a hard line about how KGS should operate, was Tom deviating from an important practice of HE schools?

Upon closer observation and reflection, however, it became clear that my initial thoughts about the democratic nature of the schools were not entirely accurate. I was struck during my conversations with members of both the RSS and BPS communities at how everyone involved in the schools seemed to be on the same page about the work that they were doing. When I asked an RSS teacher about the organisation of the year groups, his response was grounded in Steiner's theories about the development of children and the importance of certain structures in supporting their growth and learning. When I asked a student about the same issue, she gave me a similar, if less technically involved, response. Similarly, at BPS, when I asked teachers about the communal living atmosphere and its significance, their responses all reflected the work of Krishnamurti and his thoughts on the importance of allowing students to be in a place away from the people and places that condition them. Students' responses to the questions reflected an understanding of Krishnamurti's work and some of the ideas that shaped their education. To use Elizabeth's phrasing, at the HE schools it was clear that everyone was singing from the same song sheet.

The HE schools were driven by the ultimate authority of the writings and practices developed by the HE thinkers. Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti had all overseen the development of schools in which their ideas were implemented, and the models they developed nearly a century ago continue to exist in a nearly identical form. When teachers at these schools had questions about how to develop the school, they had the writings and practical work of the thinkers as an ultimate reference point, one which was shared among all members of the school and staff. The cultures that had developed over the years in the HE schools allowed the institution to become self-perpetuating for both students and teachers, enabling those new to the work of the school to be absorbed into something larger than themselves. Students are able to learn from the behaviour of other students. Teachers are able to use the work of other teachers as a reference point.

A state school like KGS which was attempting to adopt holistic principles and practices had no such template. As the driving force behind the school, Tom had an idea of what the school could be, which he had developed over his years as an educator. His vision of the school had been shaped by his own self-identification as a "radical" as well as a wide array of readings and his professional experiences. His role within the school was really to be what the body of work of the HE thinkers was to their respective HE schools. What KGS teachers viewed as dozens and dozens of annoying photocopies of articles that filled their boxes were his efforts to share with them the work that he found most inspiring and upon which his work at KGS was grounded, his effort to delineate the theories that should underlie the everyday work of the school and its teachers. What KGS teachers interpreted as his unwillingness to compromise on issues such as discipline was his effort to hold on to a vision of schooling which had to be realised by a group of diverse individuals coming from a wide range of backgrounds, a challenge not faced in the self-selective world of HE schools where teachers choose to commit themselves to a particular thinker's work. To risk carrying Elizabeth's metaphor too far, Tom was forcing the KGS teachers to sing from the same song sheet until enough of them were harmoniously singing the same song that the group could absorb outliers who were off-tune, or convince those singing the wrong song entirely to go find another group. He filled the space occupied by the theories of the HE thinkers in the HE schools, and without someone dedicated to filling that role KGS would likely have veered off

track early in its first year when it became clear that the majority of the teachers were not staunchly committed to the same vision that he espoused.

Having acknowledged the importance of Tom to the work of KGS, it is also possible that some of the challenges faced by KGS in its first few terms might have been avoided with a slightly different approach to the school's inception and a more robust approach to the professional development of teachers. Such an approach could be inspired by what we know of the work of HE schools. All of the HE schools require teachers to undergo a teacher training program specifically designed for the school. This reflects the understanding on the part of the HE thinkers that the ideas underlying the work of their schools is a shift in thinking for most people, as was discussed in detail in Chapter Six. The HE programs also require teachers to work with experienced teachers so that they can see theory put into practice, in much the same way that Elizabeth's work with her colleagues helped them to translate theories about what KGS could look like as a person-centred, relationally-oriented school into a practice that they could understand.

One of Tom's greatest shortcomings as a leader of the school was in his failure to recognise the importance of allowing teachers to spend time in a meaningful way with the material and ideas he was presenting them with before they began trying to translate the ideas into practice. He acknowledged that he was asking them to think in very new ways about their roles as teachers within a learning community; nevertheless, he failed to provide them with time to absorb and internalise the reality of that change. The KGS teachers all complained about the frantic pace of the school and the fact that there was little if any time to think or plan.

> We are always flying by the seat of our pants. There is absolutely no time to plan or to think ahead or to reflect on what could have been done differently except maybe staff insets but even those are so busy that you end the time with your head spinning (T6).
>
> When it gets hard, it is easiest to fall back into old patterns and when everyone does that then you end up with a school that is not doing what we want. We have a greater capacity for change than I think the school reflects but it has been hard (T2).

Taking the time to properly train people up-front in new ways about thinking about education and the work they were endeavouring to do might have been a reasonably

small investment during the start-up phases of the school that might have helped the teachers at KGS be more efficient in their efforts to build a school from the outset, and avoided a lot of personal conflict and misunderstanding in the long-run..

## 3. fostering knowledge and understanding

As discussed briefly in the previous section, the challenges involved in developing innovative ways of working with time, subject matter, students, and methods of content delivery meant that many practices were in flux during the first year and a half of the school's existence, and most certainly during the period of my research. The challenges of developing community structures and negotiating the related interpersonal dynamics took up a lot of time and energy during the first year. As a result, the school followed a fairly conventional timetable:

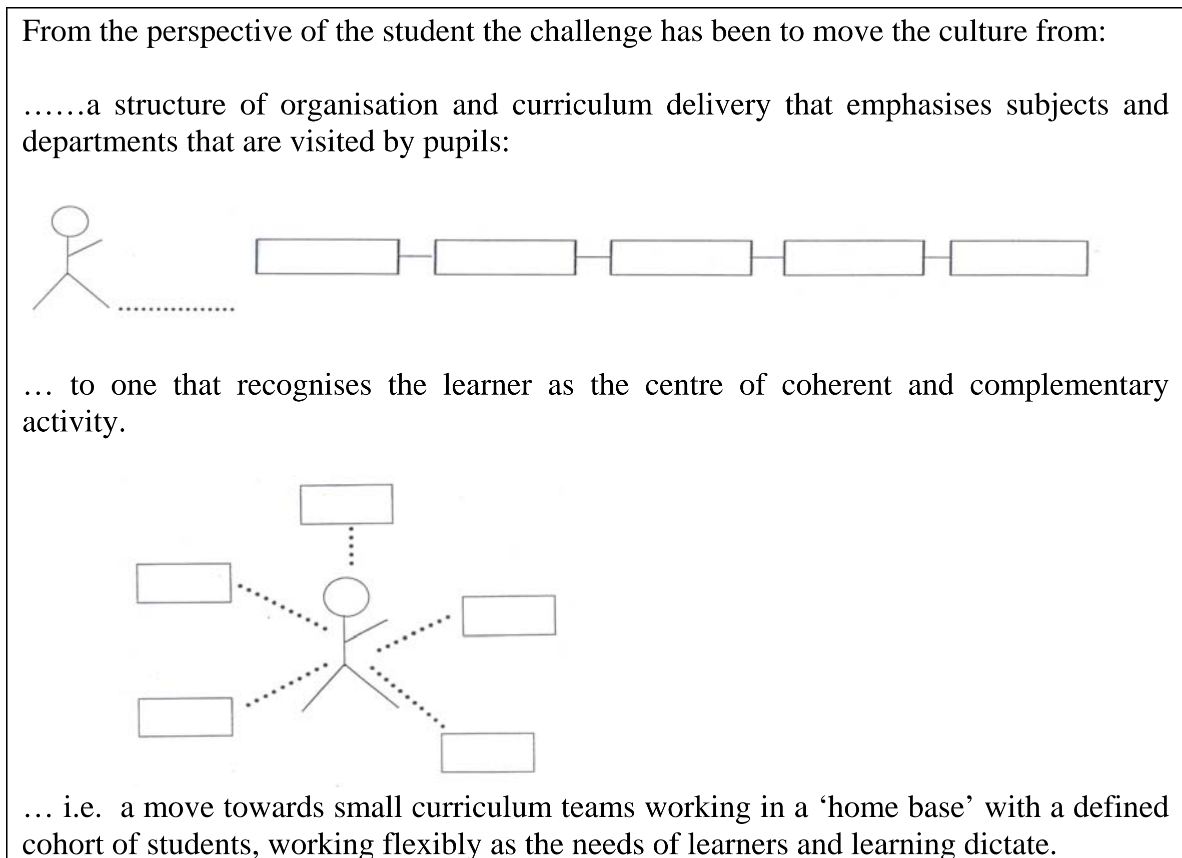
| | |
|---|---|
| 08.25 | staff briefing |
| 08.40 | small group tutorials; assembly |
| 09.00 | morning lessons includes 15 min break usually at 10.10 |
| 11.30 | club enrichment programme |
| 12.10 | 2 schools at lunch, 1 school at numeracy/literacy |
| 12.50 | 1 school at lunch; 2 schools at numeracy/literacy |
| 13.30 | afternoon lessons |
| 15.30 | end of lessons, voluntary clubs until 16.45 |

The timetable allowed for two large chunks of lesson time in the morning and afternoon, which Tom hoped would be used for interdisciplinary work. This hope was occasionally realised, but teachers were generally content to work independently as they were used to doing in their old schools, and students generally experienced a traditional array of courses: English, Maths, Design and Technology (D&T), Computes (ICT), Science, Humanities, Art and Physical education (PE).

By a few weeks into the Fall term of 2002, Tom came to the conclusion that teachers would not break out of traditional ways of working unless the impetus to do so was built

into the structure of the school. In the same way that the organisation of the school assisted in the development of community and relationships within the school, so too would organisation of time assist in the creative use of time, and the development of innovative ways of working with the curriculum. A handout to teachers contained the following diagram:

**Figure 9-3: KGS Changing Curriculum Delivery**



From the perspective of the student the challenge has been to move the culture from:

……a structure of organisation and curriculum delivery that emphasises subjects and departments that are visited by pupils:

… to one that recognises the learner as the centre of coherent and complementary activity.

… i.e. a move towards small curriculum teams working in a 'home base' with a defined cohort of students, working flexibly as the needs of learners and learning dictate.

The process of negotiating the exact structure of the new timetable was a long one, with many teachers sceptical about some of the suggestions and stressed by the constantly changing landscape of their job.

> When I first came to KGS, I thought my ideas fit well with what the school was trying to do, and I expected more structure when I came in, but it was opened up so broadly, that was the shock. You have to have something to work with and we are shaping it as we go along … It wears me out. I got to the point last year where I didn't like to come into the building because of the tensions, stresses—there are very high levels of stress here … I couldn't bear the meetings. Going round and round on the timetable instead of building up resources. I felt like it

> was so unfair to the children who rely on continuity and normalcy to have a timetable that doesn't look the same from day to day (T5).

It was agreed about midway through the first year that the teachers would try out several approaches to working with time. A few pairs of teachers developed interdisciplinary lessons such as designing and constructing a game that incorporated art, D&T and maths. Another effort included humanities teachers working as a team to teach a themed set of lessons on "Jack the Ripper" which incorporated history, humanities and English. One full day was set aside as "Faith Day," during which the school brought in members of different faith groups from the surrounding community to talk about their belief systems. Students rotated from classroom to classroom hearing different speakers.

These experiments with organising time and subject matter helped the teachers and Tom identify a set of models that they thought might work; however none of the models alone felt sufficient. On the one hand, no one wanted a strictly conventional timetable. However, organising a school primarily around one day workshops or constantly requiring teachers to team teach or develop interdisciplinary lessons seemed like it would entail more work than most of the teachers felt they could handle.

### *A. using values to develop structure*

Tom insisted that the school be built on the assumption that all children can learn and that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a learning environment and an approach to the curriculum that meets children at their level of experience. The structure of the timetable needed to allow students access to different ways of teaching and learning in order to ensure that all children engaged with materials in a variety of ways. This would increase the chance that all children would engage with material in a way that met their learning needs and should ultimately result in a deeper understanding of materials. During the spring of 2003, Tom and the teachers generated a list of learning opportunities that they hoped to be able to provide to students:

**Figure 9-4: KGS Student Learning Opportunities**

There should be opportunities for young people to:

- Pursue independent study/enquiry on topics of their own choosing as well as those externally set, making extensive links through the web and e-mail contacts around the globe
- Work in small groups on a range of problem-based learning scenarios that reflect authentic issues and dilemmas in our society and their community
- Be involved as part of a class group and negotiate, with their tutor, an appropriate theme for a class project, and move to take responsibility for part of the project, organise their work and contribute to the final exhibition
- Feel the passion and power of a teacher-as-expert/enthusiast for a specialist branch of learning e.g. a poet in residence, a history teacher tracing the rise of fascism
- Work within a broad, cross-curricular theme such as 'Global Warming' with a team of teachers who accept responsibility to engage and lead students through an exploration of a range of issues, past and present
- Ensure that the latent and overt talents of every student are able to thrive and that every student is supported and encouraged to be fully literate in all the basic skills

—"Less is More"

Working backwards from this list and drawing on their experiments with different ways of teaching materials, the teachers identified four main ways of organising the school day that they felt should be included in the timetable:

- Conventional timetable with particular subject areas covered in block periods;
- "Masterclass" days during which a teacher works with a class of about 20 pupils for a whole day on a subject-based project or lesson;
- Team theme blocks of three to four days during which the teachers on each of the three school teams work around a particular theme;
- Faculty days in which teachers who teach a particular "faculty" work with forms of pupils on projects or lessons related to that faculty area.

Starting in the 2003-04 academic year, the five teachers in each of the three schools would be responsible for developing and delivering the whole curriculum as defined by the programmes of study of the English National Curriculum and the competencies of the Royal Society for the Arts' 'Opening Minds' project. Each teaching team would be encouraged to use the expertise of its staff to organise the best match to the various

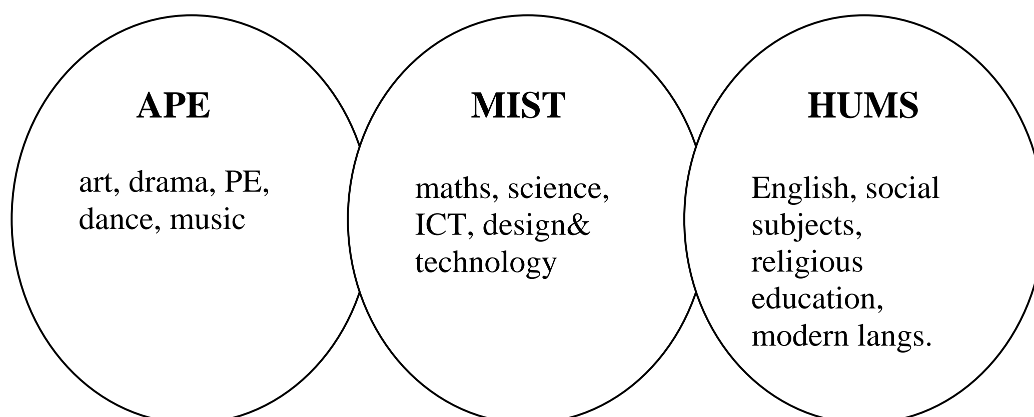
components of the curriculum. This was an important aspect of their work since not every teaching team had teachers who were specialists in all areas of the curriculum. In the second year, for example, the Lighthouses teaching team contained the following members whose specialty areas are listed in brackets:

**Figure 9-5: Lighthouses 2003-04**

| | |
|---|---|
| Heidi (English) | Sam (ICT) |
| Robert (design and technology) | Vincent (humanities) |
| Elizabeth (modern languages) | |

Between these five teachers the expectation was that all areas of the curriculum would be covered. This included subjects such as maths and science in which none of the team's teachers were specialists. Within each of the schools the members of the small teaching teams would work as solo teachers to engage students in aspects of the National Curriculum within a more conventional timetable approach. They would come together to work as a team of five to support cross curricular and thematic work. In addition, the eventual KGS timetable included a rolling programme of "Masterclasses" and a "faculty programme." Masterclasses were envisioned as whole day intensive study experiences during which teachers could develop in-depth, all-day lessons in an area of real passion and expertise for them. The Faculty programme would bring together students from Year 7 and 8 to work with a group of teachers in particular faculties on a three-day learning experience. The three "faculties" were as follows:

**Figure 9-6: KGS Faculty Organisation**



In addition to these new learning blocks all students would continue to be involved in efforts already in place during the first year. Each day began with small learning group tutorials in which four or five students met with a teacher and an LSA for a weekly review of work and target setting. This enabled class teachers to keep up with the progress of individual pupils. There was also a continuous rolling programme of clubs which met during lunchtime. Each student was able to choose from a series of club options which she would attend for two weeks before moving to her next club. The topics covered by lunchtime clubs ranged from less academic options such as "Beauty Salon", "board games" and "origami" to more substantive options such as "Great Thinkers". These clubs were run by teachers, learning support assistants as well as the occasional visiting researcher. All students also continued to attend a daily "num-lit" session in which basic numeracy and literacy skills were covered intensively by the class teacher. Finally, there was a wide range of after school clubs such as "Computer Workshop" and "Topics in the Arts", as well as sports groups.

The final version of the KGS timetable which went into effect during the Fall 2003 term was organised in half-term blocks that repeated throughout the year:

**Figure 9-7: KGS Timetable**

| Team theme | Team theme | Team theme | Team theme | Masterclass |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Masterclass |
| Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Masterclass |
| Team theme | Team theme | Team theme | Team theme | Masterclass |
| Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Masterclass |
| Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Conventional | Masterclass |
| Team theme | Team theme | Faculty | Faculty | Faculty |

The initial efforts of teachers and teams seemed promising. Towards the end of the first year, the APE faculty team worked with one set of pupils to put on a production of the musical "Grease" which involved students designing a set, putting together costumes,

learning song and dance routines, memorising the script and putting on a performance for parents and incoming KGS students. Several teachers developed interesting Masterclasses; a favourite among students was a CSI Day in which a former police officer and NQT with a science background invited former colleagues in to talk about forensic work, and developed a mock crime scenes for students to "work." This Masterclass later became the basis for a MIST faculty project in which students spent three days solving a murder using forensic techniques and preparing their findings for presentation in court. Teaching teams chose thematic units based in part on their ability to incorporate various types of learning opportunities including field trips, guest speakers and full-day experiential learning activities.

### *B. the challenges of content and assessment*

By the end of its first year, KGS had a timetable for the following year, but the challenge of developing a curriculum and developing assessment tools was only beginning. Unfortunately, my research period at the school ended shortly after the start of the Fall term, which meant that I was given only a glimpse of the issues confronting the teachers, and even less of a sense of how the challenges would be resolved. As a result, the issues discussed in this subsection give little sense of any resolution of diverse viewpoints.

At the start of the second year the teachers faced the challenge of working within their school teams to develop units of study for the various types of lessons. The hope was that, over time, coherent units of study would be developed that would allow students to spiral back over their time at KGS to topics covered in previous years, and that these units of study would inform the choices schools and teachers made about the content of all classes they taught, whether within a conventional timetable or as a Masterclass. In this regard, the work was intended to be structured in a way similar to the curriculum at Steiner and Montessori schools. The KGS curriculum would draw from the English National Curriculum as well as the RSA's Opening Minds Initiative. Tom and the teachers felt that the National Curriculum taken alone would result in a school curriculum that was too information-driven and would not adequately prepare students with a broad range of skills for life including skills for learning, the ability to manage people and situations well, and good citizenship. The Opening Minds project was

developed to teach these life-skills directly and specifically and has as its focus a competence framework that aims to meet an individual's needs in the personal, social and employment worlds.

There was, unfortunately, no time to think through the ways in which these two bodies of thought would inform the entire curriculum during the few days of staff inset before the Fall 2003 term. Not only was term nearly upon them, but the teachers were also coping with the introduction of a spate of new programmes that had somehow emerged over the summer. A Peer Mentoring project was being put in place; a consultant was coming in to teach the teachers about meta-cognitive training which they would then teach to their students during their mentor periods; and another set of visitors would also be arriving from the United States shortly after the start of the Fall term to do a staff training on developing writing skills with students. As one teacher noted,

> We have a great capacity to change, but we've been forced to move too quickly in too many directions. We see something that doesn't seem to be working and we jump full-scale into an intervention or something new, without ever stopping to ask fundamental questions about what doesn't work. When you are attempting to change people, it is a gradual process (T2).

As a result of all the turmoil surrounding the start of school, decisions were made about topics for the term's themed lessons and faculty projects based on a variety of more prosaic factors such as what subjects interested teachers, what topics seemed as though they might be of most interest to students, and how particular topics might fit a particular teacher's desire to plan an outing for pupils.

While it was clear that the process for developing themes for this term was not necessarily indicative of how future terms' themes and lesson content would be chosen, as I sat in on school and faculty planning meetings, I was struck by two contrasts between KGS and the HE schools. First, with regard to the curriculum, I was taken aback by the lack of consideration being given to the needs of students in choosing topics of study. Having studied the work of the HE thinkers and just spent time in the HE schools, the idea that curricular content should be fit to the developmental needs of students was firmly fixed in my mind, and I wondered whether such considerations would eventually make it into the conversation about curricular content at KGS given the

lack of focus on such issues generally within the National Curriculum and even an initiative such as "Opening Minds." Second, the whirl of new projects and programmes being introduced in the school surprised me. Given the early stages of its development, it seemed strange to be introducing more uncertainty and chaos into the mix. It seemed to fly in the face of the "less is more" approach taken at the HE schools where depth of coverage seemed more valued than breadth of coverage.

Of more pressing concern to the KGS teachers at the start of term were the challenges involved in non-specialist teaching, which was now an integral part of the KGS mode of operation. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the three schools model coupled with constraints on the number of teachers that could be hired meant that almost every teacher was expected to teach classes outside her/his field of expertise. Tom had been saying from the start that his expectations in hiring faculty members was that he was hiring "specialists in pedagogy" not specialists in teaching one subject or another. He insisted that by working with members of the KGS staff who were subject area specialists, strong teachers could rise to the challenge and successfully teach students in fields that were not their area of specialisation.

> First and foremost we are specialists in teaching. If I need information I have Google, and Google will be better than I can ever be for information. But I am better than Google in working with you, I am better than Google in talking with you, I am better than Google in accessing ideas with you and demonstrating to you different ways of working. My expertise is to be a teacher and a passionate teacher (T16).

In the Lighthouses team, for example, Robert, whose area of specialisation was design and technology would be teaching maths lessons, and Elizabeth, whose area of expertise was modern languages, would teach science. The reaction to this expectation of non-specialist teaching among teachers was varied during the first month of term.

> At first I was sceptical about other people teaching French. But Tom is right that ASTs are good teachers and what [maths teacher] does is better French than the kids get in five other schools I can think of. I think it works better than we allow ourselves because we are ASTs and it is galling if we do something less than perfect (T4).

> I am a D&T specialist and this term I am teaching 4 lessons in D&T, 4 in ICT and 4 in French. I can't speak French. I will give a poor experience and my opinion is that students would benefit more from learning D&T from me than French. (T2)

Beyond their own comfort or discomfort with the idea of non-specialist teaching, some teachers expressed concerns about how this approach would influence the upcoming *Ofsted* inspection. They were justified in their concerns, as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Concerns about the *Ofsted* inspection were a frequent topic of conversation within the school starting late in the Spring term of 2003 when KGS got word that it would be inspected in the Fall 2003 term. News of the inspection lent a new urgency to a final ideological debate taking place within the school: the debate surrounding appropriate ways of assessing students. Most of the teachers were quite concerned about the inspection and whether it would result in the closure of the school for not meeting minimum requirements, and many felt that it was important that KGS be seen to be in compliance with the expectation that student progress be adequately measured and recorded. Quite a few of the teachers at the school equated assessment with the awarding of marks and were adamantly in favour of giving students grades.

> Of course we need tests and grades. Society expects it. Here [at the school] we are doing something, but we do need to conform to the rules of society (T18).
>
> I absolutely think we should be marking work—not overmarking but focusing on aspects of the work. How else do we measure achievement or know whether we add value (T2)?

Other teachers were much more in line with Heidi, who had led the staff inset session on assessment a few months earlier.

> Assessment cannot be useful to students unless they know the purpose of the assessment and the criteria against which they are being assessed … pupil-teacher dialogue should be a key part of the assessment process at KGS. But how much information should students be given about their levels? Do the disadvantages of the labels outweigh the benefits or not, given that these children live in a society that already boxes people too much (T8)?

Several of these teachers acknowledged that the new approaches being taken in the school did not lend themselves well to simply giving exams and marking essays. They realised that these new ways of teaching would be most productive if students were aware of what they were supposed to get out of the activity or lesson, and often times this was a more complicated set of outcomes than could be measured on a test. Among

this cohort of teachers was support for the idea of using rubrics to lay out performance measures, an approach already being used by Lynn who taught Drama during the first year but not viewed with particular favour by Tom. Tom's view was that assessment should be formative rather than normative, thus supporting the development of alternative assessment methods such as learning portfolios but not the awarding of grades or some static indicator of one's performance.

> It is an ideological debate that has to be won. It is about school being an arena of confirmation. No grades is about trying to avoid that pall of failure that so many students already feel and to what end (T17)?

Although I was not to learn how KGS resolved the issue during my fieldwork, the debate was one which I felt was similar to the debate within the school about discipline in which both sides appeared to be talking past one another. The problem was that there were no good models available to the teachers pushing for giving students marks on what assessment would look like in the absence of awarding grades. Although the debate continued on as the date of the school's inspection drew nearer, the atmosphere in the school slowly shifted. Ideological debates, frustrations about workloads and conflicting ideas of where the school should head in its second year suddenly took a backseat as the school closed ranks in the face of a perceived outside threat.

## 4. through the eyes of the state: the *Ofsted* inspection

KGS was surprised to learn that it was to be inspected during the first term of its second year as a school, and the teachers were understandably worried about how the school's untested organisational structure and unconventional modes of working would fare under the critical eyes of the *Ofsted* team. In spite of putting on a good face, Tom was worried as well. He knew that the school could very easily be judged to be non-compliant and put on probation, a result that would mark the end of his tenure as Head and deprive him of the opportunity to build his vision of a school from the ground up. He spent the summer completing inspection reports, trying his best to find the numbers and percentages needed to complete his summary of the school. Given the state of relative chaos that had marked the school's first year, several teachers felt downright unprepared

to present student files or marks, and they worried that their lack of preparation might be the cause of problems during the inspection week.

The positive result of the looming inspection was that the school came together in a way it had never done before. Students were aware that inspectors were coming and that a bad report could mark the end of the school. It was very likely a sign of the affection many of the Year 8 students felt for the school and the teachers that the first month of school was one of the calmest period any of the teachers had ever experienced. Year 8 students seemed to be on their best behaviour and appeared to be trying to keep the Year 7 students in line as well. Teams pulled together to plan outstanding lessons; debates about discipline, assessment, and workload were put aside. Whatever their feelings about the hardships KGS brought to their lives, all of the teachers, most especially those in their second year, were determined to put their collective best foot forward.

### *A. initial challenges*

Several challenges confronted both the school and the *Ofsted* team within the first few hours of the inspection process. Top on the school's list of concerns was the fact that twelve inspectors had arrived, a seemingly large number of inspectors for a school with 270 pupils and 18 teachers. This immediately raised the tension level for teachers, as each realised that he or she was likely to be observed by inspectors numerous times over the course of the four-day inspection. Such an intense inspection experience was something none of the teachers had ever faced, most of them having been at large schools at which inspectors hardly ever inspected all teachers, let alone inspected teachers multiple times.

The inspection team faced two main challenges. First, after a meeting with Tom in which they received an overview of the school, it became clear to them that much of the information that they would normally have relied upon to make judgments about the effectiveness of the school was simply not available. In particular, the age of the pupils meant that there were no SATs results to indicate academic achievement; and the newness of the school meant that there were no established schemes of work for individual subjects.

The second major challenge for the team was the KGS timetable. After much deliberation and worry about the best way in which to approach the inspection process, the teachers had decided not to present the *Ofsted* team with a week of conventional timetabling in the school. In spite of concerns that creativity would not be well-received by the inspection team, the majority of teachers felt that it was important not to hide the unique aspects of the school's efforts with students. As a result, the teachers had agreed to, and prepared for, an inspection week schedule which had a Masterclass on Monday and team theme days on Tuesday through Thursday.

The inspection team recognised quite quickly that the standard *Ofsted* inspection framework would not fit the school well. However, the newly adopted Framework allowed for the process to be changed in order to better accommodate the structure of the school, and after consulting with Tom a new arrangement was reached. Inspectors were assigned to follow one student for the first two days of the inspection, a Masterclass day and a team theme day. This allowed inspectors to observe two main ways in which students engaged with information. Because of the subjects being covered, on these two days the majority of inspectors would not be observing lessons in their subject-specialty area; thus, on the third day of the inspection it was agreed that the inspectors would watch teachers within the subject speciality area of the inspectors, although due to the team theme approach it was not clear that the teachers would be teaching within their subject areas. As will be discussed in the second story about the inspection, the third day of the inspection was eventually changed back to a conventional timetable day so that inspectors could watch subject-area teaching.

What follow are three short vignettes about the inspection process, which highlight the major issues arising during the course of the inspection.

### *B. the inspection: three stories*

#### i. story 1: inclusion versus keeping order

A new second year teacher, Sean, was slated to be observed during his Masterclass in music. He happened to be teaching a class of Year 7 students that he had not yet taught so he did not know the students with whom he would be working that day. Due to the

number of inspections occurring simultaneously, all spare adult members of the KGS community were otherwise occupied and he was entirely on his own. During the course of the morning one of the students in the class began to misbehave and his antics soon resulted in several other students misbehaving. Sean was torn. As a new teacher, he knew how strongly Tom felt about the policy of not excluding students from class, and knew that this aspect of the school was something that Tom had highlighted in his *Ofsted* school report. On the other hand, Sean was aware that keeping the student in his classroom might reflect badly on him as a teacher, and he felt he had no way to reach out to this student who he did not know at all. Sean chose not to throw the misbehaving students out of the classroom because he felt it would go against the school's inclusion philosophy. As a result, he was given an unsatisfactory judgment by the inspector for not adequately controlling the class. Although Sean acknowledged that it was a fair though hurtful judgment, he was frustrated because he had felt unable to balance out the strong expectation for inclusion in the school with the reality of student behaviour.

- Issue: Tom was unyielding in his stance that students stay in classrooms during lessons. He did not want to institutionalise exclusion as a system for dealing with students who could not handle being in classes because he was concerned that it would be abused and he believed that changing the dynamics of the school would ultimately result in better student behaviour, a prospect that did not help teachers confronting immediate challenges in the classroom. As a result, students either stayed in classes and caused disruptions, or were asked to leave the class and wander the school. Neither solution met the needs of students, and teachers were frustrated at not being able to make Tom understand their need for a meaningful method of supporting them when confronted with challenging behaviour.

As will be discussed in greater detail later, instead of being able to address the need to resolve this tension between philosophy and classroom reality as a constructively critical point in the report, the inspection team felt unable to talk candidly about the problem for fear that it would undermine the overall judgment that KGS was doing good work.

### ii. story 2: innovation or convention

Days two and three of the inspection were originally scheduled as team theme days. The Lighthouses team had worked out three days of team-teaching activities that the teachers felt spotlighted the school's innovative ways of working with groups of pupils. After the first two days of the inspection, during which the inspection team members had observed Masterclasses and one theme day of teaching, the Lead Inspector, Henry, went to meet with Tom. He was sympathetic to what KGS was trying to do but was heading an inspection team that was feeling split about whether KGS met *Ofsted* standards. He worried that his team would be unable to make required judgments on the school's approach to academics if the inspectors were not given the opportunity to see solid, timetabled teaching within subject areas. He also worried that his team members were growing frustrated at seeing non-specialist teaching of the sort that was often apparent within a theme day approach. The lead teacher of Lighthouses got a phone call at 8:30 pm the night before the third day of the inspection and was told by the Head that her team needed to revert to a conventional timetable format for the last day of the inspection and should ensure that all teachers were teaching within their specialisation.

- Issue: The non-conventional school organisation and timetable at KGS resulted in non-specialist teaching, and lessons that might not be as strong as lessons delivered in more conventional teaching blocks by specialist teachers. This was particularly true of lessons in areas such as maths, science and D&T. However, the integration of information and the project-based approach worked well for pupils, motivating and sustaining their interest. Moreover, the decision to adopt the unique school format and timetable met needs beyond simply the academic and was at the heart of much that KGS was trying to achieve.

The *Ofsted* team did not feel able to make required judgments about the school without having access to conventional subject-based lessons, partly because the Framework did not enable them to make non-subject specific assessments within a secondary school, and partly because the inspectors themselves felt unable to work outside their subject areas (T26). As a result, aspects of the school's performance and approach which were deemed to be innovative and worthwhile by the team during debriefing sessions, such as working in alternative ways that were engaging for pupils, were not part of the judgment

criteria for the school according to the Framework and could not officially factor into the final report.

### iii. story 3: take it on faith?

The teacher responsible for religious education (RE) at KGS sat down with the inspector for RE to discuss the delivery of Basic Curriculum (BC) requirements. The *Ofsted* inspector expressed serious reservations about whether the school would meet Key Stage 3 requirements because there was not enough time blocked out within the conventional timetable for RE instruction. The RE teacher explained that RE was addressed in many other ways such as through humanities, history and English lessons, and as part of special days such as a Masterclass Faith Day in the school. The RE teacher was certain that all of the BC requirements would be covered. Despite a long and heated discussion, the inspector was unconvinced and the school was initially judged non-compliant in RE.

- Issues arising: At the time of the inspection, KGS did not yet have set schemes of work developed that identified exactly how and when subject matter would be covered. At a philosophical level, many teachers and the Head were less concerned with specific hours spent on subjects than they were about covering topics adequately. Thus, the *Ofsted* inspector's approach to the BC requirements and insistence on knowing whether the letter of the law in terms of hourly coverage requirements had been met was in tension with the spirit of the law embraced by the school.

This incident was repeated several times over the course of the inspection with different teachers. The notion that coverage must be measured in hours of conventional timetabling seemed to be a message dissuading any creative use of time, and ignoring the reality that there are many ways in which curricular areas can be covered. Such a way of measuring compliance seemed at odds with any desire for innovation.

### *C. challenges of applying the framework*

The inspection team agreed that the school was doing many things right. In a conversation with me shortly after the inspection, Henry identified areas in which he and his team were impressed with the work of KGS:

- Social and Personal Development:

> We could see that the kids were difficult. The same kids are off the wall at other schools including the two down the street. So the school is doing a lot to keep these kids in stream and it is working (T25).

He acknowledged that the school's ethos was pervasive enough that students "do sit with teachers in lunch and behave"; that they don't vandalise and fight and "don't exclude themselves from the school experience." "Teachers know pupils well and have relationships that allow them to address individual needs." The school promotes "very positive relationships which help achieve a very good rate of personal development, especially for those students with special educational needs, and this results in good behaviour" (T24, *Ofsted Report,* 6).

- Inclusion:

> This school works with students who, in schools down the road, would be put into low ability classes where they don't really learn. They are fully integrated into classes and are achieving, if only moderately. So in terms of inclusion the school is doing very good work (T25).

Part of this success, he said is because "exclusions are not accepted as a legitimate means of disciplining." Teachers and staff are expected to work hard to "make school a positive experience for all children in a way that is not the norm in other schools" (T25).

- Curriculum: The vision of integrated subject delivery was working in some important ways.

> Themes are interesting to pupils, teachers are working in new and innovative ways with time, making community linkages, etc. (*Ofsted Report*, 13).

At the same time, he said, the team recognised significant weaknesses in the school:

- Management principles are clear but the detail less so and not always implemented sufficiently rigorously.

> Tom has a vision and end goal in mind but it takes more than that to put a school in place. You need a plan and I asked Tom whether the school has a developmental plan. Tom said it was in the papers—lots of different papers. But there is no coherent, structured document so that everything is on one page and everyone has a good sense of how to get from A to Z with steps, actions, outcome measures, etc. It's not a development plan. It is ad hoc, being made up as they go along (T26).

- There was a lack of good management, which made life very difficult for teachers and students. Teachers were confused about the timetable and accountability. Normally there would be a deputy head but Tom had chosen not to hire a replacement which left a gaping hole between his theories and what was going on in the school. The Inspector cited a few examples of instances where Tom had told him one thing about how the school operated only to have teachers give a different story.

> How does that make him look? Like he is disconnected from the school, that he has no sense of what is going on in the school (T25).

- Non-specialist teaching was resulting in uneven subject delivery for students in different school teams. In the first year, this meant unsatisfactory delivery of science and music, two subjects still flagging in terms of student achievement during the second year. The team knew that this could not continue if students were to receive a quality education, despite Tom's insistence that Advanced Skills Teachers should be able to teach outside of their field of expertise.
- There was not enough staff to implement the inclusion vision in the way that the school philosophy would require. There was also not enough of a support system for teachers who were dealing with pupils who really could not function well within regular classes, and this disrupted learning in an unsustainable way.
- The teachers were overworked in a manner that was not sustainable.

Each of the issues which *Ofsted* had identified were clearly issues for the school, and issues that Tom had done his best to ignore over the last fifteen months. Some were issues that had specifically to do with KGS and its efforts to be innovative and work differently with students; others were more general organisational issues that were being exacerbated by the presence of a Head who was less concerned with the details of organisational management than he was with a larger vision of the school.

> Ideally, there would be a halfway measure that would get the school to a point where there are particular management changes made without losing Tom as the visionary. The problem is that Tom doesn't want to give in on anything. If he would agree to give a little then perhaps we could squeeze the school by with a satisfactory. But to make him listen we would need to put things into the report which would mean that the school would go into special measures (T26).

### *D. final judgments and writing the report*

The team was faced with a difficult situation. They believed that the school was doing very positive things and that the vision of the school was sound and achievable. "The underbelly of other schools is being lifted at this school—the bottom 20%" (T25). However, because the school was in its infancy and also trying to develop new ways of operating, there were particular areas of teaching, achievement, etc. that should perhaps have been classified as unsatisfactory. As Henry noted,

> There is non-specialist teaching in the school which is potentially death. I knew about it, so did the team. But it was ensured that we didn't see the full extent of the non-subject specialist teaching because if we had, the teaching would have had to be categorised as weak which would have meant the school would have had to be classified as serious weaknesses, which would have meant that Tom's vision would have been scrapped (T26).

Had this happened, the school would have most likely reverted back into a traditional framework and the team, as a whole, felt this would not have been a good outcome for the students, the school or the community. After much discussion, the team reached the conclusion that the school deserved a marginal "good" rating on the *Ofsted* scale, and were then faced with the dilemma that, according to current *Ofsted* regulations, they would have to make their reporting on the "parts" of the school match the overall judgment of the "whole."

> I am apprehensive about the *Ofsted* system being able to handle the truth in the report and that means I can't be as blunt about things as I would like to be (T26).

The end result was a report that gave KGC a marginal "good" rating, enough for the school not to be put into special measures. However, instead of being able to give helpfully critical feedback to a school that needed it, and to a Head for whom such an outside report and mandate might have been instrumental in pushing forward significant changes in school policy, Henry was put into the position of having to write a muted report that would not undermine the team's overall rating. In the long run, he is not

convinced that this was the best possible outcome for the pupils, the teachers, or the school.

> The philosophy of education this school is enacting is complex. Some members of my team felt that *Ofsted* inspections are about the achievement of children, and half my team feels that academic achievement is not uniformly high at the school, that Tom is experimenting with children's lives. But [Tom's] getting the imprimatur of *Ofsted* for this work without the full weight of our recommendations for what needs to be done for this school to survive (T26).

### *E. potential policy implications*

As *Ofsted* considers possible improvements to its Framework it should consider the need to improve the capacity of both the Framework and its trained inspectors to deal constructively and flexibly with schools that are trying to be innovative. Although it has been a useful addition to the Framework to allow the Lead Inspector and the team to work more closely with the school Head and teachers to shape the inspection itself, and while it is useful to try and take more pupil and parent feedback into account, further changes still need to be made. In particular, the KGS experience would indicate the need for several issues to be addressed.

First, the current *Ofsted* framework is still not sufficiently flexible to allow teams to work well with schools that are being innovative in ways that fall outside the parameters of some fairly traditional notions of what 'should' go on in schools and what constitutes a "successful" school. The Lead Inspector in this case was an experienced Inspector, familiar with the realities of schools in the area and the reality of student performance. As such, he was inclined to be sympathetic to what KGS was trying to do, and considered the success the school had with its pupils a strong enough factor to give the school some leeway in its academic performance given that it was only in its second year of operation. "The achievement in terms of personal development and inclusion is the principle reason for which we were able to see the school as 'good.'" Henry explained. "But I drove the meetings, my team was hesitant" (T26). He knew that the school would be re-inspected within two years and was willing to give KGS the time to improve its somewhat uneven academic record. He was sympathetic to KGS' argument that the social and personal development occurring in the school and among its pupils would

facilitate greater academic achievement. However, he noted that had a different person headed the inspection, the outcome would likely have been very different (T26).

This speaks to a broader issue which is often not explicitly addressed about what it means for a school to be successful in terms of an inspection. In theory, the *Ofsted* inspection is meant to judge a school against a range of criteria. A form handed out to schools regarding the inspection criteria entitled "Secondary Descriptors Sept 8th 2003" listed numerous areas that the inspection was to consider:

- overall ethos of the school
- satisfaction of pupils and parents with the school
- achievement of pupils
- value added in core subjects
- attitude and behaviour descriptions
- personal development
- teaching and learning
- assessment of pupils' work and progress toward targets
- how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs
- how well the needs of all pupils are met
- opportunities for enrichment within the curriculum
- care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils
- involvement of pupils in the school's work and development
- effective links with parents
- meeting statutory requirements

Thus, in theory at least, schools are to be judged on their effectiveness across a range of areas. As was noted by the inspection team, KGS was doing very well in many of the non-academic measures, but was flagging in some areas of academic achievement. The inspection guidelines gave no indication of how such a school was to be judged. As Henry noted, it was routine for schools to pass in which academic achievement was theoretically high but only at the expense of efforts to include all pupils and efforts to meet the non-academic needs of students. Should the reverse prioritisation of values also be regarded as acceptable? This team judged that it should in the case of KGS, but only

with difficulty and even then with some reservations. If the state is serious about encouraging schools to be innovative in working with pupils, it must provide clearer guidelines about how to make final judgments about such schools, for the sake of both schools and inspection teams.

A lack of flexibility in the inspection process was also illustrated by the Team members' inability to fathom how subject matter could be covered outside of conventional teaching blocks. The inspection process and inspectors must be made more flexible in their understanding of what constitutes adequate academic coverage and achievement. If *Ofsted* cannot build such flexibility into its inspection process, schools will continue to feel constrained in their ability to be innovative in improving the learning process for pupils.

Finally, and perhaps most regrettably, the current reporting framework severely ties the hands of an inspection team and its Registered Lead Inspector to make an overall positive judgment of a school's work while still openly and strongly acknowledging weaknesses that need to be addressed. In the case of KGS, for example, critical feedback from an inspection team which was ultimately sympathetic to the school's values and aims could have been a very useful part of its development and growth. However, the Registered Lead Inspector felt unable to formally make strong statements about the areas that needed improvement for fear of having the school fall into an unsatisfactory or special measures judgment. This would mean losing a leader whose vision was critical to the success of the school by its own terms.

On the flip side, schools such as KGS which are working to be innovative often need the accountability that can come from an outside agency report to improve upon their work. From the perspective of a researcher who had been at the school for about six months at the time of the inspection, I felt that the *Ofsted* team inspecting KGS made fair observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. These same issues had been pointed out to Tom without effect by his teachers; the *Ofsted* inspection might have been an ideal vehicle to open Tom's eyes to some of the weaknesses of his approach had the team had more flexibility to be honest about its findings without having to fail the school. If the inspection process is to be a constructive experience geared towards

helping schools to improve, changes must be made that will allow honest yet nuanced judgments to be made, explained, and viewed as valid. This is particularly true of schools like KGS that are working to be innovative within the state system and its existing requirements.

## 5. pulling it together: lessons of the KGS experience

The initial KGS experience in its efforts to adopt a more holistic model of education offers a number of lessons both for other schools seeking to take a broader view of the work of schools and the achievement of pupils, as well as for the state if it is serious in its desire to promote such innovations.

- *A coherent theoretical framework which is translated into specific principles for practice is important to the success of an HE school.*

KGS, through its Head Tom, attempted to implement a holistic approach to education by pulling together ideas from a range of agencies, thinkers and model school efforts. While the school managed several successes during its first two years of operation, we saw that the lack of a coherent and comprehensive map of where it was going and how it was going to achieve its overall aim exacted a toll. As was discussed in Part 3 of this chapter, a HE model of education is one which requires a shift in thinking about the work of schools and the relationship of players within the learning communities. This alone would be enough to tax even the most competent of teachers. To be trying to develop a model for how a school should be structured and organised, how a curriculum should be developed, and how assessment should be handled, in addition to trying to change personal practices is even more demanding.

A coherent and internally consistent approach to HE serves another important function, as became clearer to me during my work at the HE model schools. Although one could find things to criticise in a Steiner or Krishnamurti approach to education, the fact that there is an underlying theory behind what is happening in a school means that all members of the school can begin from the same page. They can appreciate the rationale underlying a particular approach even if they disagree with it, and can use this as a

springboard for discussion and change. At KGS there was no truly shared understanding of what the school was trying to do and why, as was evidenced by the problems arising from efforts to implement a new approach to discipline at the school during the first two years. Although Tom had an idea in his head about what the school should look like in operation and how this related to his theories of what education should be and why, he was unsuccessful at relaying this to his teachers. He distributed numerous papers and essays written by him and by others to the teachers; however, none of these papers pulled together a comprehensive, consistent and readily-accessible explanation of the philosophy being adopted in the school, the ways in which this theoretical foundation was related to children's growth and/or educational aims, and how this theory would look in practice. This made it very difficult for teachers to accept and adopt the ideas being promoted, and they tended to fall back on their own methods of practice which were both familiar and sensible to them.

This was in contrast to what was happening at the HE schools, where everyone in the school was familiar with the theory behind the work of the school, understood why the theory was relevant and important, and understood what the theory looked like in practice. Here, the HE schools were at an advantage since schools existed which put theory into practice; new schools or teachers could look to these existing schools for guidance on how to operate. KGS obviously had no such model so there was no assistance for teachers trying to understand what these theories would look like in practice. It took Elizabeth, a teacher whose classroom practice already reflected the theory that Tom was trying to promote, to begin helping other teachers understand how the theories fit together and how they would translate into practice. It was her example and her efforts to work with other teachers which began to make part of the HE theory viable for KGS in its second year. Having gone through the process of building a workable HE model that could be adopted in the state system, KGS may provide a model for schools interested in such work in the future, although the theoretical underpinnings for the work would still need to be developed.

- *It is easy to confuse a holistic approach to education with a complete repudiation of all "traditional" aspects of schooling, especially with regard to delivery of the curriculum and assessment.*

KGS chose to implement a holistic approach to the curriculum by adopting non-specialist teaching, a decision which caused concern for a number of parties and a lot of frustration for some teachers, and affected the quality of subject-matter delivery for students. It was unclear to me whether Tom actually believed that this was the best way to approach teaching. There were times when I was inclined to think from his approach to hiring that he might have been adopting the stance that non-specialist teaching was good because he was limited in the number of hires he could make in the second year and wanted to push teachers to do their best. Despite my best efforts to engage him on this topic he kept reiterating that teachers should be good teachers first and not specialist teachers; he gave no indication whether he would make future hires with an eye towards ensuring that all schools had specialist teachers in all areas. *Ofsted's* concerns in this regard seemed well-founded especially since even teachers reported feeling uncomfortable about the quality of their teaching outside of their area of specialty.

The rejection of discrete subject areas and the adoption of non-specialist teaching are not necessary aspects of HE; in fact, both RSS and BPS had specialist teachers for their secondary students. As in the state system, primary school teachers tended to be generalists and teach all subjects, but nevertheless made use of the concept of discrete subject areas. Although the HE thinkers pushed for knowledge to be integrated and, for teachers to help students make connections between subject areas and to think critically about knowledge and information, they nevertheless built their schools around core subjects. Montessori's classrooms have stations and activities geared around mathematics or mathematical concepts, geography, history and science. Steiner teachers teach primary classes subject-based lessons such as mathematics, chemistry and history. In the secondary school, Steiner students take lessons in discrete subject areas. Even Krishnamurti, with his aversion to traditional schools, nevertheless saw a need for students to take subject area lessons taught by specialist teachers. The thinkers seemed to recognise that discrete subjects can be a useful way in which to think about, approach and organise the wealth of information that exists about the world, and can thus be a useful tool for learning. Where they emphasised a holistic approach was in encouraging teachers to help students make connections between subjects—doing a project which allows students to learn about the ethical, social and political ramifications of an achievement in science, for example. The HE thinkers, Montessori and Steiner in

particular, also paid a lot of attention to how and when the curriculum and particular subject matter was delivered to students. They each had ideas about the developmental stages of learners and "sensitive periods" during which to emphasise certain content.

During my time at the school, KGS was struggling to implement the curriculum in a holistic way, in part because there was no clear understanding of what was important to a holistic way of presenting the curriculum. There were aspirations about needing to integrate subjects, work in an interdisciplinary manner and use projects as a way of engaging with the curriculum, but these notions were often overshadowed by the concerns and challenges presented by the non-specialist teaching required by the school's overall organisational structure. There was never any discussion about the need to tailor curricular content and topics to the developmental stages of students. In fairness, it is unclear whether these issues were resolved with the passage of time, the addition of more teachers to each team, and the resolution of other transitional challenges for the school. However, schools seeking to adopt a holistic approach would do well to look to the organisation of HE school curricula as a guiding point for their own work. This would include the use of assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, something which KGS had only just begun to focus on in its practice by the time I concluded my fieldwork.

- *Appropriate professional development is a key factor in the success of an HE model school.*

One of the greatest challenges faced by KGS in its first year and a half of operation was that of helping teachers to accept and learn how to implement the holistic principles being promoted. As already discussed, and as noted by many teachers at the school, both NQTs and experienced teachers, this manner of working challenged many of their conceptions of education and their role as teachers. Such conceptions are not easily changed, and thoughtfully organised professional development is a key factor in allowing teachers to succeed in this transition. Due to time and circumstance KGS devoted fairly little time to professional development in the first year. Apart from receiving a verbal description from Tom about where he hoped the school would go and a copy of a brief essay he had written about the importance of person-centred education,

the teachers had little sense that a very particular approach to education would be driving the school. Many expressed frustration that they were not being given as much of an opportunity to shape the school as they would have liked.

Once they began teaching, there was little time to think about meta-issues such as the philosophy underlying their work. Tom's handouts were rarely read, and although he constantly talked about the ideals he wished to promote, it was often in an ad hoc manner at morning staff meetings or in one-on-one conversations in which teachers were trying to communicate with him about their difficulties with the way the school was working. In part, this lack of formal professional development reflected the lack of a coherent and comprehensive theoretical model discussed earlier. However, it is not clear the Tom appreciated the importance of making such time for teachers an integral part of the work of the school, even though he knew that he was trying to implement a "radically different" approach to schooling. Again, it took an informal process of professional development between teachers to begin making changes; and the success of this informal professional development in helping some teachers to change their approach is indicative of the importance of the practice.

There are once again lessons to be drawn from the work of the HE schools. All three HE thinkers were well aware of the radical nature of their ideas and school practices. They each worked to develop professional development models for the teachers in their schools which included becoming familiar with the thinkers' ideas, and involved a period of apprenticeship under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Steiner and Montessori teacher training programs are a year long, with the first year of teaching being completed as an assistant to an experienced teacher, thus two years of full-time professional development, and two years in which to absorb the theory and practice of the school. Krishnamurti schools hire teachers who have some personal familiarly with the ideas of Krishnamurti either through being pupils at a Krishnamurti school or having a demonstrated long-term personal interest in his works. New teachers work alongside experienced teachers and the residential set-up serves to provide full-time mentorship for newer teachers.

- *Students must be given time to learn to operate successfully within an HE school model.*

Changing ideas about the work of schools and one's place in schools takes time both for teachers and for students. While the professional development discussed in the last section implicitly speaks of the need to allow time for teachers to grow and develop, it is worth noting more explicitly the need for students' needs to be attended to as well, something which Elizabeth recognised instinctively. Students in the HE model schools often attend these schools from a very young age, and are thus allowed to grow into the expectations and responsibilities incumbent on them within the HE community model. All three schools are actually quite highly structured in the early years despite being child-centred. Indeed, Montessori and Steiner both observe that young children have a need for order and structure and that it is the responsibility of the teacher and school to provide both. Only as the students mature and develop self-discipline and an understanding of the dynamics of community and the concept of mutual responsibility, do the HE schools begin to allow older students more unstructured opportunities.

One of the challenges for KGS in its first two years was that students entered Year 7 having never been in a school that gave them autonomy and control over their time and learning. When presented with this freedom in an unstructured way, such as in Sam's classes, they were quick to take advantage of it without assuming the requisite self-discipline and responsibility. An approach such as that taken by Elizabeth, which actually mimicked the more highly structured classrooms of primary HE classrooms, worked far better in allowing the students to gradually learn to use their autonomy appropriately. This process of student growth into an HE model takes effort, time and patience on the part of teachers and the school.

- *Changes must be made to government inspection processes to support innovative work in schools.*

As was discussed at length at the end of the last section, there is a need for the government to think more carefully about its approach to inspections and assessments of schools if it is serious about promoting innovation in schools. Schools like KGS which

are trying to implement new ways of working with students and the curriculum can benefit from being held accountable to an outside set of standards. However, this can only happen if all parties involved appreciate and accept that innovation necessarily means that a school is working to organise itself around a different or a differently weighted set of values. The parameters of what is nonetheless expected of these schools should be carefully laid out so that schools can work towards certain outcomes within the context of adopting a holistic approach. Inspectors must be trained to be flexible about how schools may choose to work with curricular content.

The inspection process would ideally be timed in such a way that a school transitioning to a new mode of working would be given time to be fully or at least mostly operational before being judged. Should an inspection be required within the first year or two of a school's operation, the process of judging its success and reporting on areas needing improvement should allow for the school to pass provisionally even though it may not fully meet all targets. Although some on the *Ofsted* inspection team felt that this was "experimenting with children's lives," it also seems unreasonable to expect that a school making radical changes to its approach to working with students could somehow be fully functional in all areas overnight. The experienced Lead Inspector of the KGS team seemed to understand this intuitively; however, such leeway should be formally integrated into the inspection system.

Finally, an inspection team for a school like KGS should be excused from needing to make the "parts fit the whole," and should be able to give frank feedback on areas of the school's operations needing improvement before the next inspection without undermining their decision to pass the school as a whole. Only in this way will the process truly serve as a constructive opportunity for schools trying to be innovative in their work.

# Chapter Ten—Conclusions and Implications

## 1. introduction

The aims of this thesis were two-fold. First, I sought to develop an understanding of the philosophical characteristics underlying HE approaches to education in order to apply the general principles without necessarily referencing the specific agenda of the movement as a reaction to the mainstream, which has been the focus of much of the HE literature. It was also the perspective underlying the only theoretical model of HE, that developed by Scott Forbes. While there may be nothing inherently wrong in examining HE from an inwardly-focused perspective, it has destined the work to be of no real use to educators outside of the movement. The second aim was to examine the issues involved in trying to carry HE principles and practices into schools operating within the state system.

The structure of this thesis lent itself to drawing together the conclusions of the philosophical work at the end of Chapter Six, and the major conclusions of the empirical work at the end of Chapter Nine. For a more complete discussion of the findings of each section, I would refer the reader back to the appropriate chapter. In this chapter, I will briefly reiterate the major findings of the thesis and their implications for HE theory and practice, discuss the limitations of the study and its findings, and conclude with my thoughts on potential directions for future research.

## 2. philosophical analysis: findings and implications

The theoretical work of this thesis was devoted to answering the first two of the research questions set out for the overall study:

**Figure 10-1: Theoretical Research Questions**

| |
|---|
| (1) What are the underlying philosophical characteristics of holistic education? |
| (2) How do these philosophical foundations influence the practical aspects of schools working within the holistic paradigm? |

The purpose of this work was to elucidate those philosophical and practical characteristics which distinguish HE as an approach to education by referencing the holistic worldview as it first emerged as a paradigm in science, and the philosophies and practical aspects of education developed by Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti. By choosing these thinkers as my reference point, I hoped to develop a theoretical model which addressed shortcomings in Forbes' HE framework, which was developed out of an examination of three humanistic psychologists whose works are not a significant part of the HE literature. In taking an approach that grew out of and was grounded in the existing field of HE, Forbes neglected to move HE theory out of the restricted realm of the HE community and to ground it in a broader philosophical perspective. My intent was to make the ideas more accessible for general consideration by working out of philosophical areas that have been debated and defined within a broader intellectual tradition. The hope was to make HE accessible to a broader audience of schools and educators interested in understanding what it looks like to operate in a holistic manner.

### A. *nature of reality and the limits of knowledge*

The holistic tradition as it first emerged in science was extended into a broader worldview which asserts that the entirety of creation is made up of one substance arranged in different forms, and in which all parts are interconnected and interdependent, rather than existing independently in separate spheres. This aspect of HE has not been examined in HE literature, although Forbes' notion of Ultimacy as a spiritual or psychological state does seem to refer to such an understanding of the world (Forbes 1999). Within the HE literature, discussions of this aspect of the work of HE educators and thinkers tends not to be debated or explored in ways that would meet the criteria of rigorous western philosophical discourse. Rather, the language used is quite mystical in nature and has led the movement to be linked with New Age and other fringe movements. It is thus often dismissed as having little substantive to contribute to academic debates about education and educational philosophy. I argued that the worldview described within the holistic literature can be grounded in a western philosophical tradition, namely the ideas of Hegel and later absolute idealists who built upon his works. This philosophical position provides a vehicle through which to better understand and critique the work of the HE thinkers.

Several of the basic themes of the idealist ontology and understanding of the nature of knowledge emerge in the works of all three writers:

- The world of our experience is at best a limited representation of the whole of reality and not to be confused with Absolute Reality;
- Human beings are of the same nature as the Absolute continually and strive toward a complete re-identification with the Absolute;
- Thought and the intellect are incapable of providing complete knowledge of Reality;
- The truth of Reality and of our own natures can only be obtained by learning to be fully present in the world and by engaging with the world in ways other than through the intellect alone.

The fact that the HE thinkers' ideas paralleled the absolute idealist position is not an argument that holism is a form of absolute idealism. Rather, framing it in relation to absolute idealism, which is a fairly well-developed philosophical tradition, allows for a slightly different examination and critique of the ideas.

### *B. aims of education*

The HE writers' approaches to education and recommendations for particular practices speak to their belief that the goal of education is to develop persons who possess particular traits, attributes and capabilities which are common to many educational endeavours including knowledge of facts, practical skills, intellectual excellence, wisdom, morality, citizenship and spiritual awareness. What distinguished their approach to education, particularly at the time during which they were developing their ideas, was their belief that education is a transformative endeavour. The aim of education, ultimately, is the development of human beings with a clear understanding of their true identity as members of a larger community of man and earth. Out of such an understanding would and should emerge a sense of their role within and responsibility towards the community at large.

It is here than my analysis of the distinguishing characteristics of HE divides most sharply with the work of Scott Forbes. Forbes' focused examination of three

psychologists in defining HE led to a bias in his conclusions towards the psychological aspects of HE's work. Specifically, he claims that the defining aim of HE is the attainment of Ultimacy, which he described as a psychological and/or spiritual attainment, a solitary, inwardly directed endeavour undertaken by an individual. Yet, it is clear that Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti all had a great concern about the social aspects and the social consequences of education. The goal of assisting human beings to recognise their true nature and their true relationship to the broader world was so that they would understand their role in transforming the world. Part of attaining a state of self awareness must involve developing a sense of responsibility which results in acting upon that understanding. Thus, for the HE thinkers, to be fully realised as a person is not merely to have attained a spiritual enlightenment, but rather to translate that awareness into active living in the world.

The HE thinkers shared a belief that the best way in which to go about developing this type of a person was through the richness and complexity of relationships within community. The work of John Macmurray and his focus on the development of personhood through community was used in Chapter Six to reflect on the role of community within the HE tradition. This shed light on the relational orientation of the HE schools and the resulting approaches to issues such as authority and discipline. Ultimately, for each of the HE thinkers, to live is to live in relationship to other people and to the larger world. Part of the aim of their educational efforts was to help students to recognise and embrace this way of being in the world. To neglect this aspect of their work, as has been the tendency within the HE literature, and to some extent even among practitioners, to focus too exclusively on the spiritual outcome rather than the process whereby it is achieved, is to ignore something at the heart of the educational endeavour in the eyes of these three HE thinkers.

### *C. practical work of schools*

It became clear that despite differences in the actual day-to-day organisation of the teachers and students within the HE schools, there were nevertheless important approaches to key areas of practice that were common to all three and which relate to the philosophical themes that were explored:

- Growth as a person
- Developing community
- Authority and discipline
- Growth of knowledge and understanding (curriculum)
- Modes of teaching and assessment

The empirical work of the thesis was concerned with the ways in which HE principles informed the work of a state school seeking to work in an innovative way with students. These areas of practice were the basis for much of my data collection and analysis.

### *D. implications*

When I began thinking about this project in 2001, there was very little interest in HE schools like Steiner and Montessori. However, in the last six years there has been much more interest in these alternative schools and their practices, perhaps as a result of the more standardised approaches mandated in state schools and a sense that students are being deprived of important aspects of education as a result. *The Independent* reported in 2005 that the British government had announced plans to support both a Montessori school and a Steiner school as part of an effort to expand its drive toward school diversity (Wilce 2005). The school researched in this study has received money from the government's Innovation Unit, has been featured in a number of reports by both government and non-governmental agencies and regularly has visitors interested in its unique practices, including former Prime Minister Tony Blair. As Phillip Woods, a professor of education at the University of the West of England who has just completed a major study on Steiner schools commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, said, "[there] is definitely scope for two-way learning" (Wilce 2005).

The HE thinkers studied in this work were adamant that their ideas and practices should shape education as a general undertaking and not simply be limited to those who could afford it. That the HE community is far too insular and not as involved as it should be in changing the work of all schools is a critique already raised within the HE literature by David Purpel and Ron Miller (Purpel and Miller 1991). The philosophical examination

of HE undertaken in this thesis is hopefully a first step to helping those outside of the movement better understand what is being done in HE schools and why.

Most importantly, this model makes it possible to discuss HE within a larger community of thinkers rather than being dismissed as some fringe movement that has a quasi-religious view of the world and education. It is incumbent on those within the HE field to open themselves to the possibility of engaging in that conversation by writing for general educational or philosophical journals; and by being open to sharing, discussing, and debating practices and underlying justifications. For those involved in education and shaping education policy, HE seems a worthwhile area about which to learn more, not because it is by any means a perfect form of education, but rather because it takes such a different approach to the work of schools. Possible future projects will be discussed later in this chapter. Such mutual engagement can only enrich the conversation for both sides, and the timing for such engagement with a broader community of practice seems ripe.

## 3. KGS case study: findings and implications

The empirical work of this thesis was concerned with examining the issues involved in trying to carry HE ideas into schools operating within the state system. This was done through a case study of Kings Green School (KGS), a state school seeking to adopt HE principles and practices. Three research questions guided my empirical work:

**Figure 10-2: Case Study Research Questions**

| |
|---|
| (1) In what ways does KGS enact holistic principles? |
| (2) What facilitates the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices by KGS? |
| (3) What are the barriers to the enactment of holistic educational principles and practices by KGS? |

My research was informed by my philosophical examination of HE, most notably in my use of the five areas of practical application to guide my data collection and analysis.

- Growth as a person
- Developing community
- Authority and discipline
- Growth of knowledge and understanding (curriculum)
- Modes of teaching and assessment

### A. *the experience of implementing HE principles*

It was clear that KGS was implementing many of the elements of a holistic approach to education. The school was explicit that the goal of education was about the development of persons through community, and it was committed to designing the school in a manner that facilitated this goal. It had successfully implemented a schools-within-schools organisational structure which allowed for the development of relationships between students and teachers within small communities of learning. The organisation of the school facilitated efforts to make inclusion of all students in the life of the classroom and school a reality; however, teachers had a wide range of success in their efforts to actually engage students, particularly many of the students with severe learning and behavioural issues. The school initially struggled with ways in which the new sense of community and approach to the relationships between students and teachers influenced authority structures and approaches to discipline. However, by the end of my research period it seemed that a large enough cohort of teachers accepted the need to approach discipline differently, to indicate that the school was turning a corner in this aspect of its development.

Because my time at the school was limited to its first four terms, it was hard to judge how successful it was in its efforts to develop and implement a holistic approach to the curriculum and modes of teaching and assessment. The school's unique approach to the timetable, which included devoting blocks of time for in-depth subject-based and interdisciplinary work, indicated its move in a more holistic direction. However, it was a challenge to see the rationale behind the adoption of particular curricular themes and units of study. Unlike at the HE model schools, where the content and structure of the curriculum emerged from particular notions of child development, the KGS teachers

appeared to choose topics based on personal preference and the National Curriculum. Assessment was a topic which was being debated within the school. Although many teachers supported the development of portfolios and authentic assessment models, many also felt that formal assessments and grades were a necessary part of the work of school. This was in part due to the pressures they felt from bodies like *Ofsted*.

The *Ofsted* inspection of KGS served to pull the members of the school together in important ways around the values which many of them debated internally. After the inspection resulted in a pass, many teachers felt more comfortable continuing their innovative work. On the other hand, the inspection process demonstrated the challenges that still exist for schools seeking to be innovative, as the inspection framework and reporting requirements were not adequately flexible to allow for the type of incisive feedback that might have been incredibly valuable in pushing the KGS Head to accept the need for improvements to the organisational structure and work of the school. The Head, while an important driving force behind the school's work and arguably the reason for its ability to survive difficult junctures during its first four terms, was sometimes too focused on his vision for the school and not adequately aware of the toll the work was taking on his staff. His ability to make the school a reality would have been facilitated had he had a more coherent and extensive framework for translating holistic principles into action, and if he had spent more time on the professional development of his team.

Five main lessons emerged out of my work at KGS that I considered particularly relevant for those interested in expanding the application of holistic ideas in schools, whether HE schools, state schools adopting HE models or state agencies interested in promoting this type of innovation.

**Figure 10-3: Lessons of the KGS Experience**

- A coherent theoretical framework which is translated into specific principles for practice is important to the success of an HE model school.
- It is easy to confuse a holistic approach to education with a complete repudiation of all "traditional" aspects of schooling, especially with regard to delivery of the curriculum and assessment.

- Appropriate professional development is a key factor in the success of an HE model school.
- Students must be given time to learn to operate successfully within an HE school model.
- Changes must be made to government inspection processes to support innovative work in schools.

Full discussions of each point are to be found in the final part of Chapter Nine; however, the lessons present opportunities for various parties which I will address below.

### *B. opportunities for expanding the work of HE*

The lessons of the KGS experience suggest several ways in which the work of HE could potentially be developed further and made accessible to a wider audience, and in this section I pre-empt slightly the section of this thesis in which I discuss avenues for future research.

First, there seem to be some natural opportunities for collaboration between HE model schools and state schools interested in adopting HE principles and practices. Professional development is an important aspect of the work of HE schools, and something which they seem to have developed and refined over time. How do the HE model schools approach teacher training? How do they make the ideas of the HE thinkers accessible to those not familiar with the ideas? How do they work with experienced teachers, supporting them as they seek to change their professional practice? There are discussions about these issues among practitioners within the HE literature. However, for state schools thinking about changing their approach to working with teachers and pupils, seeing the HE schools' approach to teacher training and professional development programs would be quite instructive.

State schools could also benefit from seeing how the HE model schools address issues such as presenting the curriculum in an integrated manner, helping students learn to become responsible members of the community, and handling matters of discipline and authority. Again, since these schools have been working on these issues for nearly a

century, they have developed strategies which would be worth learning more about. In particular, it would be instructive to see how the HE schools help younger students to develop the skills they need to eventually succeed in a secondary school environment in which they are given more autonomy. For schools like KGS who need to work with older students to develop these same sets of skills, this would be quite useful.

Finally, there are mutually-beneficial opportunities for learning how to balance HE practice with the demands of the state system. This is a challenge for both state schools and HE model schools, as I learned during my time at the Steiner and Krishnamurti schools in my study. It is becoming more important for HE schools to balance a desire to enact holistic principles with the need to prepare students to go out into a world in which there are certain requirements: exams, university, and jobs requiring particular skills. As one of the teachers at RSS told me, it is not easy for teachers at HE schools like RSS to maintain a HE approach while navigating these outside pressures that are becoming more important as students are concerned about post-secondary opportunities. Schools like KGS are seeking to enact HE principles and from the outset are navigating the expectations of the state. A state school enacting HE principles will build ways in which to meet state expectations into their work and thus may have a range of approaches from which HE schools could learn. Different state schools would also be coming from different perspectives and thus may have a wider array of innovative practices from which HE schools can learn.

Finally, if the state is serious about fostering innovative approaches to schooling it can learn from the challenges faced by both KGS and the *Ofsted* inspection team. As was discussed at length at the end of Chapter Nine, there is a need for the government to think more carefully about its approach to inspections and assessments of schools if it is serious about promoting innovation in schools. The parameters of what is expected of state schools must be flexible enough to allow for innovation, but clearly spelled out so that schools know from the outset what is expected of them. Inspectors must be trained to be flexible about their expectations of schools. The process of judging a school's success and reporting on areas needing improvement should allow for a school to pass provisionally even though it may not fully meet all targets. And finally, inspection teams for schools like KGS should be excused from needing to make the "parts fit the whole,"

and should be able to give frank feedback on areas of the school's operations needing improvement before the next inspection without undermining their decision to pass the school as a whole.

## 4. limitations of the study

### *A. philosophical analysis*

In explaining my decision to adopt a "family resemblances" approach to the task of defining HE I wrote in Chapter Six that

> by using the term "family resemblances," I wish to convey that there is a heterogeneous set of ideas and practices that have come to be grouped under the umbrella term of holistic education. The movement is not a homogenous block of ideas; there is no formula or ideal representation of HE. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some basic characteristics that are more or less common to any educational undertaking presuming to call itself holistic.

In the same way that I critiqued Forbes' work for being incomplete because he neglected to analyse the work of three major HE thinkers as part of his model, a similar critique might be levelled against my work. In fairness, Montessori, Steiner and Krishnamurti are far more prominent in the HE literature than any other thinkers; however, the fact remains that they are not the only thinkers represented in the HE movement broadly. That means that my theoretical conclusions about the defining characteristics of HE cannot be said to be complete, but rather can only be said to illuminate further our understanding of what HE is, to be another perspective to add to Forbes'. I would defend my work, as I did in justifying my choice of these three thinkers as the basis for my analysis, by noting that the three thinkers are the only major HE figures to have both a large body of writing in addition to schools applying their principles, thus what we can learn from their work about what HE is, is perhaps more than we can learn from any other individual whose work is either theoretical or practical, but not both.

A second issue that could fairly be raised about my work, and on which I have reflected over the course of this project, is the extent to which I have read my own interpretation into the works of the HE thinkers. I believe that any research project is influenced by the researcher's experiences, values and interpretations—in that I fall squarely within the

holistic belief that completely objective knowledge about the world is impossible. I did my best to make my own background and biases known to the reader at the outset of this project. I also purposefully included Chapters Three, Four and Five in this thesis, chapters in which I did my best to lay out the ideas of the thinkers in their own words so that a reader could draw her own conclusions about what the thinkers said and what they meant by what they said. Nevertheless, I am aware that my analysis of the HE thinkers' work in Chapter Six reflects my choice to focus on particular aspects of three extensive bodies of writing, and to make interpretations which took the analysis in one direction rather than another. Does my conclusion that the ideas of the HE thinkers can be understood through the lens of the absolute idealists and John Macmurray's work lead to a fair and accurate representation of what they said or what they meant? It is an unanswerable question since none of three can respond. I can only reiterate once again that I do not see my work as conclusive or as the only interpretation of what HE is. I believe it is accurate enough to be of value to the field, but the responses of others familiar with the field will be the ultimate test of that belief.

Finally, and this relates to both previous points, I acknowledge that my work is incomplete. For reasons of time and space, I could not possibly develop all of the many interesting aspects of the HE thinkers' work which emerged during the course of my analysis. The thinkers had much to say about the development of children; the ways in which stages of development had to play a role in decisions about curricular content and teaching and learning; the development of teachers as people and as learners; and about an individual's growth into awareness of the world. In choosing to focus on the set of issues I focused on in this work, I made decisions about which issues seemed most central to defining their work as a whole, and which issues furthered the project's aims of trying to help make HE more accessible to a broader audience, particularly state schools seeking to adopt and enact HE principles. In the next section I propose some areas for further research, knowing that this project could have been twice as long as it was and still not have been truly complete.

### B. empirical work

In Chapter Seven I discussed several of the limitations of the empirical study which were the result of choices about methodology specifically. Here, I wish to discuss several other limitations to which I have alluded in my writing but which I feel should be more explicitly addressed.

A case study is inherently limited because it is an examination of only one school. In the case of my research of KGS, this inherent limitation of the case study was exacerbated by the fact that KGS is certainly not representative of most schools that might try to change their practices to adopt a more holistic approach to education. Very few schools have the opportunity that KGS did to build themselves up from scratch: hiring new teachers, designing a new school structure; beginning with only Year seven students and building up to a full student body. On the other hand, KGS was a very typical school in many respects, and much of what we learned about the challenges it faced in implementing an HE approach are problems that would be faced by most schools trying to adopt a new mode of working: the need to properly develop and implement a plan for change; the need for adequate professional development; the need to work carefully with students to facilitate their growth into a new model; the need to carefully plan for new ways of working with subjects and assessments. Thus, in considering the overall utility of the study and its findings, it seems important to recognise what can be taken from the KGS experience, while also bearing in mind the situation of the school and making some allowances for factors that might have been unique to the school. Having said that, I believe that the uniqueness of the KGS experience may have allowed it to develop an overall model for HE work within the state system, which might have been difficult to develop otherwise. Such a model for what HE in a state school can look like can certainly be of use to other schools as a guide to the process.

Another limitation of the empirical work was that my time at KGS was artificially truncated and thus I saw only a period of the school's overall growth, development and eventual enactment of HE principles. From my own contact with members of the school since the conclusion of my fieldwork as well as information I have received from others involved in and interested in the work of the school, the second and third years of the

school's operation were marked by a dramatic solidification of the school's ethos and working culture. In the wake of the *Ofsted* inspection there was a solidarity around the purpose of the school, and progress was made on several issues such as the organisation of the curriculum, approaches to assessment, and ways of working with students, all of which had been very problematic for the school in its first four terms. Whether this is true, I cannot say, having not had an opportunity to judge for myself. Nevertheless, hearing such reports drove home the point that my time at the school and my findings about its experience based on that time were arbitrarily limited. Although I am confident that the issues I identified in this study accurately reflected the experience of the three terms during which I was at the school, further work on the school's experience and the specifics of certain aspects of that experience would be useful to complete any understanding of the challenges faced by the school and the factors that contributed to its eventual success or lack thereof.

Finally, as I noted in Chapter Seven, I am aware that my presence in the school had an effect on some of the eventual outcomes, an issue inherent in any participant observation study, but worth mentioning again here. I was in the school, talking with teachers and the Head, asking questions about what was done in the school, balancing my role as a researcher with a need to develop relationships with members of the school. I had to make decisions about how to respond to their questions about my thoughts about what should happen at the school in a way that supported the development of relationships. My eventual integration into the school gave me the opportunity to truly witness the challenges the school faced. The result of developing good relationships was that everyone was very forthcoming about their opinions and eager to hear mine.

A good example was my interaction with the *Ofsted* Lead Inspector who, after finding out who I was and what I was doing in the school, asked to speak with me. While I told him that I did not feel comfortable answering questions about the school and the data I was gathering, I know that he had been told about my work in the school by teachers who were aware of some of my thinking about what was going on in the school. The Lead Inspector was very forthcoming in one particular conversation we had during the inspection as well as in an interview which he eventually gave to me about the inspection

process and the thinking of the team. I wondered at the time whether I was being set up to communicate things to the school in some indirect way.

Thus, the quality of the data I gathered was balanced by an awareness that I was acting as a change agent in some ways. Did this eventually matter? Perhaps, perhaps not. The school was likely to have changed in some way with our without my presence. There were a lot of outside people in the school with a whole host of opinions, and I do not pretend that my thoughts or ideas carried very special significance; however, it is worth noting that the presence of myself as a researcher may well have spurred a different level of self-reflection and thinking about the challenges the school faced.

## 5. directions for future research

Several areas stand out as promising avenues for future research or theoretical work. Some of the collaborative work between HE and state schools discussed in an earlier section of this chapter might lend themselves well to small research projects dealing with issues of professional development of teachers and work with students to help them make the transition to the model of education in HE schools. Beyond those, however, several larger projects remain.

First, I have mentioned several times the need to develop a coherent model of HE theory and practice. Although it is no longer possible to follow the experience of KGS during its period of change to see how it navigates challenges and responds to opportunities, it would be very useful to follow up on the work of the school and see what it is doing. From my understanding of the school's successes, it seems that formally evaluating its work and viewing it in relationship to the theoretical models of HE developed by Forbes and in this thesis, would be a valuable step in creating a coherent model of HE theory and practice. The model would be particularly valuable since it would not be tied to the work of a specific HE thinker, and thus might be more acceptable to other schools in the state system seeking to enact a holistic model of education.

Second, it would be useful and interesting to continue to try and flesh out what the HE tradition is, since I would not presume to have captured it all. In particular, it would be a useful addition to the literature to think specifically about a holistic approach to the curriculum since this was an area with which KGS seemed to struggle. In particular, I believe there is some interesting work about the relationship between curricular content and the developmental stages and capabilities of students, something all three thinkers discussed at length in their works. Steiner is most thorough in this regard, developing his ideas about the developmental stages of the child and explicitly laying out his thoughts on appropriate ways in which to address curricular topics for students of different ages. Montessori also developed extensive theories on the stages of development of younger children and corresponding sensitive periods for learning particular knowledge and skills. Also noted in Chapter Six, but well beyond the scope of this thesis to examine in detail, is the fact that the developmental stages of the HE thinkers correspond quite closely to theories of cognitive, social and moral development developed by thinkers like Piaget, Erickson and Kohlberg. While I am not familiar with the specific process of developing the content of the National Curriculum in England or other countries, it is not obvious that curricular content has been consciously aligned with what we know about the development of children and young adults. It would be useful first to map the theories of development articulated by the HE thinkers to the theories of thinkers like Piaget, Erickson and Kohlberg; and then to examine whether there might be lessons to be learned about the best way in which to structure the content of the curriculum to align with student development in a way similar to what happens in HE schools. This might entail rethinking the organisation and focus of the secondary school years, something which emerged in Montessori and Steiner's work, but this is part of what KGS had as one of its goals as a nascent HE school—trying to make secondary school a different, more useful experience for students given their needs. Although KGS may have gone too far in trying to restructure its approach to the curriculum during this initial period, a project developing a model for an HE curriculum could help schools take a holistic approach to teaching and learning, while ensuring that they do not lose the value of a subject-based approach to learning which the HE thinkers acknowledged was a useful way of engaging with knowledge.

## 6. conclusion

There has been a tendency among both those within the HE movement and those from without to ignore the value of mutual engagement. Some members of the HE community view HE as a countercultural movement whose success depends on remaining separate from the vagaries of the state system. Many unfamiliar with HE look at the work of Steiner and Krishnamurti schools and conclude that New Age hippie approaches to education that involve lessons in strange dance movements and communal living cannot add value to the conversation about education in the state system. The aim of this project has been to show that the theories underlying HE were developed by thinkers reacting to trends in education not dissimilar to some trends in education today; thinkers whose concern was to develop the best possible approach to educating the children who would go on to shape the world, and to ensure that such education was available to as many children as possible. While the methods and language may be unfamiliar and open to fair concerns and critiques, there is nevertheless value in a conversation that might enhance practice on both sides and ultimately enrich the experience of children. My hope is that this project is one step in making such a dialogue and exchange of practices possible.

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# Appendix A: Interview Citations

| | NAME | POSITION | INTERVIEW DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| T1 | Anne | Teacher | 23. October 2003 |
| T2 | Beth | Teacher | 23. October 2003 |
| T3 | Christine | Teacher | 13. October 2003 |
| T4 | Elizabeth | Teacher | 14. October 2003 |
| T5 | Ellen | SEN (Teacher year 1) | 13. October 2003 |
| T6 | Fiona | Teacher | 13. October 2003 |
| T7 | Gillian | Teacher | 24. October 2003 |
| T8 | Heidi | Teacher | 14. October 2003 |
| T9 | Lynn | Teacher | 15. October 2003 |
| T10 | Mary | Teacher | 22. October 2003 |
| T11 | Matt | Teacher | 14. October 2003 |
| T12 | Robert | Teacher | 17. October 2003 |
| T13 | Sam | Teacher | 28. October 2003 |
| T14 | Sean | Teacher | 15. October 2003 |
| T15 | Tom | Head | 24. April 2003 |
| T16 | Tom | Head | 24. October 2003 |
| T17 | Vincent | Teacher | 21. October 2003 |
| T18 | William | Teacher | 22. October 2003 |
| T19 | Beatrice | LSA | 16. October 2003 |
| T20 | Diane | LSA | 16. October 2003 |
| T21 | Jackie | LSA | 16. October 2003 |
| T22 | Laura | LSA | 13. October 2003 |
| T23 | Nora | LSA | 13. October 2003 |
| T24 | Tess | LSA | 13. October 2003 |
| T25 | Henry | *Ofsted* Lead Inspector | 25. September 2003 |
| T26 | Henry | *Ofsted* Lead Inspector | 24. November 2003 |

# Appendix B: Teacher Interview Schedule

## Final Interview Questions

### Teaching Background

1. What subject(s) do you teach?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Where have you taught besides KGS?
4. Why did you decide to come to KGS?

### Beliefs and Values about education

1. Is there a particular educational philosopher or writer who has inspired you? If so, how have they shaped your views on education?
2. What do you think are the aims of education in schools?
3. What would you regard as the most important abilities/characteristics for pupils to leave school with?
4. What do you feel is the role of the teacher in the educative process?
5. How should the curriculum be presented in schools?
6. How do you think assessment should take place?

### The KGS Experience

1. How was KGS presented to you as a school? How was its philosophy presented to you?
2. How well do you feel that your views of education match up with what the school is trying to do?
3. What tensions do you feel between what you believe and would like to do and what is expected within the school environment?
4. Has being at KGS changed the ways in which you think about and approach any of these areas?
5. How well-prepared were you to come in and teach in the way that was expected at KGS? What might have made a difference to how well-prepared you felt? What could have been done differently?
6. Can you tell me a little bit about how you feel about leadership in the school? What have been the strengths of the leadership? What have been the weaknesses?
7. Has the staff INSET work been helpful to you? In what ways? What would you like changed about how staff training occurs?
8. With Ofsted behind you, how do you feel about the process? Do you feel anything valuable came out of it for you? For the school?

### For all teachers but particularly NQTs

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your training to become a teacher? How was your time in training spent?
2. Did you read the work of any educational philosophers? If so, who? Did any thinker’s work particularly appeal to you?
3. Did you spend much time in your course discussing theories of education, the aims of education, etc.?

# Appendix C: Samples of Observation Notes

## *Notes from KGS Staff Inset: June 29-30 2003*

**Sunday June 29, 2003**

Introduction, Tom:

Began with two videos of KGS. The first was a student-made film that highlighted aspects of KGS that they felt were important; the second was a professional film. Discussed values of the school that came out in the films: small classes, small group interactions, ownership by students, individual attention, equality, inclusiveness, practical, hands-on activities.

Characteristics of 19th century education:
- Imparting formal and informal rules;
- Teaching specialised knowledge and skills;
- Keeping children safe and contained;
- Instilling basic values of trust, cooperation and competition;
- Screening individuals for occupational pathways

Characteristics of the KGS vision for 21st century education, informed by aspects of the 19th century model:
- Developing a sense of community, mutuality and shared responsibility;
- Encouraging a sense of self-worth, contribution and personal dignity;
- Acquiring strategies/competencies for life-long learning, living and earning;
- Promoting global awareness of contemporary issues;
- Fostering a passion for and participation in community

KGS is trying to move away from the school experience of students moving through disjointed lessons in isolated subject areas and into a school model that has students at the centre of the process contextualising knowledge. "It seems bizarre to run a school around bits of expert knowledge when children live their lives in wholes," said Tom.

Key questions to ask during the development of thematic work (taken from Deborah Meier's work with the Coalition for Essential Schools):
- How do you know what you know?
- From what point of view is the information that you are obtaining?
- How are things connected to each other (context)?
- What if …?
- What significance does this piece of learning have?

Organisationally, the school will support the development of this thematic learning, cross-curricular links, etc, through the following structures:

- Teaching in teams
- Daily planning time with students
- Flexible block scheduling
- Emphasis on competencies and skills
- Emphasis on the learner and learning
- Heterogeneous grouping

- Teachers as pedagogic experts
- Authentic assessment
- Teacher contact with only 50-80 students per week

Each team will teach four classes of students, allowing teachers the opportunity to develop deep relationships with a small group of students. Each of the three teams will be responsible for engaging students in learning in and around the entire curriculum area; this may entail members of the team teaching outside of their subject specialty. Teams should also keep in mind the possibility that teachers may wish to work within different teams as part of the work for a particular unit of study.

<u>Sam, Curriculum Session</u>:

Existing models of curriculum:

- Outcomes-based learning: school programmes and instructional efforts are designed to have produced specific, lasting results in students;
- Core-curriculum: pre-determined body of skills, knowledge and abilities taught to students;
- Whole language: based on research of how students learn oral and written language skills;
- Character education: revolves around developing “good character” in students by practicing and teaching moral values, decision-making;
- Multiculturalism: based in belief that varying cultural dynamics are the fourth force along with psychodynamic, behavioural and humanistic forces in explaining human behaviour;
- Paedeia: built on an understanding that education serves to prepare individuals for learning, living, citizenship and self-development.

KGS curriculum is most in line with the Paedeia model of curriculum. Key aspects of the curriculum include:

- Student-centred: lot of contact time with students, opportunity to get to know them individually, be able to better gear teaching efforts toward individual needs;
- Inclusion: heterogeneous grouping, mixing up students in various contexts such as clubs;
- Activity days;
- Collaborative teaching and learning;
- Combination of competencies and National Curriculum.

<u>Heidi, Assessment Session</u>:

Refer to packet of slides handed out.

Discussion points:

- Assessment cannot be useful to students unless students know the purpose of the assessment, and the criteria against which they will be assessed;
- Children should be an active part of the assessment process
    - o teacher-pupil dialogue should be an important part of the assessment process at KGS;
    - o peer-review
- Some teachers commented that they have found it difficult to make time to implement the principles of assessment. Marking is very time-consuming, which makes it hard to give adequate feedback to students
    - o Perhaps LSAs can be trained up to help with the marking process?

- How much information should students have about their levels? Is it a good thing for students to know what level they are at so that they can think about moving ahead? Is it a positive thing for them to know where they have strengths and weaknesses, and for teachers to be able to talk about that openly with them? Do the disadvantages of the "labels" outweigh the benefits or not given that these students live in a society that already boxes people too much?

Lynn, Pedagogy Session:

Refer to packet of information handed out

Discussion points:

- Can be easy to slip back into old ways of thinking and practicing; reminders of what KGS is trying to do and what it means to put the learner first are really helpful;
- Teams need to decide how much time the team as a whole wants to give over the particular types of learning/pedagogic encounters: teacher-led, student-led, independent learning, etc.;
- Difficult to implement the idea of student-directed learning. It is easy to slip back into the idea of needing to deliver a particular curriculum instead of being willing to let the student direct learning;
- What place do activities like tutorial groups focusing on study skills, numeracy and literacy skills have at KGS? They are more "traditional" approaches, but do they have a place?
- Difference between fast food, slow food; fast-curriculum, slow-curriculum. Easy to think that we should compress the curriculum and teach more, more, more. But there are important benefits to having time to think, reflect, absorb. Less can be more.
- Easy to miss opportunities to link things up, bringing history into art; science into humanities, etc. But it is an important part of what KGS is trying to do.

Guest speaker Louis:

Began by asking groups to jot down something that captures the day's learning, and then to tease out something that felt distinctly KGS. Reported back:

- Inclusiveness
- Risk-taking
- Not afraid to look at the hard things
- Student-centred
- Cross-curricular emphasis
- Curriculum unconstrained by the institution
- Ethos of improving and learning
- Search for inspirational learning and recognizing that we are all independent learners
- Competence-based assessment

Louis commented that, "This is not the sort of things that teachers around the country are telling me about what is going on in their schools." It is inspiring that this is the level of conversation taking place at KGS.

Discussed different models of teacher interaction as described by Andy Hargreaves:

- Isolationist: teachers isolated from other teachers;
- Balkanisation: teachers grouped into isolated larger units like departments;
- Contrived collegiality: structures in place to facilitate teachers working together across specified boundaries, but it is fairly rigid within those planned collaborations;

- Collaborative culture: teachers are able to work together well, across traditional boundaries such as subject area; small schools usually most successful at this;
- Moving mosaic: there are teams, discipline specialties, but teachers are able to mix these things up constantly in order to support the learning that needs to take place; KGS is striving to achieve the moving mosaic model of teacher interaction.

Different types of school models:
- Impersonal organization: a school in which no student is known as an individual;
- High performance learning organization: the personal is used for the sake of the functional;
- Sentimental community: a school in which there may be a strong emphasis on the emotional but too little on the academic;
- Person-centred learning community: the functional exists for the sake of the personal.

There are fundamental questions that have been asked and answered at KGS about the purposes of education. A core value is that education should help contribute to the process of "people becoming persons; achieving their humanity." This means that KGS is striving to become a person-centred learning community in which all institutional structures should be designed and implemented for the purpose of supporting personal growth and achievement.

With this in mind, how do we deepen our understanding of teaching and learning??

From students:
- Watching them at work, direct observation;
- Questioning, using Q&A, talking with them;
- Asking about their understanding;
- Being aware of what students have learned and not learned;
- Allowing students to be actively involved.

From each other:
- Observation, formal and informal
- Primary schools
- Team teaching
- Inset/formal training
- Leader-led lesson
- Sharing mistakes
- Drifters
- Talking/listening
- LSA support and feedback
- Liaising

Louis spoke a little bit about current research on how people learn from each other; the conclusion is that transferring practice is much more difficult than transferring knowledge. "We know more than we can say. This rich tacit expertise and knowledge is the important part of our practice as teachers. The question is how we enable that knowledge to flow, and a lot of that has to do with being beside people."

From outside agencies:
- Other schools
- Professional organisations
- Journals, conferences and exhibitions

- Professional courses
- Outside agencies
- Community
- Industry
- Internet
- Networking
- Ofsted
- Personal experience as parents and pupils

Institutional/Cultural factors:

- Creative use of time
- Celebrating through sharing
- Holding people to account on their beliefs
- Prioritising the "important but not urgent"
- Networking with other institutions
- Student-centred review
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Backing for practice outside the box
- Developing "the courage to teach" and the ability to take risk

"Film: Dead Poets Society"

Discussion: What were the characteristics of John Keating that made him a strong teacher? What were things that made people worry about his teaching styles and methods?

**Power point/presentation: What is person-centred education?**

(1) Education is the main aim of schooling
(2) Education is about the development of human beings as persons
(3) We become persons in and through our relationships with others
(4) Certain kinds of relationships help our development:
  a. Freedom to say what we really think and make choices about what matters to us
  b. Equal respect that will help us say what we really feel
  c. Care for each other as well as respect for each other
  d. Listen to and learn from each other in creative ways
(5) Shared responsibility for our own and each other's learning
(6) We value differences and distinctiveness as of equal value
(7) We need to create conditions within which our voice can be heard and taken seriously
(8) We need to relate particular activities to wider and deeper considerations such as our development as persons
(9) We are committed to the connectedness between what we do and how we do it (the outcome is as important as the process whereby we reach that outcome)
(10) Organizations and structures are the servants and not the masters of what we aspire to.

**Monday June 30, 2003**

Themes for 2003-2004

½ terms, years 7, 8, and 9 → 18 possible themes for KS3

- 12 themes common to all teams
- 6 themes that are team-based
  - 3 staff-led/chosen
  - 3 student-initiated

What are the checks and balances?

- Do teams do themes at the same time and in sequence?
- Will themes be done by year group or across the key stage?
- Themes could sometimes be led by special interest, e.g. class and race issues could be explored through *West Side Story*
- How will teams share space?
- Will all teams/team members be involved in all themes?
- How can time be used more creatively to facilitate the work within themes?

Other issues:

- Student-led/initiated/negotiated work
- Use of time during day/week
- Special Fridays
  - o No reason that the special days could not be any day of the week
  - o Could do special master classes in music, science, etc.
  - o Could do whole school events like sports day
  - o Have cognate days in which people are split up into different subject area activities (drama, maths, technology, etc.)

<u>Team Planning Sessions</u>

Teams reported back on what they had discussed. Some discussion points that arose:

- What will the role of [Gillian] and [Sean] be with regard to teams? Could they perhaps swap in and out of different teams for particular units?
- Religious education needs to be incorporated into the work of the teams; was not immediately apparent that it had been planned for.
- Basic skills issues – how will these student needs be addressed?

## ***<u>School observation notes 25. Mar 2003</u>***

*italicized words UJH personal notes/questions/observations*

**8:30 – Staff meeting**. Tilbury trip tomorrow. New student to begin with 7JE tomorrow: JE talked about history of student and expressed concern about her not being in on the student's first day, so JR told other teachers to keep an eye on him. Announced planning meetings in evenings for team. [Tom] - Thanks to [Heidi] for organising Faith Day. [Heidi] told everyone that literacy begins today. [Tom] going to Boston funded by Human Scale education to see model schools. [Christine]: need numeracy files back from all teachers.

**8:40 – Assembly**: (On way to assembly [Lynn] runs into a girl who is crying – asks her what is wrong. Takes girl aside, gives her a hug and talks to her for a few moments.) [Lynn] leads assembly – talks about Dr. MLK and the theme of community in drama club. Talked about how communities around the world are different. Then talked about [KGS] and the way in which it is different from other schools. Reads about a young boy in a small school in 1950s, excerpt about

the school – One Small Boy by Bill Norton. The school is described as dull, with mean teacher, hit students, yelled at them, teaching not memorable, school compared to prison. Reads second description about another few students from schools in 1880s and in 1901. Asks students to think about how school is different at that time from their experience at KGS. How is that school different from KGS? Asks students to think about it. Gives quick plug for KGS, for the way that it operates, the way in which teachers do try hard to take care of students, students are taking charge of things in the school.

Tom congratulates students on their questions and their level of thoughtfulness in questions about religion during faith day. Told them that he had gotten calls from people who had come to talk about their religions telling him how impressed they had been with the students and how much they hoped to be able to come back.

**9:00 – Class 7JC. Maths with [Christine]**. Proportion. Put figures on board (*see attached diagrams)* Handed out markers, gave students 10 minutes to fill in answers.

C: What is proportional? Gave class a minute to think about it and raise their hands when they thought they had an answer. Called on students. When one student couldn't give an answer she asked her to say what she had done to figure out the problems on the board step by step. *Called on Jasmin and Kaomi a lot and got answers – not usual for teachers to do this. Didn't call on some of the "more able" children as much as other teachers do.* Took elements of answers and put them on board. Final answer written up on board: "Using the same multiplier to increase/decrease size."

C: "what is the scale factor? What did we learn about last week? You saw it and heard it but we didn't write it down." S: "divisibility." C: "how is scale factor different from divisibility?" After not getting response from students writes it on board: doesn't have to be a whole number.

Did 10 min 'diversion' about dividing any number by 9 (to 100) and giving answer.

Reviewed points from earlier in the lesson. Then handed out paper for them to take their notes. *C had written on the board all of the salient points that emerged from the lesson so easy for students to know what to write down.* Told them to leave space for yellow box (*students highlight and colour yellow the info that is important and that they have to learn/memorise.)* C wrote three practice questions on the board. Handed out more difficult sheets to some of the higher level students and a sheet to students finding the board problems too difficult.

Talk with C after class: She said she wasn't sure about the whole idea of teaching something that was not your speciality area. The diversion she used today in class came out of a class she had with 7JC yesterday and she felt if something were not a specialty area it would be harder to intuitively make connections like that since you would be more worried about following a lesson. UJH asked about her approach to dealing with students that other teachers found to have behavioural problems and her differentiated worksheets. C said that she felt that the students knew she was in charge of the class and she did her best to work with the students on a level that worked for them. She has been keeping track of Jasmin's progress and knows she is doing better, but she still needs to give differentiated work because J is not Lewis and to try and treat her like him would make her frustrated. *C seems to be a really good teacher – not student-centered in the way that I might have thought about it at one time. Very structured and she is definitely in control of the class. But students seem to do well in her class in a way that they don't in others.*

**10:30 – Class 7JC. English with [Heidi]** Introduced lesson. H: going to think about ways in which information is presented in the Horrible Histories books. Wrote on board the steps: 1) go to a double page of one of the books; 2) make up and write down 10 questions about the page; 3) swap books with a partner and then get your partner to write down the answers to the questions. *I am not sure what this means exactly.*

Students had 30 minutes to write down their questions. UJH walked around looking at questions. For the most part very simple questions requiring only straightforward lifting of answers out of the text of the book: who was king in X year? What are the words of the song on p 12? One or two students (Lewis and Chey) had more complex questions demonstrating and requiring higher order thinking skills: why did the war happen? Why was the cartoon on page 67 funny? *Feels more like busywork than an assignment designed to increase English skills. What is H trying to do with this lesson? What are the KS3 requirements?*

Students swapped papers and answered each other's questions. Another 20 minutes.

Back to plenary and H asked students to give examples of questions asked by other students. Students read questions off paper and gave answers. 15 minutes. *What are they learning?*

Talk with H later that day about the unit. Said she was going through the KS3 requirements and this was work on learning about ways of presenting information. Said she was trying to be a bit creative in the way she did it, hence working with HH which the kids love to read and it links with HUMS and history work.

**Lunch** - discussion with NB [visiting music teacher from the LEA]: doesn't think school is going to succeed in its efforts because people come in thinking the school is one thing and finding out it is something else. (*What do they think it is and what do they find it to be??*) "There is no coherent vision in the school for everyone to hang onto. Not enough consistency among teachers in terms of what is expected of students."

**1:30 - Class 7JC. D&T with [Beth]** Came in and assigned new seats to students. Got HW from last class. Talked about the upcoming unit – making a game. Would design a game, and then make it using the computer, D&T skills if it needed a board, figures ,etc.

Handed out HW from the previous class when they had been making scones. Went through the exercise which had involved using proportions to increase and decrease the size of a given recipe according to the number of people to be served. *Working with the maths skills currently being taught.* Went through the assignment and showed how each question ought to have been approached on the board. Asked students how they had done with their scones and whether their answers on the HW had made a difference in how the scones had come out.

Handed out a sheet for this unit and B told them that after reading through it, the students should have an idea of what they would be able to do by the end of the unit and how it would be assessed. *Seems to be a focus on helping students understand assessment – how they are assessed, self-assessment. Z.B JR's class.* Read through sheet together. *Such differences in the skills of students. Daniel from another school is really organized with his work in a binder. Msot of the KGS students are like Billy who is extreme in always forgetting or losing his work and has no sense of keeping himself organized. How does this affect their work?* Last sheet was a list of things that games might contain and went through the list and talked about specific examples: rules: players take turns, how to decide who goes first, how to decide who wins, etc. B: "this sheet is only a guide. If you want to be really creative, I would be very happy with that."

Students spent 20 mins working on computers to pick out three clip art figures that could be used as the basis of a game. Seemed to be comfortable working on computers but not doing things like laying out a paper or formatting something with them. *What are they doing in ICT?*

Had students write down HW for next time: Research a game or a puzzle. Think about the object of the game, what it is, what materials are used for it, how it is played, what rules, etc. Also handed out letters to six students in the class. "These letters are to tell your parents that the kite you made for the last unit was brilliant." *Contacting parents for good as well as bad events.*

## ***School observation notes 26. Mar 2003***

*italicized words UJH personal notes/questions/observations*

**8:30 – Staff meeting**. Tilbury trip for three classes. New student to begin with 7JE today. Christine and Beth talked about need to control phone use in school.

**8:40 – Assembly**: Ellen talked about thinking and learning to focus. One week ago during her assembly, she had given students 5 things to remember. Asked them to recall the items. Went through 12 students before she got all of the items. Asked the students how they had gone about remembering the items. How could they get better at remembering things? Students gave suggestions. Ellen gave them 5 facts to remember for the next time she did assembly in a week. *How do the assembly items get chosen? Is there a theme or purpose?*

**9:00 – Class 7JC. Humanities with JR.** J began class by assigning students to seats as they came in because it was a new term. Explained the upcoming unit on the Titanic. Each student would be given a ticket for 1st, 2nd or 3rd class seating at the end of the class. It would be punched at the beginning of each lesson and if it was lost then the student would automatically be in 3rd class. *Asked JR about purpose of these – to get students organized enough to remember the ticket and not lose it. Certain aspects of the unit, assignments, rewards would be given according to seating class and he was going to discuss whether it was fair to arbitrarily be assigned to a class like that and be treated in a certain way just because of that Talk about the titanic and the fact that certain classes of passengers were saved and others weren't. Issues of class in general..* 5 lessons during which students would be creating 5 portfolio pieces – documenting the way in which Titanic events unfolded. *HUMS, English are working on a unit about information and presenting it*. Asked students how they might present information. Answers on board: posters, brochures, diary entries, front page of a newspaper.

First page of portfolio would be an assessment sheet:

| Name | Design | Info | Effort | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | /10 | /10 | /10 | /30 |

Each student would be marked by 2 other students. Marked on effort, creativity, information presented.

Gave students blank sheet and asked them to begin working on a poster – a common first assignment. JR walked around checking work. Reminded students about the need to be creative. At one point stopped the lesson to talk about and write on the board specific ways in which creativity could be demonstrated. Use techniques in drawing that they had learned in Art: color, shadowing, etc. Remember unit in English on perspective? Could also use different perspectives to tell information. JR – what is perspective? Lewis: who is telling the story. JR: examples? Students gave examples: passenger, relative of passenger who lived, captain, servant on ship. *Good use of linking to other classes and prior knowledge.*

Students kept working and JR walked around – gave students an idea of the mark they would get if they handed in work as it was. Students seemed to respond to the individual comments given about how they could add info. One student added a border to the poster, another added speech bubbles, another put in some info blurbs. Chey, Kaomi and Jasmin worked well – responded to individual and specific suggestions.

20 mins left to class JR had students swap pieces and had them mark each other's work. JR looked at marks as they came in to see if the students had been fair in their assessments. *How do students know what fair is? There was no rubric or sense of how to judge. Ask JR.* Swapped again for a second set of marking by another student.

Collected all of the mark totals and the top 4 students got 1st class tickets. The rest got tickets randomly. Some students grumbled about getting 3rd class. JR reminded them not to lose their tickets. JR held back two students who had purposefully marked down other students' work. Told them that he would now judge them against the same high standards for the rest of the unit.

*Lot seemed to go on in this class. Content, personal dynamics, set up of future lessons, linking to other teachers and lessons. Need to go to a HUMS meeting and see how they are working together. Seems more in this team than others.*

**10:30 - Class 7JC. English with [Heidi]** H introduced lesson – "going to look at Horrible Histories books and generate a list of types of information used in them *does she mean types of info or ways in which info is presented?* Student couldn't find his book and H stopped the class for 10 minutes to allow all of the children to go around the classroom and look for the book. ?? Students re-settled and H explained their task for the lesson. "Skim two pages to find ways in which information is being presented. Make a short list, 7/8." 25 minutes. A number of kids were not doing the assignment. They were writing notes, talking, throwing things at each other. H seemed unaware or was ignoring some of them for some reason. Sends Chey out of class when he gets up and keeps walking around the classroom. Had class come together to share what they had found. Called on students and wrote on board: cartoon, graph, chart, sentence, question, drawing, writing, poem, song.

Had students work independently – find pages in HH on which information is presented in the ways listed on the board and then add to the list. Walks around giving individual help. As they worked she walked around giving individual help. *Students seem a little bored and many are restless. H keeps having to tell students to settle down and work and behave. I am a little bored. Is H considered a good teacher?* 20 minutes to do this.

Back to plenary. Had students tell her what they found and on what pages – writes down student answers on the whiteboard. Asked students to copy down those that they don't have on their list and check to see how many of them are in the books that they have.

HW written on board: "pick a period of history and research information on that period of history." *Kind of vague – wonder if students understand what to do.*

**1:00 - Drama club**, 9 students and Lynn. Read a piece on stopping conflict, resolving disagreements. Students tried to act out emotions related to the conflicts. Options for skit themes: watching horror movie vs. comedy with friends; playing outside game versus inside game; eating pizza versus a hotdog. Students worked in groups of 2 to develop a short skit in which conflict was developed and resolved. Class and L watched 4 of the skits and both SD and students gave feedback to the groups. Very relaxed atmosphere. Students and teachers both put feet up on chairs, sat on floor, moved around quite freely versus Music with NB who told students off for putting feet on chairs. Need for a common message to students regarding behaviour and demeanour.

**1:30 - Class 7JC. Maths with [Christine]** Collected HW from last time. Gave out marks from past work. Had typed up notes from yesterday's class for students who were not in class. Gave out worksheets to students which reviewed yesterday's work on proportions and scale factors. Gave 20 mins to complete the sheet – till 2. During this time, C worked with Charlotte, Kayomi and Kieran on the side *three students who seem to have trouble in classes across the board*. Supervised other students simultaneously, getting up occasionally to answer questions.

While students working, group of 4 boys discussing their problem with finding the scale factor. C explained to them that they should write things down on paper instead of trying to hold it all inside their heads. Showed them how to make a diagram of the problem. Another group of 3 girls was having problems. C told them to consult with Dani (strong maths student). Charlotte and the group C worked with got the answer to the first problem and began to work on their own. Later C asked Charlotte to explain answer to Kaomi. 5 students had hands up at 2. C told them to put hands down, were going to go over the sheet. Reviewed as whole class, putting work up on the board for all to see.

HW – students needed to make a word search with the vocabulary of this unit. Download free piece of software from the internet which let you make a search. Clues needed to be the definitions of the term.

## ***Staff Meeting with Ofsted Inspectors: 23 September 2003***

Inspectors: Henry (head inspector)
Lloyd (deputy head inspector)

H and L explained that the first day at the school had been a very positive experience. "What came across was how relaxed you were, how purposeful the lessons were." Explained that the purpose of the meeting was to put staff at ease, if at all possible.

L: "It is an interesting time for us to be here because we are working to an entirely new framework. One of the major changes is that we can now tailor inspections to individual schools. We want, as early on as possible, to target areas of strength and areas of potential improvement."

H and L have negotiated with Tom to conduct the inspection differently at KGS. Each inspector will begin the week going around the school with two pupils and getting pupil views of the

school. In this way, immediate contact with pupils will be ensured. The schedule for the meeting will be as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesday AM: | Tour school with pupils, analyze pupil work |
| Tuesday PM: | Inspectors in Masterclasses; 45 minute meetings after school with teachers responsible for specific subject areas being inspected (i.e. English, Maths, Science) |
| Wed AM: | Each inspector will shadow a student for the day, going with that pupil to classes, clubs, NumLit. |
| Wed PM: | Inspectors will meet as a group to try and pull out the important strands of their experiences, discuss leadership issues, etc. |
| Wed night: | Meeting with school governors |
| Thurs AM: | Time to pick up any areas not sufficiently covered Tuesday and Wednesday |
| Thurs PM: | Teachers and inspectors paired up for a feedback session |

L: "Achievement, teaching and learning considerations from the Frameworks will form the basis of the observations in classrooms; however we are trying to be a bit more organic in our inspection to be more in line with the way you work here."

H and L have agreed on issues of etiquette in terms of working – all will wear badges, will call teachers by their first names, invite teachers to do the same. If staff feel uncomfortable about anything, let Tom know so that things can be resolved in an open way.

Inspection team: Inspection is contracted out to a firm called Equalitas, and the members of the team work with that firm. All of them have worked together before in one context or another and know each other quite well. Inspectors will be assigned particular duties based on their strengths; however they will also work outside of their area of expertise during the Wed AM student shadowing experience. There is a range of experience represented on the team, including teaching and management.

Classroom observation and feedback to teachers:

- Inspectors will come into lessons – will normally try and stay for the whole lesson.
- No need for special planning, but it would be useful to them to be able to see teachers' normal planning efforts. Please make IEPs available along with any notes about students in the lesson who may have special problems.
- Inspectors will taking detailed notes relating to their observations on teaching and learning; achievement according to pupils' abilities; and values, attitudes, inclusion and use of ICT. In order to obtain a sense of pupils' understanding, they may also try and speak with pupils during the lesson in a way that does not interrupt the flow of the lesson.
- Inspectors will try to give feedback immediately after lessons (3-5 minutes) – this feedback will focus on areas for development. There will be no written feedback given.
- If there is a specific lesson during which you would like to be observed, please let PM or BS know and they will try to accommodate the request. Also, inspectors will try to ensure that everyone is observed, but that is not always possible.

Lead subject area teachers: If you are lead in subject area, in preparation for the meeting with the inspector on Tuesday PM, please think about issues such as performance management, teaching and learning, SEN assistance, and links with senior management.

# Appendix D: Documents Used for Document Analysis

**Non-KGS Publications**

Bayliss, V. (1999). Opening Minds: Education for the 21st century. London, Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce.
Bayliss, V. (2000). What should our children learn?: Issues around a new curriculum. London, Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce.
Handy, C. Re-inventing Education. In Handy, C. The Age of Unreason (1989). London, Business Books Ltd.
Hargreaves, A. (1997). Rethinking educational change with heart and mind. Alexandria, VA, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

**KGS Internal Documents**

Appointment of teaching staff: information for candidates. May 2002.
An attainable future. January 2002.
An approach to the curriculum. Undated.
Assessment. June 2003.
Collaborative curriculum planning through deliberation. March 2003.
Curriculum discussion paper. Summer 2002.
Framework for action. Internal document. March 2003
Indicators of excellence. October 2002. Packet of information for teachers used for staff inset including photocopies of articles and tips on topics such as “quality of interaction”, “professional dialogue”, “effective feedback”, “observation”, “four phases of the learning process”, “phase one of lessons: how am I doing?”, “effective questioning strategies”, “scaffolding thinking and answering”, “learning styles”, “what are students required to do?”
Information for parents and carers 2003-2004. August 2003.
It’s an equal thing … It’s about achieving together: student voices and the possibility of a radical collegiality. Confidential draft paper by advisor to the school, October 2003, for use at [KGS].
[KGS] Conference Notes. 28-29 June 2002
[KGS] curriculum mapping Year 7/8 2003/4.
Less is more: the move to educate on a human scale. June 2004.
Memo to [teacher]. 12. June 2002.
Memorandum beyond the agenda. Memo to Board of Governors. July 2003.
Organizing learning 2003-2004. July 2003.
Rhythms of organisation. September 2003.
Pedagogy. Internal document for use at Staff Inset, June 2004.
Professional dialogue. Undated.
Suddenly innovation is back on the agenda. May 2002.
Values into practice. June 2002.

**Ofsted-Related documents**

KGS. Form S4: Self-evaluation report for KGS.
Ofsted. (2003). Inspecting schools: framework for Inspecting Schools. London, Office for Standards in Education.
Ofsted. (2003). KGS Ofsted Inspection Report.
Ofsted. (2003). Secondary handbook for inspecting schools. London, Office for Standards in Education.