

The education of the child, the whole development of the body, mind and spirit begins before the separation from the mother and the start of independent growth. The lack of awareness of this fact in the West is reflected in many ways - an extreme example being the birth of a child already addicted to the drugs taken by the mother. In 'Magical Child' (1979, Paladin, Granada, Gt. Britain), Joseph Chilton Pearce discusses the primary perception or primary processes of nature that most children in technological societies lose, either through birth trauma or lack of bonding with the parents. He contrasts this with the well being and stability of children in more primitive societies born without trauma, drugs or fuss.

That a child can develop at an early age facilities for the appreciation of its environment, love of the arts and achieve creative skills is demonstrated in the work and methods of Susuki in the teaching of music and playing the violin. Again, at the base of his technique, is the bonding between mother and child and the realisation that the young child learns best through the parent. Other thinkers have developed ideas for the continual flowering and growth of the child through carefully structured stages, building all the time on that which has gone before and at each stage the parent plays a vital and active role. Montessori and Steiner schools reflect these ideals in the methods of their respective founders. More rarely, the pattern is developed through the secondary stage and the older child is given the opportunity to grow into maturity and independence without the pressures of society bearing down upon him, allowing him to think, to decide for himself and to be supported and guided but not straitjacketed. The Krishnamurti Foundation at Brockwood Park is an isolated example of this continual development of body, mind and spirit through to maturity and final separation from the parent into independence.

Contrast the system of education developed by our society for the majority, which has reverse motivation in its choice of curriculum. At the end of a long chain of cause and effect which starts at the top - the universities, and academic achievement of an order attainable by only a few of the ablest minds, down through examination boards and societies, through secondary education only recently moving away from the Grammar school syndrome, is a primary education that largely leaves the parent standing at the school gate. Each stage develops its ethos from the next stage above and is dominated by the requirements set down by that higher authority. Attempts to remedy the problems that arise from such a process of events, or to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing and technologically developing society are for the most part additions that are patched onto the system, often in a crude and haphazard fashion with minimum facilities or flexibilities available for easy and painless assimilation.

There is need for a radical rethinking of the whole educational process placing the child at the centre, surrounded by the family, and allowing for natural growth from the earliest years to a full flowering of potential, this for every child whatever his or her achievements are as an independent member of society. Communication and awareness skills obviously play a part in this process and a properly financed and facilitated curriculum needs to be developed that will allow for the fullest participation of all members of society whatever their role as teacher, parent or pupil.

Society today is a fast moving, ever changing phenomenon directed towards an uncertain future. In spite of the implications I have made that much of what is being done in education today is doing little more than papering the cracks of a system that is top heavy, poorly designed and built on sand, I have an optimism that eventually truth and reality will prevail, that mankind will respond to the challenge and rise above the darkness and suspicion and that this will occur in education as in all other aspects of society. That is why I will continue to help paper the cracks, looking to influence in some slight way, as I know many of my colleagues are also doing, the choice of paper and paste and seek at the same time to improve the foundations on which it is to be placed. My particular choice of paper is that of curriculum reform, free from the restrictive paste of archaic examination processes, and which is suited to the tastes and abilities of the pupils it is intended to serve. The ultimate ideal of an individual curriculum, a room papered to the particular needs of its occupant, with doors and windows opened to the society around it, will come eventually to be accepted as the norm.

In 'The Classroom Society' (1981, Croom Helm, London), Herbert Thelen postulates a cultural archetype for what schools should be like. 'To improve schools,' he says, 'one must find some way to work with rather than against them.' He continues to explain that while the general belief is that a school's purpose is the utilisation of knowledge, little real progress would be made. He suggests that the goal should be one of comprehension and that the curriculum should be the furtherance of comprehension-seeking inquiry. To do this it is also necessary to employ similar kinds of thinking to the humane society within which the educational system functions. Thelen finally points to the dilemma found at all levels of society, the conflict between the

conceptions of the cultural archetype oriented to techniques, rationality, problem solving and impersonal interaction, and the professional archetype revolving around dialectics, emergent principles and humane interaction, the assumed ideal. To redress the balance between the two is surely the goal towards which we ought to be striving in our aim for a holistic education.

At present this is a goal that goes largely unrecognised and misunderstood, yet there are positive signs. Current discussions on examinations, on profiling, on pupils with special needs (all pupils are special and have needs!), are indications that there are changes in thinking and attitudes. A further example: Philosophy, until recent times, has hardly entered the realms of education and never at primary level. Interesting results are beginning to emerge from America and pockets of growth in Wales and Devon are beginning to emerge and create wider circles of awareness and interest. The ability to teach children to think, to love wisdom and knowledge for its own sake, to seek for reality, to appreciate and be aware of what is, and to develop a way of life that takes all this into account every day, is a special one. The role of the parent is crucial, and they, too, need preparation, guidance and support as children prior to this new role.

If there is to be a growth of human potential into a harmonious and peaceful whole (holism), then time, space and energy must be found and allotted to prepare the foundations for this. Only when the foundations are well laid will the superstructure of society also be built in strength, harmony and peace and its human occupants have a true balance of body, mind and spirit.