Future Perfect?: "Cultural Evolution" as Intercultural Education[1]

Marcia J. Epstein

As the designer and instructor of several university courses on comparative culture for a multicultural audience, I have been intrigued for years with questions surrounding the notions of cultural "progress" and cultural "evolution".[2] First, of what might they consist? Are the terms synonymous, or do they represent divergent concepts? How might the processes of progress and evolution be described and evaluated? How might these concepts interact with social-scientific ideas about historical change and human nature, and scientific ones about human behaviour? As members of an academic culture that defines itself by its diversity, how do cultural historians select plausible categories and examples of "progress" in cultural terms? Should we even attempt to do so, or is a neutral stance most valid? Of what use are the notions of cultural progress and evolution in the post-secondary classroom?

A confession is appropriate at this point. I am biased toward the idea that cultures, as collective entities, can evolve over time, and that such evolution (as distinct from value-free change) is characterized by increasing diversity of population and of ideas, and by decreasing aggression. Recent examples in Western history of what I characterize in the classroom as "progress" are the racial and gender-equality movements that have resulted in the span of one generation in significant alteration of cultural norms and acceptable standards of behaviour. Both of these social movements have progressed through a series of changes in the course of the twentieth century. Racial equality, for example, begins with people of racial minorities desiring, demanding, and working for opportunities equal to those of the dominant culture. It results first in the expansion of opportunities for people of specific ethnicities, those that first identified the inequalities and began to protest them. It then expands to benefit most or all minority ethnicities, and to change the norms of the majority.

In the case of gender equality, the first step was to recognize and protest inequality of opportunity and reward. The second was to propose equitable solutions to the problems recognized, the third to implement them, and the most recent phase to recognize the values, experiences, and repression of both genders in society.[3] The first three of these steps may be placed under the heading of "cultural progress," here defined as the practical stages of social and personal change which motivate the changing of official policies toward increasingly humane and equitable interpretations. "Cultural evolution" may be seen in the fourth step, a holistic expression of the changes in social norms and values that have resulted from each practical step in the progress toward equality.[4]

The process of cultural evolution, presented in brief according to the model followed in my courses, may be read into social movements when they ultimately result in:

- conditions of health, safety, and acceptance being available to all members of the society;

- acceptance and appreciation of diversity;
- provision of a wide range of choices in education and employment, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality of origin, or economic class; and
- gradual loss, through irrelevance, of discrete categories that identify sub-groups.

The last of these characteristics may be seen as contrary to current ideas of identity politics, which hold that the self-identification and self-definition of sub-groups are critical to the health of a society. No contradiction is necessarily implied, however. At medial stages of the evolutionary process, the identification of sub-cultures is essential. All members of a society may choose to identify with a component segment of the society, as well as, or in contrast to, its totality. Acceptance of such choices is a necessary component of acceptance of diversity. As barriers break down, however, so does the need to categorize. In Canada, for example, religion is no longer a barrier to employment in the civil service, and the beliefs one holds are considered a private matter. In the nineteenth century, professed religion was regarded as a barometer of moral qualities and thus of suitability for employment in positions of public trust. Not only what religion one held, but whether one held any at all, was once considered a serious question. Today, religion, race, and gender are legally irrelevant to most hiring processes, although discriminatory practices still occur when individual employers are bound by personal biases that cannot be proven in law. Are we more 'advanced' than employers of the nineteenth century, or simply more hypocritical? This in itself is fertile ground for classroom discussion.

I will not attempt, for the purpose of this discussion, to cover the entire range of scholarship on cultural evolution in social-scientific terms, nor to explicate anthropological theories of the evolution of culture which are concerned primarily with the transitions from hominid society to human culture. The development of culture and human society has complex historical, political, and biological origins, and such complexities are beyond the scope of any individual's focus, or of any single university course. My intention here is neither to theorize nor to summarize, but rather to present an educator's practical view of salient aspects of cultural evolution upon which constructive classroom discussion can be based. Such discussion may then be brought into the public arena. Many of my former students report doing so, and the controversy generated thereby has challenged them to clarify their assertions and to refine their approaches. If they emerge from such discussions with their concern for human society intensified, so much the better.

Premises and Parameters

For the purposes of the present discussion, cultural evolution may be regarded as a process by which human societies advance in both rationality and compassion. This is perhaps a difficult combination, but one which characterizes societies that achieve or attempt to achieve the favourable conditions of social justice, safe living conditions, and reasonably distributed prosperity. It can of course be argued that these conditions represent an unattainable utopia, but they do exist at least sporadically in a variety of cultures. That they are not universal is not our concern here, nor is it a necessary problem for students of comparative culture to solve. That such favourable conditions *can* be achieved—if only for segments of a society and for limited periods of time—is at least an indication that they are possible. It is this sense of possibility that can motivate students to think about ways in which their own cultural experiences are part of an evolutionary process.

The premise in this definition of cultural evolution is that we, as individuals and societies, can learn to do a better job of ensuring peace and safety than our ancestors have done. It may not happen—but it is within the realm of possibility. I shall assume in the course of this discussion that, at this point in global history:

- peaceful societies are further evolved than aggressive ones;
- the human species, while unquestionably aggressive in aspects of its nature, is not exclusively so; and
- cultural norms are now more significant than innate tendencies in determining societal levels of aggression and attitudes toward group identification.

All of these points are debatable in the broad arena of academia. In the classroom, however, such debates may be counterproductive if one's goal is to encourage creative thinking about the process of solving social and civic problems. Students desperately need problem-solving skills if they are to feel included in, and committed to, their own societies. They are bombarded with so many critiques and so many exercises in defining "problems" and "arguments" that they meet the possibility of improving a situation with skepticism at first. The initial reaction is quickly mitigated when they are challenged to form small "task forces" (discussion and project groups of three to six members) whose job is to select a social, cultural, environmental, and/or economic problem, define it, and outline some possible solutions for it. Presenting students with a seemingly utopian goal and then challenging them to find ways to achieve it have, in my experience, the effect of bringing them to believe in their own efficacy as citizens and as shapers of their own future. One of the primary challenges that is presented to the students in "Heritage II" as a "warm-up" for their task force projects is the development—the *evolution*—of a society that no longer resorts to war as a viable mode of solving conflicts.

The Evolution of Culture Beyond Warfare: A Brief and Very Selective History

We know from comparative cultural history and anthropology that some societies work to avoid or deflect aggression. Among the most ancient, the Inuit of Canada knew that their population was so imperiled by the climate that fatal conflict within the community could tip the balance against survival. When two individuals, or two family groups, got into a state of conflict, their differences were traditionally worked out through ritualized contests of athletic performance, dance, and/or song rather than physical combat. Buddhist societies teach the transcendence of anger through introspection and compassion. Meditation on the essence of compassion as embodied in the Buddha aids the individual in overcoming feelings of aggression, and the challenging process of purifying emotions is seen as a personal responsibility. A number of minority sects within major religions—the Society of Friends ("Quakers") within Christianity and Sufism within Islam, for example—are also dedicated to the individual and societal practice of ways of life that value pacifism and compassion.[5] In these societies, as in Buddhism, the development of a way of life that transcends aggression is seen largely as an individual process. Introspective exercises designed to broaden individual perspectives on life events are practised in order to enhance compassion and reduce anger. War is waged metaphorically with one's own negative emotions, and care is taken not to externalize aggression but to remove or purify it from one's own thoughts. While the community is instrumental in providing guidance and support, the primary mechanism for attaining a transcendent state is individual dedication and practice.

The idea of a societal process of evolution beyond aggression, with the burden of progress placed on the collective rather than the individual, is a product of far more recent, and largely Western, ideas and ideals. It is prominent in the political theories of the seventeenth-century French *philosophe* Voltaire (François Marie Arouet, 1694-1778), French revolutionary Antoine de Condorcet (1743-1794), English political philosophers John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), German political philosophers Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and the English Fabian Socialist Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), among many others. All believed in the perfectibility of society in some future era, when significant numbers of people would be exposed to education in rationality and in individual and community ethics.

The Darwinian concept of physical evolution played a crucial role, as well. In the treatise *The Descent of Man* (1871 and 1874), Charles Darwin (1809-1882) translated the concept of natural selection to human evolution, painting at once a dark picture of violent conflict passed down from our hominid forebears and an optimistic one based on the growth of civilization and culture. He examined the possibility of the human capacity for rational thought as a way to escape the ancient, and presumably innate, pattern of domination by means of aggression that he suspected to have shaped our species. Darwin believed the development of culture to be distinct from the process of physical evolution and suspected that it might in time come to have the force of instinct. He observed that ideas and customs associated with culture, when impressed on the mind in extreme youth, come to be indistinguishable from instinct in their effects on the individual's development and that they were likely to affect the development of society through the growth of moral norms and rationality.[6]

Darwin's notion of collective evolution was further articulated in 1932 by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in an essay entitled "Why War?" (1953b), written at the request of Albert Einstein in an attempt to promote pacifism among European and North American intellectuals (League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation 1933). Freud responded to Einstein's request with an extrapolation of his theories about aggression in the individual to the concept of societal aggression and its eruption in warfare, as well as the idea that violence might someday be transcended by the effects of an education based on rational thinking. The timing of the essay is ironic: the Nazi doctrine of racial evolution envisioned a far different world, one based also on principles of supposed rationality. It is easy to dismiss Freud's essay as a utopian fantasy. It is worth noting, however, that his vision of a world beyond war was set in the context of a gradual development, an evolutionary process, from prehistory through the distant future:

> The cultural development of mankind (some, I know, prefer to call it civilization) has been in progress since immemorial antiquity. To this process we owe all that is best in our composition, but also much that makes for human suffering.…The psychic changes that accompany this process of cultural change are striking, and not to be gainsaid. They consist in the progressive rejection of instinctive ends and a scaling down of instinctive reactions. Sensations which delighted our forefathers have become neutral or unbearable to us; and if our ethical and aesthetic ideals have undergone a change, the causes of this are ultimately organic. On the psychological side two of the most important phenomena of culture are, firstly, a strengthening of the intellect, which tends to master our instinctive life, and, secondly, an introversion of the aggressive impulse, with all its consequent benefits and perils. Now war runs most emphatically counter to the psychic disposition imposed on us by the growth of culture; we are therefore bound to resent war, to find it utterly intolerable. (Freud 1953b, 96-97)

Freud's extrapolations from Darwin are worth examining at this point, and here I would like to set aside for the moment the tarnish on Freud's reputation as a scientist, as well the obvious misogyny of his cultural milieu and his profession. Let us regard him here as a social scientist, an observer of the human condition through the lens of human behaviour, whether normal or pathological. In the essay "Why War?", Freud summarizes Darwinian thought on the development of society as a hierarchy based on physical strength. His conclusion is that aggression is innate and inevitable. He goes on, however, to introduce the notion of cultural evolution as a slim hope for eventual transcendence of the Darwinian pattern:

> How long have we to wait before the rest of men turn pacifist? Impossible to say, and yet perhaps our hope that these two factors—man's cultural disposition and a well-founded dread of the form that future wars will take—may serve to put an end to war in the near future, is not

chimerical. But by what ways or by-ways this may come about, we cannot guess. Meanwhile we may rest on the assurance that whatever makes for cultural development is working also against war. (Freud 1953b, 97)

Freud's hope was placed in a process of intellectual evolution, which he believed to be the motivating force for the evolution of culture. He perceived intellectual evolution as analogous to the Darwinian process of natural selection, resulting not only in changes to the human intellect over time, but also in a social process that would parallel the development of ego and superego in the individual (Freud 1953a, 26-81). Freud explicates his theory of the development of a collective or cultural superego, which mediates the effects of instinct and instills loyalty to a community. In denying fulfillment of the instinct toward aggressive competition, the cultural superego initiates a dialectic between the forces of life (eros) and death (thanatos):

> [The] instinct of aggression is the derivative and main representative of the death instinct we have found alongside of Eros, sharing his rule over the earth. And now, it seems to me, the meaning of the evolution of culture is no longer a riddle to us. It must present to us the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instincts of life and the instincts of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species. (Freud 1953a, 56)

For Freud, then, the evolution of culture could be mapped as a Hegelian metaphor applied to the Darwinian model for physical evolution. In this, he was ironically close to the models used by the social Darwinist movements that inspired the Nazi philosophy of struggle for survival in terms of "race," confusing minute variations of human appearance with species differentiation. To the various social Darwinist factions active at the turn of the nineteenth century, social progress was a struggle of race against race and culture against culture, inextricably tied to the expansion of market capitalism in Europe and the Americas.

Freud's model differs, however, in that it envisions an eventual transcendence of struggle rather than a victory of one group over all rivals. As Freud realized, the mechanism for the evolution of a society is neither physical nor racial.[7] It is a matter of cultural decisions applied to social behaviour and propagated through education. It is a product of intellect and empathy combined, an ability to recognize that one's identity can move beyond the confines of self, family, immediate community, and ethnicity to a feeling of community with the species and even with the continuity of all life forms. It is learned, not inherited, and can therefore be taught. Its process is evolutionary because more can be learned in each successive generation and significant changes can occur over the course of history. It is for these reasons that Freud's articulation of cultural evolution may be useful for educative purposes. The notion that human aggression might be transcended, whatever its actual validity, is an effective starting point for analysis of what cultural factors and values might contribute to the improvement of human societies. Carrying on such analysis today in a class of approximately thirty-five to sixty students over the course of an academic year requires a set of flexible tools—readings, structures, discussion questions—that stimulate debate and defuse confrontation. What follows is a series of reflections and speculations drawn from ten years' worth of classroom experiments in the process.

Contemporary Views

Where are the cartographers of cultural evolution for the twenty-first century? It has become evident that none of the established disciplines of study concerned with the behaviour of individuals in societies—law, psychology, philosophy, political theory, sociology, anthropology, social history—has come to an agreement within its own ranks about what constitutes cultural progress. There is certainly no clear consensus across

disciplines. Adding the claims of differing ethnic, national, and gender-based interpretations of history makes the disagreement that much more complex. The knife that cuts the Gordian knot is wielded now by many hands that differ in size, shape, gender, and colour, as well as angle of approach. A method of analysis that crosses disciplines may also reconcile other differences, if it can steer a course of inclusion and respect. Here, then, are some signposts along the way provided by contemporary writers and extended by my own speculations.

Postmodern pluralism may itself represent a new stage in the evolution of culture. The struggle for recognition of subcultures based on ethnicity, gender, age, ability, sexual preference, income, language, and social habits is a sign that the concept of "mainstream culture" may be a thing of the past. The strength of such fragmentation lies in its appreciation of diversity. Its weakness lies in the parallel growth of ideological walls that block consensus about such communal issues as justice, ethics, and education. If everyone's culture is equally valid, how can consensus be formed? With new patterns of communication making our world increasingly aware of its own diversity, who decides what systems will serve as models for social justice and human rights? Should each culture create a map for its own evolution, or is there a single system that might, given a few centuries of development, suffice for all? These are some of the questions presented to and by students as the courses I teach unfold.

Students often search for a system that can provide an all-encompassing appropriateness of guidance. Rather than debating the merits of possible contenders (moral codes common to major religions? existentialism? anarchism?), I confront them with a series of mirrors: what, for you, would such a system encourage? What would it forbid? The latter is an easier place to start, since agreement on what an ideal society should *not* be is more easily found. The obvious example of a dystopia, mentioned by students every year that the course is offered, is the culture of Nazi Germany. Therein lies a trap: historical examples significantly removed from students' own experience are easily classified as remote and therefore unlikely to reoccur. Nazism strikes my students, primarily white middle-class liberal Western Canadians in their early twenties, as horrifying because of its perceived extremism: "how could people ever have thought that way?", they ask, their concern evident in eyes and voices. The students who grasp the commonplace nature of hatred are those who have personally experienced discrimination, for example those of Asian and aboriginal Canadian descent.

In order to bring the nature of intolerance and persecution into the grasp of those who have no direct experience, I assign, along with Holocaust literature, a chapter from the work of psychiatrist and ethicist F. Scott Peck. In his 1983 book *People of the Lie,* Peck outlines the need for a social-scientific definition of evil.[8] He presents several case histories of sociopathy encountered in his medical practice and then extrapolates to the collective evil of such atrocities as the My Lai massacre of 1968. What Peck terms "group evil," the impulse that leads to action opposing the most basic principles of humanitarian behaviour, is based on the following combination of factors:

- the phenomenon of "group immaturity"—the tendency of group morality to regress to the level of egotistical conflict;
- the tendency of self-perpetuating and specialized groups, like the military, to select members that will not question the group's assumptions, and to train them further not to do so;
- the desire of individuals to identify with a supportive group, even if it means altering or denying their own perceptions in order to accord with what is approved by the group; and
- the ease of dodging individual responsibility when a group has made an unwise decision.

Peck's (1983) analysis is given in psychological terms, but he extends it to an examination of ethics and individual conscience. He says that:

> [Any] group will remain inevitably potentially conscienceless and evil until such time as each and every individual holds himself or herself directly responsible for the behavior of the whole group—the organism—of which he or she is a part. We have not yet begun to arrive at that point. (218)

In a chapter entitled "Up the Ladder of Collective Responsibility," which weaves theological threads into the texture of psychological analysis, Peck outlines some potential solutions to the problems of warfare and violence. Pointing out the tendency of individuals to regress to selfishness and defensive behaviour under chronic stress and discomfort, he emphasizes the role of ethical decision-making by individuals:

> As a single vote may be crucial in an election, so the whole course of human history may depend on a change of heart in one solitary and even humble individual.… This is why the individual is sacred. For it is in the solitary mind and soul of the individual that the battle between good and evil is waged and ultimately won or lost.… The effort to prevent group evil—including war—must therefore be directed toward the individual. It is, of course, a process of education. (Peck 1983, 252)

Extrapolating from Peck's work provides an initial map for devising a system of education such as he describes. The process presented to my students is one of identifying a course of action that would discourage or prevent the attitudes and actions he cites as contributing to collective evil. It is a starting point for the articulation of what an ideal future society might advocate and legislate. Recent examples from such discussions include:

- individual responsibility to and for a community exercised as a measure of emotional and ethical maturity;
- inclusion of rational dissent and diversity in communities and in government;[9] and
- development of internal measures of self-worth in the individual, so that identity based on membership in a group is not the only available option for self-affirmation.

Such measures are potentially useful deterrents to racism, crime, and a host of other social problems within a community or a nation. Might they also serve as one step on a path consciously designed for cultural evolution? A program of universal education for nations as well as individuals might well start with an emphasis on the value of diversity of outlook allied to a process of mediation that systematizes non-aggressive approaches to disagreement.[10]

Another author whose recent work is used in my classes deals with the question of cultural values and their significance to psychological and historical development. In his books *Eye to Eye* (1983) and *A Brief History of Everything* (1996), philosopher and psychologist Ken Wilber develops a system for assessing the advancement of individual awareness and then extrapolates his conclusions to some ideas on the evolution of societies. In the third chapter of *Eye to Eye*, he examines the parallel between holistic paradigms in the natural world and the development of human consciousness. What they share, he suggests, is a pattern of growth toward "the unfolding of ever-higher unities and integrations. Very like the geological formation of the earth, psychological development proceeds stratum by stratum, level by level, stage by stage, with each successive level superimposed upon its predecessor in such a way that it transcends but includes it" (1996, 83).

Wilber (1996) poses the question "what is the highest stage of unity to which one may aspire?" He then suggests that consciousness is indeed evolving, and that in time the incidence of higher-order awareness

will show up with increasing frequency in statistical profiles taken by psychologists and sociologists (85). He defines higher awareness as the ability to transcend differences that lead to conflict because one no longer regards such differences as significant—traditionally the state of spiritual enlightenment characteristic of great religious leaders, but accessible, he believes, to others with extensive training. Citing Henry James (1843-1916) and Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) as pioneers in this field of investigation, he goes on to compare classical texts in Western psychology and religious mysticism with the yogic literature of India for evidence of evolving consciousness.

While Wilber's main concern is with the literature of mysticism, which his prose tends to echo, he does provide practical aid to the mapping of cultural evolution. In *A Brief History of Everything,* he develops a system to correlate the development of individual consciousness with the evolution of group consciousness from the combative to the all-inclusive. The system is too complex to explain fully in this context, but a description of some of its principles has been useful for stimulating class discussions. Wilber describes four "holarchies" of development:

- the Exterior-Individual (increasing physical complexity, from the atom to the neocortex);
- the Interior-Individual (increasing perceptual complexity, from sensation to symbolism);
- the Interior-Collective, or Cultural (increasing complexity of consciousness, from protoplasmic to mythic to rational); and
- the Exterior-Collective, or Social (increasing scope of allegiance, from families and tribes to planetary citizenship). (1996, 74)

Wilber (1996) goes on to explain the four quadrants of his system as a map for the development of decentred, or global, awareness in the individual, and inclusiveness in the society. He defines decentring as "a gradual decline of egocentrism" (180), and correlates the growth of mature awareness in the individual with the growth of tolerance and pluralism in society. Increasing tolerance, he believes, will result in the development of postconventional, or "worldcentric" morality. This is distinguished from a multicultural stance by its belief that some cultures are more advanced than others by virtue of their awareness that tolerance is more mature than intolerance. He uses the example of the multiculturalist who tolerates neo-Nazi doctrine as an unfortunate but inevitable ingredient in the cultural mix. The worldcentrist, he says, condemns the Nazi view as a more shallow, less mature mode of belief. It is less evolved, more egocentric, and therefore not equally valid with more humane doctrines. He distinguishes, also, between "judging fairly" and "not judging at all (188-190). The former, he states, is characteristic of the mature mind or culture, while the latter is a symptom of "adolescent confusion".

While Wilber's system is problematic in the classroom for several reasons (among them its self-referential and abstruse terminology), it is useful as a model for the building of new systems that assess the validity of cultural development. If we assume, with Wilber, that a tolerant and peaceful society is not only more humane but also more evolved than an intolerant and aggressive one, the difficulties of assessment posed by a completely relativistic stance are mitigated. Using Wilber's model, principles for the assessment of cultural evolution—always allowing for a range of variations based on traditional belief systems—may be proposed by observing the extent to which a culture encourages the following:

- **Awareness of individual and governmental responsibilities to a humane society.** These include the provision and staffing of infrastructures to aid in supplying health care, shelter, sanitation, nutrition, human interaction, and education to all members of the society, regardless of beliefs, ethnicity, financial and social status, age, and gender. Individual contributions to such infrastructures might include volunteer work, financial contributions, and/or contributions of expertise, which may not of

necessity be professionally educated expertise. For example, recovered addicts can be more effective counselors for those suffering addiction than social workers with no experience of addiction.

- **Respect for a diversity of cultural norms, beliefs, and opinions.** Respect does not necessarily equal agreement, but it does mean that individuals are not intentionally harmed because of their beliefs, opinions, or appearance. An ethical code that emphasizes avoidance of harm, already codified in a number of philosophical and religious systems, could be used as a measure of such respect.
- **Acceptance of rational dissent**. Laws protecting freedom of expression are another possible measure of progress. An exception to complete freedom might be made in the case of laws prohibiting the promulgation of intolerant beliefs that advocate harm. Thus, some restriction on the expression of opinion might be regarded as preferable to a completely open system.[11]
- E**ducation in humanistic and multicultural ethics.** The education of all individuals in a basic ethical code that emphasizes humane and humanitarian behaviour is crucial to any concept of cultural advancement, lest it deteriorate into a social Darwinistic model.
- **Education in mediation skills.** Techniques of mediation that facilitate conflict resolution have grown to prominence in the last decade of the twentieth century. While many are rooted in the practices of ancient aboriginal societies, others have been invented to cover a range of problems unique to present-day urban cultures. Such techniques are currently in use for international negotiations, legal processes, and family therapy. They are also taught in some North American elementary schools as a hedge against aggression and physical conflict among children. The broadening of education in mediation skills adapted to local cultural norms regarding communication and behaviour to all school systems and workplaces might serve as another basis for promoting cultural evolution. As such, it would be analogous to inclusive education in the principles of public health and sanitation, already growing into a worldwide phenomenon through the efforts of agencies sponsored by the United Nations and by national governments.

The mechanics of developing a system of education that promotes the study of ethics and mediation skills is itself a challenge. The establishment of local, national, and international taskforces to discuss the question is a feasible first step. Such a process might initially involve the participation of coalitions of ethicists, educators, psychologists, anthropologists and other social scientists, historians, writers, artists, and representatives of the general public, businesspeople, manual workers, technicians, and craftspeople. The system of public education in Canada has already established an extensive curriculum in multicultural issues that might serve as a model for adaptation to other systems. Other models abound and wait to be collected from the literature of the social sciences and humanities, as well as continuing psychological and medical investigations into the neurology of emotion. Education designed to bring about the evolved culture that Darwin, Freud, and others foresaw may, with considerable effort, be within the grasp of the present century.

Afterword

As an educator, I work hard at remaining acutely aware of all the varied nuances of the words "ethics," "morality," "progress," and "evolution." The easiest course is to accept all variety without categorization, but the exasperated voices of students in comparative culture courses echo in my mind: "We know when something is wrong, but *why* is it wrong? Whose standards count?" Whether from religious or secular backgrounds, students are haunted by questions surrounding the idea of cultural evolution, as am I. They are my motivation for leaping into the controversy and saying: Yes, this type of investigation—without prejudice, without ethnocentrism, with as few preconceived assumptions as possible—is worth pursuing. It might not result in any lasting conclusions, but it may sharpen our wits and enhance our humanity.

Postscript

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the notion of cultural evolution was relegated to the backwater of studies in culture and society because of its inherently judgmental approach, the lingering taint of earlier social Darwinism. Cultural evolution is rapidly moving to a foreground, driven by the news media as well as academic analyses of current events, in particular what transpired 11 September 2001. In equating the Taliban with a "backward" culture, Western analysts and journalists are following an unspoken pattern that corresponds closely with the definitions in this document. The theocracy of the Taliban is compared unfavourably with liberal branches of Islam as well as the West because the Taliban government is perceived as belligerent and repressive of its own people as well as those of other cultures, while liberal Islam and the West are (at least comparatively) tolerant and peaceful. These factors, even more than economic ones, are being brought into play as measurements of cultural stability as well as progress.

Notes

1. The core of this article was first presented as a conference paper for the Association for the Unity and Integration of Knowledge at the 2000 convention of Learned Societies in Edmonton, Alberta.
2. The courses, for the University of Calgary's Faculty of Communication and Culture, are the following. "Heritage II," a two-semester survey of social, cultural, and intellectual history from the American and French revolutions to the present; and "Seminar in Comparative Culture," a team-taught semester course that presents a socio-political or economic theme (e.g., "justice," "gender," "wealth") from the perspectives of three distinct cultures (e.g., South Asian, West African, Canadian Aboriginal). The latter is a new course, still in development; I have taught the former since 1991.
3. I am well aware that many feminist literatures define these stages quite differently, and that there are numerous schools of thought on the matter within the field of women's studies. Since the focus of this paper is not the validity of specific schools of thought, but rather a report on the potential utility of one approach in the classroom, I have chosen to leave the full range of literature in women's studies, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and many other disciplines for the reader to consider. Were it to be included here, the complete list would dwarf this paper.
4. For purposes of this paper, the term "cultural evolution" refers to the process of change defined and illustrated in the preceding paragraphs. "Evolution of culture" refers primarily to biological and anthropological interpretations of the initial development of human cultures and is used here to specify possible parallels between Darwinian evolution and interpretations of cultural progress.
5. While the scope of cross-cultural studies in non-conflictual or pacifist social structure is too vast to be covered here, it is certainly always fertile ground for further investigation and discussion.
6. See especially chapters 3 through 5 and chapter 21 of Darwin ([1874] 1909). Although Darwin's conceptualization of human evolution is too complex to summarize in these pages, it is useful as a starting point for investigation of the concept of cultural evolution.
7. This notwithstanding, Freud himself slipped occasionally into social Darwinism, as did most European intellectuals of his time. In "Why War?", Freud refers to the "uncivilized races and backward classes of all nations" as "multiplying more rapidly than the cultural elements" (96).
8. While Peck's frame of reference in the book is solidly Christian, he opens enough questions on the concept of "evil" as a social and psychiatric phenomenon to stimulate responses from a variety of perspectives.

9. Consider, for example, the institutionalization of a "Loyal Opposition" in the parliaments of Canada, Great Britain, and several other nations. The possibility that an opposition party can be included as part of the government, rather than outlawed or suppressed, stems from a fairly sophisticated conceptualization of the roles of government.
10. A sequel to this paper, examining a cross-cultural history of education in mediation, is in progress.
11 This, of course, is one of the issues faced worldwide in the question of regulating the Internet. Since definitions of what constitutes harm vary among cultures, the formulation of laws and ethical codes regulating communication is an extremely delicate matter. It is likely, however, that the twenty-first century will bring in numerous attempts at codifying a set of global regulations, whether or not they prove to be effective.

Works Cited

Darwin, Charles. [1874] 1909. *The Descent of Man.* 2d ed. New York: D. Appleton.

Freud, Sigmund. 1953a. Civilization and its Discontents (Das Unbehagen in der Kultur). In *Civilisation, War and Death.* Edited by John Rickman. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. 1953b. Why War? In *Civilisation, War and Death.* Edited by John Rickman. London: Hogarth Press.

League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. 1933. *Open Letters Series*, Vol. 2. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. Paris: League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation.

Peck, F. Scott. 1983. *People of the Lie*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wilber, Ken. 1983. *Eye to Eye: The Quest for a New Paradigm*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

_____. 1996. *A Brief History of Everything*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.