

I claim that the central model of theories of Open Education involves at least four normative and epistemological theses:

- (1) the thesis of normative developmentalism;
- (2) the thesis of affective primitivism;
- (3) the thesis of motivational simplicity;
- (4) the Cartesian thesis of privileged, incorrigible access to conscious events.

I first examine the theses. I then articulate various philosophical reservations which I have about them. Although I reject the model, I do not reject one of the ultimate goals of Open Education, *viz.*, the formation of communities of growing, loving, open, and self-directed persons.

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## Children, Bonsai Trees, and Open Education

“A work of artifice”

The bonsai tree  
in the attractive pot  
could have grown eighty feet tall  
on the side of a mountain  
till split by lightning.  
But a gardner  
carefully pruned it.  
It is nine inches high.  
Every day as he  
whittles back the branches  
the gardner croons.  
It is your nature  
to be small and cozy,  
domestic and weak;  
how lucky, little tree,  
to have a pot to grow in.  
With living creatures  
one must begin very early  
to dwarf their growth:  
the bound feet,  
the crippled brain,  
the hair in curlers,  
the hands you  
love to touch.<sup>1</sup>

This poem expresses the anger of a feminist. But it can be generalized to express the anger of all those who fight against the coercion of social stereotypes, those who are embittered by the mutilation and repression resulting from the ‘caring’ surgery of social pruning. It expresses mourning for the lost grandeur of metaphysical paraplegics, those individuals who manage to

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<sup>1</sup>Marge Piercy, *To Be of Use* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1973), p. 3.

survive the process of becoming enculturated and socialized into "useful" members of contemporary Western societies. As such, the poem speaks for those who support the principles of Open Education. Open Educators profoundly and intensely care for the development and education of children. When they respond to traditional forms of education and to the crippling effects which they attribute to those forms, Open Educators convey a similar sense of anger, a similar sense of human loss. In place of constricting educational structures, Open Educators would form communities in which "... people will grow organically in a network of wholeness, becoming loving, and sharing, while creating a culture they can believe in ... [the goal is someone who is ... ] loving, open, spontaneous, sharing, active, and self-directed."<sup>2</sup>

This paper attempts to understand the model which underlies the theory of Open Education, the Horticultural Model.<sup>3</sup> I first examine four epistemological and normative theses which are contained in this model. They are the following theses:

1. the thesis of normative developmentalism, viz., that natural development, *qua* development, is intrinsically good and if uninterrupted will lead to educational satisfaction and fulfillment;
2. the thesis of affective primitivism, viz., that, in each individual, needs, desires, values, interests are given in a pure, primitive, pre-cultural state;
3. the thesis of simplicity, viz., that all needs, desires, and values are equivalently simple; and,
4. the Cartesian thesis, viz., that we have immediate, privileged incorrigible access to our psychological happenings and states.

I then state various philosophical reservations and misgivings which I have concerning these theses.

But first a preliminary note to clarify my terminology. In speaking of the "Open Education Movement", I am not speaking merely of those educators who are self-avowed practitioners of "Free Schooling." Rather, I am referring to those individuals who advocate educational structures which are meant to embody the following assumptions:

1. The *child* is regarded primarily as a subject, that is, as a being who is actively involved in and intensely curious about the process of constructing and arranging his knowledge of the world in terms of personally-relevant interpretational schemata.
2. *Pedagogy* is highly interaction oriented with emphasis being placed on individualized construction of thought forms resulting from the subject's initiative.
3. *Educational achievement* is assessed in terms of distance from starting point to present level of development for the individual subject.
4. *Curricular decisions* are based on the assumption that the individual is basically a self-regulative being. Hence, the growing subject decides curricular content, sequence and pace.
5. The *educator's* function is that of heuristic channeling device and role-model in the process of knowledge construction.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Allen Graubard, *Free the Children* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), pp. 164-165.

<sup>3</sup>This particular term is taken from Bernstein and Davies' response to the Plowden Report. See Basil Bernstein and Brian Davies, "Some Sociological Comments on Plowden," in *Perspectives on Plowden*, ed. R. S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1969), p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>This characterization of the underlying structure of Open Education is introduced by Geoffrey Esland in an article entitled "Teaching and Learning as the Organization of Knowledge" in *Knowledge and Control*, ed. Michal F. D. Young (London: Collier-Macmillan Publishers, 1971), pp. 70-116. This notion is related to and expanded in the context of Open Education in my paper "Socialization, Social Models and the Open Education Movement: Some Philosophical Considerations" in *The Philosophy of Open Education*, ed. David Nyberg. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., n.d., n. pag. (forthcoming).

My purpose in referring to these structural features as delineating the Open Education Movement is to point to a unity of educational theory and practice at a level deeper than simple social description would permit.

### I: THE HORTICULTURAL MODEL

In dealing with any powerful educational model, various dimensions can be singled out.<sup>5</sup> For example, any such model will carry implications concerning the following: the nature of the child or, more generally, the educational subject; the role of the educator; and the nature of optimal processes of education. Moreover, any powerful educational model should suggest something about the role of educational structures in a larger societal context. To delimit the present discussion, I propose to deal with one such educational model, the Horticultural Model, as it pertains to children.<sup>6</sup> Central to the viewpoint which this model-cluster adopts are the following two philosophical orientations: (a) from the point of view of epistemology, the child is viewed as subject whose development unfolds from within and who is intrapersonally self-sufficient; (b) from the point of view of normative theory, the child is viewed from within the liberal tradition as highly individualistic and directed toward complete autonomy as the highest form of social and moral development.

I will now document my discussion with illustrations drawn from the literature of Open Education. Characteristic passages which suggest an allegiance to the Horticultural Model include the following:

1. In dealing with the question of what ought to be the basic considerations underlying curriculum decisions, Postman and Weingartner state:

"If your goals are to make people more alike, to prepare them to be docile functionaries in some bureaucracy, and to prevent them from being vigorous, self-directed learners, then the standards of most schools are neither high nor low. They are simply apt. If the goals are those of a new education, one needs standards based on the actual activities of competent, confident learners when they are genuinely engaged in learning.

One must be centrally concerned with the hearts and minds of learning — in contrast to those merely concerned with the 'fundament' . . . there is a need for a new — and 'higher' — conception of 'fundamentals' . . . if one *observes* a learner and asks himself, 'What is it that this organism needs without which he cannot thrive?', it is impossible to come up with the answer, 'The three R's.'"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>In dealing with the notion of an educational model, I am using this concept in the sense in which Scheffler uses it in his insightful essay, "Philosophical Models of Teaching." In that context, Scheffler says:

These models do not so much aim to *describe* teaching as to *orient* it, by weaving a coherent picture out of epistemological, psychological, and normative elements. Like all models, they simplify but such simplification is a legitimate way of highlighting what are thought to be important features of the subject. The primary issue, in each case, is whether these features are indeed critically important, whether we should allow our educational thinking to be guided by a model which fastens upon them, or whether we should rather reject or revise the model in question. (p. 100)

Israel Scheffler, "Philosophical Models of Teaching" in *Philosophy and Education*, 2nd Edition, ed. I. Scheffler (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1966), pp. 99-114.

<sup>6</sup>In using the term "Horticultural Model", I am using it synonymously with the following: "the Growth Ideology", "the Plant Analogy", and "Developmentalism".

<sup>7</sup>Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, "What's Worth Knowing?" in *Radical School Reform*, ed. Beatrice and Ronald Gross (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), pp. 167-168.

2. Reflecting a similarly Rousseauvian concern for "the natural learner", an excerpt from a journal published by a collective of radical public school teachers in the San Francisco area states:

We were going to provide an atmosphere where our children could explore the world as their needs and desires dictated; we were going to remain subtly in the background while our children played and learned in patterns *created by their own natural rhythms*.<sup>8</sup>

3. In summarizing the antipathy towards the structure which is taken to be characteristic of authoritarian schools, Graubard says:

The dimensions of the debate are set by the basic opposition of the libertarian to the structures of conventional schools, the key objective being to abolish constricting and authoritarian philosophies. In theory, what will emerge when these are abolished is an *organic flow of energies, a natural ordering* of events and relationships which will grow from honest needs and desires.<sup>9</sup>

4. Finally, from a report by a teacher in the Community School in Santa Barbara:

He [i.e., the science teacher] has been trying to help them follow their *natural bent for scientific investigation* and at the same time use this as a basis for learning reading and writing. Recently he has been collaborating with some of the other teachers to develop small books, worksheets, and coloring sheets about animals which will hopefully encourage some of the other children in the school to use their *natural interest in reading and writing* as a basis for learning some natural sciences.<sup>10</sup>

These passages and many others like them suggest the following characterization of the Horticultural Model as used in the context of Open Education. First, the child is viewed primarily as a natural organism, that is, as a self-enclosed, self-regulating entity from which various needs, desires, interests, etc., emanate. Second, such interests, needs, and desires are assumed to be intrinsic to and uniquely individualized by the child at a pre-cultural or a-cultural stage of development. Third, the child thrives when he learns in accord with his natural rhythms and bents, the suggestion here being that these are present in a primitive, non-rational way and that they flow from the child. Fourth, all the learning that is thought desirable, such as scientific learning, various forms of verbal and numerical literacy, social awareness and moral seriousness, can be found to be naturally motivated from within the child. Hence, the task of educators is to liberate this flow of energized curiosity.<sup>11</sup>

Accompanying this allegiance to "the natural" is a basic Cartesian assumption concerning the epistemological status of one's awareness of the natural forces which are to be noted.<sup>12</sup> Central to this Cartesian assumption are two

<sup>8</sup>Quoted by Allen Graubard, *Free the Children*, *op. cit.*, p. 153. (My underlining.)

<sup>9</sup>Graubard, pp. 155-156. (My underlining.)

<sup>10</sup>Graubard, pp. 86-87.

<sup>11</sup>Open Educators operate with the curious assumption that all that is involved in the process of person liberation is the removing of external constraints. This is an extremely negative conception of liberation and one which runs counter to contemporary liberationist movements, most of which incorporate a positive, deliberate process of consciousness-raising as central to the experience.

<sup>12</sup>This assumption is referred to as "Cartesian" for the following reason. In the *Treatise on the Passions*, Descartes states:

. . . we cannot be so deceived regarding the passions, inasmuch as they are so close to, and so entirely within our soul, that it is impossible for it to feel them without their being actually such as it feels them to be . . . we cannot be sad without its being true that the soul actually has this passion within it. (p. 343)

René Descartes, *Treatise on the Passions* (I, xxvi) in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. I, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

claims. First, it implies that we have direct, introspective awareness of our private psychological happenings and states. Second, it implies that one's identification of and description of those psychological phenomena are incorrigible; appearance and reality are one at the level of self-perception. Open Educators seem to regard this Cartesian assumption as applying to the entire range of psychological phenomena, intending it to include an awareness of all of the following: one's own needs, wants, interests, desires and curiosities, as well as one's fundamental identity as a unique being. For example, in one of the multi-media primers of the Open Education Movement, *Free to Be . . . You and Me*, one finds the following poem:

"No One Else"

Now, someone else can tell you how  
To multiply by three  
And someone else can tell you how  
To spell Schenectady  
And someone else can tell you how  
To ride a two-wheeled bike  
But no one else, no, no one else  
Can tell you what to like.

An engineer can tell you how  
To run a railroad train  
A map can tell you where to find  
The capital of Spain  
A book can tell you all the names  
Of every star above  
But no one else, no, no one else  
Can tell you who to love.

Your aunt Louise can tell you how  
To plant a pumpkin seed  
Your cousin Frank can tell you how  
To catch a centipede  
Your Mom and Dad can tell you how  
To brush between each meal  
But no one else, no, no one else  
Can tell you how to feel.

For how you feel is how you feel  
And all the whole world through  
No one else, no, no one else  
Knows *that* as well as you.<sup>13</sup>

What does this poem suggest? First, it cites all the affective transitions from liking to loving to feeling which are then contrasted sharply, from an epistemological point of view, with skill acquisition. It then expresses the Cartesian assumption which claims that the individual subject stands in a privileged position with respect to such affective states. It is the individual who is entitled to describe what affective experiences he is having and to decide on the

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<sup>13</sup>Elain Laron. *Free to Be . . . You and Me*, ed. Francine Klagsbrun (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1974), p. 112.

proper objects of those experiences. Privileged access confers exclusive authority on the subject to decide how to relate affectively to the world. Furthermore, the emphasis here is on exclusivity; no one else is allowed or entitled to interfere. Others such as professionals, detached information sources such as individuals who can be queried with respect to basic skills, or parents are viewed as irrelevant to the processes of affective development.

Adding the generalized form of the Cartesian assumption to a commitment to the absolute value of natural emergence leads Open Educators to regard the child as the pivotal decision maker with respect to modes of pedagogical interaction and curriculum content. The child is the ultimate final judge with respect to his or her own educational development. Thus, it would appear that in the ideal community of Open Education, it is the developing child who functions as the Philosopher-Ruler. The child is the one who has direct, immediate, and unerring access to the Form of the Educational Good.

If this characterization of the Horticultural Model is correct and if my extrapolations from it are fair, then the reactions of opponents of Open Education become more understandable. Insofar as Open Education challenges root epistemological assumptions of more traditional patterns of education, it necessarily alters the basic parameters of pedagogy. This pedagogical shift has radical consequences for the basic authority and power structures in the educational situation. While allowing that many individuals, including teachers, seem to be largely unaware of these consequences, Esland describes the critical response in the following way:

The cognitive and existential anxiety which is induced may amount to anomie and a personal struggle to reintegrate their perspectives . . . Relativism strikes at the roots of taken for granted reality and is usually resisted, not only because it may lead to an existential vacuum, but because it also relativizes authority and institutionally-convenient divisions of labour.<sup>14</sup>

Given that one of the costs of adopting the Horticultural Model of Open Education is intense cognitive and existential anxiety, it now becomes relevant to inquire into the philosophical soundness of the Model. Insofar as the Model includes many epistemological and normative components, the task of such an inquiry can only be partially completed in a paper of this scope. Nevertheless, if one set of theses deriving from the Model can be shown to be questionable, then it would seem reasonable to be less than totally committed to the general theory.

## II: PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE MODEL

Four epistemological and normative theses are central to the Horticultural Model as I have described it. As mentioned above, these are:

1. the thesis of normative developmentalism, viz., that natural development, *qua* development, is intrinsically good and, that if uninterrupted will lead to educational satisfaction and maximum fulfillment;
2. the thesis of affective primitivism, viz., that in each individual, needs, desires, values and interests are given in a pure, primitive, pre-cultural state;
3. the thesis of simplicity, viz., that all needs, desires, values interests are equivalently simple; and,
4. the Cartesian thesis, viz., that the subject has immediate, incorrigible, privileged access to his psychological events and states.

I will now deal with these theses in that order. I will argue that all four should be rejected.

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<sup>14</sup>G. Esland in *Knowledge and Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

*The Thesis of Normative Developmentalism*

The first thesis embodies two claims, one of which is a moral claim, the other of which is empirical in nature.

The moral claim is that because it is development, development is essentially good in itself. Why should we accept this? The mere fact that a certain developmental sequence occurs does not legitimize either promoting that particular sequence or carrying the sequence through to its final stage. Even if it could be shown that only one developmental sequence is possible, various considerations might affect its desirability. For example, simply pointing to stages of cognitive development does not settle the question of whether such development ought to be allowed to run its course (since we know that we can alter its course).<sup>15</sup> Nor does pointing to developmental sequence alleviate educational and social planners' responsibilities to investigate the possibilities and desirability of altering the actual developmental sequence. The persuasiveness of the developmental ideology, with its attendant *laissez-faire* attitude towards maturing educational subjects, derives largely, from its assimilation of all forms of human development to value-free, unalterable non-human developmental patterns such as those found, for example, in the life-cycle of the butterfly or the wild rose. In the case of plants — which is the primary focus of the Horticultural Model — the developmental pattern is unalterable (unless affected by outside forces which bring about mutated strains). Brussels sprouts grow in the same way, over and over, and the repetition takes place at a high level of specificity. In general, if we view a natural sequence as unalterable, we tend to withhold moral predicates from it, especially if the phenomenon in question is completely asocial. A plant is such a phenomenon; a child is not. Unfortunately, ideologically-committed developmentalists are captivated by the romance of the developmental pattern of the wild rose and fall into fallacious forms of analogical reasoning when dealing with sequences of human development. For humans, the descriptive component does not entail the normative consequences which are claimed to follow.<sup>16</sup>

The second, empirical claim of the developmentalist is that a child's development, if uninterrupted, will flow to complete educational fulfillment. This claim also appears to be false. The findings of two of the most prominent researchers into human developmental sequences, Jerome Bruner and Lawrence Kohlberg, suggest that under some socio-economic conditions certain developmental stages — both cognitive and moral — simply will not occur.

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<sup>15</sup>See, for example, the following research: "Perceptual-Cognitive Disorders in Children" by Ward G. Halstead and Philip M. Rensick in *Perceptual Development in Children*, ed. by Kidd and Rivoire (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 5-31; work reported by Paul Mussen in *The Psychological Development of the Child* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963) (which deals with the cognitive development of children raised in orphanages); and Basil Bernstein's work in sociolinguistics. In particular, see Basil Bernstein, "Social Class and Linguistic Development: a Theory of Social Learning" in *Education, Economy, and Society*, ed. Halsey, Floud, and Anderson (New York: Free Press, 1961), pp. 288-313.

<sup>16</sup>My discussion of this fallacy is not intended to be a rigorous one in this context. Much post-Humean philosophical discussion has been devoted to issues surrounding this controversy. There is no need to cite that general literature here. For more thorough discussions of this issue in the context of developmental theory, see the monograph, *Concepts of Development: Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development*, ed. H. W. Stevenson, 31 (1966). Similarly, for an extended discussion in the context of educational theory, see R. F. Dearden, *The Philosophy of Primary Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1968), pp. 25-49.

Bruner has shown that, in some cultures, there is no cognitive development at the symbolic level.<sup>17</sup> Various explanations have been proposed to explain this. For example, in pre-symbolic cultures, the basic mode of economic interaction tends to be a direct exchange of goods and services rather than through a mediating form of money. My point here is not to cite apparent anthropological anomalies. Rather, it is to suggest that even in cognition, which might plausibly be regarded as the most intrapersonal area of development, development is more adequately characterized as a complex process of individual-societal interaction. It is not something which emanates from the individual in uninterrupted fashion.

This point is further supported by Kohlberg's findings in the area of moral development. As is witnessed by Kohlberg's tendency to label individuals as becoming "fixated" at particular stages of moral development prior to stage six, Kohlberg is committed to a "flow model" of developmental sequence. Nevertheless, he argues quite cogently that certain 'advanced' stages of moral development are inextricably linked to various forms of more sophisticated cognitive development.<sup>18</sup> Hence, if cognitive development can be shown to be functionally dependent upon various economic and intellectual structures of a particular group or culture, it would follow that various forms of moral development are similarly dependent. The upshot of this is that if cognitive development is a product of complex interaction, then moral development is unlikely to be the result of a flow of increasingly more charged "moral energy". It will not simply emanate from a self-sufficient growing moral agent.

To summarize, with respect to this first thesis, I am denying that observable sequence provides a normative base for desirable sequence and that, unless impeded, all forms of development reach the maximally optimal stage in the individual.

### *The Thesis of Affective Primitivism*

Rather than dealing with all the multiple sub-claims that are embodied in this thesis, I propose to deal solely with the claim that such psychological phenomena exist in a pre-cultural form. I want to argue that at least some profound value orientations are probably cultural at a very early period and are certainly cultural by the time the developing child enters the educational system.

Consider the case of differential gender orientations. Present research indicates that one's sense of maleness or femaleness arises out of and is reinforced by cultural structures. This suggests that of the large store of sophisticated gender-related value structures which most children have, most of these derive from cultural sources. For example, in the article "Women and Persons", Christine Garside points out that:

What it is to be a woman includes having a particular kind of body, having a recent history of being brought up in a patriarchal society, having an inherited history of female archetypes, having present experiences which occur because one is female, and having a future which calls for a revolution from being oppressed.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Jerome Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1966); Jerome Bruner, Rose Oliver, Patricia Greenfield and Others, *Studies in Cognitive Growth* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966).

<sup>18</sup>See Lawrence Kohlberg, "From Is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with it in the Study of Moral Development" in *Cognitive Development and Epistemology*, ed. T. Mischel (New York: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 151-236.

<sup>19</sup>Christine Garside, "Women and Persons" in *Mother was Not a Person*, ed. Margret Andersen (Montreal: Content, 1972), pp. 10-11.

Substituting the alternative gender terminology and either reversing the direction of oppression or eliminating it would, obviously, permit the same remarks to be made about men.

Secondly, parents raising children participate in a universal pattern of human interaction. Nevertheless, this pattern is, in important ways, culturally relative as well. It is known that parents respond differentially even to male and female neonates and that these different patterns of response are culturally learned and culture specific. Given that the human infant begins to acquire some sense of psycho-sexual identity as soon as he or she begins to interact with other members of a particular culture, it is plausible to infer that most of the gender-related value and interest orientations which are displayed by school-age children are both acquired and culture-relative. If so, then it is absurd to think that all the interests and values manifested by children are both primitive and culture-free.

But this leads to a certain dilemma for Open Educators. If one wants to retain the view that if and only if an interest, need or value is primitive, it is educationally relevant, then one must reject all those orientations in the child which are either partially or completely derived from various socialization processes. The development of genderized identity is one such case in point. On the other hand, if one admits culturally-derived orientations as educationally relevant, then one can no longer cite the natural, primitive origin of orientations as a determining factor in the area of educational policy and practice. The first alternative is unacceptable because it denies major components of the child's present identity as important in education. Open Educators reject such a consequence on both moral and psychological grounds. The second alternative, however, is not available to Open Educators because it directly conflicts with the basic assumptions of the Horticultural Model, a model which is committed to the primacy of "the natural". Faced with this dilemma, I think that the Model should be rejected.

### *The Simplicity Thesis*

Open Educators seem to be convinced that, left to his or her own natural patterns of curiosity, the child manifests traits of both the physical and the social scientists. For example, in the report from the Community School in Santa Barbara, the author states that the science teacher ". . . has been trying to help them follow their natural bent for scientific investigation."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Thelen states:

All of us are practicing, if amateur, social scientists. The contribution of the discipline of the social studies to education is to make us better practicing, even if still amateur, social scientists: and therefore better citizens, parents, leaders, and autonomous individuals.<sup>21</sup>

In both these passages, and in many like them, the assumption seems to be that all the disciplined forms of understanding which emerge at the level of sophisticated theory are already present, in a simple form, in each individual child and that if left unconstrained, such understandings will manifest themselves in the educational setting. I wish to argue against this view in two different ways.

<sup>20</sup>Allen Graubard, p. 86.

<sup>21</sup>Herbert Thelen, *Education and the Human Quest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 47.

First, a scientific orientation towards the world must include some or all of the following features: detachment of the object from the self (in the sense that objects are regarded as having a nature of their own which is independent of man's nature and which is unconcerned with the fate of man in the world); a capacity for engaging in sustained disinterested speculation; and the systematic naturalization of and de-anthropomorphizing of object-predicates.<sup>22</sup> Present research on cognitive development shows that the cognitive intentions of children do not display any of these features, particularly not at any pre-symbolic stages. Moreover, it would appear that the most cursory overview of Western intellectual history shows that the development and attainment of scientific curiosity and perspective took centuries of monumental struggle, starting with the early forays of the pre-Socratics and beginning to reach maturity only with Newton and the philosophy of the post-Renaissance. Thus, findings in developmental psychology and intellectual history make it absurd to suggest that children possess a "natural bent for scientific investigation" if that means anything more than a merely spontaneous and episodic interest in natural phenomena.

Second, as a possible counter-example to the thesis that all evaluative structures are equivalently simple, consider the illustration of an individual holding the value of world peace. Certain very sophisticated concepts are pre-supposed by this value commitment. For example, one needs to have a comprehension of all the basic structures which go to make up a 'world', e.g., economic, geographic, cultural and political, along with some notion of the constitutive binding super-structures such that one arrives at an integrated unitary notion of 'world'. Moreover, one needs to understand the complicated notion of peace, in both its material manifestations and its ideological expressions. Finally, it would appear that some sort of Aristotelian practical wisdom would be required to understand the complex relationship between one's own moral stance of pacificism and the political and social consequences of human behaviour in relation to one's ultimate goal of world peace. Therefore, it seems ridiculous to suggest that world peace is, in some sense, a natural, simple value. Its very conception, as well as an execution of one's commitment to this value, depends upon the acquisition of some very difficult and complex concepts and forms of behaviour.

By assuming this (naïve) thesis concerning the naturalistic and simplistic nature of all value-states, Open Educators absolve themselves of the responsibility for considering whether or not certain values are to be introduced into the lives of children and, hence, avoid many of the most agonizing decisions which educators usually have to face. For example, if world peace is recognized as a culturally-derived, non-simple value, Open Educators must be committed to the view that it should not be introduced artificially into the child's value structure. But if this is a consequence of the theoretical stance of Open Education and if it follows from adopting the Horticultural Model, then surely it is the Model which should be abandoned, along with such *laissez-faire* consequences, rather than abandoning goals such as that of world peace.

In rejecting the above three theses, I hope to redirect attention to what I regard as crucial normative decisions in the educational realm, decisions which Open Educators do not face but which have value consequences nevertheless.

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<sup>22</sup>See F. M. Cornford, *Before and After Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 5-29.

### *The Cartesian Thesis*

Insofar as this thesis underlies the absolute authority accorded the child in the Open Education setting, questioning its validity challenges the locus of educational authority as well. If it is plausible to suggest that individuals other than the specific child may have equally good or, indeed, better access to one's psychological events and states, then curriculum decisions, choice of classroom interaction and other educational matters might very well be decided by individuals other than the child.

The Cartesian thesis derives its attractiveness by focusing on particular subsets of psychological phenomena, viz., one's experience of episodic states and events such as pain, fear, excitement and physical pleasure. But the further one gets from these kinds of events and states, the less the degree of incorrigibility. I would argue that such a graduated view of our access to psychological phenomena is necessary to account for three sorts of psychological experiences which we have: the experience of *ignorance* (where this is not a verbal deficiency) of what we are really feeling, the experience of *error* with respect to what we *are* feeling, and the experience of *self-deception*. With respect to complex affective states and dispositions such as love, hate, envy, friendship or patriotism, for example, we may be ignorant about the intensity of the emotions involved or about the long range structural features of the emotional posture. Similarly, the experience of coming to a recognition of one's "true feelings" (as we call them) implies, quite possibly, an extended and painful search for greater degrees of awareness. Such a process would make no sense according to the Cartesian thesis. Finally, insofar as we admit instances of self-deception, for example, deceiving ourselves that we love while, in fact, we are merely infatuated, then again incorrigibility and privileged access are called into question. Given that all these illustrate common psychological occurrences, we should have, at best, a limited degree of confidence in the Cartesian thesis. Obviously, it should not be embraced with such enthusiastically open arms by those involved in Open Education.

### III: CONCLUSION

To summarize, in this paper I have selected one feature of the general theory which is articulated by proponents and practitioners of Open Education, the Horticultural Model. In Section I, I tried to show how this Model gives rise to a picture of the growing human subject as basically a self-sufficient, intrapersonally responsible individual whose educational experiences are structured around fundamental needs and desires which are regarded as naturally and pre-culturally emanating from that individual. In Section II, I tried to argue that four of the major philosophical theses which derive from the Horticultural Model should be rejected.

It should not be thought, however, that in objecting to the Horticultural Model, I am rejecting the ultimate goals of Open Education. I am just as vehemently opposed to educational structures and processes which produce deformed and repressed individuals, human bonsai trees. Moreover, I, too, yearn for the formation of communities in which human beings can grow and become loving and open and sharing and self-directed. Where we differ is with respect to the means by which such communities can come into being.

I do not believe that Open Educational structures, based on and carrying out certain philosophical assumptions, can give rise to human beings able to understand and participate fully in such communities.<sup>23</sup>

#### RESUME

Je demande que le modèle principal des théories sur la "Libre Education" prenne en considération au moins quatre thèses normatives et épistémologiques:

- (1) La thèse du développement normatif;
- (2) La thèse de l'affectivité première;
- (3) La thèse de la simplicité motivée;
- (4) La thèse cartésienne des privilèges, accès incontrôlables aux événements conscients.

J'examine d'abord les thèses, puis j'expose différentes restrictions philosophiques que j'éprouve envers elles. Bien que je refuse le modèle, je ne peux pas rejeter un des derniers objectifs de la "Libre Education", c'est-à-dire, la formation de groupes de personnes en augmentation, qui aiment, qui sont ouvertes et autodidactes.

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