

P R E F A C E**Anthony Roda**

The N.Y.S.F.E.A. held its 29th Annual Meeting, the last of the 20th century, at SUNY New Paltz (April 7-8, 2000) and its 30th, the first of the 21st century, at SUNY Cortland (April 6-8, 2001). The keynote speakers were Maxine Greene, Emeritus at Columbia Teachers College, and Richard Brosio, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, respectively. In this volume we include an overview of Professor Greene's address presented at SUNY New Paltz and the entire address by Professor Brosio which was presented at SUNY Cortland. The focus of our association has been and continues to be the foundations of educational processes and methods, both as they have been as they are and as they could be in the near and far future. One need not belabor that such concerns cannot be appreciated without broad imaginative insights in striking contrast to the "paltry empiricism" against which Emerson railed. Nonetheless, both of these perspectives have their place within the human struggle to understand and educate.

Since the above meetings, the events of September 11, 2001 have heightened the features of conflict and uncertainty to a level probably unexperienced since the Cuban crisis. There is the general economic malaise that the economy has been experiencing over the past two years, rampant corruption at the very pinnacle of some of the largest U.S. corporations, a tax structure that is bloated with all kinds of shelters (including off-shore tax havens), a business culture in which words such as "raiders," "takeovers," etc., etc., etc. have acquired positive connotations and lost all vestiges of disapproval and illegitimacy, and a disengagement from civic and political life exhibited by cynicism and low voter turnouts. The jingoistic and chauvanistic responses by some of our public representatives, attempts to silence public debate and

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discourse, do little to alleviate the present cynicism. The style and manner is reminiscent of the false dichotomies of the Nixon era (of the love-it-or-leave-it type). The discourse is framed as though two alternatives capture the entire range of available alternatives. The strategy undermines the very nature of democratic public life by insinuating that disagreement with the policy of the representatives (one alternative) in question is tantamount to being unpatriotic.

These sweeping characterizations could be filled with an exceeding number of facts and details but such would be beyond the purpose at hand, i.e. to call attention to the part that education may have played and the part it could play now and in the future. Old concerns and old questions still haunt us and we still must wonder about what role, if any, education plays in the development of our political, religious, business and academic leaders. And yes! We must wonder to what degree education contributed to this sorry state of affairs/things.

The following pieces were written prior to the unfortunate events of September 11, 2001. Nonetheless, most of them have a compelling quality and a sense of urgency even greater than before that fateful day. The one exception is the review of Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club* which was prepared after September 11, 2001, but it too has the virtue of pointing the way to the foundations of our social order and education's role therein.

Because Professor Maxine Greene did not provide the N.Y.S.F.E.A. with a copy of her keynote address we had to rely on the notes of our Immediate Past President, Jane Morse, who was kind enough to provide us with an overview of the address to include in this volume of *Educational Change*. In her address Maxine Greene calls attention to the use of the human imagination and its powers to envision our social world in ways that pro-

mote choices and freedom while eliminating injustices. By so doing the imagination acts as a catalyst in a process she refers to as “creative democracy.” This process allows a continual re-invention of educational possibilities. These re-imaginings may lead to “outrage” at the unnecessary structural obstacles which impede and preclude many citizens from participating and contributing fully to the civic life of the community while improving their own personal lives. In this process, foundational scholars have a role to play through the vision of education with which they approach their work. She argues that no sham excuses should be accepted as justifying an unjust status quo in which the few enrich themselves and theirs while the many lack the basic necessities for a full and satisfying existence with human dignity.

The keynote at the Association’s 2001 annual meeting at SUNY Cortland was delivered by Professor Richard Brosio of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. In his address, “Attention Educational Professoriate, et al.” he gave us an overview of his longer publication *Philosophical Scaffolding for the Construction of Critical Democratic Education* (Peter Lang, 2000). The foundational issues addressed by Brosio revolved around the question: What are the appropriate educational responses in a human world in which epistemic certainty eludes us? As Dewey took great pain to remind us: The outcome of human action is riddled with uncertainty. Our keynoter contrasted this to the fixed certainties in the classical model of a market economy with its inflexible iron bound laws of supply and demand and its unalterable materiality. In his sketch of the classical Greek thinkers (Plato, Aristotle) Brosio represented them with the view that “it was possible to grasp patterns underlying seemingly random occurrences” and using this as a springboard, he quickly skipped to the Western developments of the 19th and 20th century. Here Brosio focused on figures such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and John Dewey as well as members of the Frankfurt School such as Herbert Marcuse. In addition Brosio integrated figures such as Jurgen Habermas, Existen-

tialists such as Albert Camus and Liberationists such as Paolo Freire in a kind of dialectical process which informs and encourages “participatory democracy, social justice, and respect for diversity.” For Brosio these are parts of an incomplete human project to rebuild the human world so that individual and collective needs and desires are put at the center. Part of this calls for a reorganization of the educational discourse which reorders priorities and avoids sham explanations for accepting or justifying the status quo (echoes of Maxine Greene) which oftentimes is a front or an excuse for exploitative and manipulative structures.

In the spirit of John Dewey Brosio reminds us that “forms of subjectivity, relativism, cynicism, solipsism, and nihilism” [p. 15] need not be the only alternatives or responses to cognitive uncertainty. However, there are no guarantees that these alternatives are avoidable but there are no reasons to embrace them either. For Brosio the heart of educational discourse should not be simply the acceptance of the status quo but its improvement. It is a goal that is both possible and consistent with cognitive uncertainty. And, to complement this kind of educational discourse Brosio’s *Philosophical Scaffolding* contains tasks designed to call attention and provoke reflection on the traditional cognitive classifications (e.g. mind-body dichotomy), sociological classifications, economic classifications, educational classifications, etc. At times these have been used as methods of control, while their social origins have been disguised or forgotten. Nonetheless these often invest and justify the continuation of forms of unjustifiable social stratifications as though such are inherent in the very nature and order of things.

Richard Brosio’s considerations of the relationships between categorical schemes and educational practices seen to have some parallels to the treatment of Dewey’s habits and Cassirer’s symbolic forms by Professor Thora Bayer in her “Dewey and Cassirer - A Postscript.” Her immediate concern is to tease out

the parallels between habits in Dewey and symbolic forms in Cassirer. Ultimately, however, these insights as Professor Bayer indicates should inform education in all its diverse occurrences.

As I indicated previously (“Preface,” Educational Change, Spring 2000, p. iv), I found and continue to find Dr. Bayer’s comments unusually interesting. However, I would be insincere if I did not add my own reservations regarding her comparison of Dewey’s “habits” to Cassirer’s “symbolic forms.” I should say at the outset that the status that Dewey accords to habits is quite different from the status that Cassirer accords to symbolic forms. I don’t think that either Dewey or Cassirer would use “habits” and “symbolic forms,” interchangeably. From the little that I know of Cassirer it seems to me that his use of symbolic forms suggests something about the structure or structures of human consciousness. In spite of his efforts to unstiffen the Kantian categorical framework he still ends up with a kind of formal argument (or should I say “explanation”?) for human consciousness which makes art, religion, science, etc. possible. However dynamic Cassirer attempts to make his philosophy it seems that he ends up with symbolic forms as the organizing principles of the human mind. Perhaps it is too much to suggest that Cassirer’s symbolic forms are analogous to the “invariant structures” of Husserl’s phenomenological project. If such an argument were made and sustained then the status accorded to Dewey’s habits is strikingly different from the status accorded to Cassirer’s symbolic forms. Dewey draws parallels to biological functions and mathematical functions, etc. but in the end his habits are acquired through the cooperative efforts of humans in their surroundings. As Professor Bayer so well states towards the end of her postscript it is in such contexts that the problems of self determination and freedom need to be worked out and this is an educational issue in both the narrowest and the broadest terms. In concluding this brief digression we should heed a warning that was paramount to Dewey’s thought, i.e. the avoidance of dualisms. However, the

philosophy of symbolic forms runs the risk of reifying these very forms and thus the very dualism that Dewey's treatment of habits attempted to destroy.

The next essay in our collection explores problems which have a close kinship to those articulated by Professor Bayer. In a highly speculative application of the Pygmalion myth, Professor Lars Mazzola treats us to a provocative account of the Miss America Pageant. In his "Myth, Critical Literacy, and Miss America" he interprets the pageant as an instance of the Pygmalion story. He sees the sponsors and creators of the pageant in a similar position and role as Pygmalion. The implication is that each recurrent Miss America is an instance of Galatea, Pygmalion's statue come to life, which becomes the artifact or model young American coeds aspire to resemble. Accordingly, contemporary multinationals, sponsors of these pageants, capitalize on the manipulated desire to market and sell services and products which benefit and enrich these organizations. Professor Mazzola's treatment of the Pygmalion myth might be intriguing and didactically useful, however, whether it can bear the load of explaining the phenomena of multinationals and their practices remains far from settled. Interpreting myths is problematic, to say the least, and riddled with pitfalls as Professor Mazzola indicated. At this time I should like to steer clear of such dangers. However, I welcome our readers' reflections and additional comments on Professor Mazzola's interpretation. It is interesting to note that a number of the conglomerates Professor Mazzola mentioned are being investigated for accounting and corporate irregularities, a pervasive phenomena of our economic landscape.

Closely related we have the essay, "Back to the Future: Coming to Terms with the Claims of History and Expediency in Recent Character Educational Initiatives," by Dr. David Granger also from SUNY Geneseo. In it he explored why "recent character education initiatives have proven so compelling to teachers

and the general public.” In trying to understand the appeal that these initiatives have for his graduate students Dr. Granger provided some historical context that shows the strengths and weaknesses of character education. For the most part he found that the appeal resulted from the experience of frustration by the loss of a common (universal) standard. Our contemporary order seems to lack organizing moral principles and aims which command a broad consensus. Faced with the daunting problems of diversity in all its manifestations and ramifications it is not surprising to opt for a solution in an idealized and romanticized past or a golden age which has vanished from the social landscape but which can be recovered, so the reasoning goes, through the traditional classical Aristotelian virtues of courage, temperance, honesty, etc. Sometimes these are complimented by or even replaced by those of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition such as patience, charity, fortitude, etc. The proponents of character education, recommend that these virtues and traits of character should be imparted, in an Aristotelian fashion, early in the moral development of the individual. Through this process of establishing “virtuous habits” one becomes “a person of good moral character” and displays courage, temperance, patience, modesty, etc. in everyday life. The character education proponents expect that this method is the panacea for the many social ills (drug abuse, disrespect, lack of discipline, violence and the many other social pathologies of modern societies) that pervade the contemporary social landscape.

Even though these initiatives may appeal to one for promoting cohesion and unity, they have some serious shortcomings. Primary among these shortcomings is the authoritarian and monolithic assumption inherent in the approach. The assumption often clashes with democratic and pluralistic values as well as the demographics of our social realities. A related aspect of these initiatives is the aim to promote efficiency. In itself it is a desirable aim, however, it too must be balanced with the aims of democracy. For Dr. Granger, these considerations show that there

are no easy answers and we are left to struggle with the questions: “Are recent character education initiative really receptive and responsive enough to these problems? And are they best interpreted as simple failures of character?” [p. 50]

In “Imagining Education for the Twenty-First Century: Views from Two Capitals,” Professor Kenneth Paulli from Siena College gives us his vision of educational possibilities in light of our existing realities. At the outset he emphasizes that education involves a number of players (tax payers, politicians, parents, students, teachers, administrators, etc.); and since any of these, potentially, can alter the results of the educational process and its consequences it is critical that we have an appreciation for the dynamics and the various configurations of the process insofar as we are able to imagine these. By teasing out the views of two of our public servants, Carl T. Hayden, Chancellor of New York State’s Board of Regents, and Hilary Rodham Clinton, New York State Junior Senator, Professor Paulli walks us through the main issues education faces in the near future. Through a reading of the General Requirements for the Registration of All Programs Leading to Classroom Teaching Certificates which was adapted by the New York Board of Regents in 1999 as well as a personal interview with Chancellor Hayden he articulates the chancellor’s vision.. For the views of Senator Clinton he examines all of the Senator’s education speeches as well as her more sustained reflections on education in *It Takes A Village*.

The four areas of critical concern for Chancellor Hayden which loom large on the horizon are (1) diverse student population, (2) literacy, (3) standards and (4) professional development. Professor Paulli confronts us with demographic projections from the 1996 U.S. Bureau of Census which predict that by 2020 more than 50% of the K-12 student will be non-white. In view of these demographic probabilities the great problem for both society and education is how to integrate the above concerns (1-4) and at the

same time guarantee the students of the 21st century a “real opportunity to participate fully in our American democracy and in our world’s economy.” [p. 58]

After presenting the Chancellor’s views, Professor Paulli turns his attention to the educational views of Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton. Her views flow from two fundamental interconnected beliefs, namely (1) all children are capable of learning and consequently (2) all children should be given access to a quality education. For these aims to be actualized the larger social order is implicated. It is because of this that Senator Clinton urges a better integration of these goals into the larger community. Accordingly, Professor Paulli presents the areas which Senator Clinton considers essential in the educational process with which the above aims must be carefully coordinated. He discusses these areas under the following five general headings: (1) Education and Economic Opportunities, (2) Stepping up the Federal Government’s Role, (3) A Well-Trained, Accomplished Teaching Force, (4) Education’s Greater Social Role, and (5) It Takes a Village to Educate a Child. From these it is obvious that Senator Clinton sees education and the larger social order mutually interconnected with both sharing one fate.

It is further obvious that both Chancellor Hayden and Senator Clinton imagine the future of education in “remarkably similar ways.” Among these imaginings the most obvious are (1) equal access to quality education, (2) early literacy education, (3) greater infusion of cutting-edge technology and (4) a well-trained and professionally developing teaching force. Both place the responsibility for the above on the entire social order, i.e. the “various educational stakeholders.” Further, both are of the view that the state and federal governments must be pro-active with policies that promote the above aims. Professor Paulli interprets the Senator’s and the Chancellor’s pro-active stance by the federal and the state governments as intervening in the public schools of

the 21st century in order to reform a system “inured to mediocrity, inured to chronic dysfunction.” Intervention from state and federal governments directed at reforming and improving a system from the “outside” is of some concern to Professor Paulli because, for him, it suggests that the educational system cannot reform itself. He then appeals to those on the “inside” of the educational system to reform it so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st century through their own imagination’s creativity as well as their own energy.

Professor Paulli seems to be setting up a polarizing relation between two principal stakeholders, i.e. the educational system and the government. But, if these two are genuine stakeholders then these have a stake and a role to play. The dynamics may evolve in a polarizing fashion as Professor Paulli seems to suggest. However, Professor Paulli’s “inside” and “outside” need not become mutually exclusive actors although that is a genuine possibility. Leaving open the more benign possibility of co-operative efforts, Professor Paulli’s suggestion would complement and amplify the views of the Chancellor’s and those of the Senator’s.

In addition to the above contributions this volume of Educational Change contains the winning essay (1st place), “Piaget, Constructivism, and Mathematics Education,” submitted by Jana Gardner, Manor School, Honeoye Falls-Lima School District, from the 3rd Essay Contest sponsored by the New York Foundation of Education Association.

Further, the feature “Notes and Comments” includes a note by Professor James Garrison, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on “Dewey, Spirituality, and Rationality: A Response to Professor Roda;” a second note by Professor T. W. Lindenberg, Emeritus, SUNY Oswego on “Paul Mort and Pax Americana: Further Thoughts on Glotzer’s ‘American Educational Research in the Dominions: Making the Case for Decentraliza-

tion in Inter-War South Africa’;” and a review of Louis Menand’s *The Metaphysical Club* by Professor Anthony Roda of SUNY Oneonta.