Chapter 23

The Responsibility of Educators in Peacekeeping: A View From the USA

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st Century, the specter of catastrophic war is more threatening than ever, and yet the prospect of reducing animosity is closer to being within our reach. The causes of strife are based mostly on fear and ignorance, and education is the key to erasing these two maladies. As modern technology brings the human community closer together, it is now possible to educate all people across the globe. The focus of educators’ attention must be: a) to see each member of humanity as a spiritual being; b) to recognize and emulate the purveyors of virtue; and c) to face head-on the dangerous people who stand in the way of a more God-centered universe. This chapter will explore each of these three areas from an individual perspective, as well as on a national level, and finally onto the world stage.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st Century, the specter of catastrophic war is more threatening than ever, and yet the prospect of reducing animosity is closer to being within our reach. The causes of strife are based mostly on fear and ignorance, and education is the key to erasing these two maladies. As modern technology brings the human community closer together, it is now possible to educate all people across the globe. The focus of educators’ attention must be: a) to see each member of humanity as a spiritual being, b) to recognize and emulate the purveyors of virtue, and c) to face head-on the dangerous people who stand in the way of a more peace-centered universe. This chapter will explore each of these three areas from an individual perspective, as well as on a national level, and finally onto the world stage.

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TO SEE EACH MEMBER OF HUMANITY AS A SPIRITUAL BEING

All the major religions of the world, and even lesser known, aboriginal, and Native American ones, recognize the sanctity of life. From a child’s earliest days, he or she must know and feel one’s worthiness to be loved. A child is born with a sense of spirituality, but it can be crushed if not nurtured. Wordsworth recognized a child’s innate godliness in his poem, “Intimations of Immortality”:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy (Wordsworth, 1952)

Have you ever noticed the natural bond between the very young and the very old? The blessed child comes to us from a place of eternity, and the old person will soon return from whence he or she came. In between, every significant event in one’s life (birth, coming of age, marriage, death) should be celebrated with a religious ceremony. The idea that “shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy” reminds one that material concerns are ever at hand, tempting the individual to forget one’s spiritual nature and pursue the things of this world. Religion may be out of fashion, but to deny one’s spirituality is to ignore a crucial part of the human psyche. Swiss physician Dr. Carl Jung taught that part of what it is to be human is to long for a god. He was working with a female patient, not particularly religious, suffering with troublesome dreams after the death of her father. Jung described the dream as follows:

Her father (who in reality was of small stature) was standing with her on a hill that was covered with wheat fields. She was quite tiny beside him, and he seemed to her like a giant. He lifted her up from the ground and held her in his arms like a little child. The wind swept over the wheat fields, and as the wheat swayed, he rocked her in his arms. (Jung, 2010)

Jung concluded that the dream was not of her actual father, and not of a modern European Christian figure, but rather of a primordial god symbol. He says that, try as we might, god is ever present in the human psyche. Furthermore, he says the religion into which one is born is almost impossible to erase, despite our “intellectual” nihilism. In some cultures such as China, the teaching of religion is forbidden. A friend of this writer, a Chinese PhD candidate studying Marxism at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, explained that, “Yes, our state religion may be atheism, but within the family, we still have our household gods.”
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