

The Khepera Method: Redefining Education

By Norman Harris, PhD

In the current climate of educational accountability, politicians, policy makers, entrepreneurs and educators offer reforms drawn from a reservoir of unexamined assumptions. I label that reservoir the American Worldview and it can be characterized as being anti-intellectual in terms of processes and methodologies associated with critical thinking; materialistic and pragmatic in terms of how it defines and assesses outcomes; and punitive when a stakeholder in the educational complex deviates from its anti-intellectual processes and/or its materialistic and pragmatic outcomes. This is the foundation for “bottom line” thinking that leads to high stakes testing, and singles out teachers as the group in the educational complex who most need reform. The “bottom line” is an unintended and brilliant metaphor, for it signifies a visionless educational complex intent on chopping down every tree so that it might locate a forest. Unable to see opportunity embedded in the fecund forest it razes, education must constantly invent reform and label it progress. Not surprisingly, this kind of progress is static—the curse of Sisyphus—and ultimately an illusory reform running furiously on a treadmill and made to watch changing scenes projected onto a screen a few feet in front of it. The perspiration, pontification, and money spent to change the scenes projected on the screen are collectively and variously labeled progress. In its desire to make sure that “no child is left behind” the educational system has reduced modern complexities and opportunities to sets of quantifiable phenomenon consistent with its anti-intellectual, materialistic, pragmatic and punitive worldview.

Most schools are not structured to help construct the kind of intellect necessary to create meaning in a world replete with information. Instead of authentic and interdisciplinary curriculums, many American schools teach as if the world’s challenges and opportunities are a

series of pre-defined shapes (squares, rectangles, circles, etc.) that fit into corresponding receptacles: thus the standardized test is the logical vehicle to assess learning. The reduction of assessment to numbers that can have meaning and value assigned to them is consistent with the materialistic and pragmatic assumptions of the American Worldview. In this world numbers as scores are not symbols standing for or representing a particular reality. They are the reality: so a child is not a child—she or he is that score, and without intervention their educational lives are “tracked.” From the American Worldview, this is the practical thing to do. And so the unintended embrace of half the Marxist assertion, “each according to his ability” becomes a sentence to underdevelopment.¹ The dissenting child who intuitively knows that underdevelopment and not education is what is being ladled out in classrooms is often diagnosed as a malcontent—someone “special” who needs to be segregated from the rest of the students.

The way that the unacknowledged assumptions of the American Worldview continue to shape K-12 education is the context for this essay. Within this context, I do two things. First I explore some of the consequences of the anti-intellectual, materialist, pragmatic and punitive aspects of the American Worldview on education and on teacher education. Secondly, I present my Khepera Method (Harris N. , 2011) as an alternative to the way we think about education, and the way we train teachers. The Khepera Method is in the tradition of other transformative education approaches that operate from a worldview different from the prevailing American Worldview.

How America Sees the World and Educates its Citizens: An American Worldview

America is a tangle of brilliance, ignorance, democracy and structural inequality. It has never been one thing, and it certainly has not at any point in time been the same thing to the

¹ See *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1964) for an example of how preconceived notions of some White teachers limit their ability to see the potential in Black students—particularly Black boys.

various ethnic, class and gender groups that wrestle within its borders. So discussing an American Worldview is influenced by the angles of vision of a given discussant. Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen writes “From the Dark Tower” that “We shall not always plant while others reap / The golden increment of bursting fruit.” (Cullen, 1972) Racism pervades significant portions of the America Cullen experiences. Yet in the hopeful sound vibrating just beneath words of his poem we hear the embrace of a snarled notion of “redemptive suffering” in which the African American’s self-affirmation of his or her own humanity is a basis for “redemption” and transcendence. In her iconic “Still I Rise,” Maya Angelo offers a bottom up view of America: “You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I’ll rise.” (Angelou, 1978) Angelo’s African American is transcendent, almost mystical and her ascension is not fueled by suffering. The America that Cullen, Angelo and many other African Americans see is materially and experientially different from the world of those White Americans who seek to limit African American opportunity.

A tradition at the outset of many sporting events is to sing “America the Beautiful” just before the “Star Spangled Banner” is sung. I wonder how the first Americans, the Native Americans feel when they hear: “America! America! / God shed his grace on thee / And crown thy good with brotherhood / From sea to shining sea!” Native Americans were the ones who showed “brotherhood” towards the settlers, and their “crown” was a ring of thorns, marking them for systematic annihilation. To have genocide enshrined in the national consciousness through a song meant to bind us as one manages to simultaneously “pimp slap” logic, and to shatter the human spirit. The America that Native Americans see must be quite different than the America celebrated in “America the Beautiful.”

The promise of America and the nightmare of America live within the same borders. It is what President Obama eloquently rendered in his speech on race when he talked about our nation's struggle with issues of race: "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union..." (Obama, 2008) By framing his speech in these terms, President Obama depicts an America that is a work in progress, one that the framers of the constitution—some slaveholding, many misogynistic, and all generally comfortable in their disregard for Native Americans—may or may not have seen in the same way. None of this obviates how those women and men living outside the privileged boundaries of the "Founding Fathers" saw America. For them, America was more rhetoric than reality, and for many of the dispossessed progeny of those who stood outside the founding boundaries, America's promises remain muted. So it was symbolically correct that President Obama chose to deliver his speech in Independence Hall, the resting place of the cracked Liberty Bell, silent since 1846 when that broadening crack made it "unringable." (Association, 1998) Like all potential, the Liberty Bell is mute, a possibility in need of fuller definition and implementation.

So we come again to the question of an American Worldview in a country where there are so many Americas. The American Worldview discussed herein—anti-intellectual, materialistic, pragmatic and punitive—is the prevailing worldview because it is the one that structures key institutions, and it is the one that determines the use of power. In my discussion power means the ability to make and enforce definitions. The American Worldview is powerfully at work in the field of Education.

Anti-Intellectualism and American Education: Pragmatic, Materialistic, and Punitive

"Basically the Anti-Rationalism meme declares that all of physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology and archeology can be dismissed out of hand if you *believe* something is true." (James, 2010)

"Anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that *'my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.'*" (Asimov)

"History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today." (Ford)

In his influential book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* Richard Hofstadter (Hofstadter, 1963) identifies several themes that define anti-intellectualism in American life. In my essay, I want to concentrate on three of those themes and have consequently signaled those through the three quotes that introduce this section. First, there is what Hofstadter calls “religious anti-intellectualism.” As the designation suggests and as the quote from James above illustrates, belief or faith tops reason in all matters of knowing. Religious knowing requires a willingness to systematically ignore everything that contradicts what is believed to be true. Left unchecked, it can rationalize genocide, enslavement, and widespread inequities in educational funding, and access. “Populist anti-intellectualism” is the second theme that Hofstadter identifies, and as we see in the Asimov quote above, it is a kind of thinking that places fact based knowing on the same epistemological level as opinion. This is the American way, for it opens the door to parade in—by way of one example—the remarkable and richly documented ignorance of Sarah Palin on matters of international affairs as if her view of Russia from her home magically embeds knowledge of the same: thus the cliché “seeing is believing” is made equivalent to doctoral study in international relations. The third theme is what Hofstadter calls “unreflective instrumentalism,” the predisposition to value thought only in terms of its practical use. Henry Ford’s comment on history is consistent with this theme; indeed, it is a comment that plays out today in the deracination of history, literature, art and other creative endeavors in favor of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) as if these studies are not or cannot be

strengthened through studying them both in conjunction with the arts and the humanities, and through the arts and the humanities. Diane (Ravitch, "Multiculturalism" E Pluribus Plures, 2000) Ravitch—an educational historian whose initial appearance on some African American radars marked her an enemy due to her continual snipping at multicultural education—continually makes the point that regardless of the various educational movements that this country has undertaken, there is a consistent disregard for teaching the humanities: “There were so many different movements, but the movements were always saying, ‘Why do you care about teaching all this dreary old stuff? The children should just be free to explore whatever they want to explore and to learn only what is immediately useful.’” (Ravitch, *Anti-Intellectualism Runs Rampant in U.S. Education*: Diane Ravitch, 2001) The pragmatism that Ravitch bemoans as deriving from thinking that leads to minimizing or eliminating the “dreary old stuff” of history, literature as well as other humanistic and artistic study is both anti-intellectual and materialistic. I will develop my assertion by discussing fundamental assumptions that shape the K-12 curriculum.

Our current educational system practices a brand of segregation that is arguably as egregious as the racial segregation that it seems intent on recreating. The former kind of segregation is one wherein curriculums, the lesson plans developed to teach content and skills mandated by those curriculums, and the high stakes standardized tests created to assess mastery of content and skills within those curriculums segregate the left hemisphere of the brain from the right. (Chudler, 1996) This segregation is based on reality and it is based on fiction. First the reality: at a non-reflective and developmental level, life appears knowable through observation and experimentation. While this assertion may be debatable, for my purposes I will accept its veracity in order to make a more fundamental point. What is known through observation and

experimentation is pointless. History teaches us that the weltanschauung, worldview or values of a culture determine the meaning of information gained through observation and experimentation. To assume that information obtained in this manner is intrinsically meaningful is to uncritically accept the informing perspectives of the prevailing worldview. Of course such acceptance is one-way society's assure their continued existence—their institutions socialize societal members to maintain the system.

However, when a foundational system such as the educational system routinely fails to achieve agreed upon results, then the system must reexamine itself. American education is routinely reexamined, but because the foundational assumptions of American education are not reexamined, what occurs is the intricate grooming of the dog's tail on the assumption that the tail does in fact wag the dog. This ignorance is learned and so routinely reenacted that it has become ritual, leaving its practitioners in Zombie like trances (Harris N. , 2011) that make it impossible for them to consider a philosophical overhaul of education.

Another real outcome of our segregated curriculums is that solutions they offer for problems are implemented in a manner that suggests that key institutions are incapable of doing more than one thing at a time. So even necessary reforms like the 1957 Sputnik inspired curricular emphasis on science and technology are carried out from an “either / or” framework that philosophically and procedurally minimizes or precludes interdisciplinary approaches that can lead to uncharted vistas of innovation. The cyclical nature of America's curricular emphasis on STEM subjects (1957 and 2010 forward) is a predictable result of the pragmatic and ultimately materialistic aspect of the American worldview asserting itself. Susan Jacoby's observations can be used to frame my point:

“One of our problems with computers is that we believe in technological solutions to what are essentially non-technological problems. Not knowing is a non-technological

problem. The idea that the Web is an answer to knowing nothing is wrong, but it's something that Americans—with our history of believing in technology as the solution to everything—are particularly susceptible to.” (Jacoby, 2008)

The challenges and opportunities facing America and the world are best conceptualized from a multi-disciplinary perspective, and from the perspective of multiple, perhaps competing epistemologies. Curriculums that reduce issues of space, time, resources, equity, health, and learning to single satellites in orbit around their individual suns function to prepare students for articulate obsolescence—they will be the ones with robust vocabularies to explain their inability to actualize innate talents and to contribute to the world.

Within the American Worldview framework, the reality of education that segregates the left hemisphere of the brain from the right is a set of outcomes that not only fail to teach its content and methods (as measured by its own assessment tools), but it also fails to teach purpose. I will develop my assertion about our current system's failure to teach purpose when I discuss the materialistic and pragmatic aspects of the American Worldview. Here I want to develop my discussion of the fictive aspect of this separation and in so doing complete my argument about how our current educational system segregates the left hemisphere of the brain from the right.

For more than a century physicist have known and repeatedly demonstrated that matter behaves as both particle and wave.² They have also known and repeatedly demonstrated that the act of observing matter, changes its behavior. (Wikipedia, 2011) None of this is new information, but it is revolutionary relative to the way we are educated about how the world works—not just how matter works on the sub-atomic level, but what that means in terms of the way we organize our lives. The changed behavior of observed matter means that we live in a networked world that behaves as a single organism. If the relatively passive act of observation can change the

² For the visual learner, see this excellent animation of Quantum Mechanics on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_tNzeouHC4

behavior of matter, what might more intentional actions do? We do have the historic examples of single women and men who have lived lives that impacted world history—from Mother Theresa to Mother Hale, from Mahatmas Gandhi to Martin Luther King, Jr. These women and men—and thousands of others whom history has not recorded—tapped into something as fundamental as the wave-matter duality, something that is foundationally available to all people. Yet, we have an educational system that through its segregation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, and through its well meaning ignorance, uses assumptions to educate our children to live and work in a world that does not exist.

To complete this part of my discussion, I raise the question: what would American education look like if the straightjacket of anti-intellectualism were removed, the segregation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain replaced by their integration, and the documented world of quantum physics became the basis for curricular reform? My answer will be tentative and will foreshadow the second part of this essay—the discussion of the Khepera Method. With that in mind, the thought that creates the disciplinary boundaries that structure K-12 education would be replaced by a conceptual framework consistent with cellular division (National Institute of General Medical Sciences, 2005)—no matter the differentiation in form and function among the dividing cells, the DNA would be the same among all the cells. In this way courses of study would be anchored by a single core of concerns. Such an anchor would construct answers to basic questions of being, knowing, time, space and logic. Such an anchor would address the purpose and meaning of education—something I do in the next part of this essay. So for this portion of my discussion, the new curriculum would be transdisciplinary.

The contents of the transdisciplinary curriculum would be authentic in that they would be based on actual challenges and opportunities in the world. Lombardi and Oblinger define

authentic education as focusing on “real-world, complex problems and their solutions”; it uses role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice.” In a more culturally grounded approach, Maiga describes the Gao School Museum project as follows:

Central to this approach is the principle of infusing relevant cultural knowledge and practical experience into the existing school curriculum so that what students are learning (content) and why they are learning it (intent) is more closely related to the country’s human resource needs and to its scientific, economic, and ecological environment. (Maiga, 1995)

The students in the Gao School Museum act as cultural historians, problem solvers, and in some ways their actions are consistent with those of the Griot—recording, documenting, and contextualizing the history and culture of their people in Gao, Mali, and more broadly in the African world. Maiga’s concern as to why students are learning a particular thing (intent) is corroborated and developed differently in my Khepera Method.

But back to the curriculum that integrates both brain hemispheres and is informed by quantum physics: how would teachers teach in such schools and how would they be trained? At a minimum, they would learn to collaboratively identify authentic learning situations from which various learning outcomes could be derived. They would learn to read the world, not just books. And they would learn to translate the processes they used to read the world so that they could teach their students that the opportunity to learn exists in all life’s experiences. The cliché “lifelong learner” would become part of a learning rhizome (Cromier, 2008). Such teachers would be digital wizards capable of improvising and recreating the use of digital technologies to support authentic student learning in authentic environments. And they would learn to appreciate the role of fun and joy in the learning process—something that I will talk more about in the second section when I discuss the Khepera Method.

What I have described for education and for teacher training is closer to nature's bio-diversity than it is to a growing culture in a Petri dish. The former will amaze by always presenting new vistas, and the latter—though capable of considerable diversity—will in the end be less instructive and less interesting than the vistas unfolding in nature beyond the laboratory. As I suggested earlier, the current methods of teaching reign because it is easier to present and evaluate a static reality that is free from the altering consequences of human intervention, than it is to start down a learning path that may lead as easily to cul-de-sacs as to blossoming meadows of daisies.

Because education is presented in materialistic and pragmatic ways, appealing to only that hardheaded left hemisphere of the brain, education is synonymous with control is paramount. How else could it be: practically every aspect of K-12 education works to bind children's imaginations and to teach them that knowledge demonstration—particularly through high stakes standardized tests—is always an angst filled, inauthentic activity? So, at present, we are content to teach students to function in a static world that from a scientific standpoint does not exist.

It is a cliché, but nonetheless true that we live in a networked world where information about any subject imaginable proliferates daily. So how is all of this information to be managed? Instead of teaching critical thinking skills, education creates a fictive world that treats information like a cadaver: it dissects, weighs, and classifies. While such activity is a legitimate stage in a learning process, it becomes deceptive or fictive when the hand or finger of the dissected cadaver is treated as if it is an entity unto itself. Without knowledge of the body, the finger or the hand becomes a thing whose function can only be hypothesized. We have no knowledge or memory of the part to which it once belonged and from which it derived at least an

instrumental functionality. The fictive world and the punitive consequences visited on students who question or fail to perform adequately in that world is not a world that fosters self-actualization; rather, it is a world that teaches the individual to associate self-alienation with learning.

I want to move to the next part of my discussion by linking the anti-intellectual themes of populism and unreflective instrumentalism to current problems in education and to the absence of transcendent purpose in education. Populism has fused with digital technology in ways that make ignorance smug and uncaring. After all, what one does not know can be “googled”. But as Jacoby and others point out, the absence of basic information makes what one discovers while “googling” useless—one of those severed body parts from the cadaver referenced above, a part that has no memory of the whole to which it once belonged. Basic knowledge and the ability to think critically are not necessary to quickly accessing information. However, those factors are necessary to making information more than undigested morsels offered up as bulimic responses on standardized tests.

Here are some grim statistics that document the ignorance of some American adults and some American students:

- only 53% of adults know how long it takes the Earth to revolve around the Sun;
- only 59% of adults know that the earliest humans and dinosaurs did not live at the same time; and
- only 47% of adults can roughly approximate the percent of the earth’s surface that is covered with water”
- 25% of high school students surveyed could not identify Adolf Hitler,
- approximately 50% could not guess, within 50 years, when the Civil War was fought” (Strauss, 2010)

And elected officials fair even worse in terms of basic knowledge:

- 57% of elected officials know the purpose of the Electoral College; and only
- 49% of elected officials know the three branches of government. (Zahn, 2011)

As a flourish to the ignorance of our elected officials, comedian Stephen Colbert's interview with Georgia Congressman Lynn Westmoreland is stunning. Colbert asked the Congressman about having co-sponsored a bill to require the display of the Ten Commandments in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. Congressman Westmoreland spoke earnestly about the importance of the Ten Commandments and when asked to name them, he was stumped after naming three. (Colbert, 2008) Religious knowledge is not a prerequisite to be an effective legislator, but it is reasonable to expect that a legislator would at least know the content of the "legislation" the wishes passed in violation of the First Amendment.

A great deal more could be said about angst, anger and disappointment that those involved in American education and civic life have about the basic core of knowledge that many of our students and citizens display. And, on the other side, there are remarkable examples of ingenuity and innovation as demonstrated by the youthful founders of Google, and of Facebook. As noted earlier in this essay, America is a tangle of brilliance, ignorance, democracy and structural inequality. But there is at least one other way to read the problems in education, particularly as experienced by those Americans who have been historically marginalized.

In the Trilateral Commission sponsored volume *The Crisis of Democracy*, (Michel Crozier, 1973) Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington, unintentionally provides another and more sinister view of American anti-intellectualism. He asserts that an effective democracy requires an identifiable group who are not allowed or expected to participate in that democracy. Thus he bemoans the low tide of the sixties: "Previously passive or unorganized groups in the population now embarked on concerted efforts to establish their claims to opportunities, positions, rewards, and privileges, which they had not considered themselves entitled to before" (Huntington, 61-62). He is referring primarily to African American people and in that reference

he omits the rights referred to in these lines of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” To limit democracy in the manner that Huntington does is to define something other than democracy; indeed, Huntington’s operational definition of democracy is consistent with an enslaver telling a slave that she/he is free to do everything that she/he is told to do.

But it is the role that Huntington prescribes for education that is most telling. While he is writing about higher education, his observations are operative in the K-12 system. Where, after all, would the “proper” university student learn her place? Huntington writes: “The more educated a person is, the more likely he is to participate in politics, to have a more consistent and more ideological outlook on political issues, and to hold more ‘enlightened’ or ‘liberal’ or ‘change oriented’ views on social, cultural, an foreign policy issues” (Huntington, 110). We are taught that effective American democracy requires an educated citizenry, precisely the kind of citizenry that Huntington fears—one that includes those who have been historically marginalized. Perhaps Huntington agrees with Jacoby’s assessment of how we Americans have historically thought about education: it is “good if it gets you a better job, but bad if it makes you think too much” (Jacoby, “Anti-Intellectualism Is Destroying America”).

Huntington’s essay represented the thought of the influential world leaders who were members of the Trilateral Commission, and so it is useful to ponder how his essay, published in 1973, reverberates today. Again, the components of Huntington’s essay that interest me are his assertion that effective democracy has to be selectively anti-democratic and that too much education is a dangerous thing. The editorial board of the Houston Chronicle wrote the

following concerning the Texas State Board of Education's deliberations and decisions about social studies text book selection:

In its revamp of the state's social studies curriculum, a majority of the board has consistently voted to reshape our history. Instead of the messy, complicated past, the extremist members prefer a simple story of triumphant Christian soldiers. Last week the board voted to remove Thomas Jefferson—Thomas Jefferson—from a list of Enlightenment thinkers who changed the world. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason over tradition, doesn't sit well with this board." (Morovac, 2010)

The American Democracy that Huntington wants requires Americans "educated" in the manner proscribed by the Texas State Board of Education. Teaching people to think critically about life's challenges and opportunities would likely go beyond purely pragmatic and materialistic concerns—something that happened in the sixties, something that for the Trilateral Commission led to a "Crisis in Democracy." For Huntington, and by extension, for those world leaders who are members of the Trilateral Commission, effective democracy requires effective education, and effective education is the systematic exposure to scripts that result in conditioned responses. This is the education for the masses. The elites, the "progeny" of Trilateral Commission approved students—and I mean this in a figurative sense—will continue to get challenging educations that require thinking critically and creatively, for they are the legitimate heirs to world power.

It does not take a tremendous leap to view the current shortcomings of our educational system as following the path that Huntington presented in his essay. The educational universe presented to students shrinks with each passing year, and the rationale is always couched in pragmatic and materialistic terms. Without a higher aim for education and a different purpose for education we are headed for generations of angry, brilliant and purposeless students who will delight in failing standardized tests and other inauthentic assessments we have constructed for them.

The Khepera Method: Charting a New Direction

The term “Khepera” is an ancient Egyptian term that means the infinite power of manifestation—the ability to endlessly create, sometimes in situations where the “raw material” to manifest creation seem absent. (Amen, 1990) Structural inequalities notwithstanding, “Khepera” is a power that African Americans have had systematically removed from their learning communities. And we have been complicit in this; our leaders sometimes reflexively assuming that ideas, approaches, indeed, the very presence of our White sisters and brothers was necessary and tantamount to educational progress and development in our own communities. Working from within frameworks consistent with the best traditions in our own history and culture was alternately considered anathema to integration, romantic atavistic nationalism, and just plain dumb—alone in our own institutions we would be educating our students to live in a world that did not exist. While some might label this litany a logical fallacy in which I have set up a line of “straw men” to knock down, it is generally accepted that African American social change has always swung between integration and nationalism. (Cruse, 1967) But here, I want to suggest improving education through an integrated approach that is itself based on core African concepts.

The core assumptions of the Khepera Method follow: the way African people have answered questions of being, knowing, space, time and logic, and the way they have manifested those answers in their artifacts, education, cultures and civilizations provide core lessons for the world about how to meet the global demand for effective education. So the Khepera Method is rooted in the humus of an African worldview, the components of which I will outline below. Before doing that, I need to reiterate that in being rooted in an African worldview the Khepera

Method speaks to the entire world about how education can proceed to educate people to interact and to build relationships, institutions, and opportunities that are in fact the intersection of the best traditions that reside in all people's history and culture.

The world role I assert for the Khepera Method is consistent with those aspects of African world expressive culture—which are themselves holistic expressions of physics, mathematics and art—that many in the world have come to enjoy as blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, and hip-hop. (Harris W. J., 2009) The highest achievements in each of these expressions are self-affirming, and do not seek accreditation before influencing not only creative culture, but also influencing the way people interact, the way they speak, and therefore the way they think. There is something universal about authentic African and African American cultural expression—those expressions drawn unabashedly and sincerely from African world experiences, what Stephen Henderson wrote about in *The New Black Poetry* (Henderson, 1973) as being expressed in terms of theme, structure, and saturation. Consider this from arguably one of the “Blackest” of America's poets: “...Change or die / to the Whole world too / we are Afrikans / Love is our passport to the perfectibility of humanity / Work & Study / Struggle & Victory”. (Harris W. J., 2009, p. 243) So here you have Amiri Baraka in what critics call his Black Nationalist phase poetically praying for “the perfectibility of humanity” through love. His work is part of the humus in which the Khepera Method is rooted.

The core assumption of the Khepera Method is that all people are motivated by a desire to achieve Harmony, Wisdom and Power. Harmony means the desire to develop and benefit from your own talents and the desire to do something for the common good. Wisdom means knowing through intuition and through study, observation, testing and reflection. Power means the ability to change oneself and one's environment in a manner that illustrates our

interconnectedness with each other and with nature. Because these are assumptions, I will not try to prove them by eliminating other possible motivations for people's behavior. The usefulness of the Khepera Method to any community depends on whether that community operationally believes the method's assumption. This differs from most current educational reform in that said reform is often structured through the passive acceptance of the anti-intellectual, pragmatic, and materialistic assumptions that makeup the American worldview.

With the Khepera Method's assumption defined and in mind, in the remainder of this essay I will discuss the purpose of education, how Harmony, Wisdom and Power would structure education, and how these three assumptions would structure teacher education. Due to the conventions of academic writing in particular and of writing in general—an analog form with limited ability to simultaneously appeal to both hemispheres of the brain as well as to multiple ways of knowing—what follows is not as authentic as my intentions. In some ways this essay—in the tradition of Ishmael Reed—is necromancy³, and in others it is guided by the unrealized desire of Amiri Baraka to have a poem be a three dimensional product of what happens when a “poet” goes into a booth and sincerely shares the full range of her feelings—what is left as product is her experience that she invites us in to for participation. So with those limitations of the medium in mind, I begin.

The Khepera Method: The Purpose of Education

The purpose of education is to help students be Khepera through learning and creatively applying Harmony, Wisdom and Power. This is a transcendent purpose that is used to organize the myriad practical steps, contents and skills necessary to effectively move toward the

³ I am using this term in a way consistent with Ishmael Reed's use of it in his groundbreaking anthology, *19Necromancers from Now*. The term is commonly defined as “a form of magic in which the practitioner seeks to summon the spirit of a deceased person, either as an apparition or ghost, or to raise them bodily, for the purpose of divination” (see Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necromancy>)

transcendent purpose. The transcendent purpose is an evolving destination and as such a way to assess the usefulness of steps, contents and skills all along the way. In this way, no part of education exists for its own sake. As noted earlier, it is a networked world of butterfly effects wherein beauty, growth, and possibility in a remote village or an undeveloped stretch of urban or rural America has the possibility of global impact. Conversely, the wretchedness of these environments—both as learned self-destruction and as raw material for the various money-making interests that now structurally depend on the failure of others for success—can have global effects.

Because the purpose of education is to enhance the life of both the individual and the various communities with which she/he interacts all teaching and learning would go beyond our current notions of materialism and pragmatism. Thus, education to get a good job would be replaced by education to get or create a job that improves both my community and me. The process of getting an education would embrace multiple epistemologies and thereby make authentic learning—particularly learning associated with the various wisdom traditions of our various Americas—possible from untapped sources and perspectives. The transformative purpose of education is the power to make change in a manner that demonstrates our interconnectedness with each other and with nature.

How would we determine if the purpose of education—activities aimed at operationally attaining Harmony, Wisdom and Power—are met? Some of this activity would be accomplished at the front end by associating outcomes with Harmony, Wisdom and/or Power. This would mean that each educational expectation would have a common set of concerns that embraced the development of the individual and the development of the communities to which she or he belongs.

As noted above, the content and process of education, as well as teacher training would in turn be authentic and transdisciplinary. There is no reason why the curriculum content meant to teach basic math and science skills could not be directly developed from the challenges and opportunities of the students' communities. Some of this is already being done, and has been done for some time. (Oblinger, 2007) The Internet is populated with plentiful and high quality examples, and processes to do effective problem based learning and other authentic learning activities. So what I am suggesting is not a new activity, but I think the assumptions about the purpose of education—to attain Harmony, Wisdom and Power—are new.

Harmony: Identity and Finding the Fulcrum Point

How we define what it means to be human determines how we treat ourselves, how we interact with each other, and how we interact with nature. Answers to these questions also determine how we define education and, consequently, how we teach. In the Khepera Method, identity is defined as having two characteristics as indicated in the table below. These dual characteristics are balanced by a fulcrum point. (Harris N. , 2011)

Identity Categories	Positive Traits	Negative Traits
I. Identity shared in common with all people	Peace, ability to get along with others; ability to go it alone	See yourself as a martyr or a victim
II. Unique Identity	Willingness to go it alone if necessary	Narcissist; incapable of maintaining healthy relationships
III. Fulcrum Point	Instinctive ability to find and maintain balance; this ability can be enhanced through study and practice	Indecision and lack of confidence

Dualities proliferate in nature, and are central to how we understand the world, and how we engage in critical thinking. We are encouraged to see both sides of the issue and to dialectically interrogate any expression of reality. As demonstrated in the first section of this essay, America is a nation of extraordinary contradictions and the gap between an expressed

need to see both sides of an issue, and then actually doing so is considerable. More often than not, the unexamined anti-intellectual nature of American education privileges the orthodox stance of whatever the “company line” might be in any given area. A glaring exception is that of the taxpayer supported exploits of various corporations too big to fail. In other instances precedent always delivers choreographed “beat downs” of innovation, particularly in the areas of education, media and “infotainment”— “information-based media content or programming that also includes entertainment content in an effort to enhance popularity with audiences and consumers”. (Demers, 2005) So in American education, the genuflecting towards duality is symbolic, a necessary and empty gesture like Huntington’s democracy for the dispossessed. Rhetoric stands in for reality and we are relieved of having to critically examine the assumptions that are the failure and pain the rhetoric seeks to assuage in the first place.

What we talk and teach less about is the concept of the fulcrum point, a conceptual triangle on which the two sides of our identity are balanced. In my usage, the fulcrum point is not location or place that is reached and then solidified. Education is a way in which the fulcrum point develops its agility and muscularity. There are two areas in education and teacher training where the fulcrum component of Harmony plays out.

The transdisciplinary curriculum is the first area where Harmony’s fulcrum point is employed. Transdisciplinary courses would have content from STEM areas (mainly biographical information on important contributors, their contributions, and the importance of the same); historical content; content about arts and letters; and other areas that a community deems important. Each course would have three symbiotic purposes: 1) through a variety of activities, they would immerse students in the contributions to world civilization that all cultures have made; 2) they would equip students with the skills to identify both what is unique about

world cultures, and what is similar about world cultures; and 3) they would help students locate themselves in the context of world cultures. Every stage of this process is dynamic and it is fully expected that locations that student's chose in the processes of discovery are not final destinations. The process and rationale for balancing these learning opportunities is how the fulcrum point is developed as an aspect of critical thinking.

The second area is closely related to the transdisciplinary curriculum and it is the development of authentic learning activities. In the development of authentic learning activities, the categories that the fulcrum point balances are the unique strengths and weaknesses of the students on the one side, and the needs of the communities to which the students belong on the other. The fulcrum point would seldom rest in the center, equal distance from each side. Some portion of the authentic learning project might focus more on the individual than on the community, and in other portions of the learning project the opposite might be true.

In teacher training for this aspect of the Khepera Method, teachers would use their disciplinary expertise as a point of entry to contribute to developing a transdisciplinary curriculum anchored in authentic learning activities. This presupposes the elimination of PRAXIS and other tests to assess teacher preparedness. Teachers would be assessed based on the authentic learning activities they produced.

The Harmony portion of the Khepera Method concerns the development of the fulcrum point to balance the individual's desire for self-development, and the desire to do something for the common good. This dynamic balance is reiterated through both the overall structure of the curriculum and through the authentic learning activities.

Wisdom: Processes of Learning and Discovery

The scholar, artist or scientists credited with overnight success has usually been toiling in obscurity for years; each step in developing an idea, a work of art, or some cure for a bedeviling disease is seldom publicly recorded. As a community, we are most interested in the end result. But knowing about the work done in obscurity can be enlightening. For there are moments in learning processes where it all comes together, where it clicks. These are the “aha” moments, and we have among these the dreams of scientists like Nobel Prize winning scientist Otto Loewi, (Loewi, 1960) and entrepreneurs like Madam C.J. Walker, (Peiss, 1999) where answers to vexing problems, or solutions to business issues appear in dreams or visions.

Part of what these and other such instances suggest is that a legitimate part of the learning process is extra-logical. Sometimes learning seems related to what I have indicated above—the accumulation of details gathered through observation and testing. But in other instances, “stuff just comes to us” and we wonder: Can intuition be taught? Before addressing this question let me restate the definition of Wisdom used in the Khepera Method: it is a process of knowing based on intuition and on observation and testing. This definition attempts to account for the way the two hemispheres of the brain know and attempt to verify reality—the left hemisphere by separating and labeling it; and the right hemisphere through holistic perception in which systems are understood as single, multi-faceted phenomenon.

In the wisdom traditions of many cultures, “intuition” is taught through systems of initiation. These systems share a common set of assumptions or beliefs. Chief among those assumptions is that humanity is an integral part of a unified world in which everything is alive. There is a world where matter can behave like a particle or like a wave; it is a world where our interaction with matter—even at the level of thought—can change the behavior of matter, and of course matter can change us. The ancients lived in a world of what might be called applied

quantum physics. Before outlining the commonalities among the ancients relative to their systems of initiation, I want to briefly elaborate on what I mean by “applied quantum physics,” and I do so by discussing the Great Pyramid of Giza (GPG) as a paradigmatic marvel of ancient African civilization that still stands outside both the conceptual and applied understanding of modern scholars.

GPG is almost five thousand years old and the technology that went into its construction eludes contemporary chemist, engineers, mathematicians and astronomers. Although modern chemist are able to identify the components of the mortar used to keep the stones in place, they are unable to reproduce it—the mortar is said to be stronger than stone and is still in tact. Among the many factors that amaze and in some instances baffle modern engineers is the fact that the thirteen acres on which GPG sits has a flatness or evenness of ½ inch variance—this level of precision is hard to replicate today. The optical precision with which casing stones weighing as much as 10 tons were affixed to the GPG cannot be explained. The position of GPG in relationship to directional points on the globe as well as to astronomical points indicate that the ancient Egyptians had a remarkable and full understanding of the stars and built many of their monuments to mirror the astronomical “geography” of the skies. Thus, for them, the maxim, “As above, so below” was a core aspect of architectural design. (Adventure, 1997)

There are volumes written about the unparalleled uniqueness of the GPG. What I have presented here is but an outline. Still it works to make my central point: that the worldview, and the education created to pass that worldview from generation to generation was fundamentally different from the anti-intellectual, materialistic, pragmatic and punitive worldview that is operative in American education today. Further, the worldview of the ancients—particularly the Egyptians—was holistic, a conclusion that can be reasonably deduced by the innumerable

correspondences between the GPG and nature. More directly, they seem to have had an educational system in which the two hemispheres of the brain were in harmonious communication, and in which an appropriate fulcrum point was found to balance these expressions. Their “curriculum” must have been transdisciplinary, and it must have been filled with authentic learning activities.

With the example of the ancient Egyptians in mind, I want to return to the question, can intuition be taught? While we have limited details about how the ancients educated themselves, it is clear that holistic systems of initiation intended to facilitate knowing through balanced communications between the mind, body, and spirit were the norm. My contention here is that their system(s) of initiation were at the center of an educational system that mirrored many of the suggestions I make here about how education ought to proceed today. So intuition can be learned through holistic and authentic educational opportunities that have transdisciplinary content.

Power: Moving Toward Responsible Transformation

A social science definition of power is the ability to make and enforce your view of reality. Personified, this definition of power delights in blaming victims for whatever misfortune that befalls them. Power never lacks material, military, and explanatory wherewithal to enforce or rationalize its appetite. Power never walks alone, has or can purchase friends, and is always on the lookout for any interloper sniffing around the perimeter it has mapped out. In this framework, education loves power and will do almost anything to seduce it; learning, self-actualization, community development, and any number of other platitudes we associate with education are only brought up front from the back rows when doing so satisfies power.

In the Khepera Method, Power has a different meaning: it means the ability to responsibly transform yourself and your communities in a manner that illustrates and develops our interconnectedness. In its acknowledgement of the duality of nature (self and community transformation) Power is consistent with the concept of Harmony. In its epistemological embrace of both intuitive and scientific methods Power is consistent with the concept of Wisdom. Because it is connected to these dualities, Power can never exist for its own sake: it must operate in a manner that benefits both the community and the individual.

Power affects the creation of the transdisciplinary curriculum by making sure that it reflects those transformative elements in learning that have the potential to empower both the individual learner as well as her/his communities. Power affects the learning activities by including students in the production of authentic learning activities. Through a variety of means, they become producers of information and of knowledge as opposed to being only consumers.

From the foregoing, Power can be understood as the implementation cycle of the Khepera Method—the place where Harmony and Wisdom are put into action. As with all aspects of this method, plateaus are resting places and not final destinations. So the lessons learned in implementing Harmony and Wisdom become fuel for deeper and broader explorations of learning opportunities.

Love and joy are the combustible fuels that drive the Khepera Method. Systematic study is moved away from dimly lit cubicles of pessimism where the single scholar goes dully through her work. Work is done in the sunshine and either directly or indirectly in concert with others. In both instances the learning products incubated in the respective wombs of these approaches reflects the possibilities of their creation. Learning products created in the former appear logical, but it is a kind of logic that has no correspondences in the natural world. To bridge the gap

between the appearance of logic and its alienating applications, students' intellects are lobotomized, and their spirits are voided. The resulting vacuums are filled with a predictable artificiality of standardized tests. In this world power is used to limit growth. It is no wonder that dropout rates soar. Learning products emerging from bright and collaborative modes of study and creation—the latter example above—have the expressed intent of elevating the development of the individual and the communities to which said individual belongs. This use of Power unites, while uses of power consistent with the prevailing ideology separates and creates antagonisms based on an assumption that such antagonisms are necessary to progress.

The ability to responsibly transform yourself and your community in a manner that demonstrates our interconnectedness is a hallmark of an educated individual and an educated society.

Ongoing Conclusions and The Khepera Method

Solutions to the challenges and opportunities facing American education as well as the training of American teachers cannot be appropriately addressed through the unexamined assumptions that structure our culture. A different and more optimistic worldview is required, one that assumes the best of humanity, and that gives education a transcendent purpose that unites us all around values that develop us both as individuals and as a community. The Khepera Method is one approach that does this.

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