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**THE CHILD:
Awakening the Consciousness
of the Soul**

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No. 28 THE CHILD: Awakening the Consciousness of the Soul

KEYNOTES:

The survival, protection and development of children are integral to human progress.

- UNICEF

The problem of the children is, without exception, the most urgent confronting humanity today. The future of the race lies in the hands of the young people everywhere. They are the parents of the coming generations and the engineers who must implement the new civilization. What we do with them and for them is momentous in its implications; our responsibility is great and our opportunity unique.

The problem of the children underlies the whole necessity for world rebuilding, is greater than all other problems, is above all racial and national barriers, and evokes the best in every human heart. The children have prior claim upon all men.

- Alice Bailey

SEED THOUGHT:

Two major ideas should be taught to the children of every country. They are: the value of the individual and the fact of the one humanity.

- Alice Bailey

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THE CHILD: Awakening the Consciousness of the Soul

*From the solemn gloom of the temple children run out to sit in the dust,
God watches them play and forgets the priest.*

- Rabindranath Tagore

ONE: The Child Evokes the Best in Every Human Heart

Beyond the many trite and sentimental comments that can be made about the child—precious, beautiful, magical, and valued beyond all else—there is nonetheless something extraordinary about the child to which humanity responds. Certainly one finds in children a marked degree of sincerity and simplicity, a unique propensity to spot a phony and an often-admirable capacity to forgive. Most would agree that children are, by and large, authentic, possessed of tremendous vital energy, wonderfully present in each moment, and have the gift of ‘beginners mind’.

Children are often more interested in the cardboard box than the toy it holds, are colour blind until someone teaches them otherwise, and don’t much care if loved ones are rich or poor, thin or fat, smart or slow—what matters most to them is the loving bond they have with others. It is not unusual for children to voluntarily self-sacrifice to contribute to the well being of their family and although children do not always want to share, on the whole they are generally predisposed towards goodwill, in its many forms of expression.

The research of child psychiatrist Robert Coles, Ph.D., indicates that children possess an innate moral, spiritual and even political sensitivity. Children are not only keenly aware of morals, ideals, values, and the differences between right and wrong, they also have a sharp perception of the reasons behind people’s actions, feelings and thoughts. Coles writes, “No one teaches children sociology and psychology, yet children are constantly noticing who gets along with whom and why” (Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*, p. 78). Service has also been found to be a natural moral impulse in children. Unfortunately, it seems that children often learn to deaden the voice of conscience as they grow older. This usually occurs as the direct result of role models—parents and adults—and the child’s increasing immersion in the values of society. As soon as

a child gets on the bus for school, they start to pick up on what other children have learned from their families and their innate “moral compass” becomes increasingly set aside. Under pressure to succeed, the ideal of ‘doing what is right’ gets replaced with ‘doing what is right for *me*’. A mind-set of self-interest is often encouraged and reinforced by society, replacing the child’s voice of conscience with which they are born.

The popular work of Mary Pipher, Ph.D. indicates that adolescents are under tremendous pressure to ‘fit in’. This sometimes requires distressing, dangerous, and even self-destructive degrees of self-contortion, which may result in damage to the child’s sense of his true self.

Coles’ research shows that children often feel morally abandoned by a spiritually bankrupt adult world, to which they look for guidance. Children hunger for a spiritual life that is embraced, lived and modeled by parents and society. Adults need to nurture and encourage the moral and spiritual inclinations of children and model morality, good conscience and goodwill on their behalf. Adults tend to underestimate the need for them to take responsibility for the voices in society to which they themselves respond, accept and model as a part of community life as children are quite adroit at absorbing the messages, stimuli and shortcomings of the adult world.

In their little worlds in which children have their . . . existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice.

- Charles Dickens

As stated, children tend to lose their instinctive moral and spiritual sensitivity as they grow older. These findings may correspond to the scientific evidence that the pineal gland—the gland that is distinctively active in childhood—mysteriously atrophies as children grow older. Alice Bailey points out (*The Soul and Its Mechanism*, pp. 43-4) that most books of ancient philosophy state that the pineal gland is also the seat of the soul and she notes that Descartes was often quoted as saying, “In man, soul and body touch each other only at a single point, the pineal gland in the head.” Bailey suggests that there is most likely

some real connection between the ancient belief that the pineal gland is the seat of the soul and the fact that the pineal gland atrophies as children grow older. The activity of the pineal gland in childhood and the connection with the soul it suggests may explain that quality of something extra-ordinary many sense in the child.

Although the pineal gland atrophies with age, the ancient philosophies teach that when a man takes up the spiritual life, and undertakes certain spiritual practices, then the pineal gland once again becomes active, returning the man to the full glory of God. Bailey writes in *Glamour, A World Problem* (p. 1), “We are told by physicians and scientists that thousands of cells in the human brain are still dormant and, consequently, that the average human being uses only a small part of his equipment. The area of the brain which is found around the pineal gland is that connected with the intuition, and it is these cells which must be roused into activity ... [and] which, when aroused, will manifest soul control, spiritual illumination, true psychological understanding of one's fellowmen...”

In the literature of the world's spiritual traditions, there are a number of references to the spiritual purity of childhood. In the Buddhist tradition, the idea and ideal of the child-like 'beginners mind' is well known. Mme. Blavatsky wrote, “The pupil must regain *the child-state he has lost*, ere the first sound can fall upon his ear” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 31). In the Christian tradition, the bible states, “Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”. Alice Bailey wrote that the biblical reference to “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” refers to the ready belief in God that children possess.

In some wisdom traditions, Consciousness is identified as the “child” of Spirit and Matter. Likewise, children can be said to perform a mediating role in society, binding all that has come before with all the future holds. They are the product of all human achievement and will produce all future human achievement. Perhaps, the child plays more of a vital role in the life of humanity than we realise, and in particular, perhaps the child's special connection with the soul helps humanity to

link with its own soul. One can see why some consider that the child evokes the best in every human heart and has prior claim upon all men.

Alice Bailey suggested that the whole issue of the child is the most important problem facing humanity. A startling suggestion, and yet followed through to its logical conclusion, one realises the inevitable effect on society when the light that is in the child is not nurtured or fanned to flame into adulthood. In this failure, society poisons itself and loses a great and potential resource for its future.

Reason supports the proposition that children are humanity's best hope and most direct path to world transformation. Is there really any other way quite so potent to bring about real and lasting change in the world? This is essentially the task of recognising the value of each child. A child that has been valued will naturally embrace the society that has valued them. By valuing each child, pathways of positive human interrelationships, cooperation and goodwill naturally unfold, displacing the entrenched forces of global competition and strife, and laying the needed groundwork for the recognition of the fact of one humanity. Certainly, by teaching children how to work together in atmosphere of goodwill, there is no problem which humanity cannot resolve.

It is my conviction, from having watched a great many babies grow up, that all of humanity is born a genius and then becomes de-geniused very rapidly by unfavorable circumstances and by the frustration of all their extra-ordinary built-in capabilities.

- Buckminster Fuller

Although the child may have a special connection with the soul, it does not necessarily mean that the child should be idealised as completely pure. Every child has to learn to overcome the weaknesses in their character. In Buddhism, Hinduism, and many Ageless Wisdom teachings, the doctrine of reincarnation includes the notion that past lives contribute to the karma of each individual, which is the result of their previous acts and relationships. Each new incarnation is thus seen as a fresh opportunity to redeem past failures, and to strengthen the connection with the soul. These repeated opportunities to gain life

experience can be seen to account for the differences in abilities found in children. Thus, for example, while some children are emotionally focussed and working to attain emotional equilibrium and control, others have achieved emotional balance and are focussed on achieving mastery of the mind. Whether one accepts this hypothesis, or prefers to attribute character flaws solely to the interaction between genetic inheritance and environment, the fact remains that parents and guardians have a solemn, even sacred duty to help the child overcome these flaws.

The future of the race lies in the hands of the young people everywhere. They are the parents of the coming generations and the engineers who must implement the new civilization. What we do with them and for them is momentous in its implications; our responsibility is great and our opportunity unique.

- Alice Bailey

TWO: The Unfolding Plan—Evolving Attitudes Towards Children

The child is subject to the will of its parents, and typically the imprint of the family relationship reverberates on into adulthood. The role of the family is remarkable, and in point of fact, the evolution of civilisation can be seen played out in the parenting practices employed by man throughout the ages. Author Susan Shore writes that the history of humanity's child rearing practices is a model of "the evolution of consciousness and therefore of the awakening of the soul, in and through more enlightened [child] rearing practices" (*The New Age Parent—A History of Parent-Child Relations*, The Beacon, Jul/Aug 1998).

The modern family and contemporary views on child rearing are actually quite recent developments. It is sometimes forgotten that these tremendous advances in the field of human relationships have been just as groundbreaking and important as the technological advances of our age. A quick look here at the evolution of parenting practices will help to bring the subject of the child into perspective.

In the beginning of time, there wasn't any real sense of family cohesiveness, so that the first vague tendrils of familial bonding were

considered a momentous step forward. For long ages the nature of the parent-child relationship could be characterised by the practice of infanticide, and this due to the struggle to survive. Not until the Middle Ages did infanticide begin to wane. Even so, the brutalisation of children continued to be commonplace and curiously reflected the same disregard and attitude of domination that the state had towards its subjects, says Shore.

Shore points to Europe in the eighteenth century, when children were routinely abandoned. Records from Paris in 1780 show that out of the 21,000 children born that year, 17,000 children between the ages of two to five were sent to be raised by wet-nurses in the country, and the death rates were high. That same year 2,000 to 3,000 children were left in orphanages. It remained common practice in Europe and North America, until about the middle of the nineteenth century, to send children of seven years and older to be servants and laborers with other families.

As it gradually became morally unacceptable to abandon one's offspring, parents and children were increasingly thrown into interaction with one another. Brutality towards children also became steadily unfashionable and children now tended to be locked up or psychologically pressured to bend to the will of the parents. Parents who had been brutalised as children were likely to project their own inner conflict onto their offspring, in a complicated maze of emotion and enmeshment.

The women's suffragette movement, followed by the World War, brought about what we now know as modern motherhood. With the shifting economy, domestic help became less affordable and so women became much more actively involved in the care and raising of their children. At this time the parenting model was to guide the child to conform to social norms. It was not until about 1950 when the first attempts were made to understand the child's needs—physical, emotional, psychological, and medical—and for the first time, emphasis was placed on helping the child live up to its full potential.

This is where we are today, having moved from infanticide and brutality, to a focus on helping the child, and often in a spirit of self-sacrifice. Yet, because this development is relatively new, in some families the cycle of child abuse persists, with parents tending to raise their children according to the patterns by which they were raised—whether this is their conscious choice or not. Each generation tends to pass on to the next what they themselves have learned about parenting.

Though change is still needed, on the whole brutality towards children is no longer accepted as the norm in the modern world. A steadily evolving pattern of healthy family relationships and an increasing expression of goodwill toward the child can be seen. Once a matter of political and economic arrangement and often a source of strife, the modern family now forms the core structure of society. The intimacy of family life is now seen as the ideal and a potential centre of personal fulfillment and support.

Economic stability and the resolution of issues of survival have made the modern family possible. Yet, it is only wealthy and complex societies that can afford the luxury of an extended term of childhood dependency to train its citizens. Much of the world is still faced with economic need and poverty and this has a direct and usually negative effect on child rearing practices.

Although families have always genuinely loved their children, the commonplace brutalisation of children, from which modern society is just now emerging, has surely imprinted the fabric of civilisation and has yet to be completely worked out. This is significant as a society's child rearing practices set the standard by which individuals relate to each other—person to person, group to group, and nation to nation. Fortunately, in today's world, healthy relationships are increasingly becoming the norm, and everywhere a greater sense of goodwill is emerging as the new legacy for coming generations. Everywhere one finds individuals determined to break the generational cycle of abusive parenting by which they themselves were raised, who are instead working to raise their children with compassion and goodwill.

Significant Legislation for Children and the Leading Role of the United Nations

Moving from the family setting to the wider arena of society, it has taken a long time for society to adopt a more enlightened approach to children through specific legal safeguards. The first labour laws to protect children were passed in Great Britain in the 1830s and 1840s. In the United States, legislation protecting children against abuse and neglect was not passed until 1875, nine years *after* the first law addressing cruelty to animals. Similar legislation soon followed throughout Europe, although these first laws addressed only the most serious injuries and death.

The year 2009 marked the 20th Anniversary of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. First ratified in 1989 by the UN General Assembly, and indicating an important expansion in human consciousness, the Convention affirmed the basic human rights of all children and is the first legally binding treaty of international law to define the principles that UN member states agree should be universal for all children. The treaty spells out each child's right to survival; right to develop to the fullest; right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. This has helped to bring about changes in nation's laws so that children are better protected.

The Convention has also served to guide the role of international organisations in their work for children, and has supported the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Much has been achieved in the past 20 years and even though not yet fully implemented, the idea that children have rights is becoming universally recognised. Too often children are still assumed to be the property of adults and subject to abuse and exploitation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child continues to work actively for children's rights. (www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm)

Of course, no discussion of championing the rights of children would be complete without citing the important work of UNICEF. Created in

1946 to provide emergency food and healthcare for children following the devastation of World War II, UNICEF became a permanent part of the United Nations system in 1953 when its name was officially shortened from the UN International Children's Emergency Fund to simply the UN Children's Fund. However, it has continued to be known by the acronym of its old name, UNICEF. UNICEF is adamant that the survival, protection and development of children is integral to human progress and in 1965 UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

UNICEF is mandated by the UN General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand the opportunities of children to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Among its goals, UNICEF works to mobilise political will and material resources to help countries to form policies and deliver services for children and their families. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for child victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, violence, and exploitation and those with disabilities. UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children and coordinates with UN partners and humanitarian agencies to make its facilities available for rapid response to aid suffering children and their caregivers. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children have priority. UNICEF also promotes equal rights for women and girls and supports their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities. (www.unicef.org)

THREE: The Care and Raising of our Children—The Care and Raising of our World

The care and raising of our children *is* the care and raising of our world. Ultimately, the quality of our world is shaped by the sum total of individual attitudes and values—and these are largely formed during childhood. What we teach our children about goodwill and right relationships inevitably plays out in individual, community and global relationships. Simply instilling our children with a sense of inter-

relationship and a regard for the common good may be the most direct route to building a new world order.

Alice Bailey wrote, “The damage done to children in the plastic and pliable years is often irremediable and is responsible for much of the pain and suffering in later life.” Scientific studies point to the validity of this statement. The pathways in the brain do in fact become set in place and significantly less malleable to change as children grow, particularly after the age of five.

Research also shows that a child’s brain development is most significantly influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship. Optimally each child will experience a reliable and consistent relationship with a caring adult figure. A nurturing and strong bond between parent and child is associated with good grades, positive behaviors, healthier peer interactions, and an ability to cope with stress.

When a stable and loving adult figure meets the child’s needs, the child feels safe, enabling the child’s brain to form pathways along ordered and optimal lines, and creating a confident foundation from which the child can approach life and develop problem solving skills. Among child development specialists, it is generally thought that an initial imprinting with a parental figure forms the basis for later empathy with others.

Some think that the unconditional love of the family is a symbol of the unconditional love of God. Author Susan Shore (cited earlier) makes the provocative suggestion that without the parent-child relationship, humanity would not have learned to love, at least not for many aeons. The ideal modern parent seeks to observe the child’s irrational behavior and respond with reason and calm. When the parent’s reaction is not emotional nor based on the parent’s self-interest and needs, then it could be argued that the role of the parent mirrors that of the soul, the higher self, as it oversees and guides the individual in incarnation.

The ideal parent does not see the child as intrinsically bad and in need of punishment, but instead provides a role model (a blueprint) for the

child to emulate. The parent helps the child learn to control and rise above the emotional nature. By interjecting the quota of rational mind that the child lacks, the modern parent both keeps the child out of danger and helps the child learn to think before acting. Helping the child learn to pause and think “between stimulus and response is the beginning of consciousness, the essence of the soul”, says Shore.

In spite of so much deepening insight into the needs of the child, there is still much child abuse in the world, often resulting in serious and permanent harm. Society pays a high price as well—perhaps more so than recognised. Scientific studies show clear evidence that the brain becomes significantly altered when childhood abuse has occurred. The effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and even exposure to domestic violence all constitute “an extreme traumatic insult” to the developing brain of the child (Hagele, *Impact of Maltreatment on the Developing Child*, North Carolina Medical Journal).

The experience of assault and trauma disrupts a child’s sense of security and triggers biological responses that cause long-term physical, emotional, behavioral, developmental, social and cognitive dysfunction—and this into adulthood. Chronic exposure to stressors result in permanent changes in brain chemistry, structure and function, leading to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); an inability to handle stress, or overly exaggerated responses to minor stress. Children with PTSD have a significantly reduced brain size, loss of neurons, and diminished capacity for learning and memory. Adults with a history of childhood abuse have nearly twice as many serious health problems and higher user rates for medical and psychiatric care. Ultimately, child and family dysfunction has a direct effect on the well being of community and society. The Texas Association for the Protection of Children reminds us that *abused children are 74 times more likely to commit crimes against others and six times more likely to harm their own children.*

As stated, child maltreatment is generally exacerbated by poverty. We live in a world where millions of growing children in developing nations around the world are exposed to war, extreme poverty, violence,

exploitation and sometimes even famine. Many children have little or no opportunity for education and in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, about 1.3 million children reside in orphanages. (Unicef.org/protection)

Child labour is considered to be economic activity that causes harm to a child's physical and mental development, interferes with education, and future livelihood. It is a serious concern and is not the same concept as an economically active child. An estimated 150 million children, between the ages of 5-14, in developing countries, are involved in child labour, with an additional 59 million children, between the ages of 15-17 also considered child laborers. Child labour is thought to reinforce intergenerational cycles of poverty, undermine national economies and impede progress. Nearly two thirds of all child labourers are employed in hazardous work conditions.

About 8.4 million children participate in the worst forms of child labour, consisting of: trafficked children (1.2 million); forced and bonded labour (5.7 million); child soldiers (300,000); prostitution and pornography (1.8 million); and illicit activities (600,000). The total number of 8.4 million does not include trafficked children. (*Every Child Counts*, ilo.org/ipecinfo)

An estimated 300,000 children are being used as child soldiers in armed conflicts. The majority of child soldiers are found in the African and Asian-Pacific regions, with about 30,000 in Latin America. War Child (WarChild.nl, a non-profit agency that works to rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers into society) reports that 80% of child soldiers are younger than age 15. Children not only fight as soldiers, but also serve as porters, cooks, spies, guards and sex slaves, with 40 % of all child soldiers being girls. War Child writes that when children are forced to witness and participate in the atrocities of war, "they lose faith in their own humanity".

Also of concern are the three million girls at risk each year, for female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), for non-medical reasons. This takes place on the African continent and among immigrant populations

worldwide. Although a social custom and not intended to harm girls, FGM/C is by its nature a violent act, and constitutes a brutal and ostensibly traumatic experience for girls. (Unicef.org/protection)

Especially troubling is the practice of child marriage. In spite of having been outlawed, it continues to be practiced in the rural communities of India, Yemen, and Afghanistan, among others. Called the most common, socially approved human rights abuse in the world, child marriage is a formal or informal union before the age of 18, with girls more affected than boys. Currently, about 35 percent of women (between ages 20-24) say they were married before age 18. Child marriage usually spells trauma and stress for girls, who are sent off to live with the groom's family. Separation from family, friends and community can have a significantly adverse effect on a young girl's physical and mental well being and also places the young bride at risk for violence, abuse and exploitation.

The marriage of girls under 18 is gender discrimination as it leads to premature and continuous child bearing, cutting short girls' education. There are 70,000 maternal deaths per year worldwide, for girls aged 15-19, related to pregnancy and childbirth. Infant mortality is 60 percent greater among mothers aged 19 or younger, and low birth weights—related to poor cognitive and physical development—are also common among under-age mothers. Additionally, child marriage is thought to perpetuate cycles of intergenerational poverty. (UNICEF, *State of the World's Children*, 2009) (UNICEF, *Progress for Children*, 2010)

The Effect of Child Abuse on Society

The disturbing practices outlined above are of concern because they constitute an assault and trauma to the developing brains of millions of children worldwide, setting the stage for life, and resulting in the passing on of patterns of abuse to following generations.

As mentioned earlier, in industrialised nations the rates of criminal activity are found to be higher among individuals who have been abused as children. In developing nations, where child abuse is often coupled with poverty, child exploitation and limited access to

education, many scholars have suggested that these conditions have exacerbated the rise in global terrorism.

The work of Lloyd de Mause may be worth noting here. His pioneering work in psychohistory has received accolades from many prominent names, while others consider his work controversial. De Mause concludes that social institutions inevitably arise out of society's collective experiences of childhood. He writes, "each generation of parents and children creates those issues which are later acted out in the arena of public life" (*The Evolution of Child Rearing*, Ch. 1).

De Mause points out that while the link between murder and the kind of abusive parenting that the murderer may have received is often examined, research has yet to look at the relationship between national aggression and the prevailing standards of parenting at the time of armed conflict. Traditionally, economic gain and geo-political reasons have been given as the motivation for war, even though countries actually acquire more wealth from trade and cooperation.

A more likely explanation for national aggression might be found in the widely held view among psychotherapists that children *internalise* the voice of their parents. "You are a good/bad child" becomes "I am a good/bad person". If parenting has been negative, then so too will be the internal voice that the child develops. An internalised voice of self-recrimination will gnaw at an individual and when the internal agitation gets to be too much, the individual finds someone on whom to project his discomfort—perhaps an ethnic minority, as is often the case. Psychologists recognise this process of finding a scapegoat to be a universally human process and sometimes it takes place at societal levels, in ways that are socially sanctioned such as war. De Mause suggests that the extent to which children have been brutalised in a society is related to the likelihood that that society will find a pretext to engage in war.

In the armed conflicts taking place in developing nations these days, de Mause notes that enemies are often castrated, raped and maimed. Because this brutality serves no real purpose, it suggests that these

conflicts are about more than economic and political gain; they may really be about an opportunity to reenact childhood brutality and trauma. Perhaps this is not so radically different than the phenomena commonly seen wherein youth, and sometimes adults, ‘act-out’ when troubled. There are many just and noble causes worth fighting for, but perhaps there may be an element of truth to be found in de Mause's theories.

Certainly, his theories are in line with studies that show that the areas of the brain damaged by childhood abuse and trauma—the amygdala and prefrontal cortex—are the areas that control fear and violence and result in poor impulse control. Lacking internal inhibitors, a person is more likely to act aggressively. Childhood trauma also turns-off the neurons that make empathy and conscience possible. The kind of empathy needed for a more peaceful world is not likely to be found in those who have been brutalised as children. This could be a key element in the solution to world harmony that humanity has sought down the ages. (see psychohistory.com)

Alice Bailey wrote that what is true of the individual, is eternally true of nations. If one accepts the premise that the part reflects the whole and the whole reflects the parts, then one sees that societies *are* made up of individuals, whose perspectives are largely formed during childhood. Perhaps this is why Alice Bailey noted that the problem of the child is the single most important problem facing humanity.

Mohandas Gandhi, said, “If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.” Many of the world’s foremost thinkers have said the same thing, such as Montessori who noted:

The child is the forgotten citizen, and yet, if statesmen and educationists once came to realise the terrific force that is in childhood for good or for evil, I feel they would give it priority above everything else.

All problems of humanity depend on man himself; if man is disregarded in his construction, the problems will never be solved. No child is a Bolshevist or a Fascist or a Democrat; they all become what circumstances or the environment make them.

In our days when in spite of the terrible lessons of two world wars, the times ahead loom as dark as ever before, I feel strongly that another field has to be explored, besides those of economics and ideology. It is the study of man – not of adult man on whom every appeal is wasted. He, economically insecure, remains bewildered in the maelstrom of conflicting ideas and throws himself now on this side, now on that. Man must be cultivated from the beginning of life when the great powers of nature are at work. It is then that one can hope to plan for a better international understanding.

- *Letter to Governments; Holistic Education Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer, 1991, p. 28

The allocation of resources to help alleviate extreme poverty, illiteracy and suffering in developing nations would surely lessen childhood exploitation and the resultant trauma to children. This kind of “early intervention” would be more cost effective than at a later point having to address the global hostilities that inevitably fester and erupt whenever and where ever children suffer, and would arguably bring about greater peace, stability and security for the entire world.

FOUR: New Perspectives in Education

Education is a deeply spiritual enterprise. It concerns the whole man and that includes his divine spirit.

- Alice Bailey

Whatever form a child’s education might take, education and learning have always been associated with the light of intellect and of mind. The word education comes from the root word ‘educere’, meaning to draw forth. Education draws forth the light of the child’s intellect. The

educational process, therefore, has a direct relationship to the life of the soul, which is the body of light and consciousness inherent within each child. Through education and experience, the child gradually shifts focus from the animal nature, to the world of ideas, and in due time acquires abstract intelligence, which is the means by which conscious contact with the soul is eventually achieved. From the wider perspective, education helps the child develop the intellect so that brain, mind and soul become aligned and function in proper inter-relationship.

Alice Bailey suggested that parents and educators start with a recognition of the soul and focus on the mind aspect within the child. Awakening the child's consciousness and emerging intelligence is best served by continuously asking the child, Why? Why this? Why is this so? In this way the responsibility for answering questions is thrown back upon the child, yet at the same time the answer can be subtly dropped into the child's mind. Beginning this practice at the age of five, the child's developing intelligence learns to search for answers, rather than memorising information, the validity of which depends on the authority of an adult.

Alice Bailey also recommended that parents and educators provide children with an atmosphere of love, patience, ordered activity, and understanding. These form the foundation from which knowledge can be acquired, healthy relationships can be formed, and a sense of fearlessness developed. This in turn leads to a willingness to explore the world, leading to a willingness to explore and understand other's points of view. Love, patience, ordered activity, and understanding are the foundation of empathy, respect and reverence for others. (*Education in the New Age*, p. 75)

Maria Montessori had similar ideas about children. She believed that children are not a blank slate waiting to be written upon, but rather that each child is born with a unique potential waiting to be revealed. Montessori's goal was to "to free the soul of the child, the seed of the future". She believed in non-intervention and felt that all that was needed was to direct the child's unlimited creative energy in positive

directions by structuring the environment and providing materials to help focus the child's disorganized energy. She observed that children have a tremendous capacity for concentration, prefer work to play, love order and silence, are possessed of spontaneous self-discipline, and have a sense of personal dignity. She found there was no need for a system of punishment and reward; her approach was to simply liberate the spiritual seed within the child. (www.montessori.edu/maria.html)

Montessori achieved outstanding and unexpected results with students from poor and under-privileged families. Time and again, her students unexpectedly developed far beyond what had been considered their inferior mentality. These remarkable results earned Montessori her notoriety and recognition.

In the twenty-first century, the work of neuro-scientist Adele Diamond, Ph.D. continues along these same lines. A professor in the new field of Developmental Cognitive Neuro-Science at the University of British Columbia, Diamond's research centers around how children learn to pay attention, problem solve and work creatively with what they have. (<http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2010/learning-doing-being/>)

Diamond's research points to the pivotal role of the prefrontal cortex in the educational process. It is the latest area of the brain to develop in man, and it carries out what are known as the *executive functions*, such as the ability to predict the consequences of one's actions, to work towards goals and regulate behavior. As noted earlier, damage to the prefrontal cortex results in poor impulse control and deficits in conscience.

The prefrontal cortex is what helps children learn to learn, and play activities such as music, dance, storytelling, art, sports and imaginative play are all central to its development. Studies show that the more time children have for play, the better they do academically. Play develops cognitive skills because it sustains a child's attention and involves the entire child—body, emotions, mind and social skills. In this way, play stimulates the prefrontal cortex and the physical activity of play also gives a boost to the brain.

Play incorporates and coordinates the child's cognitive processes (executive functions) in an organic way that helps them learn self-control and to "take charge of themselves". Having to remember the rules of a game under the social pressure of play, the child's mind learns focus and control. Holding a piece of information in mind and playing with it—such as a role assumed during imaginative play—the child is developing the essence of creativity, which is cognitive flexibility, or the ability to think outside the box. Through play, the child's planning and problem solving skills develop.

Diamond finds that social skills—the ability to play with other children—are an important cognitive skill. She notes that social skills are a better indicator of success in life than the standard IQ test and adds that poor executive function is often seen in mental illnesses, such as ADHD, depression, Schizophrenia, and Autism. Learning how to pay attention and focus plays a crucial role in social skills and is what enables the child to pause to reflect before acting, so as not to hurt self and others.

In short, play is educational, children learn more if there is joy, and learn more by doing, rather than if they just sit and listen. Diamond's techniques are used in the school system of British Columbia (BC), where the social and emotional development of children is considered an important educational goal. In BC, the aim is to develop good citizens who are kind, compassionate and against bullying. This approach has narrowed the academic gap between children from differing socio-economic backgrounds in BC. Montessori had similar results with her methods.

Ultimately, the executive function of the brain is related to the spiritual quality of mindfulness or reflection, valued by all the world's spiritual traditions. Diamond recommends that the best way for children to learn reflection is to practice it through play. Diamond hopes that educators will come to realise that what nourishes a child's spirit, also nourishes their mind.

There is so much more that can be said about education, but within the scope of this brief commentary it is not possible to explore the subject further. However, mention must be made of the exciting new “discovery” of the tremendous potential for positive social and economic change that comes from educating girls. Increasingly, resources are being marshaled for the education of girls in the developing world, where it is being found that educated women are the world’s most powerful agents of social change.

Educating girls has a multitude of positive effects on the wider community. Research shows that educated girls have the unique ability to bring unprecedented social and economic change to their families and communities, and this includes reduced birthrates, reduced child mortality, reduced political extremism, reduced violence against women, improved family health, and increased family and national income. Additionally, findings indicate that educating girls accelerates literacy within entire families and communities, and mothers with a primary school education are five times more likely to send their children to school. By educating girls, the world becomes a safer, healthier, and more just place.

Ideally, education is the means by which the child is helped to bring out his full and unique potential and helped to become the conscientious global citizen, so much needed in our troubled world today. To date, the educational systems of the world have tended to equip children with a competitive spirit, materialistic and selfish values, and have taught a history of the world skewed to nationalistic interests, rather than emphasising the need for international cooperation and the fact of global inter-dependence. Yet, everywhere there are signs that the world’s educational systems starting to move in more inspired and holistic directions.

FIVE: The Developing Consciousness of the Child—the Way to World Transformation

Following the devastation of WWII and looking towards the task of reconstruction, Alice Bailey wrote that the most important problem to

be addressed was that of the children, many of whom were destitute and had witnessed unspeakable acts of horror. Bailey felt that helping the children was the foundation on which a new and better world could be built. Humanity has come a long way since the world wars and yet reason still dictates that in order to bring greater intelligence, love, and cooperation into the world, aiding children is the key and perhaps even the most cost-effective way to bring about real and lasting change.

Scientific research shows us that that the way in which a child's brain develops is impacted by the experiences of childhood; the outcome will be good or bad depending, and in most instances sets the stage for adult life. Ideally, the child will have a stable relationship with a parental figure, imprinting and modeling empathy and healthy relationships. A loving and secure bond with a parental figure is also the single most important factor in a child's brain development, leading to confident and thoughtful problem solving skills in adult life. When a calm and rational parental figure models and interjects the voice of reason, the child learns how to stop and think between stimulus and response. When a child also has suitable opportunities to play, explore, and create, they learn how to focus, to take control of themselves, and develop the ability to reflect. Focus, self-control, and reason—so as not to hurt self or others—lays the groundwork for consciousness, which is the fundamental nature of the Soul. It is the consciousness and life of the soul that finds joy in interconnection and the proper relationship of the part to the whole.

We know from scientific research that stress and trauma are quite harmful to the child's developing brain, resulting in significant reduction in brain size. In addition, repeated exposure to stress and trauma results in difficulties in coping with stress, as well as deficits in problem solving skills, conscience and empathy for others. Childhood maltreatment also results in poor outcomes for impulse control, focus and planning skills, and is usually found to increase aggression, violence and fear. These problems often continue on into adulthood.

In the Western world we tend to think of child abuse as brutal parental disciplinary measures, neglect, sexual abuse and exposure to domestic

violence. We may forget that millions of children around the world are exposed to the stress and trauma of armed conflicts, extreme poverty and various forms of exploitation, such as child labour, child soldiering, child trafficking, and child marriage. Additionally, the developing minds of millions of children have little or no access to education. This has a tremendous impact on the developing brains of many of our world citizens.

It may be useful to recollect that when poverty is extreme and access to education limited, youth are at risk for exploitation, including radicalization and enticement to join terrorist organisations. In industrialised nations, impoverished children are at risk of drifting into crime, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and other outcomes for which society pays a price. Even financially well off communities are not immune; an excess of wealth can lead to poverty of the spirit, placing families at risk for dysfunction and moral corruption, which may work its way out into white-collar crime or political corruption. Perhaps these unseen crimes impact society the most, blocking societal changes that never seem to get off the ground. Ultimately, society harms itself when it harms and corrupts its youth. Even if not brutalised, neglected, or exploited, in today's world children are often taught to value materialism, to be competitive, to identify success in life with consumerism, and encouraged to embrace a culture of self-interest.

As we seek to solve the problems of humanity, we should remember that the experiences of childhood imprint upon the adult, who the child becomes. We are all impacted whenever a child is harmed. Children grow into the adults that wield power, create the good in society, as well as the societal ills everyone faces. If the innate light and unique potential within each child could be brought forth and fanned to flame, the fabric of our world would be much different than it is today. A recognition of the value of each child would lead to a recognition of the fact of the one humanity, and really only from this recognition of interconnection can the problems of humanity be effectively faced and solved.

When children are raised with love, understanding and respect, they learn to love, understand and respect others. When children are valued by family, community and society, as adults they value and seek the well being of the group of which they form an integral part.

Many have a special feeling and regard for children and regard them as being at the heart of their lives. By extension, some might consider children to be at the heart of humanity itself. Like a vibrant hub of activity that both takes in and distributes energy, children form a living centre that synthesises humanity's past and future. The lives of our children collectively pulse with creative energy, vitality, and the force of life in evolution. The joyous, authentic spark found in children repeats itself at a higher turn of the spiral in the lives of geniuses and saints. Children are a tremendous rejuvenating resource for our world. What an impact it would make if all children could develop their full potential for intellect and empathetic relationship with others and with the greater whole. As stated, the beginning of reason is the beginning of consciousness and the beginning of participation in the culture of the soul. Helping children learn self-control is the first step on this journey and it will not happen if their beginnings in life are founded in the worst and most stressful, hurtful conditions.

Obviously, the human race wouldn't survive without its children—a vital force that sustains the life of humanity. Less obvious, however, may be the outcomes humanity can reasonably expect if it continues its collective and less-than-optimal treatment of children. When any one part of an organism becomes impaired, the whole organism is impaired. Will humanity continue to limp along without giving adequate care and attention to the needs of its children, so crucial to the survival and well being of the race? Considering the significant role children play in the world, it would seem there is not nearly the allocation of resources and attention to children as logic might suggest.

Marshalling the world's resources to help alleviate the suffering of children would give rise to adults who exhibit a spirit of goodwill and a holistic perspective in individual, community and international relationships. These are the global citizens the world needs to set things

right. In caring for our children, we care for ourselves. Children present a unique potential for world transformation and when the needs of children become more strenuously factored into the plans of humanity, the result will be a world with more goodwill, healthier and saner inter-relationships and the wide spread recognition of the fact of the one humanity. In such an atmosphere and spirit of cooperation, there is no problem that humanity cannot face and surmount.

THE OBJECTIVES OF WORLD GOODWILL

To stimulate and encourage men and women of goodwill everywhere to establish right human relations between races, nations, and classes by an intelligent understanding and adequate communication.

To assist men and women of goodwill in their studies of world problems and in the effective application to these problems of goodwill, cooperation and sharing for the common good.

To cooperate with other organizations in constructive activities contributing to world unity, stability and right human relations.

To make available up-to-date information on constructive current action in the main areas of human life through the publication of a quarterly newsletter.

To establish a goodwill Commentary on issues of world interest.

To aid in establishing goodwill as the keynote of the new civilization.

To create a worldwide mailing list of men and women of goodwill.

To support the work of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies as the best hope for a united and peaceful world.

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