# Global Education from a Neohumanist Perspective: A Musical Exposition*

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## Abstract

*I frame my exploration of global education with reference to two of the Reith Lectures given by Daniel Barenboim in 2006. Three possible models of global education are mapped, the neohumanist, the flat classroom and the multicultural world, and then the possibilities of a neohumanist inspired global pedagogy are expanded upon. Issues of epistemology and the tension of the local/global, agency/structure dichotomies are referred to in order to shift the discussion from the usual neo-liberal Western concerns over content and outcomes to an appreciation of service as a pedagogic context and of the possibilities of a prophetic yet pragmatic strategic pedagogy of hope.*

**Keywords:** Neohumanism, globalization, multiculturalism, flat-classroom, pedagogy, Reith Lectures, Daniel Barenboim, Tantra, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, critical spirituality

As a musician I often find myself thinking about society, culture, history and education via analogies with music. I know there are certain limitations in doing so: the most obvious for a post structuralist being that music imposes an artificial order on any moment that is read 'musically'; while, for instance, a structuralist might express doubts over music's romantic proclivities that somehow blur the distinctions between rational and somatic categories. So, having had some months to think about the question of "Global education from a Neohumanist perspective", and knowing that I am going to be meeting some friends who had gathered with me in Israel last year just before the 'disaster' of the Israel-Lebanon action and just after Daniel Barenboim had given the last two Reith Lectures in Jerusalem on music as a form of socio-political engagement, I thought to pick some of the thematic-melodic strands of that meeting and work them here into something resembling a fugue.

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## Education and Capitalism

Firstly, I will pick up on Barenboim's (Barenboim, 2006) observation that:

> *It is very difficult for the human being to truly have the courage and the ability to start from scratch, to start from zero, to take experience from the past and yet think it anew. And yet this is essential, in music as well as in life. (Lecture 5[1])*

His argument is that every time a musician comes to a piece to play it, the music is fresh, new and ephemeral, yet it is also the product of years of disciplined work and interpretation. It is both new and old. The same applies to life. 'Today is the beginning of the rest of your life', may be a cliché, but it carries a real truth. The individual and the collective, when freed from the 'iron cage' of historical, social, and personal karma, can begin afresh. The moment, every moment, is paradoxically both stale and fresh. Similarly, the question of globalisation is both new and old, as is my own perspective: neohumanism.

Barenboim identifies courage as something necessary when facing any new context, musical or otherwise. Certainly, courage is required if we are to think beyond the conditions that determine global educational priorities as they are currently understood. Almost universally such priorities are taken to be discrete components of an unarticulated yet necessary historical narrative. Australian academic Gordon Tait (Tait, 2004) says of this narrative that it is shared and self evident, he sums it up with some irony as follows:

> *"The more civilised we became, the more we pushed back the school leaving age, until we eventually developed schools that clearly reflected the values and ambitions of the wider community. After all, are schools not simply microcosms of society at large? In addition to this, the form that modern schooling takes is regarded as an unproblematic part of the same story. Of course we should organise our learning in the way we do, with the emphasis on formalised learning spaces, graded curricula, timetables of activities, various forms of assessment, and a clear hierarchy of authority. These features of the contemporary education merely reflect the fact that this is self-evidently the best system available. After all, how else could education possibly be organised?" (Tait, 2004, p. 13)*

Tait's point is that much that we take to be natural about schooling, is unnatural. Things could be otherwise. The current momentum behind the globalisation of the neo-liberal metanarrative is contained in the subtext to the story Tait presents here. The mythic story, discretely hidden by the intelligibility of this narrative of human progress towards an enlightened education system, and citizenry, is that the individual is the basic unit of society and that when enculturated via disciplinary education, they will govern/police themselves. The beauty of the system is that it is self regulating, and heavily invested in by private capital. The 'pedagogic family' (Tait, 2004, p. 20) willingly carries the emotional, and increasingly, the financial burden of producing well educated and disciplined citizens.

At the risk of conflating positions I see parallels, counterpoints, between Tait's essentially Foucauldian analysis and that of Peter McLaren (the wild boy of Marxist

revolutionary critical pedagogy). McLaren sees the global progress of neo-liberal education as a form of pedagogy for capital (McLaren, 2006). He points out that such education facilitates capital's grounding of social mediation in forms of value (McLaren, 2006, p. 241). In this he argues that our subjectivities are constituted through the pedagogic lens of capitalist education and expressed in a social universe driven by the logic of advanced capitalism in which all things are simultaneously both commodity and labour.

## From Critique to Possibility

I have little doubt that both Tait and McLaren are right (remembering the paradox Niels Bohr points to that the opposite of a great truth is another truth) when assessing the key elements of modernities' global educational project. Yet there is another story we can tell in which the deconstructive and revolutionary energy of such analyses turns, as Henry Giroux (Giroux, 1988, p. 204) would have us turn, from critique to possibility.

This, as a story of possibility, Barenboim tells through a musical analogy:

> *Now, when you play music, whether you play chamber music or you play in an orchestra, you have to do two very important things and do them simultaneously. You have to be able to express yourself, otherwise you are not contributing to the musical experience, but at the same time it is imperative that you listen to the other. You have to understand what the other is doing. (Lecture 4)*

A neohumanistic perspective takes this interactive quality from music and applies it to social contexts in which the layered and multiple are grounded in a pedagogical ethic of the other. In this living context education implies the other; it implies, community, culture, history, myth and continuity; it simultaneously looks back and forward; it is the heartbeat of the moment stretched out before and behind the student in various unique and general syncopations of mind and soul as it encounters its and other's traditions in unique yet paradoxically general settings. Education, rather than simply focusing on the transmission of information and the learning of narrow social disciplinary rules can, when run through a neohumanist lens, lead us to consider the frontiers of our humanity where coherence dissolves into mystery. Judith Butler (Butler, 2004), when reflecting on vulnerability and how it grounds the human condition points to this liminal quality observing:

> *If the humanities has a future as cultural criticism, and cultural criticism has a task at the present moment, it is no doubt to return us to the human where we do not expect to find it, in its frailty and at the limits of its capacity to make sense. (Butler, 2004, p. 151).*

She goes on to suggest that if we are to enact such a form of critical awareness that we would need to:

> *...interrogate the emergence and vanishing of the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense. (Butler, 2004)*

This in essence is the neohumanist invitation. In this context rationality is expanded to embrace the spiritual (sure I am pushing Butler beyond her comfort zone) and critique emerges as an engaged critical spirituality that both expresses and facilitates dimensions of the global encounter that a truly global education might provide.

From the perspective of this symposium I have no doubt that the phrase 'global education' indicates the positive potential behind processes of globalisation which seem from our perspective to be unstoppable and irreversible. Despite shared misgivings we feel ourselves to be caught in an ineluctable process of global significance. The question before us is, can we reclaim our personal and collective agency?

## Critical Spirituality

The critically spiritual approach of neohumanism short circuits the dichotomy this question is based on. Global, from a neohumanist perspective, is both an expression of the unique subjectivity of each of us while simultaneously being the objective expression of universal fields of consciousness that map the subtle and physical universe. Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, who developed the concept of neohumanism, points out that such an understanding of consciousness and our global possibilities grounds our actions in a subjective approach to the real while we adjust objectively to the material and social concerns of the moment (Sarkar, 1987, pp. 24-27).

Thus by presenting consciousness and being as a continuum we have both ontological and epistemological tools for rereading the social and reengaging our pedagogy from a transformative perspective. The following image developed by Sohail Inayatullah (Inayatullah, Bussey, & Milojevic, 2006) captures the layered nature of the neohumanist world view.

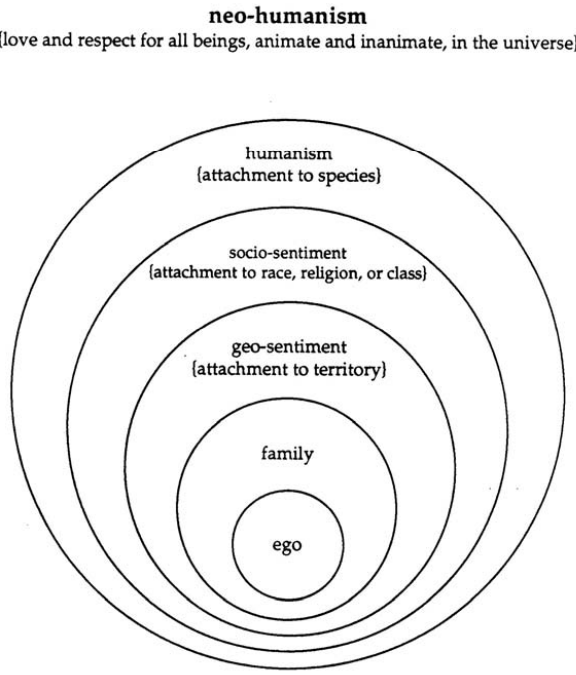


*Figure 1.* Neohumanist world view

With reality configured to validate the intersection of subjective-objective space we find the between of which Michel Serres speaks (Serres, 1995) – a space of hybrid interactivity or what Foucault called heterotopic possibility (Foucault, 1986). Sure, you say, education is all about interaction and the grey zone in which value and information collide with the unique context of the individual. But... there are two other models of education that hold centre stage. The neohumanist vision for global education is better understood when placed along side these powerful alternative visions.

## Flat Education: Networked Mono-knowledge

This contrasts greatly with the model of Capitalist being which lies at the heart of much globalising education. In this the needs of the centre are exported to the periphery in order to access the dynamic energy of desire. Thomas Friedman sums this insight up well:

> *One cannot stress enough the fact that in the flat world the frontiers of knowledge get pushed out farther, faster and faster. Therefore, companies need the brainpower that can not only reach the new frontiers but push them still farther. That is where the breakthrough drugs and software and hardware products are being found. And America either needs to be training the brainpower itself or importing it from somewhere else – or ideally both – if it wants to dominate the twenty-first century the way it dominated the twentieth... (2005, p. 274)*

Here Friedman is playing the tension inherent to such words as 'frontier'. In his 'flat world' the frontier is anywhere someone has a computer and is savvy enough to turn it on. His vision of a globalising education is one in which science and mathematics are taught uniformly and centrally in schools all over a country (Friedman, 2005, p. 273). This he assures us is not happening in the United States. Regardless of the accuracy of his claims, the vision is one of education that is uniform and 'flat'. There is only one playing field for Friedman, and it is global in dimension and uninterested in the local or parochial. Thus he warns:

> *This flattening process is happening at warp speed and directly or indirectly touching a lot more people on the planet at once. The faster and broader the transition to a new era, the more likely is the potential for disruption, as opposed to an orderly transfer of power from the old winners to the new winners. (Friedman, 2005, p. 46)*

Friedman's flat world still has a centre – the United States – but he sees that centre under attack from both within and without. His flat education is also clearly scientific and utilitarian in nature – it has a centre too; though he does acknowledge the essential extra ingredient for success here: imagination (Friedman, 2005, p. 443). Yet imagination is a double edged sword – it can imagine a 9/11 or a world of harmonious cooperation. Thus he argues, "We have to be the masters of our imaginations, not the prisoners" (Friedman, 2005, p. 448).

So Friedman imagines a flat world in which there is a relative centre, anywhere there is a computer, and an absolute centre, currently the United States but who

knows? The relative centre is built around the willingness to creatively and positively engage with the opportunities bursting into our awareness; it is anchored in the capacity to access a flat education in which the skills and values of the absolute centre are channelled throughout the flat world.

Some lessons from Friedman's flat classroom are that access to education determines access to the centre; the absolute centre may be reconfigured as fractal centres in which process – a knowledge economy – takes the place of a centralised geo-political space; take the initiative, don't wait for the centre to come to you: "Do whatever it takes, but get out of the door" (Friedman, 2005, p. 449).

A map of his flat networked education might look like one of Marc Lombardi's[2] images:

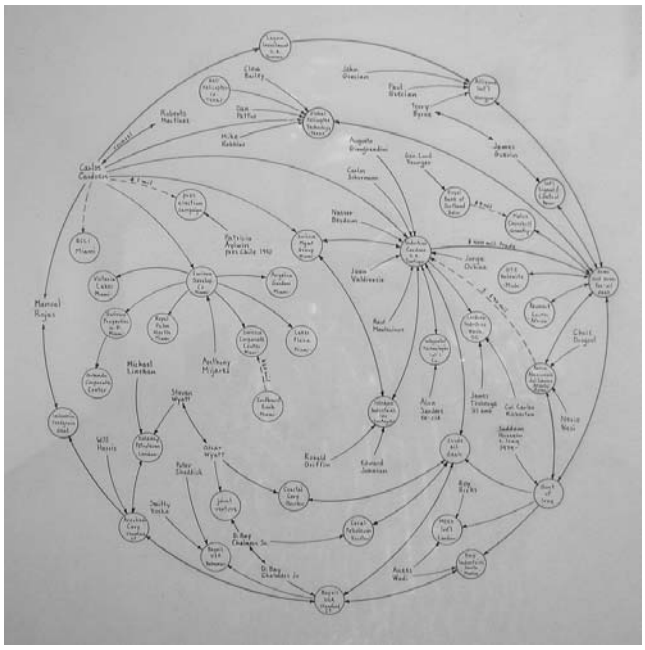

*Figure 2.* Flat world view

## The Multicultural Education: Parallel Tolerance and the Interactivity of Centre and Periphery

Contrasting with Friedman's flat education there is the well known model of multicultural education. One in which the central space is purportedly open to all and around which orbit, cultural contexts which are validated by their participation in the political and pedagogical life of the collective.

Such an approach is mapped in the following figure[3].

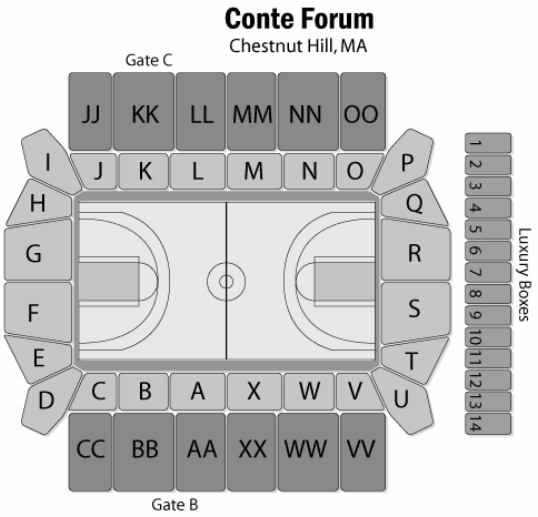


*Figure 3.* Multicultural world view

This is a broadly humanistic map of the global 'family' with educational units that promote tolerance (each family does its own 'thing'), understanding and engagement being built around the same core model described by Friedman – the maths, science and literacy trinity which acts as a kind of forum, historical and architectural overtones are intended, in which all citizens come to speak the same language, leaving individual differences aside. This division is presented as rational and reflects the values of what John Ralston Saul calls 'positive nationalism' (Saul, 2005). For Saul, this is:

> *...a belief in the positive tension of uncertainty and the central importance of choice. It is not wedded to narrow absolutes. It is particularly dubious about broad answers to utilitarian questions. Thus, the conviction that one market view must prevail in all considerations – whether it be Marxist or neo-liberal – is of little interest. (Saul, 2005, p. 271)*

For Saul, this solution works because it is the way people have organised themselves throughout history. Thus he concludes that:

> *The desire of people to organise their lives around the reality of where they live is central to the return of nationalism. (Saul, 2005, p. 272)*

Such reasoning leads Saul to conclude that the Globalist myth is evaporating (Saul, 2005, p. 274) and that the local is taking back its own and that this humanist response to the irresponsibility of market ideologues is the way of the future. Such pragmatism, some might call it wishful thinking, will see many peoples coming together in limitless configurations of "people, separate and interwoven" (Saul, 2005, p. 279) and the breaking down of "an artificial tension between a theory of global economics and a reality in which people live" (Saul, 2005, p. 277).

Here difference is presented as a life style choice and the most appropriate response, the most democratic response, is tolerance and the celebration of difference. What is fundamental to difference in this context is that it only makes sense when contextualised by our sameness – our common humanity, just as Derrida notes democracy only makes sense when contrasted with the undemocratic potential it holds within its own process (Derrida, 2005, pp. 30-31). Yet this balance tends to be overlooked in the melee of educational administration and curricula approaches to knowledge that are linear, piecemeal and driven (at warp speed) by often competing images of the future and the past.

The weakness of this model is that in a bureaucratised educational context, and a bureaucratised/McDonaldized culture of hyper-individualism, differences tend to be compartmentalised with tolerance becoming a euphemism for ignorance and laziness, and 'multi' covering for segregation and exclusion. Communities as a result are fragmented with the emergence of centre-periphery configurations that map the same disparities experienced at the global level.

## Three Models

What emerges from these rather brief overviews are three distinct models.

1. The neohumanistic concept of the 'global' as a holistic and interactive space in which agency and structure are mutually reinforcing and the creative space of cultural renewal emerges from the point of interaction. Such a point could be described as liminal or aporetic. Firstly, it is on the border between two conceptually distinct 'realms', hence its liminality; and secondly, the paradox of the agency-structure dialectic producing creative energy experienced as heterotopic possibility accounts for its aporetic profile. The end result is a global that is local/personal and heavily dependent on the uniqueness of learning encounters which indigenise global pedagogic imperatives. [Map: co-incentric circles]
2. The monoeducation of the flat classroom in which learning is networked. Both figuratively and literally, around the imperatives of the market as it transforms from hard to soft learning in which science/maths is linked to creativity and ultimately centralises not in geo-political arrangements but in aggregates of knowledge-productivity that may be corporate or nation based. [Map: networked polycentric globe]
3. The multicultural compartmentalised family model which in many ways offers a replay of global inequality at the local level. It can be read as a cultural version of Friedman's flat schooling in that it does not challenge the central educational process rather seeking to append cultural tolerance and understanding through the curriculum. As such it disempowers itself by not challenging and reconfiguring the epistemological assumptions that drive western globalising education. [Map: Multicentric forum]

## Musical Metaphors

So, back to music. Each possible reading of global education suggests a different future. There are overlaps and partial truths in all three positions but the starting points, the intention, the *telos* of each is different. What is clear is that at this moment in time we are faced with some very real choices and that a transition is inevitable. Barenboim reminds us that transitions are central to both being and musical thinking:

> *Transition, let us not forget, is the basis of human existence. In music it is not enough simply to play a statement of a phrase, it is absolutely essential to see how we arrived there, and to prepare it. One plays a statement one way at the beginning of a piece, but when the same statement returns later, in what we call in musical terminology the recapitulation, it is in a completely different psychological state of mind. And therefore the bridge, the transition, determines not only itself but what comes after it. It is important to recognise that the present does not exist without the past, and that the present would be different with another past. At the same time, what we do in the present is inevitably the prelude to what the future will be. And the future is determined not by something that we passively wait for, but it is the inevitable outcome that we prepare for from the present moment. (Lecture 5)*

What we have here is three different musical transitions in which theme and form weave according to the inner logic of the 'dance'. The neohumanist is a truly contrapuntal work in which each voice is valued and lives both as a single line and a member of a musical relationship which is simultaneously whole and part. Here the harmony is less established, less demanding or prescriptive than the powerful diatonic chords which establish a tonal centre and punishes divergence. Think of the motets and masses of Josquin des Prez (1455-1521) with the long melismatic lines and free use of harmony – structure and form are present but offset or counterbalanced by the freedom allowed the voices. Transition here is a negotiated dialogical affair and there can be many of them.

The flat classroom vision of Friedman and other globalism enthusiasts is a monodic piece in which we encounter a single voice or texture, or if thinking instrumentally, a la techno music that offers a single silken musical fabric of networked rhythmic sound that synthesises difference into a unified sonic wave. Here I am thinking of the pulsating dance music of a band like *Kraftwerk* and some of the more trance oriented techno variants of the 1980s and early 90s. This music is compulsive and can be either ambient or driven. Transitions tend to be subtle and rarely move away from a defining musical texture from beginning to end.

The multicultural classroom is a fine example of centralising western harmony at work. Here texture, invention and direction are paramount. Transition is prescribed and usually in the form Barenboim describes. Think the first movement of a symphony by Mozart and you have the idea. Melodic lines are clear, harmony centralises and satisfies the ear. The democracy of the orchestra is all harnessed to the inner logic of the piece and the outcome, given everyone listens and respects, is a magnificent expression of social purpose. Yet, the rules are clear and the appearance of democracy

belies the fact that the order determines all expression. The thing about a melody by Mozart is that it seems so perfect we all feel it could not have been otherwise. The centre of power is in the harmony and though no one can be said to hold the power – it appears to be shared by conductor, composer and musicians – it is in the very essence of the process itself and transition can only occur if and when rules are followed. This is how we experience forms of aesthetic fascism.

## Future Harmonies

Each process follows rules of harmony, meter and form yet the end results are strikingly different. Yet it is important to acknowledge the fact that music, like society, and education is an organised process. What I want to underscore is that all forms of music, society and education presuppose a value base, a structure, and a process yet the neohumanist vision is most open, functioning like an Indian *raga* in deep resonance with context.

Thus the neohumanist global vision is the most inherently tolerant of difference as the building block for any future is the individual, not as an isolated being but as a being-in-context. The critical terrain of this context is both spiritual and material, simultaneously. The educational possibilities here are therefore, more complex and more tantalising. For Friedman the starting place for transitions is a global-in-context which inverts the neohumanist approach. Thus for the neohumanist, liberation comes from the individual's personal quest being identified with collective welfare, for Friedman, the welfare of a global collective can, in someway, guarantee the welfare of individuals. For Saul, the positive nationalism of his humanism creates a safe central forum in which difference meets; the space itself guarantees the freedom of the group and the individual.

Each possible future makes sense in the light of Barenboim's comment. But which do we want? Which also is most possible? The most plausible?

Well Barenboim has an opinion on this too:

> *Music in this case is not an expression of what life is, but an expression of what life could be, or what it could become. Music itself should not be used for political or any other purpose. But although you cannot make music through politics, perhaps you can give political thinking an example through music. As the great conductor Sergei Celibidache said, music does not become something, but something may become music. (Lecture 4)*

The future harmonies inherent in the various visions of global education can indeed be understood via musical metaphors. While all represent structure and hierarchy, they do so in quite different ways. Barenboim takes up this point and how difficult it is to strike the balance here between structure, hierarchy and the individual: "in music there is a hierarchy, a hierarchy if you want with equality. And that is what of course is much easier than in life. How difficult it is to achieve equality and yet to find a hierarchy" (Lecture 4).

With this in mind, Neohumanism can be described with reference to the pre-modern work of des Prez or the non-Western *raga*. The Flat Classroom by contrast inverts

this world view offering the total synthesis of synthesized sound, while the multicultural classroom creates the spaciousness of a sonic forum in which equals meet in a predetermined space in which the rules are set (by the West) and are invariant.

## Neohumanist Possibilities

Like Derrida, I feel the future, *la futurité*, is something that acts as a horizon beyond which we cannot see (Derrida, 1978/2002, p. 95, & 1990, p. 969). It is a limit position. Yet we can and do every day assume things about the future. These assumptions are shaped by fears and hopes, by a sense of those forces acting upon us as societies and individuals, and by the burden of our *karma* – personal and collective history. When we engage strategic hope we are able to challenge the passivity we often inherit with our assumptions. Neohumanism with its mix of spiritual vision and pragmatic common sense can be taken and applied as a form of such strategic hope. It is a utopic, as Louis Marin would say (Marin, 1984), through which we can better understand ourselves in the present, and become active agents for the future.

What I have found with students and teachers is that when we start thinking globally hope diminishes. The global is just too BIG! Well neohumanism makes the global personal and returns a sense of agency to us all. It is not that we are faced with the kind of choice captured so elegantly by John F Kennedy when he said: "Ask not what your country can do for you–ask what you can do for your country." Rather it is that through a spiritual grounding we come to recognise that self-interest and the common good are indistinguishable.

With this in mind the question of how we perform global pedagogy itself becomes somewhat less confronting: neohumanist pedagogy is global pedagogy. It is not a matter of going on line and gaining a degree over the internet, or a matter of teaching about countries far from home, or engaging students in respectful interactions, or environmental studies. These can all be part of both a technocratic flat world, a multicultural world or a neohumanist one. What is different is how authority is enacted, how knowledge is constructed and how we communicate this.

Vinay Lal notes that:

> *No future can be promising unless it entails a thoroughgoing critique, and dismantling, of modern knowledge systems that have given us the interpretive devices with which we have sought to make sense of our lives and the world around us. For much too long, the spokespersons for the West have not merely pretended they had the solutions to the world's problems, but they have been allowed to exercise a monopoly over what kinds of questions are asked and the manner in which they are to be asked. (Lal, 2002, p. 181)*

To be honest I do not really know what a neohumanist classroom is. But I know what it is not: it is not limited, it is not violent and punitive, it is not teacher driven and authoritarian, it is not about learning as dull transmission and idle memorisation, it is not selfishly individualistic or segregated, it is not exclusive, fundamentalist or closed, it is not time driven, output obsessed and assessment oriented. In short is not a classroom we would recognise today.

I acknowledge here that the list I just gave is at the heart of any number of real and apparent dissenting pedagogies. It is in short both useful (as a guide) and useless (as rhetoric). What can be said of neohumanism is that it embodies the holistic aspiration by linking the educative process to the lived practice of teachers, curricula planners, and associated staff. At the heart of neohumanist practice is a direct and sustained spiritual endeavour to establish a relationship with the Divine. Only when we begin to see everything as an expression of divinity do we begin to act and think globally. This spiritual orientation generates a deepened critical faculty which strips away power and the psychological and epistemological glosses that distort social action. A continuum emerges here that is simultaneously linear and singularly immanent: we practice neohumanism, we accept it as the principle behind all we do and we also recognise it as a goal as it is always, from the human and relative stance, unattainable.

Certainly we need to be, as Lal urges, asking new questions that are expressive of a wider range of concerns relating to and inspired by the kind of inter-civilisational issues explored by Ananta Kumar Giri (Giri, 2006) and Fred Dallmayr (Dallmayr, 2002). Giri for instance identifies a new social ethic which draws upon the Vedic wisdom of his own country, India. His linking of servanthood to social action is founded on his analysis of the India *varnas* (Giri, 2006, p. 335) and has relevance for the neohumanist recognition that social service linked to local needs must be part of any pedagogy.

It is not that science, math or literacy is taught that is problematic – these are correctly identified as essential to any prosperous global future. It is the cultural context of learning that needs real sustained attention. As Theodor Adorno lamented - How could one of the most 'enlightened' cultures on the planet have committed the holocaust (Adorno, 2003)? This is a real question that education must face. Neohumanist pedagogy specifically engages with the issue of ethics and reason. It challenges the supremacy of instrumental rationality and offers a benevolent rationality which is armed, critically prepared, with a critical spirituality (Bussey, 2000, 2006) grounded in real life contexts.

As it emphasises a spiritual reflective turn, linked to a clear ethical base and an engaged, on the ground, hands on process, neohumanist pedagogy pushes teachers and students, and all school support staff, to transcend their preconceptions and begin to teach/learn in effectively global ways. Getting individuals to work both for and within collective structures begins the grounding of ethics in service. It is through such actions that we push our consciousnesses beyond self interest and the trap of alienated individuality. Truly global education is about this journey. And it is also about much more than extending the humanist parameters to include all people. As Jeremy Rifkin, in his foreword to Kim Stallwood's book on animal rights (Stallwood, 2002) notes, something much deeper is going on:

> *The human journey is, at its core, about the extension of empathy to broader and more inclusive domains. At first, the empathy extended only to kin and tribe. Eventually it was extended to people of like-minded values. In the 19th century, the first animal humane societies were established. The current studies open up a new phase, allowing us to expand and deepen our empathy to include the broader community of creatures with whom we share the Earth. (Stallwood, 2002, xiv-xv)*

Sohail Inayatullah, in a recent essay, observed that the likelihood of neohumanism becoming the new 'hegemony' any time soon is not great (Inayatullah, 2006). Yet he saw that its seeding capacity was rich and historically part of an emergent sensibility. There is a timeliness to neohumanism, an awareness that as Rifkin notes, things are rapidly moving to a new stance and whether that stance is explicitly called a neohumanist stance or not seems to me irrelevant. What is clear is that there are numerous voices, as Ivana Milojevic observes (Milojevic, 2006), working in concert stating basically the same thing: current educational vision is limited and needs to be augmented with a good shot of ecumenical spirituality.

## Enabling Traditions & Applied Hope

In this way, seeing an ecumenical language and thought emerging, I am reminded again of music and of the balance and tensions of voices in search of a global harmony. Certainly new hybrid forms are emerging from the interaction of civilisations in a global scene that offers rich possibilities for encounter, synthesis and new learnings. The hybridity of the term 'neohumanism' itself illustrates this process. It has a Greek prefix linked to a Latin root and was devised by an Indian mystic-philosopher. It draws on both critical and poststructural insights into reality while retaining its normative commitment to the social, economic and spiritual growth of all that is on the planet and in the universe.

For global education to rethink its priorities and thus escape from the flat hegemonic classroom described by Friedman and to overcome the tensions inherent in the humanist model at the heart of multicultural education we need a post material sensibility. In this I am reminded of Cornel West's elegant description of prophetic pragmatism (West, 1999, p. 149). An approach to life that is practical and grounded while cherishing and maintaining the deep connection to spirit that sustains us when the world seems set on its own destruction. Yet, like West I am aware of the vulnerability of my position when subject to the harsh gaze of a predominantly material and consumption oriented world that cherishes the individual as a token of an empty freedom. I think West's subjective, highly 'rational' defence is worth noting:

> *I do not think it possible to put forward rational defences of one's faith that verify its veracity or even persuade one's critics. Yet it is possible to convey to others the sense of deep emptiness and pervasive meaninglessness one feels if one is not critically aligned with an enabling tradition. One risks not logical inconsistency, but actual insanity; the issue is not reason or irrationality, but life or death. (West, 1999, p. 171)*

Life and death are worth considering. From a neohumanist perspective there is no heaven or hell other than that which we create, collectively, in the here and now. What emerges from this insight is a cosmology of hope that empowers us to move from the "As above: so below" world view of transcendental dualism (a.k.a. Capitalism) to an "As within: so without" sense of agency that is not merely a New Age placebo to get us through a bad day but both a challenge to engage with our own mythic structures and an invitation to dive deep into the enabling traditions that give form and meaning to daily experience.

So the fugue draws to a close and I return to Barenboim. His vision of hope anchored in music profoundly touched me. Sure, I can see that his thinking is in many ways shaped by the Western musical tradition, but, as Cornel West would observe, there is much that is enabling in that tradition. It is not all about domination, violence and predatory capitalism. If we listen closely we can hear the open strand of an Indian raga and the whistled tones of a Maori conch. Barenboim's message is that we must practice hope, it is to be applied in the present not stripped of use-value by being projected into the future. This is why he and his friend, the late Edward Said, formed the Palestinian/Israeli youth orchestra the West Eastern Divan as a vehicle that symbolises the potential unity that exists between the most alienated of peoples. Thus he notes:

> *In the West Eastern Divan the universal metaphysical language of music becomes the link, it is the language of the continuous dialogue that these young people have with each other. Music is the common framework, their abstract language of harmony. As I have said before in these lectures, nothing in music is independent. It requires a perfect balance between head, heart and stomach. And I would argue that when emotion and intellect are in tune, it is easier also for human beings and for nations to look outward as well as inward. And therefore through music we can see an alternative social model, a kind of practical Utopia, from which we might learn about expressing ourselves freely and hearing one another. (Lecture 4)*

## Conclusion

For me neohumanism has the potential to negotiate the challenge posed in Barenboim's vision of a 'practical utopia'. Is such an idea an oxymoron? Perhaps. Certainly Ashis Nandy wisely warns against utopian dreams as they inevitably turn into other's, and frequently our own, nightmares (Nandy, 1987) – we must remember that capitalism is the expression of the utopian aspirations of many 'reformers' in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Hetherington, 1997; Perkins, 2001). Yet, if we soften the term, shifting the emphasis from the future to the present tense, from salvation to process, the utopic of neohumanism, open-ended, ethical, grounded in practical action and spiritual striving, has much to offer any discussion relating to global education. Such a discussion is not about answers but about framing questions that give form to our aspirations and about trying from today to enact these questions in the classroom and everywhere else learning occurs.

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## Notes

1. Barenboim's Reith lectures number 5. The last two were given in Jerusalem. I indicate which lecture I am taking his comments from simply with their number
2. http://www.albany.edu/museum/wwwmuseum/work/lombardi/images/ lombardi1.jpg
3. I like this image as not only are the stalls all clearly bounded but it also includes 'Luxury Boxes' – something often left out of the more enthusiastic multicultural narratives.

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