

## IMAGINAL EDUCATION

### MAN'S ORDERING

1. It is the propensity of man to order the chaos. He superimposes lines of latitude and longitude upon the oceans and turns the great plains into checkerboard fields. He names the inner workings of the mind with "id, ego, and superego," and uses mathematical formulae to describe the mystery of the galaxies. Man builds himself a picture of the universe and bases his daily decisions on that picture.

### OPERATING IMAGE

2. This picture or "image," as Kenneth Boulding calls it, is made up of many smaller images out of which he operates from day to day, and which constantly changes as he makes decisions each day in response to his situation. These images fill the gap between the idea he has about something and the actual situation. While he may have rational clarity about his ideas, a person is seldom self-conscious of the image out of which he is operating. The task of imaginal education is to work with these basic operating images rather than merely with ideas or information.

### CHANGING THE IMAGE

3. Imaginal education, as developed by the staff of the Ecumenical Institute, is the process by which messages are intentionally directed to a person's images in order to give the opportunity for a change of image. Messages, the ideas and data which one receives, can have various effects on the image. First, the message may "pass through" the image leaving it untouched, as when a person blocks out the noise of children playing outdoors. Second, it may add new data to the image, again leaving it untouched, as when a person learns that the exact temperature is 25 degrees Fahrenheit after he had already known that he was cold. Or, third, the message may conflict with the present image, and be resisted, unless the message is strong enough to penetrate this resistance, in which case education, that is, a "revolutionary" change in the image, takes place. For example, a man may receive the message that his best friend is a thief, and refuse to believe it. However, if enough similar messages come from enough different sources, he begins to doubt and finally changes his image of his friend.

### PRE- SUPPOSITIONS

4. Imaginal education has several basic presuppositions. First, every person operates out of images. Second,

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these images determine his behavior. Third, these images can change, through the person's own decision, after the impact of messages which cause his former image to be called into question. Fourth, the teacher can discern what images a student is operating out of. The imaginal educator creates messages which give a person an opportunity to change his image. However, change finally remains within the decisional realm of the student; the teacher cannot force an image change, but can only send messages. Because a student's images are finally beyond the teacher's control, the teacher is released to build a model for what he sees as a desirable change in the student.

IMAGE  
OF  
GREATNESS

5. Since images, not ideas, are what underlie behavior, imaginal education, in enabling a change in these images, changes behavior. Research has identified the depth problem in the inner city as that of self-depreciation, or the victim image. The image which the 5th City project is out to create in every participant is one of appropriated greatness, that every person know himself as a unique, unrepeatable person in history who has the possibility of creating his own destiny, as he operates within the limits of his particular situation.

NEW  
IMAGE -  
NEW  
DECISION

6. Imaginal education understands a human being as a whole unit and is an attempt to change that whole through self-conscious and intentional use of messages. Students, even at preschool age, participate fully in life, with all the pain, insecurity, joy, and anxiety of what it means to be human. They do not sit back and observe life during school. Rather they participate in it at all times. The songs, rituals, and short courses used in the 5th City Preschool are an example of the message used to create the image of greatness and the power of decision. The symbol of the Iron Man is also designed to accomplish this imaginal shift. Imaginal education curriculum reveals and names the objective situation and raises the life question, which allows a new decision. A two-year-old child may operate out of the image that life should be happy. He falls down and hurts himself. Curriculum events and short courses tell him that everyone gets hurt in life, that life is not always happy. He then has the possibility of seeing that his past image was inadequate, and of recreating the world in the context of the new impingement.

HUMAN  
JOURNEY OF  
REFLECTION

7. Imaginal education is the human method because it allows one to go through a journey of consciousness relative to his situation and his life and finally make a decision about his life. Soren Kierkegaard outlines this

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journey in terms of man's three levels of reflection. He indicates that man is a bundle of objective and subjective relationships--a father, a husband, a brother, a carpenter, a friend--all at the same time. Man makes an immediate emotional response as he is conscious of his particular situation, which is the first level of reflection. He is capable not only of relating to his immediate situation, but of taking a conscious relationship to his own responses, thus choosing the appropriate action. This decision is the second level of reflection. And man can go a step further by reflecting even on this decision and can decide whether or not he wills to be the self who decided to respond the way he did. This is the third level of reflection, and Kierkegaard claims that when a person thus wills to be his self, authentic selfhood takes place. The task of the art form method is to give the student the opportunity to decide self-consciously who he is going to be and how he is going to relate to his own life.

### ART FORM METHOD

8. The method used for the intentional structuring of a person's response to the messages he receives is called the art form method. It is not an artificial imposition but rather a self-conscious ordering of the way life comes to every man. The art form method is contentless in that it can be applied to any situation through asking questions at four levels, the objective, the reflective, the interpretive and the decisional. At the objective level the intent is simply to see what the data is, what is present in the objective situation. At the reflective level becoming aware of each person's subjective response to the situation is the goal. The next step, the interpretive, is to consider the meaning and purpose of the situation and what would be an adequate statement or response to the situation. Finally, one must make a decision about how he is going to relate to the situation and to himself in that situation.

### ART FORM QUESTION STRUCTURE

9. The art form method is the structure of curriculum events, and is also used as a question structure when the class is asked to respond to a painting or sculpture or story. For example, the questions used for a painting shown to preschoolers could be these:

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| OBJECTIVE    | 1. What objects do you see?            |
|              | 2. What colors do you see?             |
| REFLECTIVE   | 3. What color would you add?           |
|              | 4. Where would you add it?             |
| INTERPRETIVE | 5. What is going on in the painting?   |
|              | 6. What story would you tell about it? |
| DECISIONAL   | 7. What would you name it?             |

### GUIDING THE CHILD'S REFLECTION

10. This method, a life method, is also the method used to help the children become aware of and decide about their practical situations. For example, a child has been bitten by another and is crying. The teacher asks, "What happened?" as an objective question. If the child is not verbal, the teacher can answer the question himself, "Johnny bit you, didn't he?" Then the teacher asks a reflective question which reveals to the child how he feels, "Does it hurt?" or "Did it make you mad?" The next level, the interpretive, would live up the child's response in the situation, and the teacher might ask (depending on how the event has unfolded), "You hit him with a block, didn't you?" or "What are you going to do? Are you going to cry, or hit him, or just go back to playing?" The fourth level occurs when the child self-consciously decides to be the self who decided one way or the other. The use of such questions helps the student on his journey of consciousness and helps to relieve his being a victim to his external situation by offering him the possibility to make a new decision.

### CONTENTLESS HUMAN DYNAMIC

11. In imaginal education, then, there is one thing to be "taught," and that is that in the midst of a person's given situation he can decide to live that situation, affirming it and himself in it. This is not an abstract statement or idea, however, but a method, the human, of living one's life. It is finally the only thing to be taught, and can be taught in any subject or situation. Therefore, imaginal education is contentless, in that it has no specific content, but takes its content from the situation. The intent of a curriculum event on any topic, then, is not to teach anything but the human dynamic of that topic. Even in a subject as basic as word symbols, the aim is more than that the children learn words, but that they grasp symbol-making as a method with which they

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can decisionally relate themselves to the given world. That is, within the world as given, they can grasp their possibilities and decide about their lives through the use of word symbols. When a child has learned that he can name the things in the world around him, sometimes the unique names he has given them, he has learned more than names. He has learned that he can decide about his world and creatively live his life in it.

### NECESSITY OF COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM

12. Because there is no specific content to which imaginal education or the art form method can be limited, it can be taught through any curriculum. This also means, however, that the curriculum rationale must take into account all of human wisdom and experience, for nothing is excluded. Such a comprehensive curriculum is a pre-supposition of any use of this method, or imaginal education requires comprehensiveness in order to be imaginal education in the classroom.

### MASS EDUCATION AS REALITY

13. In the 20th Century, there is no reason why every child in the globe cannot have quality education, although there will never be the space or equipment available that some would suggest are necessary to do this job. In the 5th City Preschool, when faced with the limitation of space, virtually no equipment, and a very high child/teacher ratio, the staff found that not only was it possible to teach in that situation, but also exciting. If the purpose of education is to prepare children to live in the world as it really is, it makes little sense to place children who are daily exposed to the vitality of an urban setting into a classroom where they confront only one teacher and a few peers. What they experience in such a situation is not true to the way they experience life. The creativity that breaks loose with mass education, using imaginal education methods and tools, is ideal for preparing children for the complexity and fascination of an expanding globe.

### IMAGINAL EDUCATION FOR THE GLOBE

14. For those who look beyond their own classroom toward the possibility of educating the entire globe, imaginal education is the mass education tool and the method of the future.