

AN EXPERIMENT IN THE EDUCATING OF THE IMAGINATION OF MODERN YOUTH

The foundation document for continuing research and experimentation conducted by The Ecumenical Institute: Phoenix on behalf of the entire Church.

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Research initiated in the spring of 1963

by

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A PROJECT IN THE IMAGINAL EDUCATION OF YOUTH

THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE OF EDUCATION is the keystone in the civilizing adventure. Social explosions vitally affect the educational foundations of a people. The radical shifts in biological research, space exploration and knowledge retrieval are causing a crisis in education. It is obvious that no era has equalled our own in concern for equipping the rising generation quantitatively, and to a lesser degree qualitatively for its responsibility in civilization. But educators almost unanimously report a common frustration. There is a quality in the learning process which is missing.

THE PURPOSE OF IMAGINAL EDUCATION is to answer the desperate need for young people to become full persons, total human beings responsible for society's welfare. Full and constructive participation in civilization requires that the individual understand his significance and his place in life. It requires that his mental image of himself be one of worth in his humanness with all its strengths and weaknesses.

IMAGINAL EDUCATION aims at enabling the student to discover and create images of himself in the real world which will motivate him to free, intelligent, responsible involvement in civilization. Images are the bridges between abstract ideas and the specific deed. Images offer the deep, personal permission to be and to do. They are the guides, forces and critics of our sense of personal integrity and vocational accomplishment. In sum, imaginal education intends to awaken, expand and furbish the image-making capacity in man and thereby to release him into effective participation in society.

A SOCIETY cannot long endure without its people appreciating their genuine humanness as a gift to bestow upon it. Education which does not take this vital factor into account, which does not provide its students with such an essential self-understanding, is in danger of producing agents motivated by self-interest only. Such will not become a fruit of progress, but a thorn in its side. This could well be the most crucial issue of our time.

THE WORLD OF YOUTH

STANDING IN THE MIDST OF OUR TIME is a new creation: the world of youth. It is the home of the emerging adult who is suddenly a fascinating and engaging figure. Though not yet mature, not very wise, he is most serious and quite dissatisfied with things as they are. His new world is not merely an unhappy accident in a certain segment of the population; it is a global phenomenon, self-conscious and powerful. In South Korea it toppled a government. In the United States it initiated almost single-handedly the Negro's revolution for human dignity. In other moods it is capable of unbelievable violence and anti-social action. Whatever its origin, whatever its future, we have on our hands a youth culture, world-wide in scope, cutting across ethnic and geographic lines and social and economic classes. It commands our attention.

YOUTH today is grounded in lucidity. Nothing is more obvious today than the loss of youthful innocence. Tragic as it may sound to the less adventuresome, the truth is that not even the little child is afforded protection from the psychological and social pressures of twentieth century living. The point is that the new world of youth is grounded in lucidity. Whether twelve or twenty, he knows either directly or indirectly the harshness of human reality. Moreover, he has thought about it. It is simply not possible to speak of youth in our day without taking this fact into account. The feeling of invasion which every adult knows before the piercing glance of a teenager bears witness to this awareness.

IT SHOULD THEREFORE surprise no one that he often appears bewildered with everything--codes and values, structures and dreams. He is subject to doubt and left with innocence as a shield. Withdrawal from the realm of commitment becomes a life option for today's adolescent. This form of bewilderment, however, is only one of the prices he pays for his lucidity. He also faces, as a natural consequence of a curiosity turned cynical, the inner turmoil of self-depreciation. He seems hardly sure, despite all he knows, that he can trust himself. This internal tendency toward withdrawal and self-depreciation represents the enormous inner distance which he constantly

travels because of his peculiar quality of consciousness. Unless we see this complexity within his assurance and suspicion, we can hardly appreciate the courage which is required of him.

IN THE SECOND PLACE, youth today is defined by revolt. What is implied in their polarity of rebellion and resignation is a refreshing concern for selfhood. Disruptive as it may be, the emerging adult seems intent upon doing his own reflecting. He intends to work out a sexual identity which is his, without too much attention to time-honored taboos. He is creating his own standards for educational and vocational significance, and he is forming new ethical models accordingly.

BUT THIS REVOLT is costly. He knows enough to be afraid of losing himself, of disintegrating into phoniness. Therefore his standards are high. Every time he lowers his guard, he cannot ignore the fact that something is lost, something priceless and irreplaceable and inwardly he mourns. He thus faces the danger of becoming brittle, insensitive and therefore of defacing the consciousness which maintains him. Just as easily he can succumb to self-pity and lose the quality of revolt which characterizes him.

OTHERS CALL HIM HOSTILE, frustrated, out of touch with the real world. He knows better. For this inner tension, with all its related dangers, also gives him the sense of sight he needs if he is to find his tomorrows.

THIRDLY, youth today is oriented to the future. However threatened we may be by the adolescent's wealth of consciousness and his refusal to submit to the traditions of authority, we should not be astonished by the young adult's insistence upon the value of tomorrow. He lives in a time when institutions are crumbling and the imagination of man is being revitalized.

TO ROMANTICIZE this orientation is however, a serious mistake. Living toward the future is a difficult posture to take before the present demands. Hence, it should not surprise us that the young adult is subject to extremes.

IN CONTRAST to the preceding generation, the emerging adult is not raising the question of meaning merely on the personal, subjective level. Therefore he is not undermined by the haunting recollection that he does not know who he is. His search for identity is turned outward into the realm of causes and commitments. Its orientation is the future. He seems to be saying that he wants to discover himself in action: that is, in the middle of history.

PERHAPS THIS EXPLAINS why he often looks so pitifully alone. His encounter with the future has turned him inside out. Loneliness however is a two-way street. It can be a path into the future, and it may be that the emerging adult is serious about his vision. If he fulfills it, he may discover for us all a new sense of vocation and the possibility of a new and open destiny.

FINALLY, youth today is prejudiced toward action. Anyone who has listened to the throbbing sensuality of today's popular music or watched the lonely but frantic bodies duplicate those rhythms in dance knows the adolescent of our time is neither immobile nor lethargic. Each emerging adult is a highly complex synthesis of explosion and inertia. He explodes in a haste of motion, but even as he does, the force of the action is due in part to a practiced tendency to inertia, and unwillingness to veer from the defined path which channeled him to the present.

YOUTH IN THE URBAN-SUBURBAN COMPLEX

THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE: Chicago's experiment in the education of the imagination with some 500 metropolitan Chicago youth and the continuing experiment with youth in Phoenix by the Ecumenical Institute: Phoenix has yielded a body of data relative to the posture of the inner city youth in relation to the imaginal problems of their suburban counterparts. The common geo-social categories, inner city and suburban, are far too simple but are used here to point to those youth who have withdrawn from school, have little positive home background, and who evidence continued sense

of social alienation as contrasted with those youth who are experiencing relatively stable social context. Thus one group of Negro youth, geographically from the inner city but quite bourgeois in its response could be classified with the outer city youth.

IT HAS BEEN THE POSITION of this project that there is today a culture of youth that cuts across socio-economic and geographical boundaries. This one world of youth includes both the roughest inner city street gang and the most protected suburban youth club. Both inner city and suburban youth were found to possess the qualities of seriousness, underlying openness, anxiety about the future and revolt against unquestioned tradition which characterizes the world of youth today. No fundamental distinction was discovered in their concern for significant life and for genuine participation in society. And each of these urban segments was consciously or unconsciously reaching after the self-pictures that would enable such a life. In the midst of this overarching solidarity, however, variations of crucial import were observed, and these differences have much to do with the content and method of imaginal education. Hopefully there description can be of service to all the formal and extra-formal educational and training efforts of our time. The observed distinctions are classified under four concerns which the faculty systematically evaluated the experimental project: the participants' initial predispositions, their prowess in communication and the group process, their responses to the life issues encountered in the curriculum, and evidence of the reconstruction of their imaginal capacities.

SPEAKERS BUREAU--

Faculty members of the Ecumenical Institute are often asked to speak to and conduct programs for groups across the nation. Besides the education of the imagination project for youth described in this issue of IMAGE, study has been undertaken and implemented through courses on family life, theological education of the laity, the Negro crusade for human dignity and other social, cultural and theological issues. Requests for speakers should be addressed to the Institute's Speakers Bureau.

THE EXPERIMENTAL CURRICULUM IN IMAGINAL EDUCATION--YOUTH

The Human Imagination -- The human mind is still reverberating from the shock of its sudden transition from animal to human status. The terrors of the jungle still stalk our dreams and shape our international relations. Yet, the vibrations persist, too, of that dark night in the rain forest when instinct perceived, as in a mirror, its shadowy reflection--and the imagination was born.

THE HISTORY of man from that moment forward is the evolution of an incredibly complex network of mental images; it is the gradual spinning of a fragile, gossamer tracery out of which can emerge a Ninth Symphony or a mathematical formula capable of releasing energy of millions of suns.

POST-MODERN MAN is clear today that his only universe, his only reality is this gigantic web of man ally-fabricated images. There is no reality beyond this. There never has been; there never will be. The only way to change reality is to change this network of images. Indeed, all future evolution on this planet must begin with the deliberate, self-conscious alteration of the mental universe. And this alteration is already underway; from the new image-webs linking mans' continuity with the ancient, glittering races of the earth to the dazzling threads reaching out into the future space of endless, coliding galaxies.

William R. Cozart, For the Corporate Office of the Ecumenical Institute: Chicago

TRANSPOSING THE HUMAN IMAGE

Twentieth Century man must bury in the same grave with the Newtonian world-view the image of man as victim of internal powers and external forces. Man is not one of Newton's innumerable unexamined particles in a causal nexus. He is not the prey of past causes or future fates. He is neither the pawn of an imminent dialectic nor the puppet of some transcendent mind. All facets of the social order must contrive together to root out this notion of man with its debilitating power over the individual and society. On the other hand, society must nurture and bring to full maturity the new image of man, potentiated by the Einsteinian world-view, as a creator of models which bend the direction of events. Man is free to be responsible for his past and future. He is free to participate in forging his own destiny and shaping the course of history. He is free to formulate fresh life-styles and models of society. Such an about-face is especially urgent where the emerging generation is concerned.

THE IMAGE OF SELFHOOD IN POST-MODERNITY

A study of the image of selfhood in the post-modern world, dealing with the problems of authentic self-understanding, decision-making, vocational significance, human relations and genuine participation in civilization. In brief, it endeavors to enable the participants to think through for themselves who they are and how they can involve themselves in the present historical age.

PART ONE: SELF-IMAGES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

WHAT ARE THE REAL LIMITS IN MY ENVIRONMENT?

Man in the twentieth century encounters in a new way the external forces and internal pressures which circumscribe his life and is in the midst of forging new images for dealing with the ever present inevitabilities of human existence.

SESSION I THE GIVEN OF LIMITATIONS AND WHAT IS MY SITUATION?

A consideration of the scope of the environment in which we must live and the nature of the concrete limits upon us.

Art Form: Painting "Guernica" Pablo Picasso

SESSION II THE GIVEN OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND WHO AM I?

A discussion of the meaning of self-consciousness as an aspect of the given of life and its role in relation to our limits.

Art Form: Motion Picture Play "High Noon"

PART TWO: SELF-IMAGES AND HUMAN POTENTIALITY

WHAT ARE THE ACTUAL POSSIBILITIES OF MY LIFE?

Man in the post-modern world senses after possibility in a new manner, relating it to the "image making" capacity of man and the necessity of a "life story" as a prelude to authentic personal identity and significant involvement in life.

SESSION III THE FUTURE AS POSSIBILITY AND WHAT CAN I HOPE FOR?

An examination of the future as the openness for change and what this means relative to the alteration of our life situation.

Art Form: Poetry--Cummings, Crane and

Lawrence

SESSION IV THE FUTURE AS IMAGINATION AND HOW IS CHANGE POSSIBLE?

An inquiry into the significance of intentionality relative to the future and of the manner of man's determination of history.

Art Form: Motion Picture Play "On The Waterfront"

PART THREE: SELF-IMAGES AND HUMAN CREATIVITY

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EXPRESS MY SIGNIFICANCE?

Man in the new age of today is creating a new understanding of vocation as the manifestation and direction of selfhood toward creatively contributing to the total human adventure of civilization toward the well-being of all men.

SESSION V THE PATTERNS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND WHAT MUST I DO?

A study of the nature of responsible engagement in society, the meaning of work and necessity of determining a style of life.

Art Form: Folk Songs--Current selections

SESSION VI THE PATTERNS OF RETREAT AND HOW AM I ESCAPING?

An Analysis of the way in which men today attempt to retreat from the burden of selfhood and participation in civilization.

Art Form: Motion Picture Play "Death of a Salesman"

"The great superiority of our age is in self-knowledge, in becoming conscious of our place and responsibility in the universe. The man of today has the awareness that his choices have repercussions for countless centuries and on countless human beings."

Teilhard de Chardin

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN THE MODERN WORLD

An analysis of the historical upheavals that are altering the direction of civilization, including: the intellectual stance in the modern scientific revolution; the reformulation of styles of life in the urban-technological revolution; and the change in basic human mood in the world-wide secular revolution of our time. This course intends to provide a new grasp of the post modern world.

PART ONE: THE REVOLUTION IN INTELLECTUAL MODEL

WHAT WILL BE THE LIMITS OF OUR WORLD?

The scientific revolution in the twentieth century has created a new model of the universe which has permeated every discipline of cultural understanding, transposing the common sense of mankind and the very meaning of rationality itself.

SESSION I THE NEW MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE and THE EXPANSIVE POSTURE TOWARD LIFE

A practical discussion of the shift from the world view of Newton to that of the Einsteinian era and the import for the image of man.
Art Form: Film Short on the Modern Cosmology
"The Universe"

SESSION II SCIENTIFIC MIND-SET of POST- MODERNITY AND THE ATTITUDE OF PERPETUAL OPENNESS

A practical consideration of the nature of the new methods in science today and how it affects the way in which man lives.
Articles: "The Expanding Universe" Sullivan
"The Common Sense of Science"
Bronowski

PART TWO: THE REVOLUTION IN SOCIAL PATTERN

HOW WILL PEOPLE LIVE IN OUR WORLD?

The urban revolution occurring throughout the world is refashioning our images not only of the individual, but of the family or the immediate neighborhood and finally of the broader social context in which man responds to his world.

"What we need today is not primarily a rebirth of good will, or a return to some ancient order of life; we need a generation of vigorous thinkers, prepared to learn whatever a special skill or knowledge they may find needful--people who can tackle terrible questions and fight through all the misconceptions and confusing traditions that mix up our thoughts and our lives. We must construct the scaffold for our new life, fast, ingeniously and on big lines."

Susanne K. Langer

SESSION III THE NEW PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT AND THE INCLUSIVE STANCE IN LIFE

A practical analysis of the merging cosmopolis of our time and of what this means in terms of the way men relate.

Art Form: Film Short on the New Megapolis
"The City of Necessity"

SESSION IV THE COSMOPOLITAN MIND-SET OF POST-MODERNITY AND THE ATTITUDE of UNIVERSAL CONCERN

A practical study of the replacement of the rural mind-set by the urban mentality and how this alters individual existence.

Articles: "Cultural Function of the World
City" Mumford
"The Metropolis" Simmel

PART THREE: THE REVOLUTION IN INTERIOR MOOD

WHY WILL PEOPLE LIVE IN OUR WORLD?

The revolution in the interior life of the man of the post-modern world has enabled him to experience new dimensions of humanness and has forced him to fresh awareness of the symbols and rites by which his intentions become history.

SESSION V THE NEW MODE Of HUMANNESS And The INTENTIONAL STYLE Of LIFE

A practical examination of the manner in which men today experience the depth dimension and the consequences for life patterns.

Art Form: Film Short on the Contemporary
Life Style

"Asterisk"

SESSION VI THE MISSIONAL MIND-SET Of POST- MODERNITY And The ATTITUDE Of UNLIMITED WONDERMENT

An inquiry into the role of symbols in the modern world and the meaning of man as a symbol making animal.

Articles: "Some Functions of Symbol" Sebban
"The Significance of Symbols" Rollo May

SOME METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT than the content in motivational education are the teaching procedures and methodological assumptions. The meaning of personal, existential images of humanness for creative living in society has been discussed in an earlier section of this document. That images perform a key and pivotal role at the core of one's being is the first of five interwoven presuppositions underlying the pedagogical methodology of the project. The other four assumptions to be clarified involve the utility of art forms, the function of serious conversation, the place of direct tututorial techniques and the significance of ritual.

IN REGARD to the second presupposition, the utility of art forms, the teaching methods of the project are grounded in the assumption that art is not only the creature of the imagination but also its midwife. In the final analysis no one can or does live without it. Art is deeply human. The art of a people is the means whereby old and inadequate common images are challenged. It is the catalyst through which fresh, useful pictures of existence are forged pictures which enable one to be present to, to comprehend and to act out his deepest experience.

ART ITSELF, however, is in need of an ally in fulfilling this function. This brings us to our third presupposition: the function of serious conversation. In give-and-take discourse, the manner in which the art object addresses the individual is clarified, empowered and expanded. Serious conversation about the way art is not about the art object as such, but about the way it addresses us as persons. And in the triologue between the art piece and the self, between the object and the other, and between the self and the other, about how art speaks to each, further self-awareness and knowledge emerges and to the self comes still more clarity and enlargement.

THE ROLE OF THE TUTOR or discussion leader is therefore a major methodological consideration. In the art form discussion, the leader's concern is to tap the imaginal powers of the particular group and the individuals within it. He insists that

the participants listen not only to each other, but also to themselves. The participants in the course development confidence in their ability to speak and share their insights.

THE PLACE OF RITUAL

Finally, the employment of ritual is a studied method interwoven with the other techniques employed. Man in the 20th century is discovering anew and at unprecedented depths that he is a symbol-making animal. This is to say that the use of symbol is quite a natural and essential part of humanness. Only through the mediation of symbols is he able to self-consciously grasp himself in relation to the other-than-the-self. Rites are dramatic symbols. In ritual, man dramatizes the way he understands himself to be. The symbolic activity, therefore, is an indispensable ally in the enterprise of motivational education. Indeed, the liturgies employed quite obviously enable them to recollect and stand to attention before the images which transport their life meanings. The class begins ritualistically setting the mood for the work of the evening, dramatizing the fact that something significant is at hand and confronting both group and individual with that dimension of self understanding appropriate to the present moment in the course. The rites differ from week to week: one involves bodily movement in unison like the rhythmic snapping of the fingers borrowed from the musical "West Side Story". Another is a choral reading of a popular comic strip such as "Peanuts". Following the rite, there is a brief introductory statement by the instructor, re-establishing an inclusive picture of the course, reviewing the previous session and indicating the area and direction of the present study.

BACKGROUND OF THE COURSE BEING OFFERED BY THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE: PHOENIX

THE FUNDAMENTAL NEED of post-modern youth is for self images relevant to the actual world in which he lives and adequate to organize meaningfully his personal and communal experience so that he can appropriate a sense of significance in involving him-

self in the human drama of civilization. In short, it is the need for imaginal education.

THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE of Chicago, in response to this need and with the encouragement of a pioneering youth development organization, launched an experimental project in imaginal education for the youth of greater Chicago in the spring of 1963. The project involved over 500 participants in some twenty-eight schools and was designed to include a cross-section of youth representing the distinctive segment of metropolitan Chicago.

The experimental curriculum used in the project was developed over a period of years in working with youth. It is not a structured body of knowledge to be transmitted. It works against all suffocating dogmatism and every confining parochialism. It is concerned with globality, with openness and with engagement. Open-ended discussion is not only the form but the very substance of motivational learning. The concern is not, in the first instance, what the student thinks but rather that he does think, that he does his own thinking and that he does it imaginatively or creatively. The curriculum intends to expand the concept of environment, to release from the past and open toward the future and, finally, to elicit a sense of appreciation of living and of vocation to society.

ONGOING RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

The faculty of the Ecumenical Institute: Phoenix in their teaching of both of the basic courses sees the imperative of keeping abreast of the cultural wisdom of our time and especially in the areas of psychology, sociology and education. Related to this is the demand to keep in touch with the growing edge in the youth culture. The courses reflect any basic shifts each time they are offered. The nature of the courses requires ongoing research and openness to truth wherever it shows itself. The curriculum being organized into two intimately related courses -- one concerned with the self in its movement toward the world and the other with the impingement of

the world upon the self -- is experimental in its affirmation that these two approaches cannot be separated.

A FACULTY THAT IS TRAINED AND MOBILE

A group of people who have immersed themselves in the cultural and religious revolutions of our time, representing a variety of occupations and social-economic background, make up the faculty for the courses. They have a disciplined study life in relation to the content and methodology of the course and the youth culture of today. They see the imaginal education of youth as a significant task and order their time so the course can be taken anywhere in the Phoenix region.

EVALUATIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROJECT

"Just a note to express my appreciation for the work that you and your associates did in bringing the "Imaginal Education" course to the Jail. It proves to be an effective method for stimulating discussion among the inmates of the class. I plan to experiment further with this kind of group process within the limits of correctional institutions, for this is the kind of creative work so necessary in correctional practice."

County Jail Chaplain

"Many people of broadly varying interests have observed the Ecumenical Institute's project in imaginal education for youth: sociologists, teachers, clergymen, social workers, and others with less professional concerns. Their observations from a variety of perspectives are reflected in the following excerpts:

An experimental (portion) of the program was to use the creative arts as a springboard for trainee discussions and a building block in developing an awareness of our trainees in themselves, the world, and their culture. We feel that the methods and techniques for motivating our trainees was excellent. It was apparent

that our trainees readily understood the symbolic realities covered. I think that it makes an important contribution in orienting our trainees to the mainstream of adult life and developing their critical self-expression."

Manpower Training Act Staff Member

"Not only are you helping to work with youth that need attention, but, perhaps in the long run more important, you are demonstrating competence in the use of a fresh approach that I would like to see become more widespread."

Social Psychologist
University Research Project

STAGING

THE SCENE is one of the schools organized by the Ecumenical Institute: Phoenix to carry out its experimental project in the imaginal education of youth.

One of the weekly evening sessions, numbering six or eight for a single course, is about to begin. Each week the group will be together for an hour to an hour and a half in this community center, YMCA, church, clubhouse, county detention home or other facility located in the area from which the students are recruited. Whether in this locale or another, the procedures in each school are largely identical.

The format of each session is systematically the same. The beginning ritual is followed by a carefully selected contemporary art piece: a painting, a cartoon, selections of poetry, a variety of folk songs, a motion picture.

The directed conversation that follows intends to sharpen the capacity of each student really to see what he sees, to trust his own impressions as significant and to develop confidence in verbalizing in the presence of others. Thirty minutes to an hour have elapsed.

Sometimes a break with light refreshments is inserted at this point while informal but purposeful conversation is encouraged. The pause relieves pressures and directs attention to everyday life situations in preparation for the focal part of the

evenings now to begin.

In brief, this is a discussion centering upon the manner in which the art form has addressed the student personally, what it said to him about the way life is, about his own life. The aim is to prompt in him the kind of involved detachment that enables him to look afresh at issues and problems in both his individual life and in the world. The leader presses the group toward critical reflection upon their own sights: to become aware of their own operating pictures and to evaluate these over against one another while determining what fresh pictures have been introduced or have become possible for them.

The session closes with a lecturette by the teacher which first recapitulates the insights of the evening and draws them together in an intelligible pattern. Secondly, it places the youth in the historic setting of the post-modern world.

Finally, it sets the question of the forthcoming week and relates it to their present insights. The evening closes with a ritual to indicate that time has passed, confronting each student with the necessity of making a decision about the significance of that time for his own life.

The format of the sessions is essentially the same, whether the course is staged on the weekend, six evening sessions during a single week, or 6 consecutive weeks.

This course is available to interested groups. For details on the staging plan, available dates or further information contact the Ecumenical Institute: Phoenix, Hotel Adams, Room 262.