Neohumanist education
A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS
Dedication
To the teachers and staff of the Ananda Marga River School, Maleny, Queensland. Your professionalism, commitment and enthusiasm are a continuing source of inspiration to me.

Note
Thanks are due to Sue Attrill for contributing the curriculum tables (at the end of Appendix 1) and helping the author keep his target audience in mind, namely, teachers in Neohumanist schools. Also to Wendy Oakley for the elegant layout. This introduction to Neohumanist education will be revised from time to time.
Check if you have the latest edition by contacting:
michaeltowsey@gmail.com
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Preface

This introduction to the educational philosophy of Neohumanist schools focuses on six themes that are unifying concepts through the entirety of Sarkar’s philosophy, not just his discourses on Neohumanism. These six themes correspond to six educational objectives or qualities that Neohumanist schools endeavour to cultivate in their children: loving hearts, subtle minds, service-mindedness, virtuous character, rationality and a harmony of one’s inner and outer worlds.

The material is presented in the form of a handbook for teachers at Neohumanist schools. However, much of the content may also be of interest to anyone wanting a better understanding of what Neohumanist schools are about. Of course, there are many ways to introduce Neohumanism and the education system derived from it. I am by training a biologist and hence my interest in a biological perspective. Biology is not everything, but it does contribute something helpful to our understanding of Neohumanism and learning!

Every Neohumanist school is different – they do not follow a formula. Not all the ideas discussed here will be reflected in every Neohumanist school. Local culture and of course the principal and teachers imprint their character on a school. If this were not so, the school would not be a vibrant place to learn! As a teacher in a Neohumanist school, you can think of yourself as a researcher. You are constantly experimenting – constantly exploring the frontiers of what Neohumanism is about. A Neohumanist school is an exciting place to teach!

Michael Towsey
Introducing a Neohumanist school
A Neohumanist school

The Ananda Marga River School is an independent, co-educational primary school and early childhood centre. It is located on the outskirts of Maleny in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia.

When you first visit the River School, you discover a beautiful campus set in sub-tropical bush. A permanent creek flows along one side, with swimming holes much frequented in summer. The school grounds contain vegetable gardens and fruit trees.

In other respects, the school is typical. It teaches the standard Australian curriculum, it satisfies, if not exceeds, all the statutory certification requirements and on that basis, receives State and Commonwealth funding. It is one of many independent schools in Australia that offer choice to parents.

Look a little deeper however and you discover that it is not just the beautiful environment that makes the River School different. Perhaps the vegetarian tuckshop will catch your attention. Or you may be surprised that the students are introduced to meditation and yoga. And you will hear about Neohumanism, the philosophy which motivates the school. What is Neohumanism? Why a vegetarian tuckshop? Why is yoga part of the school curriculum? This introduction attempts to answer these and other questions.
Neohumanist education • 7

A Western education

Education in the Western world is described as humanist and secular. Such schools will likely define their mission as two-fold: to enable children to ‘realise their potential’ and to enable them to contribute something useful to society. Elite schools may in addition allude to the training of future leaders and religious schools will promote the importance of values. Neohumanist schools want no less for their students – but they go further.

*Realising one’s potential* is very much a humanist ideal. A humanist education offers remarkable human beings as role models – consider Einstein and Shakespeare in the West, Buddha and Tagore in the East. But the concept of potential is problematic in the humanist tradition because it is not clearly articulated. In the educational context, realising a child’s potential can be physical (to excel on the sports field), material (to succeed in business) or intellectual (to succeed in the professional or academic worlds). But the secular nature of a Western education typically means that a child’s spiritual development is compromised, because the West has not yet learned to disentangle religion and spirituality.

<< *Realising one’s potential* is very much a humanist ideal…

But the concept of ‘potential’ is problematic in the humanist tradition because it is not clearly articulated. >>
A Neohumanist education

Helping children to realise their spiritual potential is an integral part of the mission of a Neohumanist school. Children are encouraged to develop their ‘internal life’ and to recognise their ‘interconnectedness of being’ with the natural world and planet Earth. The inner and outer life of humans is often linked to mind and body respectively.¹ However in Neohumanist education, the distinction is subtler. One’s inner life is concerned with wisdom and the capacity to love selflessly. External life, on the other hand, is concerned with the accumulation of the objective knowledge required to live in the world, which includes both sensory/motor and social skills, as well as academic knowledge.

Neohumanism takes the inner spirit of humanism (love of humanity) and expands it to also embrace plants, animals and indeed the entire universe. Neohumanism is also secular in the sense that spirituality can be embraced by everyone, regardless of religion.

Neohumanism recognises diversity but also emphasises the interconnectedness of all things. A Neohumanist education seeks to cultivate in children their already innate capacity for love and compassion. In the words of Shrii Prabat Ranjan Sarkar who first propounded the philosophy and who founded a global network of Neohumanist schools:

When the love of the human heart extends its embrace to the entire living and non-living worlds, this is Neohumanism.

The goal of a Neohumanist education is to expand gradually a student’s sense of community: from self, to family, locality, country, humanity, life on earth and ultimately the entire universe. A Neohumanist education is also an ‘education for the whole child’, that is, for the physical, mental and spiritual child. It is about doing (activity in the world), knowing (learning) and being (entering one’s inner world). A successful education leads to a deep desire for further learning which then continues throughout life. However, there is abundant evidence that the kindergarten and primary school years are supremely important because they lay foundations for the rest of one’s life.

The Ananda Marga River School highlights six themes that define the uniqueness of a Neohumanist education. Each theme corresponds to a character trait that Neohumanist schools endeavour to cultivate within
their students. The verb to cultivate is used deliberately – it means to nurture from seed all the way through to adult life. Education does not stop when one leaves school. It is a life-long endeavour. What Neohumanist schools do is plant seeds and care for the seedlings.

The six themes are concerned with heart, mind, community, values, rationality and harmony of the inner and outer worlds.

1. **Expansion of heart**
   A Neohumanist education is spiritually-based. The personal quality that a Neohumanist school wishes to cultivate in each of its students is a ‘loving heart’. Spirituality is not something extra in life, it sits at the heart of one’s life. The capacity to love selflessly (‘devotional sentiment’ in Sarkar’s words) is the “greatest treasure of humanity”.

   In the classroom, a child’s feelings of love can be kindled through song, stories, drama and games. Parents are encouraged to participate in ‘morning circle’, where they join children and staff in growing the school community.

2. **Expansion of mind**
   In Sarkar’s words, “Education is that which liberates”. That is, education removes the self-doubts, fears and ignorance that can frustrate a child’s desire to grow. Expansion of mind leads to personal qualities such as subtlety, sensitivity, intuition, mental discipline and ultimately a deep inner stillness. These qualities are essential if a child is to realise his/her potential.

3. **Expansion of community**
   A Neohumanist education is service-based. Children are encouraged to become service-minded. They come to understand that a ‘community’ is a group of people who help one another – even make sacrifices for one another. As children grow, their community grows from local to global, and likewise, their ability to reach out and help others also grows.

4. **Virtue**
   A Neohumanist education is values-based. Character building (that is, acquiring mental virtues such as kindness, compassion and moral courage) is a key classroom endeavour. All virtues are life-affirming. They lead to both inner peace of mind and successful human relationships.

5. **Rationality**
   A Neohumanist education cultivates rational discrimination. Rationality is not just about the logic of calculation. Rather, it is about logic in the service of collective wellbeing. Children are encouraged to reflect on the many social and cultural influences to which they are exposed. The qualities of wisdom and discrimination (the ability to distinguish between that which gives long-term peace of mind versus short-term pleasure) are not possible without rationality.
6 Harmony of one’s inner and outer worlds

A Neohumanist education is an education for life. Ecology tells us that life is a whole composed of many parts and that the parts must work in balance and cooperation. Students learn that the principles of ecology apply both internally (maintaining a well-adjusted mind) and externally (living in balance with nature). Success in life requires a balance between all the dimensions of life, internal-external, physical-mental-spiritual, individual-social.

From the Neohumanist point of view, the first three themes, Expansion of heart, mind and community represent innate human longings. They are latent in all children and define what it is to be human. Collectively, they give a meaning and purpose to life. By contrast the last three themes, Virtue, Rationality and Harmony of one’s inner and outer worlds, are not innate – rather they are foundation skills that must be learned. Collectively they breathe vitality into a child’s life. To find both purpose and vitality in life is the first step to realising one’s potential, and to leading a fulfilled life. This is the desired outcome of a Neohumanist education.

<< The secular nature of a Western education typically means that a child’s spiritual development is compromised, because the West has not yet learned to disentangle religion and spirituality. >>
Neohumanism – an historical perspective

Neohumanism is the philosophy that motivates educational practice at schools like the River School. It was introduced in 1982 by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the founder of Ananda Marga, in a series of discourses, which were later compiled into a book titled *The Liberation of Intellect – Neohumanism*.

Neohumanism can be appreciated as a synthesis of two great civilising traditions, European humanism and Asian spirituality. The prefix *neo-* says Sarkar, implies humanism “newly explained”. Sarkar did not initially introduce Neohumanism as a philosophy of education. However, when he subsequently founded Gurukul, the educational institution which oversees Ananda Marga schools, he described its mission as “to serve humanity with Neohumanist spirit and to acquire knowledge for that purpose”. And indeed, the Neohumanist themes of personal, intellectual and social liberation are an excellent starting point for a philosophy of education.

Humanism is an idea that came to prominence during the European Renaissance, but whose lineage extends back to ancient Greece. The Greek philosopher Protagoras offered a concise definition of humanism which still stands – it is the belief that:

*Man is the measure of all things.*

This revolutionary idea has continued to generate controversy through the centuries. It says that right and wrong are not to be determined by an absolute power (in the guise of popes and monarchs) beyond the reach of human experience. Not surprisingly there has been an uneasy tension between humanism and religion over the centuries, but a statement by Pope Francis is clearly humanist:

*To educate in solidarity therefore means to educate ourselves in humanity: to build a society that is truly human means to put the person and his or her dignity at the centre, always, and never to sell him out to the logic of profit.*

Some historians consider the defining theme of European history to be its struggle to establish humanism as a social and political reality. And some go so far as to identify the constitutions arising out of the American and French revolutions as the crowning achievement of humanism because finally the power of popes, priests, monarchs and aristocrats was subordinated to the power of the ‘people’. If we accept this overarching view of European history, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that somewhere in the 20th century, humanism badly lost its way.
From the vantage point of the 21st century, humanism has two clear defects. First, if humans are the measure of all things, then where do plants and animals fit into the scheme of things? Second, what is the future of humanity, if our only measure of success is past and present human societies?

The future does not look promising given the present. This is where the great civilising tradition of Asian spirituality makes two contributions. First, it offers a ‘human story’ in which both the past (the struggle to establish humanism) and the future (the aspiration to achieve human potential) acquire a deeper spiritual meaning. And second, it also offers practical insights into how human potential can be best developed.

**KEY IDEAS**

- Neohumanism is the synthesis of two great civilizing influences in the history of ideas, European humanism and Asian spirituality.

- A concise definition of humanism: the belief that humanity is the measure of all things.

- Humanism has two shortcomings. If ‘humanity is the measure of all things’ then what about plants and animals? And what is it that humans are to become if we only have past and present human societies to inform us?

- Neohumanism extends the embrace of humanism to include the plant and animal worlds.

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

- Is globalisation about establishing a democratic, secular and humanist society on a global scale?

- What features make a ‘modern’ Western education humanist and what features make it secular? Consider the advantages and disadvantages of a humanist, secular education.

- The rapid pace of globalisation implies a ‘global education’. What should a ‘global’ education look like? Should it be humanist and secular? Is a global education even desirable? For thoughts on these questions, read Bussey.
Theme 1: Expansion of heart

Sentiment
Group sentiments
Expanding the circle of one's embrace
Devotional Sentiment
The first theme of a Neohumanist education concerns the internal life of humans which in colloquial language we refer to as the realm of the ‘heart’. A Neohumanist education endeavours “to cultivate loving hearts”. Here a loving heart is a metaphor for a rich and generous inner life.

A loving heart extends its embrace beyond immediate family, friends and school, to include the great diversity of people who live on planet Earth, and further, to include the fascinating variety of animals and plants that also live on Earth. Their well-being is our well-being. A loving heart expresses wonderment when introduced to the innumerable stars and galaxies that fill the universe – so many possibilities for interesting relationships with life on distant planets!

Our experience of love is developmental. Children first experience it within the family circle but later discover love of a life-partner, love of country and so on. In this chapter, we explore various manifestations of love which are important in our individual and collective lives. We begin with a central theme in the Neohumanist discourses - the pivotal role played by sentiment in the life of human beings.

Sentiment

Here is a simple definition, but one having many ramifications:

A sentiment is an idea coloured by emotion.⁴

An emotion is affective, even visceral. An idea is cognitive, usually abstract. And a sentiment is an association of the two. That is, sentiments are learned, the product of culture and schooling. The neural circuitry that underlies sentiments includes the neocortex (cognitive), the limbic system (emotional) and the endocrine glands (physiological). It follows that human sentimental life is developmental – as the neural networks in a child’s brain are shaped by accumulating life experience, the instincts of the infant are gradually modulated by ideas in the neocortex to become sentiments.

According to contemporary neuroscience, ideas reside in the cortex as connected networks of neurons. And there is abundant evidence that reasoning and decision-making, based on manipulation of those ideas, are strongly correlated with activity in the pre-frontal cortex.
It is commonly assumed that emotion and reason are at odds; that without emotions a person can make better decisions, that is, more rational decisions. Therefore, it has come as a great surprise in recent years to discover that, rather than being antagonistic faculties, reasoning and emotion are inextricably linked in the brain. All decision making involves neural activity in the emotional parts of the brain, even when those decisions are not apparently emotionally or morally charged. An important goal of a Neohumanist education is to build a healthy working relationship between emotion and reason.

**Relationships and belonging**

From an evolutionary point of view, *Homo sapiens* is a social rather than a solitary species. In fact, “We were social before we were human”. Our survival has depended on close cooperation to find food and ward off predators. Given the importance of group cohesion for survival, it is not surprising that many emotions arise only in the context of relationships between people.

Positive examples are love, trust, affection and compassion which contribute to warm feelings of belonging. Negative examples include envy, disapproval, distrust – feelings which can arise instinctively on meeting people from a different group. And these emotions become attached to ideas (beliefs concerning self and other) thereby creating sentiments about one’s own group versus other groups.

We now consider in more detail those sentiments concerned with belonging to a community or group. The warm feelings of belonging (or conversely, the deprivation of such feelings) exert immense influence on our individual and collective lives.

A community is defined by the relationships between its members, the group sentiment. The quality of the relationships between people is so important to group function that it is now considered to be a measurable economic resource known as social capital. Social capital is defined as the “empathy and sympathy” in human relationships and the “shared attitudes and goals” of a community, and again, as the “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”. In other words, social capital is embedded in the ideas and emotions (the sentiments) that constitute human relationships and in the social, educational and cultural institutions which mould those relationships. The name social capital has an obvious economic bias (distasteful to some) but it appears to be firmly entrenched, so we use it here.
An important emotion in determining the quality of human relationships is trust. Consequently, attempts to measure social capital focus on measures of (average) trust.

**SOCIAL CAPITAL**

The capacity to trust varies greatly from person to person and indeed from country to country. Cultural environment has a lot to do with this. In one study which compared measures of social capital in various countries around the world, aggregate (average) ‘trustworthiness’ ranged from a low 3% in Brazil to 65% in Norway. In a ranking of some 42 countries, Australia came in eighth position, just ahead of India, Switzerland and the USA.

Another study has shown that income inequality reduces social capital which in turn leads to higher rates of mortality. In other words, income inequality occurs at the expense of social capital; and declining social capital (that is, declining trust and civic participation) has a deleterious effect on public health.
within a community and the civic involvement of its members. Trust is measured by asking questions about how safe a person feels in their local community and in their dealings with business and government agencies. Civic engagement is measured by counting the number of church groups, unions, sports clubs, school activities, clubs and societies to which a person belongs. Studies over the past two decades indicate that government policies which promote education, communication technologies and wealth equality help to increase levels of trust in a community and thereby promote social capital and social well-being. In ordinary language, these are policies that ‘build community’.

KEY IDEAS

- A sentiment is an idea coloured by an emotion.
- A community is defined by the relationships between its members, that is, the sentiments of belonging, the shared ideas and emotions that bind the community together.
- In economics and sociology, such sentiments are collectively referred to as social capital. In those disciplines, social capital is defined as the trust and empathy between members of a community.
- Social capital is measured by surveying people about their feelings of trust and safety, and about their civic involvement.
- Social capital is culturally and economically important because it encourages cooperation and productive activity between people who do not necessarily know each other well.
- Increased levels of social capital are correlated with increased levels of education.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How many community groups do you participate in? Has your involvement increased or declined over the last decade? Why might this be?
- On a scale of one-to-ten, how do you rate your feelings of trust about the community in which you live? The country in which you live? Is there a difference?
Group sentiments

Sociologist Robert Putnam recognizes different kinds of social capital just as there are different kinds of physical and economic capital. He makes an important distinction between inclusive and exclusive social connections. Ethnic organizations, sectarian church groups and fashionable country clubs tend to be exclusive even while their internal cohesion is strong. Civil rights groups, youth service groups and charitable organizations tend to be inclusive.

It is here that Sarkar’s analysis of sentiments becomes important because it is not just the emotional connections, but the ideas associated with them, that define the dynamics of a group. Sarkar begins his Neohumanist discourses by distinguishing three important categories of group sentiment: geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment and human sentiment or humanism.

Geo-sentiment

Geo-sentiment “grows out of love for the indigenous soil of a country”. It spans the range from tribal loyalties to nationalist fervour. For thousands of years, geo-sentiments have motivated wars over border disputes and access to resources. In the present day, they continue to dominate international politics and sport but they also infiltrate religious and economic life. The faithful are urged to make pilgrimages to holy places such as Varanasi, Mecca and Rome. A capital city wants the tallest building in the world regardless of the cost. However, some geo-sentiments serve a positive purpose, for example ‘buy local’ campaigns which attempt to strengthen a local economy by limiting the drainage of wealth to major centres.

Socio-sentiment

Socio-sentiments are group sentiments unconstrained by ‘place’ or geographical boundary. The four major categories of socio-sentiment in today’s world are associated with religion (people in my religion are saved, others are condemned), class (those who generate
economic wealth deserve the largest rewards), race (white races conquered the world because they are superior) and gender (men are made in the likeness of God). Socio-sentiments often embrace larger communities than geo-sentiments, but they are far more dangerous because they encourage deeply-entrenched superiority complexes that remain invisible to those gripped by them.

**Human sentiment**

Sarkar describes humanism as socio-sentiment extended to its maximum extent. Recall the suggestion that European history from the ancient Greeks to the present-day has been the struggle to establish humanism. But for the ancient Greeks, the humanist embrace did not extend to slaves or to women. In 18th century England, it did not extend to women or colonies. The struggle of European history was not to establish a fixed, ideal ‘Humanism’ but rather to transcend the suffocating boundaries of contemporary socio-sentiments and thereby expand the circle of those included within the humanist embrace.

**Universalism**

The logic of the above three sentiments implies the existence of a fourth sentiment from which no person, animal or plant is excluded – *universalism*. By definition, universalism is not about groups because nothing is excluded. Neohumanism is a philosophy of universal sentiments:

“... when the underlying spirit of humanism is extended to everything, animate and inanimate, in this universe – I have designated this as Neohumanism. This Neohumanism will elevate humanism to universalism, the cult of love for all created beings of this universe.”

Neohumanism also contains other important ideas, for example, that the Cosmos is conscious and that humanity is not isolated:

“Neohumanism ... takes the universal aspiration of Humanism, to reach beyond the limitation of humanity and to strive for unity at the social level, and suggests a universalism that includes all animate and inanimate existence. Humanity is thus part of a great whole and our job is to increase the radius of our heart’s love... Furthermore, the Cosmos, its matter and the organic forms that populate it, are all taken to be conscious, thus human isolation is broken down. We are never alone, as Sarkar insists. Rather we are bound together in an infinite network of relationships that span material, intellectual and spiritual realities.”

Neohumanism is an entirely optimistic philosophy. Happiness is a human birth right – and it is achievable.
KEY IDEAS

• Sentiments of belonging to a group are complex assemblages of ideas and emotions about those within the group and those outside the group.

• Community sentiments can be inclusive or exclusive. That is, the community sentiments towards outsiders can be positive or negative.

• Four important categories of community sentiment are geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment, humanis sentiment and universalism.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• Describe two geo-sentiments that you acquired as a child? How did you acquire them? How did they feel?

• The United Nations presents a curious dilemma. National sentiments do not, by definition, extend beyond a national boundary. Does this imply an inherent contradiction in the possibility of a ‘United Nations’?

• Soccer in the UK and Australian Rules in Australia have been described as ‘tribal’ sports. What does ‘tribal’ mean in this context? ‘Tribal’ is not normally used to describe tennis or cricket. What is the difference?

• Can you identify another socio-sentiment apart from the four mentioned in the text?

• Does humanist sentiment play an important role in the political, social and cultural life of your local community? What about at the State, National and Global levels?

• Do you think the sentiment of universalism is articulated in any of the world’s organisations? Perhaps Medecin Sans Frontieres?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Ask students to look in newspapers/magazines and identify the different sentiments used by people in the news. (e.g. America First)
Expanding the circle of one’s embrace

The negotiation of belonging, who is and isn’t in a group, begins in the school playground. Making such issues conscious, giving children the vocabulary to identify the emotions and ideas that constitute group sentiments, is an essential part of preparing them for adult life. Furthermore, if teachers have to mediate in playground struggles, how they do so sets an example that will be learned.

The primary school years are the most important for acquiring group sentiments. By the time they leave primary school, students will have learnt the major sentiments at play in the adult world. Easiest to learn (consciously or unconsciously) are those associated with the visible differences of race and gender. The slowest to be learned are those associated with class, because the symbols of status and wealth are not always obvious.

Geo- and socio-sentiments once learned are difficult to unlearn. A deep and pervasive “rewiring” of the brain is required. Feelings of superiority easily become part of an identity which one fiercely protects. Sarkar compares the pain of ‘unlearning’ a socio-sentiment to that of extracting a barbed-thorn. Destructive fighting between religious sects, spreading like a global contagion in the 21st century, illustrates the truth of this.

A dilemma

We are faced with a dilemma. On the one side, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs tells us that healthy children require a sense of belonging. But belonging to the ‘universe’ is too big and too abstract a concept to satisfy a child’s need for belonging. Furthermore, from an objective point of view, group sentiment promotes group effectiveness, something that cannot be ignored in the hard world of survival. But group sentiments differentiate those who belong from those who do not. So how is it possible to have any practical sense of community without having an inside and an outside, us and them, sentiments that are tearing humanity apart in the 21st Century?

A first step to resolve this dilemma is to recognise that we all belong to multiple communities, the local street, suburb, State, country and the world. As they develop, children are introduced to larger and larger communities. Before a negative sentiment is allowed to define the bounds of a community, the child can be introduced to a larger community which embraces people who were previously on the ‘outside’. In other words, teachers encourage students, step by step, to expand their community of...
embrace. Just as European history is a story of struggle to expand the humanist embrace, so a child’s development is a kind of recapitulation — the ongoing effort to expand his/her community of embrace. It is important to note that embracing a larger community does not mean abandoning one’s local community, any more than loving one person means not loving others. It is simply that we love in different ways depending on context.

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF ONE’S EMBRACE

The concept of expanding the circle of one’s embrace has a history. The Australian moral philosopher, Peter Singer, draws on the idea as a title for his book, “The Expanding Circle”. And he finds reference to it even in the 19th Century. For example:

“... At one time, the benevolent affections embrace merely the family. Soon the circle expanding includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity, and finally, its influence is felt in the dealings of man with the animal world.”

Lecky, 1876

Expanding the circle of one’s embrace at school

As Neohumanist teachers guide their students through a journey of intellectual and emotional expansion, there are forces to both help and hinder. One hindrance is that the infant brain is already wired to detect difference which, in the biological world, means danger with its associated feelings of caution and mistrust. Thus, it is easy for children to attach negative emotions to physical, cultural, psychological and religious differences from their norm. In short, the fear instinct is a significant factor that children and teachers must negotiate.
Another hindrance: geo- and socio-sentiments are difficult to counter because the emotions which colour them are deeply satisfying and, depending on the associated idea, essential for well-being. Yet, the teacher does not wish to let a limited sentiment go unchallenged because one day it will likely be expressed destructively – for example, violence in the sports stadium.

Fortunately, there are many factors to assist the teacher. First, proximity breaks down barriers, for example, mixing children of different race, religion, culture, class in the playground. Second, it is not difficult for a child to learn the appropriate context for sentiments. He/she quickly learns that barracking for the Arsenal players and abusing the Chelsea players in an English side is not appropriate at the World Cup! Third, once a person recognises the stunting effect of a limited sentiment on their lives, it becomes intolerable. This is a fundamental feature of human psychology: “... the innermost desire of people is to expand themselves maximally in all directions”. 19

**KEY IDEAS**

- Geo and socio-sentiments, once learned, are very difficult to unlearn.
- A Neohumanist education helps students to expand the circle of their embrace, that is, to increase the radius of their sentimental embrace before negative sentiments about “those on the outside” become deeply embedded.
- Fear is a major obstacle to expanding the circle of one’s embrace.
- Embracing a larger community does not mean abandoning one’s local community. We love in different ways depending on context.
- Children and adults alike must learn the appropriate contexts for expressing different sentiments of belonging.

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

- Have you ever felt the discomfort of embracing a group of people you would not normally mix with?
- Have you ever felt the pain of unlearning a prejudice?
- Have you been pleasurably surprised when meeting a group of new people?
IN THE CLASSROOM

- What programs do you implement in your classroom to help students expand the circle of their embrace? E.g. buddy programs in the classroom for new students
- Group mix-ups – ask students to work with people they do not know.
- Teach explicit language for getting to know someone.
- Role playing drama activities to explore being inside and outside a group.

Devotional sentiment

Up to now, the sentiments we have examined are more or less familiar in family, social and political life. Most children come to understand that selfishness is a vice and inclusivity is a virtue. Furthermore, we have dissected these sentiments intellectually using the language of biology, psychology and sociology. But now we put science aside because, if we ask the question, from where comes the human capacity to love selflessly, then we must enter the inner-most world of the human heart, beyond the reach of science.

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched.
They must be felt within the heart.

— Helen Keller

In the language of yoga, the human capacity for selfless love is referred to as devotional sentiment. Given encouragement and opportunity, devotional sentiment flows like spring water from deep inside every person. It is a natural expression of the human heart and the ultimate source of all that is beautiful about human beings.

Devotional sentiment can be difficult to talk about in the school context because its source is internal and if it appears in a Western education then it is likely identified with religion. But there is no equivalent of ‘religious instruction’ for devotional sentiment. It cannot be a subject in the curriculum and yet teachers must be conscious of its place in pedagogical practice. Note that we use the term devotional sentiment in its broadest sense to include a spectrum of sentiments such as love, trust, compassion, affection, kindness and appreciation in all their shades. Devotional sentiment can also manifest as devotion to selfless duty and to a noble calling, for example to teaching or to nursing. However, the word love is often used in the same way, so the words devotion and love will be used interchangeably. The supreme quality of devotional sentiment in all its manifestations is that it breaks down barriers between people.
Every Neohumanist School must find its vocabulary and culture to assist children to discover their capacity for selfless love. Devotional sentiments are not complicated – they can (and should) appeal to adults and children alike. Here is a ‘simple’ thought from a children’s story by Leo Buscaglia, previously professor of Special Education at University of Southern California, and who came to be known as “Doctor Love”:

Love is always bestowed as a gift – freely, willingly and without expectation.
We don’t love to be loved; we love to love.

**Devotion as a humanist expression**

In the West, devotional sentiment found expression in Christian traditions particularly through the humanitarian work of the churches in an age when life could be brutal. In the words of St Francis de Sales (1567-1622):

> In short, devotion is simply that spiritual agility and vivacity by which charity works in us or by aid of which we do good works quickly and lovingly.

Note that devotion is the inner impulse, not the charitable act itself.

The second theme of a Neohumanist education is expansion of mind. Expansion of mind is a fundamental human drive. Devotional sentiment facilitates expansion of mind because it accepts no narrowness, no restraint on the expansion of life. The tremendous mental expansion required to embrace universalism gets its inner motivation from devotional sentiment.

> True love knows no bound.

Devotional sentiment is a language beyond religion. It crosses all cultural boundaries. The poetry of the 13th Century Islamic scholar and mystic, Rumi (Persia, 1210? – 1273, said to be the “best selling poet” in the United States), speaks the same language as the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and St Francis.

**Devotion as a way of being in the world**

It is not easy to extend one’s affection to something which is dead. A child’s experience of their world becomes more special if they feel it to be conscious and alive. This experience is not just a contrivance for children. A small, but growing group of scientists are challenging the materialist dogma of a dead universe sliding inexorably to its thermal death. At the risk of reputation and ridicule, they are daring to express a new understanding. For example, here is evolutionary biologist, Elisabet Sahtouris:

> As we recognize the universe to be conscious, intelligent, alive, and all of us co-creators, what is our role? Are we not the creative edge of God? We are the universe inventing itself. And that intelligent Cosmos, or God – whatever
you call it; doesn’t matter which word you use as long as we agree that it’s alive, intelligent, conscious, and creative – that is looking through your eyes, working through your hands, walking on your feet. Isn’t that exciting? How does the universe get to know itself? Through all of us and what we are doing.  

The idea that the universe is ‘alive’, that it has a ‘mind’, is not new even in the West. It appears in the philosophies of the mathematician Alfred Whitehead and the evolutionist Sewell Wright:

The only satisfactory solution … would seem to be that mind is universal, present not only in all organisms and in their cells but in their molecules, atoms and elementary particles.  

Once this intellectual understanding becomes internalised, then the universe is less vast and more like home. Consider the tee-shirt slogan:

I am not alone. The force which guides the stars, guides me.

Children frequently create imaginary friends that help them feel cared for, especially when they are alone. Consider the thought in this song composed for a Neohumanist school:

- How do small butterflies
- Find their way through the skies
- To a home that is 5000 miles away?
- And the planets and the stars,
- Each know which path is theirs?
- They go on spinning in time
- Through the vastness of space.
- Am I different from these?
- Is someone guiding me?
- How can I truly know
- Where is the right way to go?
- When my spirit takes flight
- Comes an answer in the night.
- Something I have always known.
- I am never alone
- I am never alone.

Devotion in Neohumanist schools

Neohumanist schools take the attitude that the desire to express devotion is innate and potentially limitless in every child. It flows from a deep internal source to the outside world.
through a child’s thoughts, words and actions. This potential is not automatically realised however, because fear, cultural prejudice and so many obstacles get in the way. The role of the Neohumanist educator is to help students remove the obstacles, the hurts and the stubbornness that block the natural flow of affection from their hearts. In the words of Leo Buscaglia:\textsuperscript{25}

> You may have the ‘capacity’ to love, but if left undeveloped, you will never gain the ‘ability’.

**THE YOGA OF DEVOTION**

Devotional sentiment is the first sentiment to be introduced in the Neohumanism discourses, yet Sarkar does not discuss it in depth, other than to emphasize its importance in transforming narrow sentiments into universalism. Instead he references his 1981 series of discourses on the life and teachings of Krishna,\textsuperscript{26} the great Indian yogi, king and philosopher who lived about 3500 years ago.

Krishna is best known in the West through the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which narrates a dialogue between Krishna and Arjun on the eve of the battle of the Mahabharata. Krishna explains that there are three kinds of yoga, the yoga of action, the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of devotion. While action and knowledge (the external paths of yoga) must not be neglected, both come to naught without the internal path, the path of devotion.

The word *yoga* means *union*, that is, the merger of one’s small identity with that of the universe. In this sense, yoga is the goal of life. But the universe is too vast for an adult, let alone a child. So, devotional sentiment starts with one’s immediate world and grows outwards from there. Ultimately, the effect of devotional sentiment is to dissolve every feeling of separation.

> Through action mixed with devotion and knowledge, you will find the meaning of your life, the supreme treasure of your heart.\textsuperscript{27}

Sarkar describes devotional sentiment as “the greatest treasure of humanity” because it motivates the transformation of narrow sentiments (geo-, socio- and human sentiments) into universalism. It may begin internally, but when it percolates into the external world it is like the spring rain that brings a desert to bloom.

> This element of devotion, the most precious treasure of humanity, must be preserved most carefully. Because it is such a tender inner asset, to preserve it from the onslaughts of materialism, one must build a protective fence around it, just as people put up a guard-rail around a small tender plant. Now the question is, what is this protective fence? It is a proper philosophy which will establish the correct harmony between the spiritual and material worlds,
Everybody feels the limitations of their ability to love. We are all familiar with the tight constriction of a selfish thought carried through to word and deed. It is not possible and not necessary for teachers in Neohumanist schools to be perfect embodiments of love! However, it is possible for teachers to understand the importance of devotional sentiment in human life and to introduce it into their students’ lives. An easy way for children to discover their capacity for love is through stories, song and chant. Neohumanist schools use many songs and chants with life-affirming themes, including the Sanskrit mantra *Baba nam kevalam – Love is all there is.*

In the East, the yoga of devotion has traditionally been a quest pursued in isolation from society (for example, in the Himalayan Mountains). In the West, the pursuit of humanism has been an external quest, through politics, intellect and science. One’s internal life was irrelevant or an impediment, because in most cases it was trapped by centuries of dogma and ritual. Neohumanism attempts to break both these traditions. It seeks a synthesis because, ultimately, liberation in external life, whether individual or collective, depends on the liberation of one’s internal life.

<< That which makes the mind soft, and so strong and strenuous as it may keep itself in a balanced state even in a condition of pain, and which creates perpetually a pleasant feeling within, is called love. Devotion is identical with love. >>

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar
KEY IDEAS

- An important objective of a Neohumanist school is to help students develop their innate capacity to love selflessly.

- Love is not a single emotion. Rather, it is a deeper propensity that expresses itself through compassion, caring, respect, empathy.

- Sarkar calls this inner capacity for selfless love, devotional sentiment. He adds that devotional sentiment is the most precious treasure of humanity.

- Ultimately, it is devotional sentiment that motivates expansion of heart, mind and community.

- There are three kinds of yoga, just as there are three ways of being in the world: the yoga of action, the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of devotion.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- It is often stated as a self-evident truth that competition is required to get the best out of a person, to get them to their maximum potential. To what extent do you consider this true?

- What is the role of competition in school sport? And the role of ‘houses’?

- Is it possible to enjoy narrow sentiments according to circumstance but simultaneously retain the inner bearing of a Universalist?

- Where does the human capacity for selfless love comes from?

IN THE CLASSROOM

- Activities to learn how to perceive other people’s feelings.

- Discussion of virtues such as compassion, caring, respect, empathy.

- Explore the expression of feelings of the heart through art, music, movement and words.
We now tie many important ideas together into the Cycle of Neohumanist Education, as illustrated in the following diagram. The cycle traverses the individual–social dimension (represented by the vertical line) and the inner–outer dimension (represented by the horizontal line).

We start in the individual, objective quadrant (quadrant 1). Virtue, rationality and balanced living are skills that every individual must learn. This requires continual effort and progress is often achieved by making mistakes. But acquiring these skills is essential for cultivating feelings of trust in one’s personal life. My effort to acquire virtue helps others to trust me. And of course, if I do not endeavour to be trustworthy, then I will not be inclined to trust others because I assume they will be like me.

Turning to the individual, subjective quadrant (quadrant 2), the feelings associated with trust create a mental environment in which one is feels free to open one’s heart, to express aesthetically subtle ideas and to reach out to others. The result is that a student develops an inner life, a sense of identity and of belonging, which spans self, family, suburb, region, country, globe and civilisation (that is, the student embraces multiple scales of time, space and community).
The internal, social quadrant (quadrant 3) concerns culture. A Neohumanist education seeks to create a culture of *diversity and inclusion*, building on students’ collective sentiments of belonging to multiple levels of community. Again, we come back to trust but this time, trust in its *collective or aggregate* form, social capital.

The external, social quadrant (quadrant 4) concerns the *governmental and economic institutions* necessary to maintain the integrity of a community. Also included in this quadrant is *civil society*, the sum-total of NGOs and not-for-profit organizations that manifest the interests of ordinary people. Where civil society is weak and education is dominated by State and business interests, it is extremely difficult to promote an educational practice based both on science and the spirit of universal ideas.

Unfortunately, we do not presently live in a world that actively embraces universal ideas or one that values civil society. However, a Neohumanist school can generate its own education cycle. Teachers can experiment in the classroom and promote a science of Neohumanist education within their school. They can share their results. Sarkar also founded *Gurukul* as an organisation to promote the Neohumanist education cycle.

Finally, it needs to be said that the Neohumanist education cycle is driven by *devotional sentiment*. A Neohumanist education expresses devotional sentiment by continually striving to entwine universal ideas with positive emotions. This endeavour is never ending because the mind continually discovers new ideas, people and places beyond the limits of its current reach, after which devotional sentiment reaches out to embrace what has been discovered. Thus, the cycle is in fact a spiral. And there appears to be no limit to the depth of subtle emotions and ideas that humans discover. Thus, the teaching practice in Neohumanist schools will never remain fixed. It will forever be in a state of ‘becoming’.
KEY IDEAS

• The Neohumanist education cycle is propelled by the inherent tendency of human beings to expand the domain of their hearts, their minds and their sense of belonging.

• Trust, both in one’s individual life and in collective life (social capital), is a crucial link in the education cycle.

• Progress in Neohumanist pedagogy stands on two pillars, universal approach and scientific research.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• What does “universal approach” mean in the context of a pedagogy of Neohumanist education?

• What makes research into teaching methods “scientific”?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• What can you do in your classroom to promote a pedagogy of Neohumanist education?
Theme 2: Expansion of mind

What is yoga?
What is a subtle mind?
Meditation
What is spirituality?
The second theme of a Neohumanist education is **expansion of mind**. Expansion of intellectual knowledge is of course what we assume an education will provide. But Neohumanist schools are specially concerned with cultivating **subtle minds**. A subtle mind has emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual facility. It goes beyond the superficial to ‘see’ what is not obvious. It is wise, capable of both empathy and calculation. We shall discover that an expanding mind also becomes a subtle mind.

A fundamental premise of Neohumanism is that every human being, child and adult, is a physical, mental and spiritual being. A Neohumanist teacher engages with all the dimensions of a child’s life, physical, emotional, sentimental, intellectual, social, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual and explores all these dimensions of their own life. Yoga is a science which adopts this holistic view to promote human development. Hence, yoga is beneficial in an **education for the whole child**.30 Indeed, as Western science brings its focus to bear on traditional yogic practices, such as postures, diet and meditation, it has only helped to confirm the benefits of yoga.31

### What is yoga?

The origins of yoga are lost in prehistory and there are different proposals as to its genesis. According to Sarkar, yoga as we understand it today emerged several thousand years ago from a synthesis of the Tantric practices of indigenous India with religious practices introduced by the Aryan migrations from Persia.32 Two significant early names in the development of yoga are Shiva and Krishna. What today is known as **ashtanga yoga**33 (eight practices of yoga) was codified by Patanjali (circa 200 BCE) and has survived to the present as a ‘living lineage’. Ashtanga yoga is what is taught in Neohumanist schools. It is not claimed as a religious practice and does not trace its origins to a particular guru. The eight practices of ashtanga yoga are:

- Yama: five moral principles to guide human conduct.
- Niyama: five practices for mental health.
- Breath control: important for physical health and mental concentration.
- Yoga postures: to promote physical and mental health.
- Sense withdrawal: to withdraw one’s mind from...
Neohumanist education

• Concentration: to focus one’s awareness on a single thought.

• Contemplation: to merge successive moments of concentration into an uninterrupted flow of ideation.

• Absorption: to merge one’s individual consciousness with that of the Universe. This is actually the end result of the previous seven practices.

The last four limbs collectively make up the practice of meditation. Neohumanist schools teach those elements of ashtanga yoga that are appropriate for young children, in particular, yama, niyama, easy postures and simplified forms of meditation. Yama and niyama are of immediate benefit from a young age. The teaching of postures and meditation at this age is more to plant seeds for the future.

Yoga postures

The practice of yoga postures (asanas in Sanskrit) promotes physical and mental well-being by regulating the activity of the ‘ductless’ endocrine glands and thereby indirectly regulating mood, thoughts and emotions. Each asana exerts either a pressurising or depressurizing effect on specific glands (a kind of glandular massage), which causes those glands to become more or less active. One hormone stimulates a set of responses, another inhibits it, the end result being to maintain body and mind in a balanced state of good health. All this regulatory activity has an internal or subjective side – it stimulates and inhibits complex arrays of ideas and their attached emotions, that is, human sentiments.

Consequently, it is better not to practice asanas at random. Usually they are prescribed according to a person’s physical and sentimental constitution.

Asanas are subtle, yet powerful, because extremely small changes in secretions can have a remarkable effect on wellbeing.

Asanas become particularly important at puberty when the full complement of endocrine glands becomes active. Nevertheless, practice of basic asanas is helpful for pre-adolescents and the child’s imagination can be caught by those postures named after animals. There are numerous books and websites suggesting ways to interest children in yoga postures. See the Yoga Touch program and others.

The traditional language of yoga is Sanskrit. It is the ancient mother language of the Indo-European tree of languages. English has evolved from Sanskrit through ancient Greek and Latin. Sometimes it is easier to use the Sanskrit word for a yogic practice to avoid ambiguity.
**Why a vegetarian tuckshop?**

The River School only provides healthy vegetarian food at its tuckshop and parents are asked to provide only vegetarian food in school lunches. Why? The evidence for the superiority of a balanced vegetarian diet is now overwhelming. A particularly important study was a joint 20-year project of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, Cornell University and the University of Oxford. Researchers measured mortality rates from cancer and other chronic diseases in 100 people in each of 65 Chinese counties. They found that counties with a high consumption of animal-based foods were more likely to have higher death rates from ‘Western’ diseases than counties that ate more plant foods.

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**EATING FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

Most people, when they consider healthy eating habits, are concerned only for their physical health. However, the Ayurveda tradition (a system of traditional Indian medicine) also promotes eating for mental health.

Ayurveda places foods into three categories, sentient, mutative and static. Sentient foods are good for the body and calming for the mind. A sentient diet consists of a balance of fruit, vegetables, grains and pulses. Mutative foods may or may not be good for the body but make the mind restless (examples: coffee, tea and carbonated soft-drinks). Static foods are bad for the body and mind (examples: meats and alcoholic drinks). It is well established that junk ‘foods’ (high in sugar, colourings and preservatives) make it difficult for children to concentrate. Hence, Neohumanist schools encourage children to eat sentient foods.

Ayurveda promotes the idea that you are what you eat. What you eat influences what you think and feel. Here is an important metabolic pathway as understood by yogic physiology:

\[
\text{food} \rightarrow \text{lymph} \rightarrow \text{nerves & glands} \rightarrow \text{hormones} \rightarrow \text{thoughts & feelings} \rightarrow \text{sentiments}
\]

Food becomes lymph; lymph becomes the substance of nerves and glands and therefore the substance of secreted hormones; hormones influence what we think and feel. Subtle food builds a subtle body which in turn becomes the seat of a subtle mind.
KEY IDEAS

- Neohumanist schools teach ashtanga yoga, the eight practices of yoga.
- The eight practices are: Yama, Niyama, Breath control, Yoga postures, Sense withdrawal, Concentration, Contemplation and Absorption
- Yoga postures exert their beneficial effect through “massage” of the endocrine glands.
- Foods are divided into three categories: Sentient foods are good for the body and calming for the mind. Mutative foods may or may not be good for the body but make the mind restless. Static foods are bad for the body and mind.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Should schools interfere in what students eat?

IN THE CLASSROOM

- Ask your students to describe what they typically have for breakfast. Get them to ask their parents what they used to have for breakfast when they were young. And then to ask their grand-parents. And ask their grandparents what their parents used to have for breakfast. How has breakfast changed over the last 100 years? How has the sugar content changed? How has the fat content changed? Is breakfast healthier today than 100 years ago?

What is a subtle mind?

Yoga psychology accepts the substantive theory of mind, that is, mind is a substance distinct from, but interacting with physical matter. Of course, materialist philosophies reject this – mind is nothing more than physical processes in the brain.

It probably makes no difference to a teacher’s classroom practice whether she accepts the substantive theory of mind or not. However, familiarity with the yogic understanding of mind will help teachers to understand the culture of Neohumanist schools and also the meaning of the phrase subtle mind.
The anatomy of mind

Western psychology accepts that mind has three compartments, the conscious, subconscious and unconscious minds (Table 1, lower left column). Yoga psychology recognises five layers of mind (Table 1, columns 3 and 4), the lowest two corresponding (awkwardly) to the conscious, subconscious and unconscious categories. The five layers are arrayed on a spectrum from crude to subtle (Table 1, right most column). The layers are distinguished by: 1. our experience of them; and 2. the ‘eye’ (or the ‘lens’) through which each layer views the world (Table 1, column 4).

The sensory-motor mind is at the ‘crude’ end of the spectrum because sensory experience is easily accessible to ordinary consciousness. By comparison, intellectual ideas can be more or less difficult to grasp and certain kinds of spiritual experience are extremely subtle and difficult to grasp with ordinary consciousness. The mind’s ‘eye’ (the locus of a person’s consciousness) can range over all layers of mind but typically, contemporary human beings view the world with the eye of the flesh and the eye of reason.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common terminology</th>
<th>Wilber’s terminology</th>
<th>Key-word description</th>
<th>The Mind’s Eye</th>
<th>Spectrum of subtlety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superconscious</td>
<td>Transpersonal</td>
<td>Universal, Spiritual</td>
<td>Eye of the Spirit</td>
<td>Sublest mind – has vast horizons, unconstrained by space, time and language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trans-egoic</td>
<td>Archetypes, Wisdom</td>
<td>Eye of Discrimination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intuition, Collective Zeitgeist</td>
<td>Eye of Intuition</td>
<td>Subtle mind – its vision extends to the well-being of life on earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious</td>
<td>Personal, Ego</td>
<td>Symbolic, Rational, Language</td>
<td>Eye of Reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subconscious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unconscious</td>
<td>Pre-personal, Pre-egoic</td>
<td>Sensory/motor, Instinctual</td>
<td>Eye of the Flesh</td>
<td>Crude mind – trapped in the pleasure and pain of immediate sensory-motor experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems to be a general rule that the different kinds of mental experience sustain happiness in inverse degree to their ease of attainment! Tasty food is necessary for happiness but it fails to be enough once readily obtained. Conversely, spiritual experience is elusive but offers sustained contentment in the long term. Although different names are
used by different schools of philosophy for the layers of mind, there is general consistency about what they do.

**The sensory-motor mind**

This layer is the interface between body and mind and therefore at the ‘crude’ end of the spectrum of mind. Much of its activity is unconscious, concerned with sensory-motor processing, instincts and animal survival. Indeed, this is the *animal mind*. It interacts with the physical body through the *chi* (Chinese medicine), *prana* (Ayurveda) and *meridians* (acupuncture). It sees with the *Eye of the Flesh*.40

**The rational-symbolic mind**

Although human consciousness can (in theory) range over all levels of mind, it typically operates in this second layer, the rational mind. Memory and thinking are its major occupations. Abstract reasoning using natural and symbolic languages is its greatest achievement. Hence Wilber describes this mind’s eye as the *Eye of Reason*. The rational-symbolic mind has a much larger domain than the sensory-motor. It calculates back to the origins of the universe, it predicts the future and makes plans. It postulates and manipulates different mathematical infinities.

**The transpersonal or super-conscious mind**

The top three layers of mind are frequently collapsed into one, variously called the *transpersonal* or *superconscious* mind (Table 4, columns 1 and 2). In the superconscious state, one’s sense of identity transcends the normal bounds of the ego-centred mind. *Transpersonal psychology* is gradually finding a place in the West because it fills a void in orthodox Western psychology which trivialises spiritual experience (e.g. as a computational error in brain’s neural processing). Transpersonal psychology accepts *altered states of consciousness* and *spiritual experiences* on their own terms.41 One distinction between the pre-personal, personal and transpersonal minds lies in their relationship to the outside world. The pre-personal mind is passive – reacting to outside circumstances but not creating them. The personal mind is active – an ‘agent’ that attempts to mould external circumstances to its will. For the transpersonal mind however, the ‘outside’ world is within. The sense of agent (“I do”) is absorbed into the feeling of *all is within* (“I am”).

**The intuitive mind**

We experience this layer of mind as moments of intuitional clarity or insight. Hence this mind’s eye is the *Eye of Intuition*. Its capabilities are beyond logic and reason. Here is Mozart’s description of the intuitional process during composition:

>When I feel well and in good humour, or when I am taking a drive or walk...thoughts crowd into my mind as easily as you could wish. Whence do they come? I do not know and have nothing to do with it...Once I have a theme, another melody comes, linking itself with the first one, in accordance with the needs of the composition as a whole. It does not come to me successively,
with its various parts worked out in detail, as they will later on, but it is in its entirety that my imagination lets me hear it.\textsuperscript{42}

Intuition is also integral to scientific discovery. However, once a discovery becomes accepted, the role of intuition is generally erased from the rational account of it.\textsuperscript{43} The most common ‘normal’ experience due to the intuitive mind is usually called empathy.

\textbf{The archetypal mind}

Wilber describes this layer of mind as the layer of “archetypes” because it is the mind in which differentiations and distinctions first begin to emerge out of Spirit.

\begin{quote}
An archetype has “one leg here and the other in infinity. It points to the transcendent.”\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Absolute notions of Truth, Beauty and Justice make their first appearance in this layer of mind. Sarkar describes this layer as ‘subliminal’ because we typically experience it indirectly.

In addition, moral discrimination, wisdom and spiritual longing are important characteristics of this layer. Wisdom is the ability to discriminate between that which provides short-term pleasure and that which provides long-term contentment – hence the \textit{Eye of Discrimination}.

\textbf{The universal mind}

This is the most expansive and subtle level of mind, the interface between mind and Spirit. It is a transcendent state of consciousness that encompasses the universe as its own. It is from this layer of mind that ideas about Truth, Beauty and Justice derive their ultimate legitimacy or absolute stance. In yogic philosophy, a person can experience this layer of mind when their individual mind merges with the mind of the universe. This experience of the unity of everything precludes any sense of differentiation, demarcation, hierarchy – hence the \textit{Eye of Spirit}.

\begin{quote}
It is misleading to think that you are a physical being having a spiritual experience. Rather take the view that you are a spiritual being having a worldly experience.

– Teilhard de Chardin
\end{quote}

\textbf{The development of mind}

Piaget’s theory\textsuperscript{45} of the four stages of cognitive development is now some 50 years old. In that time, it has survived intense investigation, although, as might be expected, in a more flexible and nuanced form. An important modification is that cognitive development is now known to be systaltic rather than linear. That is, development proceeds in cycles of speed (called \textit{growth spurts}) and pause (in which cognitive function may even regress). Fischer, who is one of a school of neo-Piagetian theorists,\textsuperscript{46} recognises ten cycles of cognitive development between birth and about the age of 25.\textsuperscript{47} The first three growth cycles
concern sensory-motor development, the next four underpin representational thinking (starting around 2-5 years) and the final cycles concern abstract thinking (from around 10 to 25 years of age). These cognitive cycles appear to be underpinned by well-observed cycles of neural development, particularly in the making of long-range cortical connections. Note that neural development in the pre-frontal cortex (PFC) continues up to about 25 years of age.

Another modification of Piaget’s original theory is that cognitive development is strongly influenced by social, cultural and educational factors. Indeed, the kinds of relationships a child has with carers in the first year of life are critical to his/her future development.

In addition, children develop at different rates (thus the average trajectory, even within a small school, is not strongly cyclical) and the cyclical pattern is not so evident where the child lacks a stimulating learning environment to fully exercise the emerging neural substrate. In fact, learning environment is critical for cognitive development and while the early cycles may be driven by a biological clock, the later cognitive cycles are entirely learning dependent and may not occur at all in the absence of appropriate stimulation.

According to the yogic understanding, the five layers of mind sit on a physical base, which is the entire physical body, not just the brain. However, there is no doubt that cognitive development is correlated with neural development. Just as cognitive development is from ‘concrete’ to ‘abstract’, yoga describes the development of mind as unfolding from ‘crude’ to ‘subtle’. We may equate the sensory-motor developmental stage to the unfolding of the first layer of mind (Table 1). We may equate Piaget’s representational and abstract developmental stages to the unfolding of the second layer of mind, the rational-symbolic. This sequence is clearly dependent on cortical maturation.

The neural correlates for the three higher levels of mind are not known (which, in any case, are not recognised as such in Western science) but in the yogic schema, these layers of mind represent the future potentiality of human beings. Recall the second defect of humanism, that if we only have past and present humans as our measure of humanity, then what of the future? In the yogic view, humanity has hardly begun to explore the potentiality of the human mind, yet cognitive development gives insights into how the subtler layers of mind will unfold.

- The unfolding of higher levels of mind will be systaltic, with speed and pause.
- The unfolding of higher levels of mind will require deliberate and conscious effort. It will also depend on a supportive social, cultural and educational environment.
- Once a subtler mental faculty develops, it must be exercised. Use it or lose it applies to the subtle mind as well as to the intellect and the body. Thus, mind can unfold but it can also contract back on itself if not stimulated and exercised.
WHAT IS HUMAN NATURE?

Animal nature is easy to define—it is directed to the exigencies of survival: food, sleep, reproduction and avoiding predators. Humans are sometimes described as rational animals but this definition misses the point, just as to define animals as moving plants reveals nothing about animals. Neohumanism makes the distinction between human nature and animal nature. Here the word ‘nature’ means the essence of a thing, its “basic or inherent features, character, or qualities”. The essential human nature takes the form of three motivations or longings, which collectively make the human species remarkable. We have hinted at each of them earlier:

- The longing to expand one’s mind beyond every limitation. This longing motivates adventurers, scientific enquiry and those who challenge injustice and dogma. Ultimately it is discovered that only something infinite satisfies this longing.
- The longing to merge in love. This longing is at first sought through attachment to another person but is satisfied only when it blossoms into a devotional sentiment that knows no bound.
- The longing to establish the community of life. This longing motivates a person to a life of service; to care for the sick and unfortunate, to teach the young and to protect the environment. Once again, the community of life knows no bound.

The purpose of a Neohumanist education is to awaken these three longings in every student. And Neohumanist teachers bring their own experience of these longings to the classroom. What a privilege! It is a beautiful paradox that all three longings ultimately arrive at the same destination. Collectively, Sarkar refers to them as Longing for the Great.

In yoga psychology, the development of mind from baby to adult can be compared to the unfolding of a flower having five layers of petals each with many petals. Each petal represents a specific mental faculty. The outer-most layer of petals (the sensory-motor mind) opens first, followed by the other layers successively from crude to subtle. The second layer begins to open before the first is fully bloomed and even the inner-most layers exert unconscious influences long before they are experienced consciously. However, in a life-time, most people only get one or two glimpses of their subtlest layers of mind— but the consequences can be profound and remembered vividly for the rest of life. Such experiences are often referred to as ‘religious experiences’ but the term is a misnomer...
because they are not necessarily religious in content, nor confined to persons with religious affiliation.\textsuperscript{52} When asked, “Have you ever been aware of or been influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?” some 62% of people surveyed in Nottingham said they had had such an experience at least once or twice in their life.\textsuperscript{53}

\begin{quote}
From the perspective of Neohumanism, humanity has hardly begun to explore the vast universe that is mind.
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\textbf{KEY IDEAS} \\
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\textbullet In yoga psychology, mind has five layers or shells: the sensory/motor mind; the symbolic/rational mind; the intuitive/collective mind; the wise/discriminating mind; and the spiritual/universal mind. \\
\textbullet Mind develops by unfolding its five layers from crude to subtle. \\
\textbullet Human nature (as distinct from animal nature) has three longings: to expand the mind; to merge in love; to establish the community of life through service. \\
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\textbf{SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT} \\
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\textbullet What is the difference between creativity and intuition? \\
\textbullet Have you ever had a ‘religious’ or ‘out-of-body’ experience? Did you talk about it with someone else? \\
\textbullet Do you feel that one of the three human longings is more strongly expressed in you than the others? Do you feel them at different times? How would you describe the feeling of them? \\
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\textbf{IN THE CLASSROOM} \\
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\textbullet Consider classroom experiences to exercise a child’s faculty of intuition? \\
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Meditation

Every person’s experience of meditation is different. Some find it easier to go deeper than others. The first rule of the meditator: *never compare yourself to others!* The second rule of the meditator: *set aside all judgements about how ‘good’ you are at meditation* – it does not work like that! What can be said generally is that the practice of meditation is beneficial for mental and physical health, regardless of what you think is happening. Indeed, in the increasingly complex emotional and intellectual climate of the 21st Century, meditation helps you to deal with stress and to maintain mental balance. The physical body has many automated systems to maintain homeostasis, such as constant body temperature, constant blood glucose and constant salt levels. The mind has no such automated homeostasis mechanisms – conscious control is required to steer a path between many mental complexes: inferiority versus superiority, introversion versus extroversion, depression versus mania, domineering versus submissive – the list is quite long! Meditation makes one more aware of mental state and therefore more able to maintain balance.

There are many kinds of meditation advertised in Western countries and most Westerners have little idea what the differences signify. For example, the point of concentration (if there is one) may be the third eye, tip of the nose, breath or the heart chakra. Some meditation techniques use a mantra, some not. From the point of view of Neohumanist schools, there are a few key factors that are considered important:

- The technique should acknowledge a spiritual purpose. The physical and mental health benefits of meditation are a bonus!
- The technique should acknowledge the four skills of sense withdrawal, concentration, contemplation and absorption in the infinite, although these need not be introduced explicitly.
- The technique should use a mantra. A mantra serves two purposes. It is a device that helps to focus the mind. And second, the mantra must convey an idea that has no bound or limitation.

*Without depending upon mantra...Buddhahood cannot be attained.*

– Dalai Lama

Those new to teaching young children to meditate in the classroom may be dismayed at the amount of fidget and giggling. Some children cannot close their eyes – but then neither can some adults. It is unreasonable to expect young children to sit still and meditate like adults. But brief periods of making the attempt are worthwhile. Consider the fifth limb of ashtanga yoga, *withdrawal of mind* from the outside world. If a young child gradually learns to sit still for a few seconds and close their eyes, this can be regarded as the first step to acquiring the meditator’s skill. It may be considered a success if, by the time a child leaves primary school, he/she can sit for five or ten minutes and achieve a short period of concentration!
should not forget that a child may hold onto a momentary glimpse of the infinite for his/her entire life, but you as a teacher may never know about it.

One does not seek to see oneself in running water, rather in still water. For only what is itself still can impart stillness unto others.

– Chuang-tse

### KEY IDEAS

- Meditation helps one to maintain mental balance.
- The effort to achieve stillness of mind helps the mind become more subtle.
- The meditator has gradually to acquire four skills: sense withdrawal, concentration, contemplation and absorption.
- A mantra serves two purposes. It is an internal sound that helps to focus the mind. And in addition, it conveys a universal idea.
- Ultimately, the principal advantage of meditation is spiritual. The physical and mental health benefits are a bonus!

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Is there a practice in the Western secular or religious traditions that is equivalent to meditation?
- Why do most Westerners equate yoga to the postures known as asanas and know nothing of the eight yogic practices?
- What is the difference between prayer and meditation? Between dream and meditation?

### IN THE CLASSROOM

- Have your students practice visualisations, in particular, ones based in the real world, e.g. imagine standing at the top of a high mountain or on a small island in the middle of a large ocean.
- Have students talk about the difference between ‘longing’ and ‘wanting’ in the context of spirituality.
- Use art as a reflective tool after mediation/visualisation.
- Practice of yoga daily.
What is spirituality?

Spirituality is the endeavour to manifest Spirit in one’s life. And Spirit is the light hidden deep inside every human heart. It is what makes humans capable of love. It is the well-spring of devotional sentiment and of all virtue. It cannot be ‘seen’ but it beckons like the sweet sound of a flute calling from deep in a forest.

Another definition but a philosophical one: Spirituality is that pertaining to Cosmic Consciousness. This definition focusses on the universe as a Conscious Entity, Spirit as the ultimate Witnessing Entity of all that happens in the universe. It is interesting to observe how many metaphors are used to describe the one idea. A mountain peak is one but its appearance depends on the direction of ascent.

Ultimately everyone wants an object of happiness which is timeless, changeless and limitless. Even children have a sense of this – when lost in play they wish it might go on forever, only to be disappointed when parents call or the bell rings. Humans are not satisfied with anything limited, yet material things (and even ideas) are by their very nature limited in time and space. That which is limitless is extraordinarily subtle. Hence a very subtle mind is required to grasp it.

Indigenous culture

Neohumanist schools can introduce spirituality by identifying spiritual ideas in local culture. In Australia, as in most countries of the world, one need look no further than indigenous culture. Actually, “We are all indigenous when we go back to our roots” - in the words of Uncle Bobby Randall, an elder of the Pitjantjatjara people in South Australia.

Silas Roberts, first chair of the Northern Land Council, describes Aboriginal spirituality as follows:

Aboriginals have a special connection with everything that is natural. Aboriginals see themselves as part of nature. We see all things natural as part of us. All things on Earth we see as part human. This is told through the idea of dreaming. By dreaming we mean the belief that long ago, these creatures started human society.

These creatures, these great creatures are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature as we are. Our connection to all things natural is spiritual.

And Bobby Randall once again:
Being alive connects you to every other living thing that is around you. Your spirit, your psyche, your physical, your mental – you are all connected with other living forms – you are one with everything else that there is – the oneness – the completeness of the oneness.

**Conclusion**

In this section, we have traversed the full spectrum of mind from its interface with matter, through layers of increasing subtlety, to its interface with Spirit. Our purpose was to give some glimpses of what is meant by *cultivating a subtle mind*.

Mind is a vast universe which humanity has only just begun to explore. As always with the unknown, there is an element of fear. But human beings are irresistibly drawn by the mystery and the spiritual promise of the subtle unknown. Typically, it is artists, poets, musicians and novelists who lead the way, reaching out to ever subtler experiences that elude science and philosophy – hence the importance of art, music and creative programs in schools.

> .... And I have felt  
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
> Of something far more deeply interfused,  
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
> And the round ocean and the living air,  
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
> A motion and a spirit, that impels  
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
> And rolls through all things.  

– William Wordsworth, extract from *Tintern Abbey*, 1798
KEY IDEAS

• Spirituality is the endeavour to manifest Spirit in one’s life.

• Spirit is the light hidden deep inside every human heart. It is what makes humans capable of love. It is the well-spring of devotional sentiment, of courage and of all virtue. It is what makes human beings remarkable.

• Neohumanist schools can introduce spirituality by identifying spiritual ideas in local culture. Indigenous culture can be a good starting point.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• What is the difference between one’s emotional life and one’s spiritual life?

• If you were offered a wish that would come true, for what would you wish?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Invite an indigenous elder to talk to your class about spirituality

• Ask students to write/draw about what spirituality means to them.

• Have your students ask their parents and friends, what does spirituality mean to them?
Theme 3: Expansion of community

Service learning
The third theme of Neohumanist Education is *expansion of community*. The corresponding character trait that Neohumanist schools endeavour to cultivate in their students is *service-mindedness*. Here is a beautiful definition:

A community is a group of people who do favours for one another.\(^6\)

And again,

Community is built over time through gift exchanges.

From a Neohumanist perspective, expansion of heart, mind and community go hand-in-hand. They are different manifestations of a deep, inner, innate impulse which is ultimately a spiritual expression. They define what it is to be human. Not surprisingly then, we have already been introduced to service-mindedness: for example, St Francis de Sales’ definition of devotion as:

that spiritual agility and vivacity by which charity works in us or by aid of which we do good works quickly and lovingly.;

and Sarkar,

Through action mixed with devotion and knowledge you will find the meaning of your life, the supreme treasure of your heart.

The action here of course means one’s involvement in serving other people, whether it is within one’s own family or the larger world.
Service learning

Discussions about service in an educational context use the term service-learning which has been defined as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes.” And again, service-learning “occurs when there is a balance between learning goals and service outcomes.” In fact there is a spectrum of learning activities that satisfy these definitions: volunteering, community service, internships, field education etc. And of course, service learning can happen within the school grounds which is important in the kindy and primary school contexts.

Many benefits have been identified for students in service learning:

- Students learn best when they see a reason for learning and when the benefits manifest as a result of action. Academic learning can become more interesting in a service context because it becomes experiential learning.

- Students learn interpersonal skills because they will likely have to interact with fellow students and persons outside the school community. Students may also get opportunities to develop leadership skills in the context of service learning.

- Service-learning can present students with multiple problems in complex, real-life situations. They are challenged to use critical thinking and problem solving skills. Service activities can present unexpected situations forcing students and teachers to think in unexpected ways.

- Service-learning offers an opportunity for students to interact with people from ethnic, cultural and class backgrounds different to their own because, typically, service activities will be directed to people in need. This helps to reduce negative stereotypes.

- Service-learning helps students better understand social issues in their own community. They gradually come to understand more abstract notions such as community, civic duty and shared-humanity.
SERVICE MINDEDNESS – ITS IN THE BLOOD

An unexpected dimension to service activities (although not a justification for them) comes from a fascinating 2015 investigation of eighty healthy adults who were surveyed about their lifestyles and what made them most happy. Medical scientists then took blood samples from each person, analysing their white cells for immune system health.

Participants who derived happiness from more self-centred, hedonistic pursuits had increased markers (immune system traits or characteristics) that are believed to promote inflammation. They also had lower levels of markers associated with fighting infection. By contrast, those who derived pleasure from more altruistic pursuits, that involved helping others, had decreased inflammation markers and increased markers associated with production of immune system antibodies.

Note that all the participants reported deriving pleasure from their activities but their cellular physiology revealed a different story. We appear to be better off mentally and physically when we adopt ‘altruistic’ rather than ‘selfish’ life-styles.

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Have students explore service activities and projects in which they could participate. E.g. to look after the school environment or to help a family in need.

• Special days or times of day for “random acts of kindness”.

• Buddy programs – buddy up younger and senior students with focus on senior students assisting young students in specific ways.
Theme 4: Virtue and good character

The changing ethical landscape
Virtue and good character
Cardinal human values
Ethics in action
Restorative practice
The fourth theme of a Neohumanist Education is virtue. The corresponding trait which Neohumanist schools wish to cultivate in students is good character. It is frequently stated that a major role of schooling is socialisation, imparting habits of behaviour which conform to established custom. It is true that children must adjust to the mores of society. However, the habits of good conduct which a Neohumanist school wishes to encourage are not so much about conforming as about assisting students to flourish. Words such ‘flourish’ and ‘thrive’ appear with much frequency in the recent literature on ethics in education. We promote virtue and good character because they are liberating, for both the child and his/her classmates.

Another important distinction is the difference between values and virtues. A person’s values (or a community’s values) are what their conduct reveals as being important to them. An obvious example is the extent to which a person chases name and fame to detriment of their relationships. Virtues are character traits that have general acceptance in many if not all cultures because they promote individual and collective wellbeing. Which brings us to an important idea:

<< The pursuit of good character is to bring one’s values into synchrony with virtue. >>

The changing ethical landscape

Behavioural decisions that affect individual and collective well-being come within the scope of ethics. For many centuries what individuals ought and ought not do was determined by rule-based religious codes, such as the Ten Commandments. Rule-based morality has two advantages:

- Rules offer clarity – one does not have to think too deeply about the consequences of an action. The rules say what is, and is not, to be done;
- Religious rules have the authority of God so there is an internal motivation (whether born of love or fear) to please God. The decline of religion over the past century has been accompanied by a decline in the authority of religious moral codes.
Utilitarian ethics

In the modern era, utilitarian ethics have gradually replaced religious ethics. According to utilitarian ethics, good conduct is decided by consequences rather than intentions.

Utilitarianism was formulated during the social upheavals of the industrial revolution as an ethical foundation for liberal capitalism. In this role, it supports the argument that the greatest good is achieved when individuals pursue their self-interest within free markets. The individual intentions may be selfish but the consequence is the greatest good.

In the 20th century, utilitarian ethics became stridently puritan. The ultra-conservative economist, Milton Friedman, for example, denounced social responsibility in economic life as a “fundamentally subversive doctrine”. Proponents of this view reject altruism and self-sacrifice as false virtues and instead argue for the virtue of selfishness.

The decline of religious morality and the rise of utilitarian ethics have had two detrimental consequences. The first is that moral education has been largely abandoned in the public/state school systems because there is no consensus about what it should look like. Individuals are increasingly left to their own moral devices because religion (once the custodian of morality) is now perceived as irrational in a modern age.

The problem is that, left to their own devices, people frequently make bad moral choices and then suffer the inevitable painful consequences. Moral suffering rather than physical suffering is a major cause of pain in contemporary Western society. The West has made great progress in reducing material suffering, but little in reducing moral suffering. In case this is beginning to sound self-righteous, it must be noted that not all suffering is moral suffering, for example, having an inherited disease or finding oneself in a war zone. But much suffering is clearly the result of making unwise decisions.

This brings us to the second detrimental consequence of the changing ethical landscape – that moral behaviour is increasingly assumed to be equivalent to that which the State does not prohibit. Given a decline in personal ethical standards and given that it does not want to involve itself in what was a traditional domain of the church, the State has responded by regulating good conduct through legislation.

But secular rules elicit poor compliance because they do not excite intrinsic motivation. A case in point: banking is the most highly regulated sector of an economy and yet this did not prevent a global financial crisis due to the immoral conduct of bankers. Without intrinsic motivation, rules become an obstacle to be circumvented. The State responds by
adding more rules to fill the gaps, but it is only a matter of time before the new rules are also circumvented.

Over the past twenty-five years, the U.S. Congress has created more than 500 new crimes per decade! And there is no end in sight. But rules without internal motivation must fail because there will always be gaps that can only be filled by personal integrity.

**Utopian ethics**

There is an unlikely third strand to this story of the shifting ethical landscape. While 19th century utilitarian philosophers were establishing the moral high ground for self-interest, the rapidly growing socialist movement argued for an understanding of morality in terms of class interest. They argued that working class immorality is a consequence of poverty brought about by a capitalist class whose wealth hoarding activities are made morally invisible.

This view of morality remains important even in the 21st century. The socialist solution was (and still is) to abolish inequality. Their belief is that the seeds of selfishness will disappear in an equal society. Various experiments in utopian living based on this belief were attempted in the 19th Century and all ultimately failed.71

![Utopianism may be defined as the belief that the human character can be perfected without conscious ethical struggle; that ‘fixing’ the external or social environment is sufficient.](image)

Even through the 20th century and into the 21st, the belief persists that moral deficit can be fixed by abolishing material deficit.72 In a materialist philosophy, all problems have a material origin and should therefore respond to a material solution.

Neohumanism is egalitarian – it recognises that society must fight poverty and illiteracy. But once this is achieved, we are still left with the seeds of selfish behaviour that lie covert in the minds of all humans, rich and poor alike. Dealing with these requires a subtle, internal approach.

**KEY IDEAS**

- **Three dominant approaches to ethics in the modern world are:**
  - religious (rules given by God);
  - utilitarian (good is defined by consequences, not motivation);
  - utopian (virtue as a consequence of material equality).

- **Legality is not virtue.**
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT
• Some parents send their child to a religious school even though they are not religious? Why might they make that decision? Would you?
• There has been a great increase in the paper work required of teachers, social workers and others in the human services over the last few decades. What do you think are contributing factors?

Virtue and good character

The difference between good conduct and good character is that the former is a behavioural perspective which is not concerned with motivation. Good character requires the cultivation of internal virtue which in turn draws on wisdom (discrimination) and devotional sentiment (the internal desire to promote others well-being). Neohumanist schools adopt two approaches to the cultivation of good character – the practice of virtue ethics and the practice of cardinal human values. These are complementary approaches. We discuss them in turn.

The virtues

To address the contemporary lack of consensus concerning religious moral codes, educators are turning to the concept of virtue as the basis for a moral system. The advantage is that virtues are recognised across cultural and religious boundaries and they can be presented in a non-sectarian manner. Virtues are mental and behavioural character traits that are widely, if not universally, accepted as deserving of praise because they promote individual and social well-being.

The respected Virtues Project promotes 52 virtues: assertiveness, caring, cleanliness, commitment, compassion, confidence, consideration, cooperation, courage, courtesy, creativity, detachment, determination, diligence, enthusiasm, excellence, flexibility, forgiveness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, honour, humility, idealism, integrity, joyfulness, justice, kindness, love, loyalty, moderation, modesty, orderliness, patience, peacefulness, perseverance, purposefulness, reliability, respect, responsibility, self-discipline, service, tact, thankfulness, tolerance, trust, trustworthiness, truthfulness, understanding, unity.
The above list is not fixed or complete: we might add positivity, contentment and prudence. Some are words we also use for positive emotions (most noticeably love, compassion and trust) and some are traditional moral principles (e.g. kindness, truthfulness, honesty).

We might consider honesty to be more important than tact but, according to Aristotle, the virtues are not optional. Rather he considered them to be an indivisible unity. We cannot decide to ignore one and practice others, because a deficiency in one threatens them all. For example, honesty requires courage, which in turn requires prudence. A reckless (imprudent) person may not have the common sense to recognise danger (foolishness rather than courage) nor the patience to exercise tact. There is much we can learn from Aristotle concerning virtue. He did not argue that people should be virtuous but rather that virtue is a necessity in order to live a fulfilling life and to realise one’s potential.

### VIRTUE AS A GOLDEN MEAN

Virtue, advised Aristotle, cannot be learned from books – it must be practiced. He also regarded each virtue as representing a golden mean, a balanced behaviour poised between the extremes of excess and deficiency. For example, generosity is a golden mean between profligacy and meanness. Courage is a golden mean between aggression and cowardice. Trust is a golden mean between naivety and cynicism. We shall return to trust as a golden mean.

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KEY IDEAS

- Virtue ethics is a code of conduct arising out of the authority of virtue.
- Virtues are mental and behavioural character traits that are widely, if not universally, accepted as promoting individual and social well-being.
- Virtues cross cultural and religious boundaries, i.e. they are non-sectarian.
- The pursuit of good character is to bring one’s values into synchrony with virtue.
- Virtue requires wisdom (discrimination) and devotional sentiment (the internal desire to promote others well-being).
- According to Aristotle, the practice of each virtue requires achieving a balance between an excess and a deficiency.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- What other virtues could be included in the above list?
- Consider some of the other virtues as golden means. What is their corresponding deficit and excess?

......IN THE CLASSROOM

- Ensure your students know the school’s values – Happy, Safe, Free to Learn.
- Develop a classroom values statement
- Compare and contrast the values of various religions
- Virtues program – practical activities across the week, e.g. homework, lunchtime, morning circle.
- Discussions that reveal how social and individual wellbeing is linked to the accepted virtues.
Cardinal human values

There is one difficulty with the recognised virtues as the basis for a moral system - there are too many of them! A practical moral code should have three qualities, purpose, motivation and brevity:

*Purpose* in the case of ethics is two-fold: 1. to promote individual *peace of mind* without which happiness and success in life are impossible; and 2. to promote *collective well-being*.

*Motivation* is of three kinds: fear of punishment, expectation of reward and internal or intrinsic desire. While internal motivation is essential, fear is additionally required in practical life because internal motivation sometimes fails. At such times *fear of consequences* is a necessary safety-net. Reward can also be appropriate, for example in economic life when attempting to promote the recycling of waste. But these, by themselves, are not enough. Good behaviour only becomes good character with intrinsic motivation.

*Brevity* helps make a moral code easy to remember. Law makes an abysmal moral code (as anyone who has read a statute will know). Young children do not yet have the maturity to sift through options and consequences. A practical moral code should therefore consist of relatively few principles worded in a way that remains relevant for child and adult alike.

Perhaps it is for brevity that Sarkar promotes the concept of *cardinal human values*, virtues that not only transcend culture and religion but are also *cardinal*, that is, they are *fundamental* values on which everything else depends. Although he does not state it explicitly, a wider reading of Sarkar suggests that he promotes the yogic code of conduct as a starting point for cardinal values. These consist of ten principals divided into five avoidances and five observances.

The five avoidances

Each avoidance can be expressed in the negative (an avoidance) or in the positive (a virtue).

- **Nonviolence**: not to cause harm to others consciously by deed or omission; gentleness; kindness; to do good according to one’s capacity.
- **Non-deceit**: not to tell lies; benevolent truthfulness.
- **Non-stealing**: not to take or to covet that which belongs to others; honesty.
- **Non-objectification**: not to use others as objects; to see the beauty of the divine in everyone and everything.
- **Non-acquisitiveness**: simple living. To avoid excessive consumption.

Most cultures around the world accept the first three of these principles and it is hard to imagine a sustainable society that ignores them.
Of the above five principles, *non-objectification* is particularly important. Objectification is the use of a person (or any living being) as an object for one’s own purpose, without regard for his/her/its well-being.\(^\text{75}\)

To recognize the existential value of a person is to recognize that their joys and sorrows are as important to them as mine are to me. This requires an ability to be conscious of another person’s consciousness – to expand one’s own consciousness beyond its limited ego boundary.

**MORAL SUFFERING – IT CAN BE PHYSICAL**

Moral suffering is not something we typically give much thought to. But we all experience it – we call it *guilt*. It is the regret we feel when recalling, for example, our harsh words that hurt a friend. But moral suffering can be subtler than this and can come in startlingly unexpected ways.

**A 2015 study:**

We have already referred to this study in the chapter on Service-learning. Recall the 80 healthy adults who were asked about their lifestyles and what made them most happy. Blood samples revealed that the immune systems of those who reported living more altruistic lifestyles were in better shape than of those living a self-centred lives. Yet *all* participants reported deriving pleasure from their activities.

**A 2010 study:**

20 pairs of male volunteers were asked to share money while having brain scans. It was found that equitable sharing promoted activity in those parts of the brain that process pleasurable rewards. In other words, sharing gives us pleasure. But more surprising was the result when researchers manipulated the initial shares so that one man was richer than the others. The richer man was then asked to share an *additional* sum of money. Even when the richer man retained the additional money, his brain scan did not indicate a corresponding pleasure. In other words, there was a discrepancy between his ‘greedy’ behaviour and the resulting pleasure revealed by his brain. According to the researchers this apparent incongruity “highlights the idea that even the basic reward structures in the human brain are not purely self-oriented”.\(^\text{76}\)

The five observances

These are expressed as five virtues.

- **Cleanliness**: both physical and mental, external and internal.
- **Contentment**: to be accepting of what one has; to exercise restraint over one’s desires.
- **Service**: to help others even at the cost of inconvenience to oneself.
• To **read good literature** and **keep good company**.

• To **take the shelter of the Cosmic Entity**: In practice, this means to maintain a positive mental attitude of trust and optimism about life. It means to hold onto the belief that the universe has its own wisdom and its own timetable; that the difficult challenges which beset us in life are opportunities to learn and to grow. Expressed as a double negative, this observance means to avoid pessimism, bitterness, distrust, cynicism, hopelessness, resentment and negativity. You will feel a lot better for it! And so will those around you.

Acceptance of the above cardinal human values as a moral code has important benefits:

• they are a ‘natural’ code of conduct; they promote expansion of mind;

• they are not ends in themselves but a means to realization of individual potential and social progress;

• they provide the necessary foundation for a peaceful mind and a rich spiritual life;

• their practice builds trust and therefore the quality of human relationships. Recall that social capital is defined in terms of the trust and empathy inherent in social relationships. Therefore, the building of social capital has a moral dimension; and

• they are egalitarian because they are of benefit to all – their practice, by definition, excludes group or class interest.

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**KEY IDEAS**

• A practical moral code should have three qualities, **purpose, motivation** and **brevity**.

• Sarkar describes the yogic code of morality, Yama and Niyama, as the Cardinal Human Values – that is, the essential virtues to be practiced in daily life.

• The five Yama are: non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, non-objectification and simple living.

• The five Niyama are: cleanliness of body and mind, contentment, service, reading good literature and keeping good company, and taking the shelter of the Cosmic Entity.
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• In recent decades, international courts of law have attempted to reach across national and cultural boundaries. What is an example? What is the premise on which these courts are based?

• Look up the word *exploitation* in Wikipedia. How does the description compare to the definition of *objectification*?

• What human faculty helps prevent a person from using others as objects?

• Why are reading good literature and keeping good company so important that they are included as moral principles?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Explicit teaching of Yama/Niyama and the virtues

• Discuss the following aphorism: “I do what I say, and I say what I think”.

• Consider the various Yama and Niyama and the cultivation of trust within the classroom. Do they help with trust in group cooperation games?

Ethics in action

Morning circle

For many Neohumanist schools, including the Ananda Marga River School, the school week begins on Monday mornings with morning circle. The whole school, with teachers and interested parents, sit together. In other schools, this might be called school assembly. Morning circle may include singing, dancing, class presentations, contemplation, or discussion, but whatever the content, the aim is that students “contribute to the collective intelligence and wisdom; at the same time, they are supported by the powerful synergetic flow”.

After songs and meditation, morning circle will typically focus on a specific virtue. Children do artwork, role-plays, writing and brainstorming to explore all the ramifications of a virtue. One class each week presents their understanding of the week’s virtue and writes an affirmation about that virtue which is presented to the gathering. The Ananda Marga River School has selected ten virtues as the school’s cardinal human values: compassion, love, honesty, respect, simple living, contentment, responsibility, courage, service and
knowledge. Apart from morning circle, the virtues are also embedded in stories, songs, learning activities and in all that the school does.

**THINKING ABOUT MORAL DILEMMAS IS GOOD FOR THE BRAIN!**

A 2009 study:

Brain scans have opened a huge field of research into what parts of the brain participate in different mental activities. For example, it has been discovered that pondering a situation calling for altruism or compassion predominantly activates a region known as the medial prefrontal cortex (m-PFC), sometimes described as the *social-empathic cortex*.

However, pondering a moral dilemma activates many parts of the brain simultaneously – the m-PFC, the dorso-lateral prefrontal cortex (whose functions include planning and abstract reasoning), the anterior-cingulated cortex (involved in decision making, empathy and conflict detection) and the limbic system which, as already noted, regulates emotional state. The authors of this study concluded that the neural basis of wisdom may involve an optimal balance between the more primitive brain regions (limbic system) and the most recently evolved (the pre-frontal cortex).78

There is the ‘balance’ word again!

**Trust, naivety and cynicism**

Trust has been a recurring theme through this introduction to Neohumanist schools. It is essential for our emotional well-being and for building healthy relationships and healthy communities. It is an ingredient of social capital; one which sociologists attempt to measure. It is necessary for cooperation and for learning. The cardinal human values preserve trust and cultivating trust is, itself, a virtue. But trust is also vulnerable – it depends on people treating each other with respect and not using each other as objects for their own purposes. In short, trust is at the core of human social life but it is fragile and cannot be taken for granted.

Recall Aristotle’s belief that every virtue is a golden mean between excess and deficiency. It is helpful to consider the excess and deficiency of trust – *naivety* and *cynicism* respectively.

**Naivety**

We have already come across naivety in the utopian belief that the human character can be perfected without personal internal struggle; that selfishness can be abolished with external fixes alone. Naivety becomes a vice when it surrenders social well-being into the hands of those who have no ability or interest to promote it. Nevertheless, the promise of utopia has spawned a literature that spans centuries and attracts a growing readership in times of social strife.79
Cynicism
It is easy to read and write about good character. It is of course another matter to live it. When we read about important persons behaving corruptly (those of high religious, political and social status whom we want to respect), cynicism is an easy response. “Why should I bother to acquire virtue? Humans are selfish by nature. Virtue is just a veneer – a waste of effort!” Just as naivety has spawned a literature of utopia, so cynicism has spawned a literature of dystopia.

Cynicism hardens the heart. It is the enemy of devotional sentiment. A child’s transition from innocence to reality ought not be accompanied by cynicism. Teachers should never express a cynical sentiment and they should question one if heard. And children are susceptible to cynicism. It can, for example, come as a shock to discover that one’s parents are not perfect. Cynicism is a way of deflecting the pain of a broken trust and passing it to someone else. Not passing on the pain is an act of courage and a gift to one’s friends and colleagues. However, broken trust is also of collective concern because it damages social connections, the ‘social fabric’, and therefore a social response is additionally required.

KEY IDEAS
• Trust is an important virtue in both individual and social life (recall social capital). We also experience it as an emotion. A deficiency of trust is cynicism and an excess is naivety. Both cynicism and naivety are dangerous in one’s spiritual life.
• Virtues are integrated into the curriculum of a Neohumanist school.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT
• Cynicism is sometimes defended in entertainment on the grounds of realism. How can children best be prepared for their encounters with cynicism?
• Are there any ideas having a powerful influence in contemporary political/social debates that you would consider to be naïve?

IN THE CLASSROOM
• Games involving trust
• Moral dilemma activities – problem solving
• Daily Circles – ongoing opportunities for discussion of virtues and moral dilemmas
This brings us to the issue of behavior management in Neohumanist schools.

Restorative Practice

The Ananda Marga River School has adopted *Restorative Practice* as its approach to behaviour management, although this terminology is inadequate because restorative practice achieves more than behaviour management. We introduce restorative practice by highlighting two distinctions: 1. *restorative justice* versus *retributive justice*; 2. *restorative practice* versus *restorative justice*.

Restorative justice is a program originally developed within the Canadian judicial system in the 1970s to give offenders the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour and to acknowledge harm done to victims. Its focus is on repairing damage, restoring relationships and reintegrating the offender into the community. This is a major shift from blame and punishment, the hallmarks of retributive justice. ⁸¹

In fact, restorative justice was the norm in many earlier societies. In England, restorative justice was replaced by retributive justice following the Norman invasion of 1066 A.D. By the 12th century, crime came to be viewed as an offense against the state rather than injury to persons and community. ⁸² The contemporary interest in restorative justice was assisted by the revival of indigenous communities, particularly in Canada, the U.S., and New Zealand. Prior to European contact, the Maori had a restorative justice system known as *Utu* which is now being reintroduced to New Zealand. ⁸³

Restorative practice has its origins in restorative justice but is a broader concept. The latter is *reactive*, consisting of formal or informal responses to wrongdoing *after* it occurs. Restorative practice is *proactive*. It builds relationships and a sense of community to *prevent* conflict and wrongdoing. Restorative practice is now an active field of research in schools, businesses and government. In schools, it is not so much a ‘program’ as a culture. It builds positive relationships between students, teachers, staff and parents rather than focusing on misbehaviour. Nevertheless, it has been shown to reduce student misbehaviour, bullying and crime and to improve the climate for learning. ⁸⁴

Two key features of restorative practice are: 1. a focus on relationships rather than the individual in isolation; and 2. a focus on internally motivated behaviour change rather than external pressure. Both these are familiar themes within Neohumanism:

- To restore relationships means to restore the positive *sentiments* which bind teachers and children. This in turn means to restore the *emotions* of trust, love and respect and to restore the *idea* of school as family. However, trust depends on trustworthiness, which in turn depends on previous experiences of group behaviour. Hence the importance of learning habits of good conduct. Good conduct
promotes trust and trust is the foundation of teaching and learning. To focus on internal motivation means to utilise the three human longings. For example, despite possible protestation by a wrong-doer, we can assume that somewhere inside she/he desires to restore a lost connection with community. And despite possible demands for revenge, we may assume that the victim can be helped to understand that desire for revenge cripples one’s own life. Acknowledging wrong-doing is difficult when its origins are invisible (unconscious) to the children concerned. The process of repairing relationships requires expansion of consciousness – it is a liberation. In this way, good conduct becomes good character.

Restorative practice may be a challenge for teachers because it requires them to be explicit about their classroom practice. It asks of them the courage to create a space where students can experience situations that develop their emotional and social capacity. We have already noted that moral decision-making demands whole brain engagement. It cannot be learned from books any more than can tennis or sculpture.

A restorative classroom setting is one that values dialogue through an inclusive approach where everyone expects to be heard, and through this participatory process students develop the capacity to learn in a practical way that emotions are an important and legitimate expression of healthy dialogue. This helps students to deal with conflict, tensions and difference in respectful ways that engender trust, empathy, responsibility, and foster healthy relationships.

At the Ananda Marga River School, restoring relationships can take many forms which are decided upon by the student in conjunction with teachers. There is often a service element to help build the student’s self-esteem and confidence through helping others. The Principal of the River School reports that one of the consequences of restorative practice is that students do not fear telling the truth. Furthermore, children learn to recognise trigger factors that influence their behaviour and monitor themselves accordingly. Restorative practice is ethics in action:

Reflection + Ethics + Action = Thrival
THE SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW

Written by Sue Attrill; drawn from work by Margaret Thorsborne

The below diagram is used in Restorative Practice to describe the impact that Discipline philosophy has on the development of internally motivated behaviour and on the capacity for children to learn to be active agents in problem solving when a relationship goes wrong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quadrant</th>
<th>Pressure to achieve expected standard of performance</th>
<th>Support to achieve expected standard of performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOING TO</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOING NOTHING</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>DOING FOR</td>
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<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOING WITH</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vertical axis indicates the pressure or insistence that the child conform to a set of expectations, boundaries or rules, whether these be to do with behaviour, relationships or social norms. The horizontal axis indicates the degree of support that is provided to assist the child to reach those expectations.

The ‘DOING TO’ quadrant has high expectations and low support. This is the authoritarian quadrant where children ‘do what they are told’. Things are done ‘to’ the child.

The ‘DOING NOTHING’ quadrant is low in expectation and low in support. This is the neglectful quadrant. Expectations or support are absent and the adult is often absent leaving the child to navigate their own way.

The ‘DOING FOR’ quadrant is high in support and low in expectation. This is the permissive quadrant. Excusing unacceptable behaviour is often present here.

The ‘DOING WITH’ quadrant is high in support and high in expectation. This is the quadrant where Restorative Practices work through negotiation, insistence, and support for children to build their internal strength which helps them to maintain and repair relationships.
KEY IDEAS

• Two key features of restorative practice are: 1. a focus on relationships rather than the individual in isolation; and 2. a focus on internally motivated behaviour change rather than external pressure.

• To restore relationships means to restore the positive sentiments which bind teachers and children. This in turn means to restore emotions of trust, love and respect and to restore the idea of school as family.

• To focus on internal motivation means to utilise the three internal human longings: the longings for expansion of heart, mind and community.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• Make sure you understand the difference between restorative justice versus retributive justice; between restorative practice versus punishment.

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Establish a clear consistent restorative approach to classroom behaviour management.

• Problem solving circles to address relationship or behaviour issues as they arise.

• Teachers use Restorative Chat to involve students in problem solving when addressing behaviour issues.
Theme 5: Rationality and critical thinking

Rationality
Critical thinking
Pseudo-culture
Rationality

The fifth theme of a Neohumanist Education is rationality. The corresponding character trait that Neohumanist schools endeavour to cultivate in their students is discrimination. The link between rationality and discrimination may not at first be obvious. So, let us start with two definitions.

Rationality is that which conforms to reason.\(^{88}\) and:

Reason is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgements logically.\(^{89}\)

Rationality implies a logical consistency between action and purpose, between ends and means. But rationality is also contextual – what is rational to an economist is not necessarily rational to a family with a mortgage. Another definition: discrimination is the quality or power of finely distinguishing,\(^{90}\) as for example, distinguishing between right and wrong or between the consequences of one course of action and another.

Rationality is a hallmark of human beings, but it is important to note that Sarkar uses the term rationality in a very particular sense. If rational behaviour depends on the effective use of reason to achieve a goal, then Sarkar would add that the goal must be consistent with collective well-being. Rationality is life-affirming. Any other goal is irrational. And here lies the link between rationality and discrimination. The ability to determine which actions do or do not contribute to collective well-being requires wise discrimination. Hence says Sarkar:

The path of rationality is discrimination.\(^{91}\)

And when, because of discrimination, a person chooses that path leading to collective well-being, we call it conscience.

As noted previously, rationality is usually understood to be at odds with sentiment. Neohumanism, however, acknowledges what neuro-biologists have learned – that reason cannot be divorced from sentiment because the two are interwoven within the brain. Rationality is not reason divorced from sentiment, but reason empowered by positive universal sentiments.

So, we make the following distinction: Sentimentality is to follow an idea because its emotion gives pleasure. Rationality is to follow an idea because it is conducive to collective well-being. And here we repeat a fundamental idea: a Neohumanist education assists...
students to associate positive emotions with universal ideas so that they can more easily acquire the habit of rationality.

And those who possess the inner asset of devotion within their hearts and follow the path of rationality in dealing with the external world must be victorious. They alone can accomplish worthy deeds in this world.\textsuperscript{92}

A Neohumanist education assists students to associate positive emotions with universal ideas.

**Dogma**

Where there is an absence of rationality, dogma takes over. Much of Sarkar’s Neohumanist discourses are concerned with the means to recognise and overcome social dogmas. As defined by Sarkar:

A dogma is an idea beyond which the mind is not permitted to go.

Geo-sentiments and socio-sentiments are dogmas because, by definition, they establish a boundary between self and other which is not to be crossed. Even humanism becomes a dogma when it cannot embrace the natural world.

Study (educating oneself) and rationality are essential to overcome dogma. In addition, socio-sentiments succumb when challenged by the Principle of Social Equality. Recall that within every socio-sentiment lies a superiority complex, a selfish belief that one has a right to privilege. Neohumanism is fundamentally egalitarian. It promotes the Principle of Social Equality which it sets in opposition to the Principle of Selfish Pleasure.

Identifying dogmas is not easy because the boundary of an idea is not always immediately apparent and, as previously observed, the emotions maintaining that boundary can be very satisfying. Hence all of the means offered by Neohumanism are required to challenge dogmas:

- devotional sentiment
- a subtle mind which sees what is hidden to most
- service mindedness
- virtue ethics
- rationality
Sentimentality based on rationality is the strongest force in the universe. And sentimentality without rationality takes the form of, or rather the distortion of dogma.93

KEY IDEAS

• Rationality is that which conforms to reason and reason is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgements logically.

• Rationality must be consistent with collective well-being. It is always life-affirming.

• The path of rationality is discrimination.

• Sentimentality based on rationality is the strongest force in the universe.

• A dogma is an idea beyond which the mind is not permitted to go.

• Concentrated study, the exercise of rationality and holding on to the Principle of Social Equality are all essential in the struggle against dogmas.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• Does rationality squash creativity? See the following article for consideration of this question.94

• Rationality implies a logical consistency between action and purpose. There are two accepted kinds of logic, deductive and inductive. What is the difference between them and how are they used? Which kind of logic is implied in the context of Neohumanism?

• A dogma is an idea. Can an idea be unethical, or can only actions be unethical?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Explicit teaching about logic and its place in life.

• Apply different logics to real situations and discuss outcomes; for example, finding money in the street; eating healthy vegetables one does not like; calculating the correct change at the shops.

• Scan the newspapers and discuss possible examples of dogmatic ideas. Discuss historical examples of dogma. Apply logic to them. Is a dogma the same as a lie?
Critical thinking

*Critical thinking* implies something more than rationality. If rationality is the application of reason to sentiments which are ‘visible’, then critical thinking is the application of reason to *coax invisible* sentiments and motivations out into the open – to make them visible. In the primary school classroom, critical thinking helps students and teachers alike become more conscious of how they use their minds. It also helps them become more aware of the cultural environment in which they live. In this section, we examine two topics that involve critical thinking: introspection and pseudo-culture.

Introspection – knowing one’s Self

In the early stages of a child’s development, the layers of his/her mind unfold without conscious effort. Then at some point, the unfolding of mind ceases to be ‘automatic’. Learning increasingly requires conscious effort (work!). But the intellectual rewards of an expanding mind more than justify the work done.

At some further point in a child’s development, the unfolding of subtler layers of mind requires *introspection* or *self-reflection*, rather than acquisition of book knowledge. The reward for this kind of work is *wisdom*. But introspection is not always easy, for a simple reason:

> A blade cuts things but not itself.
> Eyes see everything except themselves.

That is, introspection requires the mind’s ‘eye’ to turn inward and ‘to look at itself’. It requires that the *self* (the ‘eye’ with which the mind ‘sees’) shifts to a subtler layer of mind and that portion of mind which was previously hidden in the mists of the unconscious now becomes conscious, that is, it becomes an object of thought. As an analogy, a person who wears blue-tinted glasses sees everything in blue. To see the world differently, they must be persuaded to take off their glasses. It frequently takes a life-crisis to make us look inward. For example, after a meltdown we ask in anguish: “What led to this? “How can I prevent it happening again?” Introspection can also be an examination of conscience. “How can I avoid making the same mistake again?”

From a Neohumanist point of view, meditation is one such form of internal work. But it is also the work done by children in Restorative Practice, when they attempt to shine the light of consciousness onto their behaviour and their relationships.

<< Making the unconscious, conscious, and making the invisible, visible, is the education which liberates. 

This remains true at any age. >>
So far, we have discussed critical thinking as if it were a purely individual concern. We now consider a different kind of critical thinking, one which requires that we turn our ‘mind’s eye’ to an examination of our collective self, that is the society and culture in which we are completely immersed.

**KEY IDEAS**

- Critical thinking requires introspection, that is, knowing one’s Self.
- Making the unconscious, conscious, and making the invisible, visible, *is the education which liberates*

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

- How does meditation help to develop insight, self-awareness?

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

- Use a well-known powerful speech e.g. from Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela or any positive persuasive message and apply critical thinking. Are there hidden deeper ‘truths’ in the text?
- Encourage introspective thought processes through diary writing or journaling.
- Encourage reflective practices after conflict to understand the ‘truths’ for each person involved.

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**Pseudo-culture**

One of the darker but ubiquitous dangers in adult life is the encounter with seductive words that disguise a hidden intent. In the case of advertising and financial contracts, adults learn the hard way to read between the lines. Children are introduced to this murky aspect of life though fairy tales about the wolf in sheep’s clothing and Little Red Riding Hood. Neohumanism acknowledges this reality by observing that positive sentiments can be used to disguise a nefarious intent. Sarkar refers to *pseudo-humanism*, *pseudo-spirituality* and *pseudo-culture*.

It is not appropriate to expose young children to the cynicism that lies behind the use of pseudo-positive sentiments. Cautionary tales such as Little Red Riding Hood are hint enough. But teachers will want to beware false sentiments when selecting teaching materials. In this regard, Sarkar gives particular importance to *pseudo-culture*. 
Recall that culture has the same root as the verb *to cultivate*. What Neohumanist schools wish to cultivate is loving hearts and subtle minds and the culture of Neohumanist schools should reflect this intention. But the dominant culture of contemporary Western society is not so oriented. Consider the following:

- By the age of 14, the average American child has seen 11,000 murders on TV.\(^9^9\)
- The average cartoon depicts 26 violent incidents.

Research indicates that children who see violence frequently on television can become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others and come to view aggression as an acceptable way of solving problems.\(^1^0^0\)

Common sense suggests that something is not right here. The Western preoccupation with death and violence cannot be healthy, particularly for children. Consider the following:

- The child’s brain is very plastic. It is a ‘one-shot learner’ – it learns an association of images and ideas in just one exposure. This is how children learn a first language without effort.
- The brain becomes less plastic with age. For example, after puberty it is hard to learn a second language. But also, it becomes much harder to *unlearn* the experiences and sentiments acquired as a child.

Discussions about the effect of violence in contemporary culture are complicated by commerce – violent films and video-games make big money. Scientific studies attempting to shed light on the consequences of virtual-violence are confounded by the inherent uncertainty of scientific research.\(^1^0^1\) Common sense is required here. It is surely preferable that young children are exposed to positive images, themes and ideas. Such debates need not be puritan. Children love playing games with goodies and baddies (‘cops and robbers’) where they play with fear, danger, vice and virtue. What is being questioned here is the pre-occupation of Western culture with violence and murder perpetrated by deeply twisted minds within a cynical story line.

There is however a pseudo-culture grey-zone that is much more difficult to negotiate – it concerns those cultural expressions which keep the subtle dimensions of life *invisible*. In this category would be Hollywood films which portray the consumerist Middle-America lifestyle as the norm and which are devoid of nobler sentiments. The grey-zone will always invite debate because it is easy to be unaware of something that is missing, especially when it is subtle. The issue is to be decided by critical thinking and not dogmatic definitions.

Bollywood movies are a case in point. Some people hate them, others love them – but this kind of debate misses the point.

One of the currents that Neo-humanist schools find themselves swimming against is what is termed “pseudo-culture”, the homogenous (mostly American) music, films, and television shows that are designed not to uplift the human spirit, but to gain short term profits for their makers. These
Neohumanist education products are finding their way into every corner of the world, and eroding local cultural expressions and sentiments. This raging current of cultural products is countered in Neo-humanist schools by working to develop local art and craft forms, by media literacy and the development of a critical social/political awareness, and by fostering the creative transmission of cherished local values to future generations (through plays, murals, literature, and other forms of expression).  

How does this translate into practical guidelines for a teacher? Eric Jacobson, the principal of the Neohumanist school in New York (The Long Island Progressive School) suggests that the Neohumanist teacher must first understand the priorities in teaching literacy: He lists them in order of importance as:

1. to develop good taste
2. to establish a reading habit
3. to acquire comprehension and analysis skills etc.

Most schools would place literacy skills at the top of this list.

Of course, Jacobson’s list raises the question, what is good taste? He lists five qualities of good taste and these are the criteria by which he selects books and other teaching materials. They should:

- contain moral content
- expand our mental horizons
- help us to re-evaluate beliefs
- reveal new perspectives
- inspire us to dream big.

Once again, we return to the word cultivate. Praiseworthy cultural expressions cultivate loving hearts and subtle minds, but in an entertaining and emotionally moving way. They inspire virtue and they stir universal sentiments.

The mental effort to discriminate culture from pseudo-culture requires rationality, critical thinking and discrimination. When teachers exercise these faculties to select classroom teaching materials, the same faculties are vicariously imbibed by the plastic minds of their young students.
KEY IDEAS

• The word *culture* is derived from the verb *to cultivate*, that is to nurture and to grow from seed.

• Neohumanist school cultivate loving hearts, subtle minds, service mindedness, good character, rationality and balance in life.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• What are two films or television shows that you have seen recently that you would put in the category of pseudo-culture? And two that you would consider culture in the true sense of the word? What are your reasons?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Have students consider popular advertisements. Analyse them for their intention and to uncover hidden messages or dogmas.

• Discuss well known fairy/folk tales. Analyse them with respect to the overt story and their ‘hidden message’.
Theme 6: A harmony of our inner and outer worlds

Neo-ethics
A synthesis of East and West
The sixth and final theme in this introduction to Neohumanist Education is the *harmony of inner and outer life*. It is helpful to consider this theme from the perspective of ecology. Here we are using the word *ecology* in a very general sense, not just biological. Ecology tells us that life is a ‘whole’ composed of many ‘parts’ and that the parts must work in balance and coordination if the ‘whole’ is to be healthy. The emphasis in ecology is not on the parts *per se* but on the interactions and relations between them. And each ‘whole’ is ‘part’ of a greater ‘whole’. And the wholes are more than the sum of their parts. What Neohumanism adds to this ecological perspective, is that the parts are not purely biological and physical. The inner mental world of humans (individual and social) is also part of the dynamism of life and therefore students at Neohumanist schools learn that ecology is both internal and external.

Inner-ecology is about maintaining balance in one’s mental life, walking the fine line between extroversion-introversion, superiority complex-inferiority complex and mania-depression. Outer-ecology is about humans living in balance with nature. For life to flourish, balance must be maintained between all its dimensions, internal-external, physical-mental-spiritual, individual-social. Hence a Neohumanist education is an education for Life.

The word *balance* seems very mundane, hardly worthy of a place in a system of education. Yet all the preceding five Neohumanist themes come to nothing without maintaining balance in life. Indeed, Sarkar has stated that “to maintain balance in life is the spiritual path”.

This sixth theme is a vast topic. Here we attend to just two ideas: Neo-ethics and a balance of cultures.

<< All the preceding five Neohumanist themes come to nothing without maintaining balance in life. Indeed, “to maintain balance in life is the spiritual path” >>
Neo-ethics

In this section, we introduce an idea that we side-stepped in Theme Four, “Virtue and good character”: the idea of a supreme ethical principle that acts as an umbrella for all virtues, commandments and moral codes. The existence of a supreme ethic has exercised minds since well before the ancient Greeks. The Old and New Testaments of the Bible offer *The Greatest Commandment* as such an ethic. It has two parts, here expressed in its New Testament form: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”.

The famous German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, proposed what he considered to be a rational supreme ethic: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”. In other words, do only that which, if done by everyone, would create a desirable world.

After completing his discourses on Neohumanism, Sarkar introduced a two-part ethical principle which he named *Neo-ethics*. It appears to be his statement of a supreme ethical principle arising out of the philosophy of Neohumanism. The original wording contains special terminology, so they are presented here in paraphrased version:

1. Spiritual realisation, being that which motivates virtue, sustains a subtle mind, and drives social progress, “must be accepted as the supreme desideratum in human life”.

2. There should be a “happy adjustment and balanced blending” between the many dimensions of life (physical, emotional, sentimental, intellectual, social, aesthetic, moral and spiritual).

The first principle deals with the goal of life and the second with how to get there. A consequence of the first principle is that all sentiments, desires, thoughts, actions, values and moral codes get their justification from life’s singular goal. However, the second principle suggests that living in the world requires continual adjustment because the external worlds of matter and mind are forever changing.

It is important that teachers at Neohumanist schools try to understand these two principles. They do require some contemplation. Perhaps the following metaphor will help.

Suppose a yachtsman charts a course across the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco. The destination is singular. But every hour of every day he must adjust rudder and sails to account for shifting currents, winds and swell. Every moment presents a different circumstance – if no
adjustments are made, the destination will never be reached. On the other hand, without
the destination in mind, all that seamanship has no purpose.

Two kinds of knowledge

Consideration of the two principles of Neo-ethics brings us to an understanding that there
are two kinds of knowledge, spiritual and worldly. Spiritual knowledge is concerned with
that which does not change. Worldly knowledge (the domain of the psychological and
physical sciences) is concerned with the universe of mind and matter. But these worlds are
forever changing and therefore scientific knowledge will always be relative and conditional.

Consider how life has changed since the time of the ancient Greeks. Today Greek science is
only of interest to historians, but their wisdom (as for example, Aristotle’s account of
type) is still relevant over two thousand years later and will likely be relevant after
another 2000 years. Wisdom is the ability to discriminate between that which does not
change (and therefore can offer lasting contentment) versus that which is ephemeral and
ultimately disappoints if one grasps it in the expectation of lasting happiness.

<< From the Neohumanist perspective, both spiritual
and worldly knowledge are required in life.
The trick is to remember the role of each. >>

Returning to the metaphor of the sailor:
His goal is to sail under the great Golden Gate Bridge into
San Francisco Bay. This is what keeps him going through
the difficult and dangerous parts of his journey.
Navigational knowledge and sea craft help him maintain a
course, but they are not, in themselves, the purpose of his
journey.

KEY IDEAS

• The first principle of Neo-ethics concerns the goal of life and the second with
  how to get there.

• There are two kinds of knowledge, spiritual knowledge and worldly knowledge.
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• Sarkar describes life as a ceaseless fight to restore an unstable equilibrium.\textsuperscript{106} Consider some physiological and psychological examples of this idea.

• To maintain balance in life is the spiritual path! Comment on this thought.

• After you have retired, and you are contemplating your life as a teacher, what will you consider a successful career?

IN THE CLASSROOM

• Have your students consider the idea of life balance – how can they achieve it? Is it only about a balance of play, sport and study?

• Have your students consider the concept of psychological development with age.

• Drawing and/or writing projects that articulate the things I need in order to be content and happy.

In the introduction to this study guide, we noted that the first three themes of a Neohumanist education, expansion of heart, mind and community collectively give meaning and purpose to life. We have now come the full circle - to pursue these three endeavours is to satisfy the first principle of Neo-ethics because they represent the path to spiritual realisation. By contrast the last three themes, virtue, rationality and harmony of one’s inner and outer worlds, collectively breathe vitality into human life. Learning these skills satisfies the second principle of Neo-ethics. To find both purpose and vitality in life and to pursue them to their pinnacle-point, this is to realise human potential.
A Synthesis of East and West

We introduced Neohumanism as a synthesis of two great civilising traditions, European humanism and Asian spirituality. Elsewhere Sarkar was explicit: the future of humanity depends on a “happy synthesis” of East and West. Returning to this thought is a fitting way to end this introduction to Neohumanism.

“The Asian countries, in spite of their long heritage of morality and spirituality, have been subject to great humiliation during periods of foreign invasion. While the higher knowledge of philosophy propagated by the oriental sages and saints has been accepted as a unique contribution to the store house of human culture and civilization, the people of these lands could not resist the foreign invaders. The history of all the Asian countries, a region of so many religions, has been dominated by foreign powers for centuries together. This imbalance brought about their material deprivation and political subjugation.

“On the other hand, the West is completely obsessed with physical development. It has made spectacular progress in the fields of politics, economics, science, warfare, etc. In fact, it has made so much material progress that it seems to be the sovereign master of the water, land and air. But for all that, it is not socially content and miserably lacks spiritual wealth. Unlike the East, in the West plenty of wealth has created a crisis. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that no country can progress harmoniously with only one-sided development.

“Therefore, it behoves both the East and the West to accept a synthetic ideology that stands for a happy synthesis between the two. Here, the East can help the West spiritually, whereas the materialistic West can extend its material help to the East. Both will be mutually benefited if they accept this golden policy of give and take...

“In the educational system of the East, there is the predominant element of spirituality... So, the people of the orient could not but be spiritual in their thoughts and actions. Whereas there is, in the Western system of education, a clear and unilateral emphasis on mundane knowledge. So to build up an ideal human society in the future, the balanced emphasis on the two is indispensable. 107

Neohumanist schools strive to achieve this balance, yet no two Neohumanist schools will ever be the same. They can never be formulaic. They will always be a work in progress. They work within local culture and of course they also express the commitments and enthusiasms of their principal and teachers. But they do share a common purpose – to cultivate within their students the six Neohumanist character traits: loving hearts, subtle minds, service mindedness, virtuous character, rational discrimination and a harmony of inner and outer life.
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

• Think back to when you studied to become a teacher. What was the balance of course content? In what ways would you change the content of your teacher training to better reflect balance in life?

• What might a global culture look like?
The human story

Introducing the Cycle of Creation

Notes for Teachers
Introducing the Cycle of Creation

Neohumanism is not just about education. It is also a way of understanding our lives and the world around us. It broaches the big questions that humans have been pondering since they became human: Where did the universe come from? How did humans get here? What is our purpose, our future?

The human story, as told from a Neohumanist perspective, is called the Cycle of Creation. It is introduced here in the barest outline, using the language of adults, not children. Teachers can decide if and how they convey the story to children.
Much of the story is familiar to the educated Western mind. Humans evolved from apes who evolved from mammals who evolved from... and so on. And of course, human beings did not evolve in isolation but as part of the web of life on Earth. And it seems that life emerged on a cooling Earth as soon as it possibly could have, around 5 billion years ago – possibly more than once because life’s first faltering steps were likely obliterated by monster meteor strikes that were a feature of Earth’s early history.

We know that the molecules of life are distributed through the deep reaches of space and we know that the atoms of which those molecules are made were forged in tremendous stellar explosions or supernovae. Human beings are truly children of the stars!
But stars can be traced back to gas clouds which exploded forth from the ‘big bang’ about 13-14 billion years ago. At the present time, the human story cannot be pushed back any further than this, although some physicists believe that our universe is just one in a succession of universes!

Neohumanism respects the science that gives us this story, but does not consider it to be the whole story. It tells us only the physical part of the story. What’s missing are the feeling parts played by mind and consciousness. We get a clue that something is missing because it remains a mystery how matter, which is supposedly dead and inert, can become alive, sentient and culturally creative.

From a Neohumanist perspective, humans are conscious because the stuff of which they are made is conscious. Charles Birch, a former professor of biology at the University of New South Wales, puts it this way:

There is but one theory known to me, that casts any positive light on the ability of brain cells to furnish us with feelings. It is that brain cells can feel! What gives brain cells feelings? It is by the same logic that we may say – their molecules. And so on down the line to those individuals we call electrons, protons and the like. The theory is that things that feel are made of things that feel.

As Birch understands it, the evolution of life on Earth has not been a five-billion year walk in the dark – survival of the fittest acting on blind random mutations. Rather, evolution has a direction. Consciousness, which initially lies covert within matter, becomes ever more powerfully expressed through increasingly complex plants, animals and humans, and through the societies which they create. Just as a hatchling-bird struggles to escape its shell, so too, consciousness struggles to escape its physical confines.

An exciting development in recent years is that scientists are beginning to recognise consciousness where they never saw it before. For example, mammals are known to have many of the same ‘molecules of emotion’ (adrenalin, oxytocin, etc) as humans, which implies that they should also have some of the same internal feelings associated with those molecules. And this begs the question: why should feelings (and sentience) be limited only to mammals?

Some scientists tell us that planet Earth itself should be considered a living entity, Gaia. And a small but growing number of scientists are even telling us that the universe is alive.

As we recognize the universe to be conscious, intelligent, alive, and all of us co-creators, what is our role? Are we not the creative edge of God? We are the universe inventing itself. And that intelligent Cosmos, or God – whatever you call it; doesn’t matter which word you use as long as we agree that it’s alive, intelligent, conscious, and creative – that is looking through your eyes, working through your hands, walking on your feet. Isn’t that exciting? How does the universe get to know itself? Through all of us and what we are doing.
This is a very different human story, and it invites a different kind of relationship with the living and non-living worlds. It reminds us of the stories told by poets, mystics and indigenous people, but this time, underpinned by science.

If we accept that the great variety of animals and plants on planet Earth and the dazzling qualities of human beings have all evolved from physical matter, this prompts another question: where did matter come from? To answer this question, we turn to ideas that emerged in the early 20th century as scientists struggled with puzzles posed by the new quantum physics. It appeared as if the world of matter particles owes its existence to a hidden world, just as foam particles dancing on the crests of ocean waves owe their existence to those underlying waves. All physics can see is the foam.

Squint your eyes and imagine that you can see only the foam. The water beneath is invisible. Could you deduce the existence of the ocean by observing only the foam? Look up at the Milky-way tonight. This is our home galaxy. What are the invisible oceans at play behind what you see?

A prominent British philosopher of the day, Cyril Joad, expressed it this way:

“... behind the world which physics studies, there is another world. This other world is conceived as a mental or spiritual unity.”

This is a revolutionary idea. It implies that the universe is filled with both matter and mind. It means that Earth is bathed in both physical radiation and mental radiation from the sun. And even in the outermost reaches of space where there is seeming complete emptiness, there remains an inner-most part, a consciousness that is both aware and creative.
The above image is a visual metaphor encapsulating the Cycle of Creation. Of course, it is simplistic, but it can be a useful first step towards getting the ‘bigger picture’. Clockwise from the top, it is a two-part cycle. In the first half (right side), consciousness devolves into the fundamental particles of mind and matter, the raw materials or building blocks of the universe. In the second half of the cycle (left side), those raw materials evolve, that is, combine into the complex machinery of life. And as evolution proceeds, the consciousness lying covert within those raw materials becomes increasingly expressed through plant, animal and human structures. The process of evolution is far from over and we can only guess at how covert consciousness may become more expressed in future ages.

This is the Cycle of Creation in its barest outline, a skeletal version. More detail can be obtained elsewhere. Another helpful analogy is the water cycle, which describes how water cycles around the Earth (see following page).
It was stated at the beginning of this handbook that Neohumanism can be approached as a synthesis of European humanism and Asian spirituality. The Cycle of Creation, as described above, can likewise be approached as a synthesis of Western cosmology with Asian philosophy, particularly the philosophies of Tantra and Vedanta. Neohumanism is by no means the first to recognise links between Western science and Eastern philosophy. The early founders of quantum physics turned to the East to find metaphors for the perplexing nature of the sub-atomic world. A series of books in the 1970s (with catchy titles such as “The Tao of Physics” and “The Dancing Wu-Li Masters”) also explored these links in depth. By far the most comprehensive is the work of Ken Wilber who has been referenced on several occasions in this handbook.
The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum

The Cycle of Creation tells the human story. It situates human beings within an inconceivably large universe and gives their lives a meaning. However, the story is of very little use if it cannot be translated into progressive teaching practices within Neohumanist schools. It should offer inspiration about human potential and about the future of humanity.

A challenge for teachers is to engage their students with the Cycle of Creation story in an age-appropriate way. The story can have different names and flavours as the years progress. For example:

- **Kindergarten**: The Circle of Love
- **School**: The Cycle of Creation
- **University**: Cosmology, philosophy, psychology, etc

A Neohumanist curriculum cannot be deeply prescriptive. Local teachers and culture must be allowed to express themselves. Previous chapters in this handbook have already offered six themes to blend into a Neohumanist curriculum. What follows are some additional ideas emerging out of the Cycle of Creation story that may help to give additional structure to a Neohumanist curriculum.

1. **The internal and external worlds**

As with any good story, there are two essential ingredients, plot and themes. The plot is what happens, how the Cycle unfolds; the themes are the moral and spiritual lessons learned as the story unfolds. The plot unfolds in the external world; the themes become apparent in the internal world. The internal is as important as the external and deserves equal attention when the teacher prepares her lesson plans.

The external story will take the child from gazing at the stars in the night sky to, eventually, a study of cosmology at university; and from observing animals in the school grounds to a study of evolution and ecology. Obvious feelings to encourage are wonder, awe and reverence. This is not hard because the creation story grows in magnitude as the child grows. Even adults feel awe when they ponder the sheer size of the universe or the complexity of the machinery inside a tiny living cell.

The internal themes are moral and spiritual. They concern our growth in stature as human beings and the acquisition of wisdom. Spiritual feelings are those of connection, belonging and, most importantly, the feeling that “I am not alone – the force which guides the stars guides me”. This feeling is also easy to encourage in children. It is only a materialist education that puts an objective distance between the child and his/her world.
Topic 1  |  The internal and external worlds
--- | ---
Objectives  | To recognise that every school topic or skill has two sides: the technical/objective side and the internal/subjective side.
 | To recognise that the internal/subjective side has two dimensions, the feeling or experiential dimension and the meaning dimension, i.e. the contribution that a topic/skill makes in giving purpose to the student’s life.

2 The Cycle of Creation is a journey full of drama

Very few people get through life without the intrusion of drama and, all too often, tragedy. Despite the pain, the positive side is that drama and tragedy help us to grow in stature, to acquire wisdom and to discover the spiritual dimension to our lives. The Cycle of Creation is drama on an epic scale: there is loss, followed by a journey of great struggle, that resolves eventually into a return home, the fulfilment. All cultures have their equivalent of the Greek myths, legends and tragedies. Even inspiring children’s stories often follow a trajectory of tragedy followed by resolution. Consider *The Railway Children* and *The Lion*. In our times, the real-life stories of many refugees are of loss and resolution.

Primary school children are obviously too young to be plunged into real-life drama, but their minds can be shaped by two important ideas: 1. That life is a journey along a road full of surprises and with many tests and challenges; and 2. That to travel successfully along this road, each of us will need the qualities of a warrior hero.

Topic 2  |  The Warrior Hero
--- | ---
Objectives  | To acquire the warrior virtues, such as, courage, fortitude, perseverance, stamina, self-discipline, ability to accept discomfort.

3 Human stories are the same everywhere

Creation stories taking the form of a cycle are ubiquitous in cultures around the world, especially in indigenous cultures. For example, in Australian Aboriginal culture, there is the return to the ‘dreaming’. Aldous Huxley, in a study of the ubiquity of cyclical creation stories, called it the *perennial philosophy*. Consider this centuries old Sufi aphorism:

Just as an ocean wave breaks on the shore and ebbs back to the ocean,
Just as sparks burst from the fire and fall back into the fire,
So too, human beings emerge from consciousness and return to consciousness.

It is important for school children to learn that despite the apparent differences from one culture to another, humans everywhere face the same kinds of struggle: the
struggle to survive and earn a living, the struggle to express inner subtle feelings, the struggle to give meaning to their lives. In these respects, the people who live in Paris are no different from those who live in Nairobi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 3</th>
<th>Human stories are similar everywhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>The objectives of NHE Theme 1: Expansion of heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The objectives of NHE Theme 2: Expansion of mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To discover the peoples of the world and their stories.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional “Social Studies” objectives including those of subjects such as geography, history, literature and culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Discovering the universe of mind

In our evolutionary journey so far, humans have been preoccupied with material survival. Today, we have reached a point where we appear to be masters of the physical universe. But rather than being at the end of a journey, we find ourselves at the threshold of something new and intangible, the universe of mind. Mind is a vast universe that humans have hardly begun to explore. We are like Columbus leaving the safety of land, setting sail across the ocean for the first time, with every possibility of falling off the edge of what is known. Each Neohumanist school should have a program that introduces its students to the ‘anatomy’ of mind: the sensory/motor mind which interacts with matter, the rational mind, the intuitive mind, the discriminating mind and the universal mind which interacts with Spirit. Given a properly nourishing education, these subtle layers of mind unfold progressively as a child grows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 4</th>
<th>Discovering the universe of mind</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Objectives of NHE Theme 2: Expansion of mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘five layers’ of mind as a schema for understanding the mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn how the brain works.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To develop and explore the sense and motor organs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To explore the emotions, reason, intuition and psychology more generally.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To recognise the special characteristics of ‘human nature’</td>
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<td>To develop aesthetic sensibilities through music, creative writing, performing and visual arts programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To recognise the importance of universalism and spirituality for a healthy mind and a happy life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Which road to take? The crude or the subtle?

Objectively defined, \textit{crude} refers to that which can be easily perceived with the senses and \textit{subtle} means that which can only be perceived with the intuition. Returning to the metaphor that life is a journey, the road we travel has many forks, each of which requires making moral and spiritual choices. The best choice is seldom the easiest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 5</th>
<th>Which road to take? The crude or the subtle?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Objectives of NHE Theme 4: Virtue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To recognise moral dilemmas and the importance of moral decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives of NHE Theme 5: Rationality and dogma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To recognise the difference between culture and pseudo-culture.</td>
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<td>To recognise the difference between “art for art sake” and “art for service and expansion of mind”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To recognise the difference between a life for one’s self and a life of service.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6 The outward journey – the Inanimate Sciences

From a curriculum point of view, the path of devolution includes the inanimate sciences, such as physics, chemistry, cosmology and all their sub-disciplines. As shown in the above Cycle of Creation image, the path of devolution also has a mental component.

The idea that there is a hidden world of mind behind the observable material world is fascinating for students of physics but of little relevance to young children. However, there is a feeling component to the first phase of the Cycle of Creation.

Consciousness is a state of tranquillity, equilibrium, poise and completeness. This feeling is lost when the “One” becomes “many” — the original equilibrium is disturbed. Throughout life, humans must deal with feelings of incompleteness — in fact, we might call this feeling the ‘human condition’. We attempt to fill our incompleteness with possessions, friends and hobbies. But humans have a unique characteristic: their desires are limitless, so ultimately, only something limitless can satisfy the longing for completeness. Consciousness has this quality and hence only continual expansion of heart and mind can ultimately satisfy the desire for completeness. This idea underlies the values promoted at Neohumanist schools.
### Topic 6

**The Outward Journey — the inanimate sciences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To acquire the knowledge and the methods of the inanimate sciences, such as physics, chemistry, cosmology, mathematics, logic, computing/coding, artificial intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To recognise that the longing for wholeness cannot ultimately be satisfied by mastery over the finite material world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7 The Homeward Journey

The return journey of the Cycle of Creation is one of *synthesis*. Consider the following sequence: billions of atoms combine to make a living cell; billions of cells cooperate over evolutionary time to produce, eventually, a human being; and billions of human beings cooperate to produce a human society.

Of course, there are many intermediate smaller steps – this is the broad outline. The important idea here is that the formation of a global human society from disparate groups of people scattered around the world also requires a synthesis. Furthermore, with each synthetic step, the *whole* is more than the sum of its many parts. And each synthetic step involves both physical and mental ingredients. This is known as a *systems* view of life.

### Topic 7

**The Homeward Journey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of NHE Theme 2: Expansion of mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire the knowledge and the methods of the animate sciences, such as biology, human biology, microbiology, ecology, genetics, evolution, health and mental wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire a <em>systems view of life</em>, that everything is connected to everything else, and that parts combine to make wholes that are more than the sum of parts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8 The personal journey

The human part of the homeward journey has two strands, the personal and the social. Neither can be neglected. We deal with the collective journey in the next section. The personal homeward journey is the endeavour to become more subtle, in other words, to expand one’s heart and mind. Subtlety and expansion of heart and mind go together. A subtle mind requires a healthy body. The synthesis of billions of atoms and cells to maintain a healthy body requires continuous commitment. This is why Neohumanist schools promote healthy outdoor exercises and games, yoga postures, vegetarian diet, etc.

The word *yoga* means ‘union’, that is, the expansion of the individual heart and mind towards eventual union with the consciousness of the cosmos. Yoga helps liberate the
desire latent within all children to expand their hearts and minds. But to achieve this, children must also acquire good values, rationality and the art of living a balanced life. In this way, Neohumanist schools prepare every student to make a positive contribution to the human story. Each of us has an individual duty to help advance the Cycle of Creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 8</th>
<th>My personal journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Objectives | Objectives of NHE Theme 6: Balance in life  
To acquire an understanding of my life as a journey.  
To understand the many ways in which my life can be successful.  
To understand the importance of healthy living and simple living.  
To recognise the importance of my spiritual life. |

9 Our journey together

The other side of a person’s participation in the path of synthesis is the collective effort to establish a human society. Humanity has not yet formed a human society to be proud of. From the Neohumanist perspective, humans have reached a critical turning point. Do we take the path of those who want to build walls between people (the reverse of synthesis, sometimes called the analytical path) or do we embrace the vision of a global society having many colourful, cultural expressions?

Humans are deeply sentimental. We can be motivated by sentiment to perform extraordinary deeds, both very good and very bad. A sentiment is an idea powered by an emotion. Much of our contemporary world is driven by destructive sentiments, selfish ideas powered by fearful emotions. Neohumanist schools encourage students to associate universal ideas (we are one human family) with positive emotions (love, compassion, optimism). Only constructive sentiments can break down the barriers between people and inspire them to build a better world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 9</th>
<th>Our journey together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Objectives | Objectives of NHE Theme 3: Service  
To understand society as a group of people moving together.  
To recognise the structural components of society: the private, the public sectors and civil society.  
To understand the cooperative system, how organisations work, how governments work (civics).  
To understand how people make decisions in groups.  
To develop negotiation skills |
IS THERE LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS?

The Kepler Space Observatory, launched in 2009, has discovered thousands of exo-planets, so many that scientists are now confident that most, if not all, the billions of stars in our galaxy have one or more planets.

10 The deep future

Continuing the sequence of steps along the path of synthesis, consider the next synthetic step. What happens when billions of ‘human societies’ begin to cooperate? What is the something extra that emerges which is more than the sum of its parts?

<< At present, we will have to look at everything in this world from the perspective of our solar system, even if we do not yet look at things from a cosmological perspective. We must move ahead, looking upon this solar system as one integral entity.

But in the future, human beings from other planets and satellites will join our movement; we will have to build our society together with all. We will have to look upon this whole world [i.e. cosmos] as an integral entity. >>

— P. R. Sarkar, The Importance of Society, 1978
The above question stretches even the adult mind. Paradoxically, children’s minds can be stretched into the future by having them consider contemporary issues. Contemporary issues are usually controversial because they demand humanity to make choices today that will shape the future, perhaps the distant future. Hence, our last topic for a Neohumanist curriculum is “Contemporary Issues”. In the early 21st Century, there is no shortage of them!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 10</th>
<th>Contemporary issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>That students become familiar with a range of ‘contemporary issues’.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That students demonstrate an ability to think rationally and critically about these issues.</td>
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<td>That students can engage in discussion and debate about contemporary issues in an effective manner.</td>
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<td>That students can project their minds into the future, beyond their personal concerns and even beyond the bounds of planet Earth.</td>
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<td>That students understand that the choices we make now have consequences for our future lives, perhaps far into the future.</td>
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<td>That students have some understanding of the following ‘contemporary issues’ and why they present themselves as ‘issues’:</td>
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<td>• AI and robotics: Will robots take my job or look after me when I get sick.</td>
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<td>• Space travel: Will I go to Mars when I grow up?</td>
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<td>• Life in outer space: What will I say when I meet an ET?</td>
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<td>• Humans in the future: Will my great-grandchildren look like ET in the film?</td>
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<td>• Climate change: What will the weather be like when I grow up?</td>
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<td>• Refugees: journeys with no choices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pollution and the Age of Plastic: When archaeologists dig up my bones in several thousand years, will they have to dig through layers of plastic rubbish?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum
A developmentally sensitive sequence of Themes and Topics

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<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Topic 1 The Internal and External Worlds</th>
<th>Topic 2 The Warrior Hero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years K-2</td>
<td>My Internal World</td>
<td>The Warrior Virtues – (subset)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>Explore imagination, feeling, perception</td>
<td>Assertiveness, Confidence, Courage, Determination, Flexibility, Forgiveness, Honour, Justice, Peacefulness, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandings</td>
<td>Thankfulness, gratitude</td>
<td>• Experiencing through story and drama</td>
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<td>Love</td>
<td>• Vocab development</td>
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<td>My Outside World</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caring and being Kind</td>
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<td>Friendliness</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 3-4</th>
<th>My Internal World</th>
<th>Myths and Legends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does this fit in my world?</td>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>Explore warrior qualities through myths and legends from different cultures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive Outlook</td>
<td>Look for similarities in different cultural stories.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My Outside World</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consideration to others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Empathy for others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co-operation with others</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 5-6</th>
<th>My internal World</th>
<th>Personal Warrior Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Order Thinking</td>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>Understanding the quest stories, universal experiences of fear/loss, struggle and fulfillment and how they drive the warrior qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reverence</td>
<td>Stories about people who demonstrate courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Outside World</td>
<td>Courage as Moral/Mental/Physical/Emotional acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>• Expand concepts through story, discussion, current events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unity of purpose</td>
<td>• Invite speakers who have demonstrated courage in their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>• Besides courage, there are many other warrior virtues to explore, such as, fortitude, perseverance, stamina, self-discipline, ability to accept discomfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmony between the inside and outside worlds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do I present myself? Do my words and actions fit with my inside world?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Neohumanist education • 105

### The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum

A developmentally sensitive sequence of Themes and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Topic 3</th>
<th>Topic 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Stories are the same everywhere</td>
<td>Discovering the Universe of Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years K-2</td>
<td>Exploration of immediate environment.</td>
<td>How the Brain works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>- Family</td>
<td>- Brain function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandings</td>
<td>- Local community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Curriculum</td>
<td>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</td>
<td>Introduction to stillness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation - My Personal World</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Guided visualisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 1</td>
<td>How my World is Different from the past and can change the future</td>
<td>- Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 2</td>
<td>Our past and present connections to people and places.</td>
<td>- Early meditation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 3-4</td>
<td>Exploration of Australian Social Environment</td>
<td>Introduction to sentience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this fit in my world?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Curriculum HASS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 3</td>
<td>Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make.</td>
<td>Linking feelings to actions – the difference between emotion and reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 4</td>
<td>How people, places and environments interact, past and present</td>
<td>Theory of Mind – How do I know someone else has internal feelings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 5-6</td>
<td>Exploration of the World</td>
<td>Reflecting on actions/behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Order Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation – focus the mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Curriculum HASS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentience – do animals have feelings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 5</td>
<td>Australian communities – their past, present and possible futures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 6</td>
<td>Australia in the past and present and its connections with a diverse world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theories of Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Foundation concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- History of psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How emotion, reason and intuition work together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical perspectives around sentience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building mental stamina – concentration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focusing the mind – Meditation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum
A developmentally sensitive sequence of Themes and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Topic 5</th>
<th>Topic 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Which Road to take?</strong>  <strong>Towards a Subtle Mind.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Outward Journey</strong>  <strong>The Inanimate Sciences.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year K-2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Foundation Understandings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the Virtues?</td>
<td><strong>Foundation - The way objects move depends on a variety of factors,</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exploration</td>
<td><strong>including their size and shape</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Art responses</td>
<td>**Yr 1 - Everyday materials can be physically changed in a variety of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the Cardinal Human Values?</td>
<td><strong>ways</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exploratory activities</td>
<td><strong>Yr 2 - Different materials can be combined for a particular purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 3-4</strong></td>
<td><strong>How does this fit in my world?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is Culture and what is Pseudo-culture</td>
<td><strong>Yr 3 - A change of state between solid and liquid can be caused by</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What makes culture?</td>
<td><strong>adding or removing heat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What makes Pseudo Culture?</td>
<td><strong>Yr 4 - Natural and processed materials have a range of physical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence of Advertising.</td>
<td><strong>properties that can influence their use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virtues exploration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflective practices - art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 5-6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Higher Order Thinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td><strong>Yr 5 - Solids, liquids and gases have different observable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td><strong>properties and behave in different ways</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Yr 6 - Changes to materials can be reversible or irreversible</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum

A developmentally sensitive sequence of Themes and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Topic 7</th>
<th>Topic 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Nutrition&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Hygiene</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Keeping clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation Understandings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Gross motor exercise&lt;br&gt; - Cooperative games&lt;br&gt; - Dance&lt;br&gt; - Creative movement</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Explore virtue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year K-2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Explore virtue</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Nutrition&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hygiene</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Keeping clean</td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Gross motor exercise&lt;br&gt; - Cooperative games&lt;br&gt; - Dance&lt;br&gt; - Creative movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Homeward Journey</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Making a difference&lt;br&gt; - Selfless behaviour&lt;br&gt; - Giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Animate Sciences</strong></td>
<td><strong>My capabilities</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Strengths/challenges</td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Yoga&lt;br&gt; - Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation - Living things have basic needs, including food and water.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do I want to do for:</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Myself&lt;br&gt; - Others&lt;br&gt; - The world</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 1 - Living things live in different places where their needs are met.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Gross motor exercise&lt;br&gt; - Cooperative games&lt;br&gt; - Dance&lt;br&gt; - Creative movement</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Making a difference&lt;br&gt; - Selfless behaviour&lt;br&gt; - Giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 2 - Living things grow, change and have offspring similar to themselves.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 3-4</strong></td>
<td><strong>My capabilities</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Strengths/challenges</td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Yoga&lt;br&gt; - Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does this fit in my world?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do I want to do for:</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Myself&lt;br&gt; - Others&lt;br&gt; - The world</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Making a difference&lt;br&gt; - Selfless behaviour&lt;br&gt; - Giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 3 - Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hygiene</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Cleanliness</td>
<td><strong>Healthy exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Yoga&lt;br&gt; - Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 4 - Living things have life cycles.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Yoga&lt;br&gt; - Dance</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Making a difference&lt;br&gt; - Selfless behaviour&lt;br&gt; - Giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 5-6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Lifestyle</strong>&lt;br&gt; - What is a balanced life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Order Thinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
<td><strong>Healthy eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Sentience&lt;br&gt; - Eating for a balanced world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum Science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hygiene</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Sex education&lt;br&gt; - Personal hygiene</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Eating</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Vegetarianism&lt;br&gt; - Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 5 - Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them to survive in their environment.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Yoga&lt;br&gt; - Dance</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Making a difference&lt;br&gt; - Selfless behaviour&lt;br&gt; - Giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yr 6 - The growth and survival of living things are affected by physical conditions of their environment.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What could be my personal contribution to the world?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Cycle of Creation in the Curriculum
A developmentally sensitive sequence of Themes and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Topic 9</th>
<th>Topic 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Our Journey Together</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Deep Future</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years K-2</strong></td>
<td>Explore Family dynamics. How do families work together? What are family bonds?</td>
<td>Foundational thinking skills for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>How do families resolve conflicts?</td>
<td>• Sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandings</td>
<td>Explore friendships – how do friends treat each other?</td>
<td>• Cause/effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Imagining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• dreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 3-4</strong></td>
<td>Family structures – structure vs function. Friendship groups</td>
<td>What are we doing now that is going to affect the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this fit in</td>
<td>• Open/closed</td>
<td>• Eco studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my world?</td>
<td>• Who is inside/outside?</td>
<td>• Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resolving conflict</td>
<td>• Recycling – plastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugees – expanding the circle of embrace.</td>
<td>• Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years 5-6</strong></td>
<td>Collective emotions</td>
<td>Vision for the future of Human Beings – personal manifesto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Order</td>
<td>• Power of mob thinking</td>
<td>Artificial Intelligences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>• Popular ideas and the impact on personal decision making</td>
<td>Robotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical thinking – decision making</td>
<td>Humans exploring Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Society – Australian Curriculum</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading list


Notes


4 This is the third of three definitions in the Merriam-Webster.com/dictionary. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentiment


9 Ibid. See Figure 1 in Zak.


11 Ibid. Robert D. Putnam.


13 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, “Devotional Sentiment and Neo-humanism”, in Discourse 1, Liberation of Intellect. In fact, Sarkar used the term universal humanism as early 1957 to describe the ideal towards which human society is moving. It appears to anticipate Neohumanism which was introduced 25 years later.


19 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, “Devotional Sentiment and Neo-humanism”, in Discourse 1, Liberation of Intellect.

From *Introduction to a Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales.

Sahtouris is not the only biologist to break with materialism. She works with James Lovelock (of Gaia fame) and Lynn Margulis.


Leo Buscaglia, *ibid*.


Prabat Ranjan Sarkar, *Subhasita Samgaha Pt1: 6*

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, “Devotional Sentiment and Neohumanism”, Discourse 1 in *Liberation of Intellect*.

According to the yogic understanding, humans are capable of love because love is the very ‘substance’ of the Cosmos. This is in fact the deeper meaning of *Baba nam kevalam*. It is impossible to do justice to thousands of years of yogic scholarship in just one paragraph. The only purpose here is to provide the reader with some hint that behind the ‘eastern’ contribution to Neohumanism lies a long heritage. For more on devotional sentiment one can read Sarkar’s spiritual texts.

This is the motto of the Ananda Marga River School.

The Indian Government has recently announced that it will provide free yoga classes to its bureaucrats in order to promote their health and productivity. http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/mar/20/indian-civil-servants-to-get-free-daily-yoga-lessons


There are several standards for Romanising the spelling of Sanskrit words. Sarkar prefers the spelling *astaunga*. To avoid confusion, we have used the spelling typically found on Western web sites.

http://www.abc-of-yoga.com/health/glands.asp

Rudramohan, *Yoga Touch*. Three handbooks available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/zkz02tgev81sjwt/The%20YogaTouch%20new%20handbookone.doc

http://www.yogajournal.com/article/family/teach-children-well/

https://yogainternational.com/article/view/the-secret-to-teaching-yoga-to-children

T. Colin Campbell, *The China Study*, 2005. This is said to be one of America’s best-selling books about nutrition. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_China_Study

Ken Wilber is a Californian philosopher who has done much to build a synthesis of eastern philosophy and western science.

This is Ken Wilber’s terminology, as is the *Eye of Reason* and the *Eye of Spirit*. Different schools of Eastern philosophy use different terminology for the layers of mind.

Transpersonal experiences are frequently confused with pre-personal experiences because both are departures from ‘normal’ personal or ego-consciousness. Ken Wilber offers an insightful analysis of this confusion. See: Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm*,


A Jungian insight.


See Table 8.1 in Fischer, ibid.

The following YouTube video is well worth watching to gain an understanding of the importance of relationship and communication in the early years of life. Nathan Mikael-Walls, *Brain Development for Babies: An introduction to neuroscience and infant development*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB-A4awkRU>.


The word *ethos* (borrowed from Modern Greek) has a similar meaning. The Sanskrit word is *dharma*.


In fact, the list is as long as one’s list of virtues because, according to Aristotle, every virtue is a “golden mean” at the optimum point between excess on one side and deficiency on the other. More on this later.

Just as for yoga postures, there are several programs available for teaching kids to meditate. The following two use the language of mindfulness: the MindUP Family Program (http://thehawnfoundation.org/learning-community/families/) and the Smiling Mind Education Program (http://smilingmind.com.au/education-program/). Both emphasise the mental and physical health benefits of meditation.

Chuang-tse was a Chinese Taoist sage, dates uncertain, c.360 BC - c.275 BC.

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar.

Bobby Randall in the documentary, *Surviving Earth*.

As stated by Bobby Randall, traditional owner of Uluru, Central Australia, in a documentary film,
This principle appears in Neohumanism as the distinction between utility value and existential value. The Virtues Project™ is a global grassroots initiative to inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life. It operates in some 95 countries and was honoured by the United Nations during the International Year of the Family as a “model global program for all cultures.”

For more on the history of the utopian socialist movement, see Michael Towsey, “The Biopsychology of Cooperation” in Understanding Prout, Volume 1, 2010, eds. J. Karlyle and M. Towsey.


http://www.virtuesproject.com/. The Virtues Project™ is a global grassroots initiative to inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life. It operates in some 95 countries and was honoured by the United Nations during the International Year of the Family as a “model global program for all cultures.” The Virtues Project was founded in Canada in 1991 by Linda Kavelin-Popov, Dr. Dan Popov and John Kavelin. They realized that virtues are universal qualities of character honored by all of humanity. The Virtues Project™ produces books, cards, and posters to foster the practice of virtues in individuals, families, schools, and organizations.

Known as yama and niyama. See Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, A Guide to Human Conduct, 1957 (EIEEdit). See also Bussey, “Education for Liberation” in Understanding Prout, Volume 1 for a further account of the Yama and Niyama and their importance in Neohumanist education. Sarkar uses the terms cardinal human values and cardinal human principles interchangeably.

This principle appears in Neohumanism as the distinction between utility value and existential value.
value. Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Liberation of Intellect, p63.


79 Utopia by Thomas More (1478-1535) and Walden Two by B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) are two of many examples.

80 For example, Animal Farm and 1984, both by George Orwell (1903-1950).


82 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorative_justice>

83 Utu, Ministry of Justice, New Zealand. (Valid link 17 September 2013).

84 The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) <http://www.iirp.edu/what-is-restorative-practices.php>


89 Definition from Google dictionary.


91 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism, 1982, First edition, p16. Implicit in Sarkar’s definition of rationality is the idea that science can only be of benefit to society if it is motivated by Neohumanist sentiments.


93 In “The Noumenal Cause and the Personal God”, talk given by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, 20th May 1979, Timmern, Germany.


95 This quote comes from A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters, translated by Soiku Shigematsu. The French philosopher, Michel Foucault, (1926 – 1984) defined critical thinking as the work “we do upon ourselves in order to ‘make’ our subjectivity an object of self-reflexive thought”. In other words, the ‘work’ we do to get our ‘eye’ to ‘see’ itself. For Foucault, the ‘work’ to be done upon ourselves is predominantly intellectual. And the ‘subject’ he would have us uncover is that hidden in culture. The argument we make in this section is that the “work” of critical thinking is also personal and internal. The Foucault quote comes from: Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, Understanding Foucault, Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 2001, first published Allen and Unwin, 2000.

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98 An example of pseudo-humanism, according to Foucault, is the idea of “the people”. It is a false sentiment invented to authorise claims to power.


100 http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/shore/shore072.shtml

101 Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, Bloomsbury Press, 2010, offers an excellent expose of how the inherent uncertainty in scientific results is used to sow confusion in the use of those results.


103 Even biological ecologists are beginning to integrate the human inner world (human culture and the political systems which manage our biological environment) into their theoretical models of ecosystems. See for example *Panarchy – Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems*, Ed. Gunderson and Holling, Island Press, 2002.

104 Immanuel Kant, (1785) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

105 One concept that appears frequently throughout Sarkar’s work and which could be regarded as the capstone that ties it all together is subjective approach and objective adjustment. Neo-ethics appears to be subjective approach and objective adjustment elevated to supreme ethical status.


107 Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, “Talks on Education: Basic Differences in Attitude between the East and the West”, in (ElEdit).

108 Teachers will occasionally hear the Sanskrit term *Brahmacakra*. Brahma means creation and cakra means circle or cycle.


110 Elisabet Sahtouris is an evolutionary biologist, http://www.sahtouris.com/INFO/. Sahtouris is not the only biologist to break with materialism. She works with James Lovelock (of Gaia fame ) and Lynn Margulis.

111 C. E. M. Joad, English philosopher (1891-1953) a populariser of the ‘new physics’ as it was then in the early 20th Century. University Press, 1990, p. 32
