

10

Learning from Hermit Crabs, Mycelia and Banyan

Schools as Centers of Critical Inquiry and Re-Normatization

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Looking for a new home

Most species of hermit crabs have long soft abdomens [that] are protected from predators by the adaptation of carrying around a salvaged empty seashell into which the whole crab's body can retract As the hermit crab grows in size, it has to find a larger shell and abandon the previous one. (Wikipedia, 2009b, par. 1–2)

Humans instruct, coach, model, and guide each other, especially the young, to help them acquire norms of a given cultural group, be it a clan, tribe, kingdom, or nation. Through this intergenerational transmission of cultural content, individuals acquire particular beliefs, values, tastes, desires, habits, behaviors, skills, and social and bodily practices that belong to a cultural group.

Schools as modern institutions of intergenerational cultural transmission have been specifically mandated to perform the formal and explicit task of shaping citizenry to fit into the modernist industrial consumer society. Through mass schooling, individuals become *normatized* and *normalized*. To *normatize* means to shape individuals' beliefs, values, taste, and conduct to the norms of society. Through this process, individuals come to feel "normal" about their worldview and their ways of being and doing in society.

This mass schooling process of normatization and normalization would not be an egregious problem for the present world, *if* these instrumentalist and consumerist worldviews and values that are set up as norms were viable to the survival of our species and the well-being of the planet. But, decisively, they are not. Current literature sources are vast and well established on the indictment against our dominant global culture and civilization for their utterly damaging contribution to the biosphere and human community (e.g., Korten, 2001; McMurtry, 1998; Orr, 1994; Schor, 2004).

What are the characteristic worldviews and values of modernity? A fairly well-defined picture of modernity emerges from the works of many contemporary thinkers

engaged in characterizing our world: most notably, instrumentalism, industrialism, individualism, consumerism, and economism, all of which are backed up by militarism (e.g., Borgmann, 1992; Fromm, 1976; Taylor, 1991). There is every indication that many of our cultural habits of mind, heart, and body, constituting the modern-western and global-industrial-military-consumeristic way of life, are rapidly eroding the very carrying capacity of the planet (Harrison, 1996). Simply put, this civilization seems to be on course for extinction. Many are ignorant or in denial about the precarious planetary situation that we have put ourselves and all other beings into. Others writhe in fear about the bleak future, but their "solution" is doing more of the things that accelerate destruction. Many explode in anger and blame, and many more are simply feeling lost, hopeless, helpless, and numb (Macy & Young, 1998). The present global culture of consumeristic capitalism that has a stranglehold on almost all human societies on this earth is like a hermit crab's old shell and has become a threat to the inhabitant's viability and eventual survival.

As we indicated earlier, schooling is modern society's formal and explicit means of shaping its citizenry through instilling normative beliefs and values of what it is to be a functioning and successful human being within industrial-consumer culture. Should our schools continue to instill in students existing societal beliefs, values, and practices that threaten the very core of life on earth (Orr, 1994), let alone the survival of humanity, just because these are the societal norms? Or should schools instead strive to become *awakened* institutions that systematically examine how the existing norms are damaging, and deliberate what we need to do to change them? Can public and private schools become leaders in a social movement towards our current humanity practicing a more ecological life on earth?

We propose that both the content and manner of schooling—the particular norms of beliefs and values—are in need of radical revision. We believe that schools *should* indeed be committed to changing the norms of society and

civilization. Hence, this chapter will focus on what we the authors have come to call the “hermit crab project”—looking for new norms of schooling. Coincidentally, Evernden (1993) has also used the illustrative example of a hermit crab:

Like hermit crabs, who protect their delicate abdomens by confiscating the shells of snails, we [the natural alien] crawl into a structure of belief and refuse to expose ourselves, even to move to a more adequate abode. This is a dangerous policy. (p. 143)

At the moment, we the authors see no other institution that has the potential to commit to and implement this large-scale project of re-normatizing the culture so as to avert the modern civilization’s socio-ecological collision course. Hence our focus for this chapter on re-dedicating schools to teaching and learning ecological ways of human life. What we are suggesting for schools here is far bigger and more radical than the “Save the Earth” environmental awareness campaigns that promote recycling, tree-planting, and energy saving solutions. While these campaigns are worthy and indispensable, they, by themselves, fall short of addressing the real heart of the issue: we need to dismantle the exploitative cultural and economic systems that are continuously being enacted through normative institutions, especially schools (Apple, 2009). This systemic dismantling is what we suggest that schools of the future should, if not must, do. This requires that K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions become leaders in the *re-normatization* of humanity.

Understanding the process of normatization is crucial here, as the proposal for re-normatization requires reversing the process. The force of learning is revealed by its power to render us *unconscious* in the process of normatization. That is, the knowledge and skills transmitted by the culture and acquired by the individual go deep into the individual’s psyche and body, and become “second-nature.” Through normatization, we internalize various assumptions and presuppositions that have been normalized in the culture. Hence, the degree of success in schooling shows up in its citizens’ tendency to unquestioningly accept and enact norms. Norms become reality for the successful learners, and this phenomenon demonstrates the ubiquitous power of mass schooling. However, today’s successful schooling may be tomorrow’s miseducation, leading to demise (Orr, 1994).

For our society to survive through the challenge of changes and uncertainties there has to be a critical balance between unconscious normatization and conscious undoing. Can schools play this critical role of managing the balance? Not if we continue to look to schooling for mainly carrying out the society’s mandate of normatization. Instead, schools must be specifically dedicated to be institutions of critical enlightenment that serve to wake students from the unconscious force of successful learning—that is, normatization—and send them to work, individually and collectively, on reconfiguring norms.

Schools can then become sites of critical examination of prevailing norms and creative experiments with alternative norms. But, of course, this is easier said than done. Where can we get the help and support we need to convert our existing educational institutions into facilitators of wide-awakeness and change?

We believe that the best possibility lies with universities and their faculties or departments of education that educate—not just instruct and transmit knowledge and skills—the future generations of teachers and educational leaders. We understand that “education” is an evocative word that is used in different ways in different contexts and in different cultures and linguistic groups. As space does not allow us to unpack these meanings, we will focus primarily on schools and their latent potential at the crossroads of normatization and ecological imperative.

Higher education has the best chance of fulfilling the function of re-normatization of beliefs and values through critical analysis and discourse (Rorty, 1996). Specifically, faculties of education in universities tend to infuse general culture with unconventional and innovative visions and practices of schooling through pre-service and in-service teacher education and graduate education. This is particularly the case for faculties of education in universities that offer courses that are philosophical in nature. These philosophy courses in education can, and often do, play a critical and crucial role in re-normatizing the culture of teacher education.

An important function of philosophy is its radical critique of “reality,” showing how so-called reality known to socialized human beings is a construction of the human mind and culture, and that, for this reason, human reality can be deconstructed and re-constructed again and again (Bai, 2006). To this end, philosophical approaches in education examine the cultural assumptions and presuppositions about what educated human beings are like, what we see as the ideal of human life, and what we value and why (Martin, 1994). The details of such examination and deconstruction make the study a rich and challenging experience, as there is no aspect of human personal and collective identity and conduct that cannot be brought to the critical lens of inquiry. We therefore urge faculties of education in universities to use their academic leadership to help and guide schools to become centers of critical awareness and re-normatization. Hence we also urge them to centralize philosophical studies and practices in their teaching and research. As well, there is no theoretical or practical reason whatsoever why we cannot include philosophy in K-12 curriculum and pedagogy (Moran, 2004). It is good to start philosophizing sooner than in higher education. Sow the seed sooner rather than later.

Philosophy, however, is not just one thing. We need to clarify the kind of philosophy we need for our project. Some assume that philosophy has no end other than purely theoretical or speculative inquiry. While this might be true for some domains of philosophical activity, this is not the

case for our suggested philosophical examination of social norms and their internalization by students in schools. The philosophical examination of schooling (and, indeed, education) should not be neutral. Instead, it should show both intention and commitment, for the same reason that the medical examination of a patient is not neutral but is purposefully guided by the committed interest in the well-being of the patient.

But what will be the guiding hand for the philosophical examination of schools? Will it be the same as the doctor's hand? We reply, yes. Both education and medicine are formally concerned with human survival and well-being (Bai, 2004). This does not mean that all educational or medical practices result in promoting survival and health. There can be miseducation or medical malpractice, which necessitates a self-critical guidance system to reflect on and attempt to correct, or if problems are systemic, re-normatize, the practice of education or medicine. The self-critical guidance system for human conduct is known as *ethics*, which is part of the study in philosophy. Ethics asks this fundamental question: Are we harming the world and ourselves through living out the existing norms? Such a question, as Weston (1992) reminds us, can only be asked and responded to in a concrete socio-political, economic and ideological context of the culture that is critically examining its own values. If we, the citizens who are living out the culture's worldviews and normative values, could see that the latter is not conducive to ecologically and socially sustainable life on this planet, then we would need to ask the next question: How can we change the habits of mind, heart, and body so as to reduce harm and increase well-being?

In the next section, we further elaborate the centrality of ethics as the guiding and healing hand for future schools committed to re-examination and re-normatization of humanity. Most importantly, ethics is not just theoretical, but is a practice.

New homemaking

Almost since life began on earth, mycelia have performed important ecological roles: nourishing ecosystems, repairing them, and sometimes even helping create them. The fungi's exquisitely fine filaments absorb nutrients from the soil and then trade them with the roots of plants for some of the energy that the plants produce through photosynthesis. No plant community could exist without mycelia. (Jensen, 2008, par. 5)

We stated in the last section that ethics should guide schools (their aims, goals, objectives, and curricular and pedagogical choices). At the core of ethics is the inquiry into the "good life" or human flourishing, that is, how *well* we are living our lives, with and for each other. In our understanding of ethics, the question and the quest for the good life precedes the question of moral right

or wrong because the latter requires a conception of the good life that will act as a criterion or a rubric against which particular practices are evaluated and judged to be "right" or "wrong." And the inquiry into the good life is a normative activity since it challenges us to question what constitutes as a good life, and to consider culturally and historically contingent conceptions of a good life. In much of western philosophy, the good life discourse has been limited to human welfare. Ethics has been by and large about human well-being. This limitation has become ecologically deadly, especially in modern times when the good life and well-being discourse is increasingly constricted to the instrumentalist and consumerist visions (Bai, 2009). Human well-being cannot be separated from planetary well-being, for humans are an integral part of the biosphere. The modern ideal of a "good life" that we have been protecting and enacting—namely, capitalistic consumerism backed up by militarism and spiced up by the entertainment industry—is decisively damaging and compromising the health of the planet. Therefore, we need a new ethic that is eco-centric, or ecological ethics (Kohák, 2000). What characterizes ecological ethics from ordinary—human-centered—ethics?

A cardinal understanding in ecology is the complex interconnectedness of all life phenomena, which is captured in the etymology of the very word "ecology" (eco+logy = study of household). In the operations of a household, in which everybody is interconnected and every element interpenetrates, a dedicated and resourceful homemaker knows, intimately and intuitively, how everything fits and flows together, and he or she can care for the household in such an intelligent, skillful way that everybody in the household flourishes. The key idea here that we need to pay attention to is how a good homemaker comes to know his or her household intimately and how to help it to flourish. The homemaker knows how every element in the household connects and fits together with everything else. This knowing is born out of the intimacy of participation (Skolimowski, 1994b), as the homemaker knows the household so intimately through being *one-bodied* with every element, participant, aspect, and detail of it. Such intimate knowing is an integral function of love and care. A devoted homemaker or householder loves his or her family and household, and embraces all aspects of it—including pains, sorrows, and toils. They care for it with the knowledge and skills that can only come from knowing something proprioceptively, like one's own body. Students and practitioners of ecological ethics are people who are in love with the earth community and its inhabitants, including the human community, which disposes them to deeply *care about* the earth's well-being and to naturally *care for* life on earth. Hence the foundation of ecological ethics is love and care *of* the earth, and love and care *for* earth's beings. Ecology as ethics is love's knowledge. Upon this foundation of ecological ethics, we can build a new normative dimension within schooling. Moving forward on this understanding, let us look at the

actual practice of love and care. What is it to practice love and care? How do we learn to love and care?

Ecology as an ethic and moral education has much in common with the ethics of care that Noddings (2003), Held (2006), and Slote (2007) explored and developed. Ethics of care is also known as a branch of relational ethics because its key principle is relationship. Basically, in this ethical framework, an action is good and right when it is in the service of nourishing, fostering, repairing, and preserving relationship of intrinsic worth and regard for the other. Based on this, we can construe ecological ethics as an extended form of ethics of care in that the complex and irreducible relationships supported by intrinsic valuing include relationships with the earth community, its inhabitants, and constituent members. Earth is one large household, and ecology is an ethic of care that supports the leadership and partnership pertaining to the earth-household. Let the mycelia be our inspiration! For so long the human presence on this planet has been destructive to the ecosystems. Let us learn the ways of mycelia and join their bio-ecological functions of nourishing, repairing, and creating ecosystems. Our practice of ethical living is analogous to the mycelium's bio-ecological functions, illustrating yet again that humans and other earthly beings are consanguineous.

Love, care, knowledge, and vigilant and skillful actions are required to nurture, repair, and re-create the earth household that integrates and harmonizes everything into mutually affording and supporting relationships. Do our schools centralize such learning? Is our school learning all about creating, nurturing, repairing the complex web of relationships that we call the earth community? We believe this is not the case as of yet. There is much we can learn and borrow from ethics of care for our task of conceptualizing ecological ethics for schools. What is particularly attractive about ethics of care for our purpose is its practice dimension. We can tell the world all we want, that it *should be* this way and it *should act* that way, but if we cannot model and teach how this and that way can be achieved and practiced every day and every moment, ethics as practice ultimately fails. Failed ethics remain as moralistic “shouldism” that ends up being oppressive, and worse, if practiced with our future generations, may destroy the very fiber of moral autonomy and agency. In ethics of care, care as moral agency is understood as natural endowment or birthright, and the task of moral education is to create optimal conditions for its realization and extension. Noddings (1992) articulates four pillars of ethics of care as moral education: dialogue, modeling, practice, and confirmation. She also speaks of organizing the school curriculum in the terms of centers of care and concern such as “caring for animals, plants, and the earth” (p. 126), “caring for strangers and distant others” (p. 126), “caring for self” (p. 126), and so on.

Optimal conditions for generating the expansive care consciousness (Bai, 1999; Chinnery & Bai, 2000) are not easy to create, given the historical entrenchment of

humanity in all kinds of ideological constructions that drastically limit care consciousness. Feminists, critical theorists, postcolonial scholars, and ecophilosophers all have thoroughly critiqued these ideological constructions that have wounded and damaged cultural norms. One combination that has had the strongest hold on humanity is that of the human (anthropocentrism), the masculine (patriarchy), the white (western colonialism), the propertied (capitalism), and the mental (rationalism) (e.g., Bordo, 1986; Martin, 1994; Merchant, 2005). According to this normative combination, a great proportion of humanity becomes “underprivileged” and “underdeveloped” (Martin, 1994). This restrictive and oppressive worldview cannot support the ecological understanding of a systemic worldview that insists on interconnectedness and interpenetration of everything in the phenomenal world (Macy, 1991). Hence, for an ecologically expansive care consciousness to take root and flourish in our schools and culture in general, we need to work steadily to undo and remove such patriarchal, colonial, capitalistic, and rationalistic norms from our formal and informal learning goals, policies, materials, and practices. We suggest that this very undoing and removing work, which is repair or healing work, should be an essential part of school curriculum and pedagogy. By the time students come to school, even at a primary level, they will have internalized the dominant values and views that are damaging to both the earth community and their own immediate human community. Therefore, we need an ethical curriculum and pedagogy that aims at healing and nourishing both ourselves and our relationships with all earth beings. Recall that mycelia perform both nourishing and repairing functions. The two functions go together. An ethic of care plays the role of mycelia, and when applied to ecology, both repairs the damaged relationship between humans and the biosphere, and nourishes it.

In the next section we will consider some practical strategies for rooting alternative norms. Given that the task of resisting and breaking into the existing norms and inserting new norms is likely difficult and inherently challenging, we need strategies. This time, the example of banyan tree with its amazing ability to germinate anywhere and send down its root into any available place shall be our inspiring and guiding imagery and example.

Rooting down

A banyan is a fig that starts its life as an epiphyte when its seeds germinate in the cracks and crevices on a host tree (or on structures like buildings and bridges)... The seeds germinate and send down roots towards the ground, and may envelope part of the host tree or building structure with their roots, giving them the casual name of “strangler fig.” (Wikipedia, 2009a, par. 1)

For a norm to be successful as a guide to ethical living it needs the support of stories and practices that permeate a culture and work into every aspect of personhood. Stories

and practices *inform*, that is, give form to, what the world is like, what people are like as creatures amongst other creatures, what sense and meaning we can make of human life, who we are as individuals, and who we become through collective life-making. When these stories are told and retold in a million different variations and disguises, and practices and experiments are undertaken in innumerable ways and spaces (Weston, 1992), they infiltrate our unconscious and conscious, and sooner or later, start to permeate our perceptions, emotions, and our conduct. Currently the dominant storytelling that guides billions of people on this planet is ecologically unsustainable and even deadly. That much is clear. Look around the world today. What are the dominant stories of a good life and success for humanity? Consumerism as fulfillment; social progress through the production of goods and services; institutionalization and commodification of fundamental human needs, such as turning learning into earning grades, love into sex, bliss into entertainment, and so on and so forth. At the heart of all these un-ecological ways of being is the reductionist and instrumentalist mindset—as opposed to ethics of care we referenced earlier—that dichotomizes the means from the ends, and privileges the latter over the former, thereby turning the world into a vast resource base that acts as the means to human consumptive ends (Bai, 2001). The task before us is then to change the habits of the human heart and mind, thus change the major story line of human survival and flourishing. And this, we argue, is what schools can and must help to do.

True to the principle of ecology that shows that nothing is wasted and all is recycled, composted, and renewed, we may find in our midst right now a wealth of stories and practices that we can take up, and, with some intelligent labor, turn into ecological ways of feeling, perceiving, thinking, sensing, and acting. Thus we are not talking about a brand new and major invention and production of stories to live by and practices to try out. We already have stories and practices that can be revitalized and remodeled to serve ecology as a life-philosophy. We will illustrate this with some examples from our local culture, the west coast of Canada, which is home to cross-cultural confluences, especially Asian cultural influences.

Yoga studios are beginning to proliferate our culture, along with Tai Chi and Qi Gong Centers. Mindfulness meditations, originally of Buddhist origin but now secularized, are being taught in public schools by teachers who find that the practice helps children cope with stress and anxiety, and that it helps teachers manage their classrooms. Practices that would have been once thought exotic and suspicious have part of the everyday routine for countless people going to work and school. These are, essentially, healthy signs. However, in many instances, what is vitally missing in the way these practices are taken up is a substantial and comprehensive philosophy, such as eco-philosophies and care ethics, to give them a larger vision of human flourishing in partnership with all earth beings and a critical understanding

of human presence in the world today. When mindfulness and yoga, or any other practices that aim to nourish and balance us, are taught under the guiding eco-ethics and eco-philosophy, these practices can go far beyond making a flexible body, stress release, and better classroom management. They can heal us from the largely objectified, alienated, and even commodified state of our being by awakening and reconnecting us to the cosmic reality of *interbeing*, to use Thich Nhat Hanh's wonderful neologism for ecology (1998). Unfortunately, in the way these practices are usually promoted and purveyed in public culture and schools, they are no more than techniques for releasing stresses associated with the "unecological" forms of life that are harming us all. In other words, these practices are most often just a useful adjunct for the highly commodified lifestyle, rather than a catalyst for a new way of life.

The task of turning ecological ethics into life practice is really a matter of taking up some suitable everyday practices and habits of mind-body-heart, be they gardening, cooking, cleaning, exercising, walking, writing, or any number of different things we do each day, and infuse them with a clear eco-ethic and eco-philosophy, such as intrinsic valuing based on the realization of interconnection and interpenetration (Bai, 2004). Indeed, there is neither a lack of, nor limit to what we can take up from our everyday life and work into them ecological ethics as a way of being. We can be like the banyan tree whose "seeds germinate in the cracks and crevices on a host tree (or on structures like buildings and bridges)" (Wikipedia, 2009a, par. 1). Wherever we are and go, we find "cracks and crevices" of our everyday activities into which we can drop seeds of mindfulness, yoga, integral ways, or what have you, and turn these activities into enlightenment practices. Here, enlightenment means nothing other than freedom from alienated consciousness and full presence in *interbeing* (Hanh, 1998). In many ways, the simplest human actions, such as the act of seeing, touching, and hearing afford us profound possibilities of realizing interconnectedness and interpenetration of life—that is, the ecology. We see these and other possibilities as central to the curriculum of schools that set to change the civilizational matrix.

Here is one particularly moving example of what we were suggesting above: Skolimowski (1994a) describes four elements (rock, earth, water, and tree) that can be a source of "re-enchantment with the world" (p. 32). Skolimowski begins by inviting "us to go for a journey—if possible into a forest, or wild place. Let your mind be free. Allow time for this journey" (p. 30). However if only a park is nearby or only "a piece of solid rock" can be brought home, that is fine too. Being "in the right frame of mind" is more important in yoga (p. 30). His instruction for identifying with the rock begins thus:

Approach the rock and embrace it as tightly and meaningfully as you can. You must not feel embarrassed or shy.

AQ1

Your bones are made from the remnants of rocks, and everything there is was once a rock. So in embracing the rock you are embracing yourselves—in your earlier states of being. Embrace the rock as a part of yourself. You are this rock. Feel its solidity, its roughness, its texture. Feel how wonderfully enduring it is, and how it is already cracked, ready to disintegrate further to give rise to other forms of being.

Spend several minutes contemplating this rock. Look at it in a new way, as if you have never seen a rock before! See the forms of life which are already there—though hidden. Contemplate its origin, and what it wants to become. Feel yourself in this rock. A rock is a frozen spark out of which the tulips will grow. Then take a deep breath and wonder for a little while longer.

Now you know the meaning of empathy with the rock.
(p. 33)

In a similar vein, Skolimowski (1994a) describes how to “feel the heat and life in the earth:”

The earth is the same element that was once a rock. You can experience the reality of the earth.

Choose a patch of ground to sit on, perhaps a bed of grass next to some soil. Submerge your fingers in the soil, and feel it. Feel it profoundly. Feel the beat of life in this earth. The entire earth is the dust of rocks transformed into life. Listen to the earth and feel its great reverberating rhythm.

Take another deep breath and wonder for a minute or two. Don't rush. Time is your friend.

Now you know the meaning of empathy with the earth.
(p. 34)

The instruction to “submerge our fingers in the soil” (Skolimowski, 1994a, p. 34) can also be used to re-normatize schooling in the key of ecological ethics through the practice of horticulture. One well-known urban school project is the Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, California (Chez Panisse Foundation, 2009a, 2009b). Co-founder and chef Waters (2009) recently chronicled her 14-year journey in *Edible schoolyard: A universal idea*. The Edible Schoolyard originally began in 1995 with monthly visits by students. The project now reaches nearly 1,000 students at King Middle School (Chez Panisse Foundation 2009a). Currently interests are also picking up in metro-Vancouver's urban horticulture, which was the topic of a recent public dialogue event that took place at the heart of downtown Vancouver, Canada (Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 2009, May 6). All these school and public space projects are hopeful signs and offer us the opportunity to frame them as re-normatization of education, thereby serving the cause of shifting, however subtly, the civilizational matrix.

Coda

Schooling has been the main vehicle of an unconscious transmission of society's values and beliefs (Eisner, 1985). Students are neither trained to become deeply critical thinkers, nor to question the cultural values and beliefs that may arguably be the reason behind global crises. They are essentially ill equipped to respond to the current critical challenges facing humanity today, being blind to their own participation in global problems as well as being kept powerless to precipitate true change. We can trace our actions to our educational roots and the epistemology our culture has taught us. Ecological crises, global warming, poverty, exploitation, violence, greed—these are knowledges of some kind or another that we practice, and that have devastating effects on the earth and its inhabitants. Some argue that these destructive patterns are due to a lack of knowledge. Some also argue that if only we have better technology, if only we research more about the problems and gather more information about these problems, then we will be able to find solutions to these problems. We assert this is decidedly not so. These harmful effects are not because we lack knowledge. It is because we acquire knowledge without learning to form respectful relationships with the object of our knowledge.

Meyer (2001) writes that “[as indigenous people], what we know, what we value about knowledge, how we exchange what that knowledge is, and how it endures through time are some of the most vital aspects of who we are” (p. 197). We believe this is true not only for indigenous people, but for all beings on earth. Animals, plants, and humans all pass knowledge from one form or another through time, exchanging and changing it to better the chances of survival. And if survival is not one of the most important uses of knowledge, then what is? As daily reports of the destruction and harm humans are causing to the planet increase, we can only deduce that the knowledge we are exchanging with one another is not the knowledge of survival, let alone knowledge of nourishing and flourishing. It is not the knowledge of respectful relationships, mutually benefitting cooperation and life. And if we continue to teach it, if we continue to enculturate generations with this flawed knowledge that has perpetrated so much harm, then harm will continue to happen. It is that simple. At this point in history, as we face the necessity of changing civilizational norms, we can deliberately choose to make schools an institution of re-normatization and shape them to be more radically (*radix* = roots) and critically (*critus* = judgment) aware, questioning, and responsive to a changing world and a challenging reality. Will our schools wake up and become the leaders in changing social norms? Will schools prepare citizens to encounter a critically challenging life on earth? Let us not even allow these to be questions. The earth may not be able to wait any longer, and neither can we. Schools must become awakened seekers and leaders of change in societal and civilizational norms.

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