

Dynamic Education for Transformation

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In *Solitude of the Self*, Stanton introduced five paradigm shifting concepts that move one from positivist constructions of law and exclusionary uses of power, to natural realizations of law and inclusive practices of power; in doing so she affirmed the twin pillars of ideal governance and the bio-political need for an “organic change in the structure of present day society” (Effendi 1931: 23). Together, these shifts represent the promise of humanity’s collective Strength, or Popular Sovereignty, which Deganawidah affirmed in the Great Values and represented through the visionary image of the Tree of Justice.

The five shifts implied by Stanton pertain to: the recognition of human dignity and agency; human particularity and equality; dynamic human education; optimal development; and each individual’s relation to the mystery of life. Together they move people from blind acceptance of dehumanizing customs and social policies to the critical and compassionate avowal of the need for humanizing ones. The transformations involved are described below:

1. HUMAN DIGNITY AND AGENCY

This involves a transformation:

from technical expressions of law that deny the expression of human criticality and creativity and that coercively maintain status quo order in society,

to natural realizations of law that responsively urge transformation in society by calling attention to the nature of human needs and to the interior dimensions of the human condition, awakening one’s agency, sense of responsibility and concern for dignity and preparedness.

Relevant Passages
<i>Nothing strengthens the judgment and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility. Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one’s self-sovereignty; the right to an equal place, everywhere conceded—a place earned by personal merit, not an artificial attainment by inheritance, wealth, family and position...</i>
<i>To refuse political equality is to rob the ostracized of all self-respect.</i>
<i>No matter how much women prefer to lean, to be protected and supported, nor how much men desire to have them do so, they must make the voyage of life alone, and for safety in an emergency, they must know something of the laws of navigation.</i>
<i>Such are the facts in human experience, the responsibilities of individual sovereignty. Rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, wise and foolish, virtuous and vicious, man and woman; it is ever the same, each soul must depend wholly on itself.</i>

Significance of the Paradigm Shift

Laws and policies designed to protect, for example, corporate profit, or to maintain costly medical, military, insurance and penal systems deny the realization of human dignity. They refuse to recognize the human individual capacity for creativity and

criticality, and collective capacity for community-based, creative ethical problem solving, and global, collaborative transformative research. Through this paradigm shift in perspective, governing structures would be transformed to protect human dignity by respecting each individual's potential and need to engage their agency and ethical creativity.

Self-sovereignty is better understood in this context as a sacred non-sovereignty that invites the emergence of a common shared sovereignty across genders and peoples. This is because genuine self-sovereignty has always required, without exception, an acceptance of the vicissitudes of life and of life's great mystery. Both of these are larger than the individual and require her to navigate through the unknown, applying both purposeful effort and willing surrender. Respect for the commonality of human independence is emphasized in Stanton's remark that, "it is ever the same, each soul must depend wholly on itself."

These recognitions reveal the transformative secret at the heart of the concept of equality: they point to the human condition of solitude and poverty and show the way to genuine wealth through education, self-governance, and realization of communal or shared sovereignty. This is similarly how Deganawidah links individual Power, or moral and spiritual power, to Strength, which rises as Popular Sovereignty, through a collective realization of co-participation, equality and harmony.

2. HUMAN PARTICULARITY AND EQUALITY

This involves a transformation:

from misplaced trust in the standardization of learning and uncritical acceptance of mass cultural homogenization,

to recognition of the individual's distinct variability and the paradoxical universality and equality of one's condition under this truth.

Relevant Passage
<p><i>No mortal ever has been, no mortal ever will be like the soul just launched on the sea of life. There can never again be just such a combination of prenatal influences; never again just such environments as make up the infancy, youth and manhood of this one. Nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another. No one has ever found two blades of ribbon grass alike, and no one will ever find two human beings alike.</i></p>

Significance of Paradigm Shift

Adherence to positivist constructions of law and to an economic system that treats education and the natural bounties of life as a commodity contributes to invariant, categorical modes of thinking and reductionist responses to human complexity and potential. Respect for the particularity of the individual lets people acknowledge the beauty and value of each individual's constituent power and new frontiers of co-learning together. Furthermore, biological appreciation of variability represents a new frontier in human developmental science and in the arts. Such research seeks to integrate those in the margins into a new center. It would nurture the unique and ethical creative capacities in the individual that have been submerged due to ignorance and oppression in the

structures of the larger society. These include gifts for service, collaboration and cultural syntheses. When researched understandings of human variability are applied in educational practices through the full expression of Universal Design for Learning,ⁱ the realization of these gifts would bring genuine prosperity to all humanity.

Finally, the bio-political acknowledgment of variability and particularity turns people away from notions of building political strength through partisan identifications and conformities, and instead directly supports the vision of a genuinely democratic and participatory society that values the worth and diversity of each individual's constituent power. Stanton affirmed this when she commented: "Seeing, then, what must be the infinite diversity in human character, we can in a measure appreciate the loss to a nation when any class of the people is uneducated and unrepresented in the government."

3. DYNAMIC HUMAN EDUCATION

This involves a transformation:

from a static perception of human nature that organizes education around cultural expectations of expertise and the fixed certification and degree requirements for employment,

to a dynamic perception of human nature that uplifts dignity through a whole approach to education, and that develops dynamic skills for self-awareness and self-development in inter-participatory relationship with the environment.

Relevant Passages
<i>In talking of education, how shallow the argument that each class must be educated for the special work it proposes to do, and that all those faculties not needed in this special work must lie dormant and utterly wither for want of use, when, perhaps, these will be the very faculties needed in life's greatest emergencies!</i>
<i>Is it, then, consistent to hold the developed woman of this day within the same narrow political limits as the dame with the spinning wheel and knitting needle occupied in the past? No, no! ... the hopes and ambitions of women are essentially changed.</i>
<i>To guide our own craft, we must be captain, pilot, engineer; with chart and compass to stand at the wheel; to watch the winds and waves, and know when to take in the sail, and to read the signs in the firmament over all.</i>

Significance of Paradigm Shift

Dynamic education justly prepares the individual and the society to live in an adaptive and resilient relationship to strife, on-going evolutionary changes, and natural life adversities, including unforeseen moral and spiritual life challenges. It therefore acknowledges the human relationship to uncertainty, flux and uncertainty, and provides a more holistic approach to life realities otherwise oppressed and denied for the sake of conformity within closed and static social systems.

Appreciation of the dynamic nature of life and learning and the inherent need for movement, participation and integration, protects us from rigid societal job-role identities. These identities impede the development of natural emergent gifts within the

individual that need to be aligned with the biological truth of adaptive dynamics within Nature. Here collective human strength rises as we respect how our interior life is interwoven with the natural world and as we educate ourselves to benefit from this complex inter-relationship by cultivating harmonizing qualities of mind and being rather than dominionistic or possessive ones.

4. OPTIMAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

This involves a transformation:

from a transient, material perspective coupled with individualistic values that settle for status quo expectations in human development,

to abiding moral and spiritual values that respect optimal expectations in human development and that support the maturation of a larger, shared humanity.

Relevant Passages
<i>We ask for the complete development of every individual, first, for his own benefit and happiness.... Again, we ask complete individual development for the general good.</i>
<i>The chief reason for opening to every soul the doors to the whole round of human duties and pleasures is the individual development thus attained, the resources thus provided under all circumstances to mitigate the solitude that at times must come to everyone. . . .</i>
<i>As in our extremity we must depend on ourselves, the dictates of wisdom point to complete individual development.</i>

Significance of Paradigm Shift

The ability to discern continually the gap between optimal standards for development and status quo-standards for development is the indicator of humanity’s capacity to uphold the vision of Justice and to act with loving-kindness. This is a conceptual and imaginative capacity.

The raised standard of optimal development promises to fulfill the requirements of Justice for humanity because it addresses the full range of human needs, including physical, emotional, intellectual, social, creative, moral and spiritual dimensions. It therefore prepares the individual thoroughly for the challenge of being human, including preparation both for the experience of human solitude and of self-awareness.

Furthermore, through a paradigm shift that emphasizes optimal standards for development over status-quo standards, the flourishing of all life is protected. This is because this raised standard directs humanity to remember its highest station as stewards and trustees of life on the planet. A hallmark of optimal development is the proliferation of ethical social creativity: a way of innovating around principles of high reason and felt wisdom that yields unintended positive effects in every direction and that protects future generations of life. The paradigm of optimal development does not promote competition or individualism, but rather shifts humanity toward collaboration and co-responsibility; it is a “joint” venture, and requires all peoples to contribute and take part in our collective strength-building.

5. RESPECT FOR THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

Involves a transformation:

from material sensory responses to human life that promote a positivist willingness to dominate and control human and ecological life systems in the entitled, reductionist pursuit of one's ends,

to holistic poetic responses to human life that de-center and dissolve fixed rigid perceptions, opening one to life-affirming participation in creative processes and reverent respect for life's mystery.

Relevant Passages

And yet, there is a solitude which each and every one of us has always carried with him, more inaccessible than the ice-cold mountains, more profound than the midnight sea; the solitude of self. Our inner being which we call ourself, no eye nor touch of man or angel has ever pierced. It is more hidden than the caves of the gnome; the sacred adytum of the oracle; the hidden chamber of Eleusinian mystery, for to it only omniscience is permitted to enter.

Such is individual life. Who, I ask you, can take, dare take on himself the rights, the duties, the responsibilities of another human soul?

Significance of Paradigm Shift

Through respect for each one's direct relationship with the mystery of the transcendent, a fresh vision of intimacy is opened to humanity. By tolerating and even welcoming from within one's self mystery and the presence of the "other," authentic intra-personal intimacy is attained. A new inter-subjective ground can then be forged in the place where one human life intersects another. Personal sovereignty or ownership of the self is no longer relevant. Instead one's sacred non-sovereignty is recognized. (Giri 2014: 223)

A new realization of group intimacy is then possible: one in which hope and the otherness of visionary insight is protected, and intellectual and spiritual principles applied. A new cultural intimacy can thus emerge. It conceals constructed political differences and makes possible a political consensus-making that mystically nourishes diversity and variability and that encourages an on-going investigative, naturally inquisitive approach to reality. Old stereotypes of cultural intimacy, based on construction of an "other" and on superficial in-group loyalties, are unhinged. The human understandings that support solidarity across borders can come to light. This is the democratic Strength of shared sacred non-sovereignty.

In *Solitude of the Self*, awareness of the individual's participation in the natural unfolding of historical progress intersects with realizations of the eternal or absolute. Stanton observed this most poignantly in remarks such as: "In that solemn solitude of self, that links us with the immeasurable and the eternal, each soul lives alone forever," and "Inasmuch, then, as woman shares equally the joys and sorrows of time and eternity, is it not the height of presumption in man to propose to represent her at the ballot box ... to do ... her voting in the state, her praying in the church, and to assume the position of high priest at the family altar?"

The political ramification of this intersection is that historical progress, as it participates in the movement of Justice, is simultaneously infused with the mystery of the immeasurable and eternal, its unfathomable secret and its sacredness. The unfolding realization and institutionalization of natural law is a dynamic process that is inseparable from the evolutionary “happenings” of our shared human history. Still, the wisdom of providence does not in itself reflect an unfolding or dynamic event. Instead, it carries the mystery of the eternal and absolute. It relates directly to the transcendent domain of eternal law, to the spiritual gospels for humanity provided by its greatest moral and spiritual teachers. It connects humans to an authentic and sublime vision of human dignity and nobility and therefore to a more sensitive and integral realization of the full range of human rights. This meta-level of providential creative wisdom is also, for humans, an optimal realm of trust and solidarity. It can be intimated by peoples everywhere, through visionary and contemplative practice, despite the particularities of one’s culture or customs.

It infuses historical progress with meaning and humankind with faith, simply because it is larger than a single human life and encompasses more than the whole of humanity. It inspires leaders such as Martin Luther King to observe and confirm with mystic certitude that though “the arc of the moral universe is long,” over time it “bends toward justice.”ⁱⁱ Respect for the mystery of life and for the meta-level of providential creative wisdom gives value to the precautionary principle and supports one’s deepest feeling that our real commitments to one another are sacred and obligatory. By destabilizing any false and facile assumption of human authority, it also promotes a humble willingness to support transversal or horizontal methods of arriving at social agreements, such as those protected in Iroquoian culture and government. Furthermore, in Stanton’s appreciation of law, the individual’s direct and unmediated relationship with the mystical and hidden dimensions within one’s inner being serves as the practical ontological foundation of Justice. Remembrance of one’s relationship with the vastness which is within and beyond one uproots bias and habitual modes of reacting to or reducing reality; and in Stanton’s vision of absolute or divine Justice, one’s solitary relation to the grandeur of life represents a holy reality that no one is permitted to ignore, to oppress or to refuse to protect.

For Stanton, it is our relation to mystery and our collective orientation to providential creative wisdom that makes each one a solitary “Robinson Crusoe” and that guides people together to

navigate the seas of ethical decision-making. In the same way constellations once guided sailors, the constellation of general principles point us toward regions of moral action. Yet the precise longitude and latitude of any moral region can only be determined in creative collaborative expeditions we undertake. Ethical decision-making is collaborative and creative practice. (Carter, Miller, Radhakrishnan 2001: 24)

As Stanton points out, woman “shares equally the joys and sorrows of time and eternity,” and so must be able to co-participate in the navigation of “the seas of ethical decision-making.” She must be fitted with the right education and developmental vision for this. But the fact is that women’s rights, as expressed in *Solitude of the Self*, are relevant to all people, man or woman, young or old. The intersection of any person’s historically embedded life with the eternal, or absolute creates a juncture that is the universal source of life’s mystery and dignity. It assures a human journey of life-long learning and meaning-making and requires that we cultivate ourselves so as to be able to traverse disjuncture. In *Global Ethical Options: Gandhi, King, Ikeda*, authors Carter, Miller and Radhakrishnan explain the need to negotiate ethically within the many contexts of the social sphere, the multi-dimensional distinct levels present in that Nowhere place where human biological and temporal life intersects with spirituality. In this way, a new kind of human security can be found through the serious effort to build understanding in the midst of “creative insecurity”:

A relevant ethics for the new century must be inclusive of diverse perspectives: business, economics, ecology, education, medicine, philosophy, politics, psychology, spirituality, science, society, and technology.

Thus the collaborative and creative ethics of the twenty-first century must be international, interdisciplinary, intercultural, ecumenical, interfaith, social, non-hierarchical ethical options. The ethics of the future must be open to the theist, non-theist, the metaphysician, and the materialist.

Ethical enrichment for one's own identity comes through interaction with different belief systems, cultures, faiths, norms, traditions, and values. Through these encounters, spirituality becomes creative insecurity instead of moral disdain or disregard of difference. (25)

ⁱ Universal design for learning (UDL) is (hopefully) an evolving framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. It concerns itself with observable differences in how people learn, their skills, needs and abilities. Rather than gearing instruction to an imaginary "average" student, it faces the reality of human variability and concerns itself with finding larger patterns of stability across variability and with integrating those in the "margins" of mainstream education. When research attention is directed toward understanding and serving those with challenges and more serious differences in learning ability, it has been shown that these research findings are beneficial even for those without the noted challenge; in other words, it is "universally" helpful insight.

ⁱⁱ King is known for citing this affirmation in "The Gospel Messenger" periodical. He put the actual words in quotes, to signal that they were not his own:

Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but that same Christ arose and split history into A.D. and B.C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. Yes, **"the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."** There is something in the universe which justifies William Cullen Bryant in saying, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again."

In 1964 King gave a sermon to undergraduates of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, at their commencement ceremony and he concluded with the line: *"The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."* However, though King is remembered for this metaphor, it did not originate with him.

The Quote Investigator website found at <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/11/15/arc-of-universe/> reviews the origins of this quote, which is most often mistakenly attributed to King. The site reports that it began with Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister and Transcendentalist who called for the

abolition of slavery. In 1853 his book, "Ten Sermons of Religion" was released. It is the third sermon, titled "Of Justice and the Conscience" that includes the concept:

*Look at the facts of the world. You see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. **I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. **But from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.*****

Things refuse to be mismanaged long. Jefferson trembled when he thought of slavery and remembered that God is just. Ere long all America will tremble.

The site then gives a chronology of how the actual aphorism has been used by different people and how it came into its more concise and popularly recognized form in 1918, still long before King's famous citations of it.