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Educating for Peace: The Founding Vision of CIIS¹

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Yaacov Iram is Professor of International Education at Bar-Ilan University in Israel where he holds the UNESCO/Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance, and Peace. In his book *Educating toward a Culture of Peace* (2006), professor Iram edited a collection of essays written by international scholars and teachers of peace studies who have been involved in UNESCO's "International Decade (2000-2010) for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World." In the introduction to his collection Iram distinguishes three types of peace activity: "peace keeping" – peace through strength; "peace making" – peace through communication, negotiation, and diplomacy; and "peace building" – peace through education. The focus of Iram's book is on "peace building" – peace through education – and this is my topic.

Iram notes that "As defined by the United Nations, a culture of peace is 'a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations' " (2006:4). He adds that:

Education plays a paramount role in imparting the values of tolerance, multiculturalism, and peace to the next generation. Through tolerance, one can strive to transcend religious and political boundaries and bridge cultural and ethical differences. Tolerance and pluralism require both knowledge of what people share in common, as well as an understanding of their differences. Without awareness, there can be no multi cultural education and no peace education (2006:10).

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Prof. Iram concludes his essay with a scathing indictment against education: he charges that “The state of the world today clearly indicates that educators, educationists, and other professionals involved in and in charge of education have failed in their goals to make the world a place that improves the material well-being of people and promotes a peaceful state of existence for all” (2006:9).

From its founding, *The California Institute of Integral Studies* (CIIS) has devoted itself to an education that supports peace building because, as we shall see, educating for peace was the principal reason for the founding of CIIS.

In 1951, Louis Gainsborough established the American Academy of Asian Studies. Gainsborough, a business entrepreneur and importer, traveled throughout Asia and acquired a deep appreciation of Asian history and culture. He was so inspired by the non-violent teachings of Gandhi that he produced a documentary film on Gandhi that featured rare original footage. In 1957, on the day following his second inauguration, President Dwight Eisenhower screened the film at the White House with Jawaharlal Nehru, then prime minister of India, and Gainsborough present.

Gainsborough founded the Academy because he was convinced that in order to have peace in the world, the East and the West needed to understand and appreciate each other. In the 1950's, the notion of peace building education was both a forward thinking concept as well as a courageous act because many Americans were extremely prejudiced against Asians. The United States was barely out of a catastrophic war with Japan which included the first, second, and only use of nuclear weapons; and the US was intensely engaged in a war against North Korea.

Haridas Chaudhuri, who was one of the original professors appointed to the American Academy of Asian Studies, asserted that educating for peace was central to his founding vision of the California Institute of Asian Studies. He wrote:

Everybody feels the need for peace. Every great leader talks about it and proclaims its vital importance. However, we find that even though on an intellectual level we are convinced about it, by talking about it and

making pledges in our actual behavior patterns, [in] our day to day dealing with fellow beings, we seem to act paradoxically, showing a yawning chasm, an unbridgeable gulf, between our profession and practice. What is the reason, and what could be done about it? This is the crux of the whole crisis that confronts us today. (1977:77)

Sharing Gainsborough's sense of urgency for an education that could lead to global peace, Chaudhuri stated:

In modern times, religious faith has yielded to a far more powerful force in collective living, and that is political ideology.... Consequently, the most crucial problem facing humanity in our present age is the problem in interrelationship between such rival ideologies as communism and democracy or socialism and capitalism. With the creation of hydrogen bombs and rockets, the problem has assumed alarming proportions so that it poses a menace not only to the peace of the world, but to the very survival of the human race (1977:20-21).

Chaudhuri was convinced that the compelling value of an "Integral Education was that it warns against extreme tendencies which mislead people into lopsided development" (1965:37). He believed that non-dualistic thinking is a prerequisite of world peace:

Nondualism implies that seemingly conflicting political ideologies are only relatively valid truths of life. None of them can be affirmed to represent the absolute truth. On the other hand, none of them can be condemned either as absolute untruth. Each represents a particular formulation of truth based upon the consideration of some specific social, economical and political conditions used in a particular country at a given time (1977:21).

By recognizing peace building as the overriding rationale for the creation of CIIS, albeit often implicit, we see the relevance of our institutional roots and historical development – we can understand why CIIS offers certain

programs and not others – we can integrate the various parts of CIIS into a dynamic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

I encourage you to reflect on how we ensure that educating for peace continues to be an aspiration as well as a unifying theme in our academic programs, co-curricular activities, public programs, and performances. To do so, let us briefly look at four areas of study and practice that have been central to CIIS since its origins; and let us see how they provide a unique and productive academic model for peace building:

Two areas are goals: personal transformation, and social transformation; and two are means to reach those goals: contemplative practice, and interreligious dialogue.

We tend to view these areas as unrelated because we often discuss and plan them separately as if they were not interconnected. By overlooking their interconnectedness, we miss how they contribute to a comprehensive goal of educating for peace. I hope that by being more aware of their interconnectedness and their relevance to contemporary higher education, we will become more intentional – more explicit – in relating our work to a core mission of peace building.

Personal Transformation

Haridas Chudhuri maintained that personal transformation was the foundation for an education for peace. He insightfully noted:

It is with regard to this matter [peace] that many people feel education plays a vital role – not only in our ways of thinking, in our outlook on life, and in our sense of values, but also in our actual behavior. When we think about the role of education in human life, in our conduct, and in our relations with one another, we immediately feel that there is a great need today for an overhaul of the entire educational system (1977:77-78)

Regarding the international student protests of his time, Chaudhuri added:

Most probably it is a kind of vague, intuitive feeling of this vital need [personal transformation] which is at the

root of widespread turmoil and disturbances in the university and college campuses throughout the world. (1977:78)

Nearly 20 years later, His Holiness the Dalai Lama similarly recognized that social change begins with personal change: in his Introduction to Thich Nhat Hahn's *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (2011), he claimed:

Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way...Peace must first be developed within an individual (1991: vii).

In the academic programs and activities at CIIS, we strive to embody the wisdom of Gandhi that *we need to be the change we wish to see in the world*. The notion that personal transformation leads to social change has been an underlying educational principle at CIIS since its founding. This is why we have academic programs in counseling psychology, community mental health, social and cultural anthropology, integral ecology, and many others; this is why we have six counseling centers throughout the Bay Area; and this is why we have the kind of public programs and performances that we present.

Alan Senauke, Director of Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, has succinctly summed up this principle of responsibility for oneself and for others in his *The Bodhisattva's Embrace* (2010):

Each of us must take complete responsibility for the world, as if the world's fate depended on our words and actions. Whether we know it or not, it does. (153)

Social Transformation

In Chaudhuri's book *The Evolution of Integral Consciousness* (1977), he listed the 12 "most fundamental principles of integral or holistic education for the world community." He believed that these principles would lead to "the building of one internationally unified global society" (p. 84). Chaudhuri specified three principles that provide a rationale for our

commitment to multicultural understanding and social transformation through community service. These are:

1. Promotion of intercultural, interracial, and interreligious understanding
2. Affirmation of the intrinsic dignity of all individuals, men and women, everywhere in the world....
3. The essential equality of all races, and peoples, and nations in the world. (1977: 84)

While these principles are supported today in US higher education, even mandated by the Federal Government and accrediting commissions, they reveal the extent to which Haridas Chaudhuri and his colleagues were ahead of their time. This should not be surprising given that CIIS was a leader in the 50's and 60's San Francisco Renaissance which did much to raise awareness regarding non-violence, civil rights, social justice, and ecology.

Moreover, these three principles provide a rationale for our recent institutional community service initiative: The Center for the Beloved Community. Led by Shirley Strong, Dean of Students, the Center is moving through its formation period by building on the many community service programs and activities that CIIS has developed over the years. In our design of the Center for Beloved Community, we recognize that we serve many communities, locally and globally. For example, we serve our local communities through our counseling centers which now number 6 including our "Clinic Without Walls" in the Mission. We are exploring ways to expand these centers outside San Francisco. Presently, we are working to serve the Indian immigrant community in the Silicon Valley by setting up a counseling center at the India Community Center in Milpitas. We are also piloting a counseling center that includes acupuncture by partnering with the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM).

As Edgar Morin eloquently maintains in his visionary book, *Homeland Earth: A Manifesto for the New Millennium* (1999) (translated by Sean Kelley of CIIS), we are living in the Planetary Era. Dr. Chaudhuri was well aware of this worldview many years ago as he insisted that higher education needed to provide a global perspective if we were ever to have global peace. He wrote:

The educational system, as it operates today, does not take into account the whole man, nor does it take into account the whole world. It is concerned neither with global consciousness nor the integral man in his full integrity and in the multidimensional richness of his total existence. We find that these concepts do not go into the educational planning (1977:78).

Unquestionably, this citation attests to Chaudhuri's passionate commitment to implement a new vision for higher education – he was not interested in developing one more college or university. In his unique plan, education was to lead to personal transformation which in turn would lead to social transformation. He maintained that personal and social transformation, so necessary for peace building, required contemplative practice, spiritual inquiry, and interreligious dialogue.

Contemplative practice

Throughout the history of CIIS, we have included contemplative practice in our curriculum as well as in our teaching and learning. In addition, contemplative practice often has a place in administrative and organizational meetings. Classes, gatherings, and meetings often begin with a meditation either in silent or guided format. Many CIIS faculty members enjoy distinguished reputations as teachers and scholars of contemplative theory and practice. For example, Rina Sircar, who was appointed by Dr. Chaudhuri in 1974, teaches courses in Buddhist Studies, Buddhist Psychology, Mindfulness Meditation, and healing practices found in Burmese Buddhism. Dr. Sircar's courses are informed by her lived contemplative theory and practice.

Daniel Siegel, professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, has written three highly regarded books on mindfulness: *The Developing Mind* (1999), *The Mindful Brain* (2007), and *Mindsight* (2011).

Siegel defines mindsight as “the kind of focused attention that allows us to see the internal workings of our own minds” (ix). He bases his study of mindsight on three ruling principles: first, “that mindsight can be cultivated through very practical steps” (xii); second, by developing the skills of mindsight, “we actually change the physical structure of the brain” (ibid);

and third, “well-being emerges when we create connections in our lives – when we learn to use mindsight to help the brain achieve and maintain *integration*, a process by which separate elements are linked together into a working whole” (xii).

Siegel’s books reflect an emerging research by a number of leading edge neuroscientists who are documenting how mindfulness practice affects human behavior. For example, in their book *How God Changes Your Brain* (2009), Andrew Newberry and Robert Waldman, both of the University of Pennsylvania, discuss how thinking about the divine positively alters the physical structure of the brain; and Newberry proposes a new area of study in *Principles of Neurotheology* (2010). In their *Cultivating the Spirit: How College can Enhance Students’ Inner Lives* (2011), Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm, all of UCLA and scholars of higher education, provide longitudinal data from their extensive student surveys demonstrating that mindfulness can improve faculty pedagogy and student learning as well as open both groups to personal transformation.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, drew international attention when he toured the US during the Vietnam War, and rigorously protested the war. His position was publically supported by Thomas Merton, the American Trappist monk who met Nhat Hanh and joined him in writing extensively against the war. In his *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (1991) Nhat Hanh writes on the need to “wage peace”:

Real strength is not in power, money, or weapons, but in deep, inner, peace. Practicing mindfulness in each moment of our daily lives, we can cultivate our own peace. With clarity, determination, and patience – the fruits of meditation – we can sustain a life of action and be real instruments of peace. I have seen this peace in people of various religious and cultural backgrounds who spend their time and energy protecting the weak, struggling for social justice, lessening the disparity between rich and poor, stopping the arms race, fighting against discrimination, and watering the trees of love and understanding throughout the world (99-100).

According to Nhat Hanh, we can cultivate our own peace by practicing mindfulness and that through the “fruits of meditation – clarity, determination and patience – we can sustain a life of action and be real instruments of peace.” As “instruments of peace,” we can move freely to acts of engaged spirituality.

Interreligious dialogue

In their commitments to educate for peace, both Gainsborough and Chaudhuri insisted that without meaningful dialogue and interaction among the members of the world’s religions and spiritual traditions, there could never be global peace. Their assertions are just as valid for us as they were for them.

In 1951, Alan Watts, who was the Chaplain at Northwestern University, arrived at the American Academy of Asian Studies to join Haridas Chaudhuri in being among the Academy’s founding faculty. By 1951, Watts had already published 8 of his 22 books as well as many essays on Eastern religions and spiritual traditions, Zen Buddhism in particular. Watts was drawn to the Academy because of its openness to provide space for dialogue among members of diverse religions and spiritual traditions – this openness was counter to the dominant academic and cultural thinking of his day. Watts recognized that “the actual living out of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist ways of life at the level of high mysticism [is] repugnant to academics and contemptible to businessmen, threatening to Jews and Christians, and irrational to most scientists” (2001:234). He recalled his many dialogues on spirituality with Dr. Chaudhuri who with “his gentle humor and learned mind made him a wonderful partner in debate, so that we could argue endlessly without losing tempers” (235).

Years after his work at the Academy, Watts acknowledged the success of Chaudhuri in creating the Institute; and he noted that Chaudhuri built on many of the relevant themes of the Academy. Watts wrote “Haridas Chaudhuri went off on his own and replaced it [the Academy] with the California Academy [sic] of Asian Studies, which is where something of the original tradition of the work is now alive and kicking quite interestingly” (262). Despite the troubled times and issues surrounding Watts and his relationship to the Academy, there is no question that his intellectual

brilliance and personal charisma brought attention to the predecessor of CIIS, and that it positively affected the founding vision of CIIS.

From its first days, CIIS has been offering courses in the world's religions and spiritual traditions. For example, the CIIS Self-Study Report for WASC written in June 1973 cited the following courses: *Comparative Theology*, *Comparative Religion*, *Basic Scriptures*, and *Critique of Religion and Mysticism*.

Presently at CIIS, we are strengthening our commitment to interreligious dialogue through the formation of the Chaudhuri Center for Contemplative Practice, Interreligious Dialogue, and Social Justice. The Chaudhuri Center is co-curricular program at CIIS that is intended to bring the CIIS community together around the three themes of personal and social transformation. As a co-curricular program, every person at CIIS, regardless of areas of expertise and affiliations, can get involved in the activities of the Chaudhuri Center and contribute to its peace building mission.

James Carroll, former chaplain at Boston University, is a prominent peace activist, and historian of wars among religious groups as evidenced by his highly regarded studies, *Constantine's Sword* (2001) and *Jerusalem, Jerusalem* (2011). In his *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, after tracing the countless wars among the Abrahamic religions throughout their histories, Carroll offers five guiding principles that for him define "good religions":

First, Good Religion would celebrate life not death (310).

Second, Good Religion recognizes in God's oneness a principle of unity among all God's creatures, a unity that is also known as love (311).

Third, Good Religion is concerned with revelation not salvation (312).

Fourth, Good Religion knows nothing of Coercion (313).

Fifth, in the new age, Good Religion may paradoxically have a secular character (314).

These principles echo Haridas Chaudhuri's statements regarding the inevitability of religion as well as the need for us to "reconstruct" religion to contemporary issues. In his book, *Modern Man's Religion* (1966), he thoughtfully noted:

Religion is an autonomous function of the spirit. It can hardly be replaced by any non-religious discipline. That which seeks to replace religion in a radically atheistic and anti-religious mood begins soon to function as a special kind of religion. So the great need of our day is not to reject religion but to reconstruct it in accordance with the intellectual climate and the specific requirements of existence (ix).

Conclusion

In order for us to be on a steady course toward global peace, it is important to keep a clear perspective regarding our progress. As a civilization, we are making progress. In his *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2011), Steven Pinker extensively documents that we are living in an age that is more peaceful than any other in the history of humankind. Nonetheless, we are not and should not be satisfied. We should agree that much more needs to be done. We need to be more conscious and strategic in our peace building. Because educating for peace is as relevant and urgent now as it was when CIIS was founded, I hope that we will commit today to act more intentionally in advancing the peace building of our founding vision. Also, I ask you to consider how to be more explicit about your commitment to global peace in defining and planning our future.

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