

THINKING ABOUT THINKING — Part 1

EXAMINING THE STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION

By Jean Millay, Ph.D.

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Theoretically, the free public schools of America are supposed to accomplish these major things--teach reading, writing and arithmetic, and prepare students to participate in society. Ideally, students will also learn how to think, how to use logic, how to discriminate, and how to enhance their natural creative intelligence.

1) Schools must teach literacy.

Thomas Jefferson and others believed that for democracy to survive people must freely participate in elections with enough ability to read and understand the issues. The concept was a major change in thinking about thinking. It grew out of a society controlled by an oligarchy governing the illiterate. The concept of education for all inspired creativity and technology, even among those inventors who did not finish school.

However, the intensity of early patriotism exerted political influence over the content of history textbooks, and embellished them with less than factual accounts of past events. When a government is not honest, people lose respect for authority, and students lose respect for teachers and schools. When science textbooks suggested that life might have started and begun evolving only by accident, there was a substantial increase among those who resisted that concept. Many strongly preferred the version of creation of life as written in the Bible. For them, the primary purpose of literacy was to read the Bible. The constitutional promise that there must be a separation between church and state is constantly being challenged politically by many different faiths that follow diverse interpretations of various spiritual texts.

So what do we teach our children to read: **1)** Scientific information (based on non-theism and sometimes atheism); **2)** Political dogma (based on the party in power at the moment); **3)** Religious beliefs (promoted by any one religion); **4)** Perhaps

whatever the academic subject, The Bill of Rights and the Constitution should also accompany the topic. With so much money and energy spent to influence what textbooks are allowed to print, our major political conflicts about the proper use of taxes for public education will continue to burn brightly. Lost in this conflict, in overcrowded classes, too many students in low-income (low tax-based) areas continue to drop out or graduate with barely third grade literacy skills. Most of these see only the ads on TV, which are read to them, so they will be “good consumers.” The corporations that grow rich on “good consumers” are able to buy politicians to bypass science. Politicians broadcast fear over the TV to maintain power over education—that is over what can and cannot be discussed on TV. Thus, some of the most important science is silenced for profit.

Is there a way to avoid these costly conflicts and just focus on the most efficient teaching methods? Free people should be able to choose what they want to read, but first they need to know how.

2) Schools are expected to prepare students to participate in society and to support the economy.

The most practical accomplishment of education has been to prepare students to get a job, pay taxes, participate in their communities (and in public defense, as needed). However, we have seen that these needs change with our rapidly changing society. When this country was still an agrarian society, illiteracy was high, especially for girls. In 1915, my mother was criticized for attending high school, since school wasn't necessary for girls. The skills required to be a good farm wife would be learned at home. Fortunately for me, that criticism did not deter my mother, or her parents, both of whom had attended the university.

After WWII, more veterans (men and women) could afford to go to college with the help of the GI Bill. The surge in creativity was phenomenal.

Now with the rapid advancement of the computer revolution, requirements for job training have become quite specialized. Students must be flexible in their thinking to keep up with changing times. Now learning how to think in a way that is enhanced by creative problem solving has become fundamental to a complete education.

The rest of this issue [*AHP Perspective, Nov/Dec 2001*] is devoted to major influences on thinking, among them the chemistry and electricity of thought, the hypnotic influences of the media, and the collection of memories and cognitive

processes we bring with us into the mix.

THINKING ABOUT THINKING — Part 2

EXAMINING YOUR OWN THOUGHT PROCESSES

1) How do you think? Ask yourself, what verbal or perceptual systems most often dominate your cognitive style? Words? Images? Feelings? Smells? Can you translate what you feel into words? Can you find words to describe your images? Are your words, images, and feelings in harmony, or are they in conflict over which will be used to express your personality? Study the different systems of thought you use most often.

2) What do you think about ? Three subjects dominate: **a)** our personal relationships; **b)** our needs for the basics— housing, food, transportation and healthcare; **c)** our special areas of interest, such as a field of study or art or music, job or sports.

With your personal relationships, is it your style to dominate, to be submissive, or to just share and/or cooperate with your business associates, partners and family? If you feel the need to dominate, perhaps you will ignore what others think, and that will limit communication. If your own creativity has been suppressed, your thoughts may be lost in anxiety and depression, and this also limits communication. If you are self-confident, sharing in an open-minded way is easier, and communication with others can grow creatively.

Few actually realize that most of what we perceive is a reflection of what we project from an unquestioned belief system. A frequently used comedy routine in a play shows characters using the same words that mean different things to each of them. We laugh as we watch the characters projecting different personal “realities,” while falsely thinking that they are actually communicating with each other. However, sometimes we are so wrapped up in our own circle of thoughts that we don’t see the humor of these misperceptions (either our own or those of others). Exploring the source of our own projections is a way of developing a more open mind and a sense of humor.

We also spend a lot of time thinking about our own activities of work or play. What you do think about as you follow your interests helps define the pathways of your

thinking processes along with the development of your memories. Farmers pay close attention to seeds, soil, sun and seasons. Inventors visualize in multiple dimensions to invent and build working machinery. Artists pay attention to light, shadows, color and inner visions, to express feelings through images. Academics explore research questions with theories, experiments, and statistics, studying countless books and writing their own in response. Musicians focus on vibrations. Ali Akbar Khan, the master teacher of North Indian classical music, said "...music is a sound, and when you want to play this sound, you don't need to train your eyes, you need to train your ears...." ("Education and Music." In *AHP Newsletter*, San Francisco, CA May 1979.)

By focusing intention in non-verbal vibration, all the senses are able to perceive things, even at a distance, through resonance. Twenty-five members of the Parapsychology Research Group met regularly for thirty years to discuss such remarkable abilities of mental activity (such as telepathy, spiritual healing, clairvoyance, now called remote viewing). Prominent researchers (using vastly different cognitive styles, since they represented a wide variety of disciplines such as medicine, psychology, anthropology, physics and art) published a book about what they learned about psi phenomena. (Kane, B., Millay, J. & Brown, D., Eds., *Silver Threads: 25 Years of Parapsychology Research*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.)

In 1972, after Timothy Scully developed the electronics for the Alphaphone* portable brainwave analyzers and phase comparator, we built the First *Stereo Brainwave Biofeedback Light Sculpture*. We used it to learn voluntary control of our own brainwaves, before determining the research questions to study the electricity of thought. Those experiences changed everything I thought before that time about my own thinking processes. (Millay, J. *Multidimensional Mind: Remote Viewing in Hyperspace*. Berkeley: A Universal Dialogues Book. North Atlantic Books, 1999.)

The educational system needs to provide such biofeedback for self-discovery. The game of educating yourself about your own thought process is not a competitive game. It is an essential part of discovering how you think and how to focus your intention. From there, you can learn to increase your intelligence and learn how to manifest what you desire to accomplish.

3. What do you think about those things that you choose to perceive ? Our ability to perceive all that is going on around us is limited. We must focus on something or allow our attention to be scattered. We tend to pick certain types of

things to notice, while ignoring others. We choose them from habits of doing so. What aspect of your mind becomes the chooser? Are you conscious of choosing your perceptions, or is that all automatic? You may have been indoctrinated into a particular belief system (i.e., religious or ethnic). Whether you accepted or rejected that indoctrination, those early habits of perception may still determine your logic, since **logic follows belief**.

If you decide to follow this question deeply, you might find your consciousness becoming aware of the many other dimensions of reality. Your peer group (with the same belief system) might not want you to explore your own multidimensionality. They might even consider this question a form of heresy and try to prevent you from even thinking about it through ridicule, peer pressure, or threats of abandonment from your social group.

However, this question is primary to certain meditative practices, and to those who wish to discover the source of the choices. It is our own higher consciousness that is the chooser, and we can learn to identify with that rather than with the habits of choice imprinted from early indoctrination.

4) Every thought, feeling and emotion is accompanied by chemical activity in the brain. The food we eat forms the chemistry that sometimes overwhelms the intention of our thinking. Aside from the issue of drugs, we shouldn't overlook the effects of ordinary food. Some may recall the overstuffed, dull-minded, feeling after a very large dinner, the hyperactive rush from too much sugar, the rash and/or depression from pesticides in the food, the loss of coordination from drinking alcohol, and the allergic reaction (or addiction) to cigarette smoke. Some say they can't "think" in the morning without a cup of coffee. The medical technology of MRI and PET scans show us where the blood sugar burns more brightly in the areas of the brain that are more active. In this way, we can see different areas of the brain "light up" for different types of thoughts. With these tools, researchers and pharmaceutical companies are busy designing new pills to activate, or suppress, different mental activities. Beside the use of legal uppers, downers, Prozac and Ritalin (with their side effects) there are entheogens and even "smart pills" that are designed to assist focus of attention and enhance access to memory. In the future students may use "smart pills" to pass an exam (though without the damaging side effects on the body that athletes experience when they have used chemistry for

building muscles and endurance). This may be an inevitable result of our current high-stakes testing policies. However, I doubt if anyone will ever have to provide a urine sample before taking an SAT.

1. Every thought, feeling, and emotion is accompanied by an electrical event in

the brain. Here is where biofeedback has the best potential for illuminating the ways we think about thinking. From years of medical use, and some experiments in an educational setting, we can now say that biofeedback can be used to train focus of attention. ([Google Biofeedback](#) or read Green, G. *The A.D.D. Quest for Identity: Inside the Mind of Attention Deficit Disorder*. Reno, NV: The Biofeedback Center Press, 1999.) The ability to become more intelligent is possible for each person who has the opportunity to use the tools and chooses to practice. It is my hope that biofeedback can be used more widely in elementary and high schools to help students learn more about the relationship between their own thoughts and the way their bodies react to thoughts.

Fifth grade is a good time to begin. From my own studies I can predict that a child gains greatly in self-esteem when s/he learns to raise and lower skin temperature at will, tense or relax a muscle with the EMG (electro-myograph), and exert voluntary control of emotional responses with the GSR (galvanic skin response). By learning to bring phase coherence to their brainwaves, students can learn more about the multidimensional nature of their own consciousness. Once students learn voluntary control of various parameters, through biofeedback that learning stays with most of them even after the machines have been turned off. It is my opinion that biofeedback training in elementary and high school could set off a chain reaction that could modify the dominate use of expensive chemicals that pharmaceutical companies push for healthcare today.

6) Television produces hypnotic effects on the thinking activity of all children, young and old. The great educational potentials of television can be seen in such programs as the Bill Moyer's special "*Earth on Edge*," the National Geographic specials about nature, *The American Experience* historical series, and the Ken Burns stories of *Jazz* and more recently *The War*.

Still we must realize that television uses a medium of flickering light, which can evoke trance states by entraining our brainwaves. In such a state, the mind can

become very susceptible to suggestion, especially when the same ads and sound bites are repeated. Our educational institutions have ignored trance states, but advertisers spend billions of dollars to study their effectiveness. Sex, violence and gossip attract the most attention among TV viewers, so they are featured while other important news events are ignored along with any public complaint. **This puts our civilization on a giant feedback loop with the dark side.** The negative psychological and medical effects (of this type of corporate media “education”) goes unheeded. On another level politicians require massive contributions from large corporations in order to buy time on television. Some of these same corporations have control over the major media networks. Repetitious sound bites and gossip are also used to influence elections. Multinational corporations are in a position to buy political control around the world through this power, and ravage 3rd world countries, as well.

Television is important to education, but students need to learn how to be discriminating in their choice of programs. Many programs project disrespect for parents and teachers. Suggestions to help keep freedom of thought alive and well need to be brought forward from parents, dedicated teachers, and students. The participation of all who are concerned is needed to keep us out of the trap of Fascist commercialism.

PTAs, Internet Groups, and community groups, need to work harder on this issue. Schools need smaller classes, better-trained teachers and good technology to attempt to counteract television mind control. Educators need to study trance states in order to help themselves and their students understand what television can do to their brains and memory systems. **When students learned from their parents to have respect for their teachers, that respect formed an essential part of the learning environment. Those teachers, who showed respect for their students, are the ones we remember all our lives, because they encouraged us to think. Free thinking is the essence of democracy. Let’s work to keep it vibrant and creative.**