

# The Need To Know



Educational Solutions Worldwide Inc.

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Caleb Gattegno

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Author: Caleb Gattegno

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Educational Solutions Worldwide Inc.

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor 99 University Place, New York, N.Y. 10003-4555

[www.EducationalSolutions.com](http://www.EducationalSolutions.com)

In our day to day living we meet varied phenomena. Daily we engage in arriving at our own observations about them. We notice that some of our observations ring deeper than others, have echoes which make them last and come back to linger in our minds or nag us to find some explanation for what strikes us and stays with us.

Since there is such a variety of happenings, events, incidents, accidents which call for our attention and involve us, we generally sense that there are also a large variety of causes within us and/or outside us for us to notice the occurrences, the goings on around us. Individually we do some simultaneous “reflective observing” in the time of our living, by being in dialogue with ourselves. We actively try to reduce the haphazardness of what reaches our mind. By making sense of it, when we succeed in creating some order, we tell ourselves: now we understand.

It is possible for us to benefit from one another’s individual understandings of phenomena around us, by sharing our awarenesses and by developing the approaches which take us beyond our individual understanding of specific phenomena to a more comprehensive and relativistic one.

In a significant sense, understanding implies that anything new that strikes us is fully integrated with that which has left its impact on us earlier and which we still hold in our mind. In spite of our limited experience, we become better at understanding, at least some of what reaches us, through the process of the integration of the new and the subordination of the old in the light of the new.

But oftentimes, we attempt to “explain” the new in terms of the old. Explaining is a personal attempt at reducing that which is there to be understood, to the size understandable by us. Just the same, it is an attempt to harmonize the new with what we know, or believe we know.

In the process of explaining, it is possible to catch ourselves creating *theories*. Our theories may be provisional, but they remain in force so long as with their help we can perceive the new in terms of the old and can explain the newly met phenomena, to our satisfaction. If others

adopt our theories, the theories gain a social validity and look more objective.

In this issue we shall study the existence in us of THE NEED TO KNOW. We shall examine the validity of this assumption in the light of its fruitfulness.

The News Items follow the articles.

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# 1 Introducing The Need To Know

We have all heard of the kind of curiosity which makes our children destroy their toys to see inside them, and of those adults who manage to keep this childhood curiosity alive in later years. Curiosity is experienced by all of us several times a day. We have questions which come to us and, when asked why they were formulated, we hear, "I was just curious!" indicating the legitimacy of that movement and its benign-ness.

Curiosity in some social context and circumstances becomes nosiness and can be resented. But in other contexts it seems a healthy human attribute of the mind, the one which keeps us on a specific track to find out something about what occupies us. Curiosity blends a mental, intellectual component with an affective one. The latter gives us the energy that keeps us at it, which holds other matters at bay and nourishes our involvement in the pursuit of that which seems relevant to our search. It is the feeling of the affective component which characterizes curiosity whatever the intellectual content of the search. This universal presence of a particular kind of tension in us, recognizable by the self in a vast spectrum of involvements, allows us to switch from a feeling to a need, and see curiosity as "a need to know."

Man's mind is such that it can become aware of perception whether it is created by an input of energy from outside the soma or it is a shift of energy within the soma. Awarenesses of energy changes, qualify those changes as subtle, notable, excessive. Those awarenesses accompanied by others which refer to the content and to the whole, blended in the

moment, are the reality of the knowing, whether it is retained as significant or shoved away in order to dwell on something else. The self at the level of experience at work in this way, generates experience, its experience.

This is why each of us believes in the genuineness of one's experience and can distinguish not only truth from lie and from mental fabrications (which may be creatively valuable in fictitious work of fantasy and fiction) but also the qualities and attributes of one's mental acts as distinct from their content which takes the form of objectified energy. Thus we reach the power to judge our inner life and some of its transactions.

With the distinction between the attributes of our mental acts and the objectified forms of ourselves available to us, we can reach our needs as well as our knowing, and blend them into our need to know.

We can find in us the need to know, in our present inner life under thousands of guises, at our present age and in our present circumstances. We can distinguish between the need to know nourished by curiosity and the need fed by ambition, habit or even the momentum of curiosity. Once known empirically in the here-and-now, we can try to make it into an instrument for our understanding of our own life, our condition, our involvements and their present shapes and strengths.

Since the life of each of us is unique, every one of us must redo the work of focusing on one's experience of the need in one to know, by using such lightings and by noting what is being made evident, stressed, put into relief and thus meet one's need to know face to face.

We can select instances from our lives and illustrate first, the existence of a need to know and then, a variety of the modalities of its manifestation. We can look at, for example, what we all (or almost all) do when we come to an intersection and want to cross to the other side. We stop and inspect the environment. We take in the color of the traffic lights and interpret the signal; we look to the right or to the left (but generally to both) and process the information by stopping or moving

ahead, leisurely or fast, involved with the traffic to avoid being run over or even simply to interfere with its flow, feeling what is our right of way, our sense of fairness, our courtesy, separately or blended. It takes only fractions of seconds to do all that mental work but we do it spontaneously, using our need to know whether or not it is safe to cross at this intersection at this moment with all that which characterizes the moment as it is perceived by our trained senses supported by our previous experience and our knowledge of the laws of traffic.

While our inner life goes on and we order our soma to walk towards a certain destination set in advance, by a certain route which may have a number of options at the precise moment of actual crossing we give to our need to know its chance to function unobtrusively towards a practical end. If the situation demands, once again, that we need to know, we feel the need active in us mobilizing us to assess the situation captured in the moment. The moment taken care of, we move on to our destination. Such insertion of the need to know into a routine activity though it gives the need to know a trivial appearance, it also makes it a part of the fabric of our life, localizable in so many of our daily involvements. By dwelling in some of them *now* we can all find our own list of instances which introduce us explicitly to what our need to know is.

If it is, as we claim, an important part of the fabric of human lives, we shall be helped by meeting its existence in us to understand ourselves and others. We shall contribute to our evolution by becoming aware that our need, in fact, is an instrument of knowing.

In fact, it is the need which provides the energy for knowing, the affective energy that mobilizes the psychic energy which in turn is required to mobilize our organized past: our soma as well as all the objectivations which enter in every action and have been generated in earlier knowings and experiences. Because of the existence of this energy component in knowing, we are allowed to speak of *need to know*. Indeed, “need” can be proposed, and can be adopted, because of the contact of the self with the presence of the dynamics within the happening. Each of us is sensitive both to this presence and to its vicissitudes which represent the modalities of the manifestation of a

need and we assert spontaneously both that we have a need to know and can remain with the knowing.

The superficial openness of curiosity has been replaced by the profound and hidden workings of the need to know. This will allow us to understand why and how humans are compelled to yield to their curiosity in so many circumstances of their lives, why curiosity at certain times and of certain kinds is healthy and must be encouraged and cultivated.

Homo sapiens is not only a knowing hominid among all creatures, but defined as a knowing creature, with knowing as the essence of his being. Thus he has created a new reality called knowledge which covers the full spectrum of all the reaches of his awareness. In so doing he has become aware of awareness and generated all the sciences of successive generations from the least structured and least established — which were passed on through action from parents to offspring — to the modern established sciences of the last four hundred years — which form the contents of the courses in all schools of the world, including the graduate, and for which organized education is the vehicle.

Without the need to know there can be no sciences.

According to the nature of the impacts on the self, the need to know applies those attributes of knowing to itself which indicate that the resultant knowledge belongs to such or such a science. The need is universal but it gets structured differently according to the selected attributes of the knowing. Both a nuclear physicist and a cosmologist — an observer of the whole universe, experience the need to know but that need does not satisfy itself in the same way in both fields. The infinitely small in one case and the infinitely large in the other, remain beyond the reach of the mind which creates the instruments to reach the  $\alpha$  and the  $\omega$  of the universe. The experience of the need to know (though reachable in both) is not stressed while the experience of the contact with the contents is. Thus both can recognize themselves as scientists because of their discipline to know, while the findings of each might pose difficulties in their comprehension by the other.

Although the ethics of scientists require that they stress objectivity and neutrality and ignore the emergence of subjective and personal components, yet each working scientist knows that he experiences the very subjective pressures of his personal need to know as it manifests itself in his specific field and not in others. There we find the source of specialization which does not result only from the enormity of the accumulated knowledge. Indeed, there are people who specialize in allowing the whole to occupy them and who propose syntheses of fields rather than collections of details gathered in narrow areas.

We all experience the need to know. Its existence cannot be denied. Exceptionally we suspend it: at our moments of introspection, when we are in dialogue with ourselves.



## **2 The Knower Dialoguing With Himself**

If we have accepted the existence of a need to know as a manifestation of the human condition, we can give ourselves the task of finding out how it structures the objectivation of experience over the years, and the activities which fill the days of those years.

We are clearly able to isolate and talk about the need to know at least in circumstances similar to those which make possible the writing of this paper. But whether it is always possible to isolate and always possible to talk about it in all circumstances in our life, must be answered negatively. Especially if we were to include in our study the contemplation of the states of ourselves before we are born, after birth, before we could speak our language, or in the state of sleep or of meditation etc., when words do not exist or do not present themselves.

Dialoguing with oneself can take other forms than verbal ones.

Since we all know that, let us agree that the usage of the word “dialogue” includes nonverbal communication and not restrict its meaning to what is verbalized. If we can verbalize our dialogue we give ourselves an audience, as I am doing here.

If on a moonlit night with a clear sky, I happen to be on my back and looking at the stars, I can stress my perception of these dots of light and focus my attention on some of them collectively or individually. These acts do not require that I verbalize them since they are expressions of my very early self-education when I had no language at my disposal. To look and see, to note some similarities and some differences, are part of my techniques of dialoguing with the sources of energy impacts outside myself. My self must make available the time for these activities, the time for the mobilization of the components of the self which define looking, seeing, noting, retaining, having the retained available, blending the functioning of each with the other, and with those already existing. All of this is needed to define the readiness to dialogue as well as the dialogues which actually take place in all of us, all day, every day.

Since in the beginning there are no words, all questions asked are non-verbal during our embryonic development and our very early childhood. Even later we all have many non-verbal dialogues with ourselves and our environment though this escapes most of us. It is therefore not wise to restrict the dialogue of the self with itself and with the world, and the interactions of both, to what requires words.

Of course, writing requires words. The act of verbalization has the potential of letting be known that which does not require words in order to come into being. Dialogue with oneself or with the world, is such a reality.

The way in which my self knows my soma is non-verbal.

The way my self knows sleep, memory, inner dynamics and inner criteria is also non-verbal.

The ways my self lets quanta of light, sound waves, chemicals, affect its somatic objectivation are non-verbal.

The way my self lives the law of integration and subordination of the old into the new, is also non-verbal, most of the time.

The way time becomes an integral component of all experiencing is also non-verbal.

All these are forms of dialogue of the self with itself from the moment of conception on.

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At its embryonic and fetal stages, the self is in dialogue with the energy contained in the mother's blood and in the compatible DNA. Through these exchanges of energy, the tissues and the organs — the physiological and anatomical formations of the self — come into being. Concomitantly, their links and their dynamics — which constitute the prenatal psyche — come to exist. All these are the expressions of the self in dialogue with its "universe." Since the self carries on this dialogue in accordance with the law of integration and subordination, the self is, simultaneously, in dialogue with itself. Through a succession of dialogues the self goes on producing cells and tissues and specializing these into organs related through the various stages of evolution of the nervous tissue culminating in the brain and its grid of firing circuits of nerves which keep the self informed of all that goes on in the soma at every moment. For the rest of one's life, the self keeps this information network at work minimizing the cost of maintenance because it applied the law of integration and subordination properly. This works best by letting the psyche look after the subordinated part while the self with its affective energy dwells at the apex with the integrative part. Because of that, the self knows itself as an integrated being. The self is itself its soma and all the functionings stored in it, those of the brain as well as those of the psyche. That is why we all know ourselves as affectable by cosmic energy, by vital energy, by mental energy, and we recognize which of these three forms of energy is at work at every moment. Hence we act accordingly, that is, knowingly.

In awareness, the self knows itself as different from those three realms which represent all the possible, durable expressions:

- 1 of the cosmic energy which produced the cosmos as we know it,
- 2 of the vital energy which produced all living forms and hence the flora and fauna studied in botany and zoology and, as part of it,
- 3 of the realm of the psyches made of all animal instincts.

To be different is one thing and to be *sui generis* is another. Humans know themselves as of *four* realms and mainly dwelling in the fourth. The fourth realm integrates and subordinates the other three. When dead, humans rejoin the cosmos by being only cosmic matter as found on earth. They can “vegetate” if their brain is severed and then only act as organized tissues made of cells. They become “animals” if they surrender their capacity to change themselves and allow themselves to have only predictable behaviors. They are human to the extent they cannot take anything for granted and are able to meet what comes.

Through a variety of experiences and experiments, the self engages in the dialogues with itself. They lead the self to its experience and its knowledge. These dialogues take various forms because the four realms, which are part of the dialogues, are different in their composition and contribute differently in nature and in energy amounts. The dialogues of the embryonic and fetal stages concern themselves predominantly with the cosmic and vital energies. They end up with the self knowing how to read chemical reactions within its somatic receptacle. But also, and above all, they end up with the self knowing how it holds the soma together by being at the apex and by integrating and subordinating the brain and the nervous system which were gradually produced to integrate and subordinate the vital energy flowing in the tissues and their cells to maintain health or proper functionings.

Human energy becomes the psyche which functions as the watchdog for the self, of the good functioning of all that has been integrated and subordinated. Having given the past its due, human energy constructs the future in the present. At the various moments of life, the self holds the past as provider of the instruments which permit it to forge the new. The extent of the past involved, therefore, conditions the working

of the self and its ability to give the need to know its extent. But in the fourth realm such conditionings can be assessed and recast to make possible what seemed impossible previously. For that “new,” new experiments and experiences coupled with new awarenesses are required. The self considers them to be the prerequisites and the preparation for the re-departure which the self gives to the need to know. In the new departure there are chances which the self sees as desirable or necessary for meeting and creating the new, and for knowing that which the need to know could not, as yet.

The illustrations for such workings abound in everyone’s life. Humans by projection, dream, inspiration or other means, set their realization in the future and in specific forms. They are guided by what they foresee, intuit and thus sketch a future. While remaining with it, they recast the past for it to yield that which can serve the realization concerned. The need to know makes one find what to discard momentarily of that past, what to stress in it which seems akin to a distant goal, what to engage in as learning, in order to make oneself better equipped to meet the demands of that realization.

Looking at ourselves growing through learning will supply some answers.

Clearly, for a baby, for example, to lift a chair as its daddy does it, is not always possible. If a particular baby is inspired by the ease of moving things around as is displayed by his father, he will have to wait until his bones are bigger and more solid, his muscles have a greater bulk, his grip is more secure, his knowledge of how physical energy behaves and can be educated and his judgment of some of the components of action have become adequate and automatic. For some babies it may be only two years before such dreams or projects are realized; for others twenty, for others never. But the dynamics within will, in all cases, have some resemblance.

Perception of the act executed by the father, is at hand; the sense that it is easy for the father, implies going beyond pure perception although other perceptions may be at work which affect the baby in stressing the duration of the action, the curves in the trajectory of the chair, the calm

on the face of the father, the absence of signs of effort known innerly to the baby from his experiences when attempting the impossible. Judging that among the many exercises which fill his day, some are related to the project which occupies him, a baby may polarize his mind so as to give more attention to them, practicing them in preference to others and noting how much progress towards the goal has been made every time lifting and moving were involved.

In the dialogues which take the forms of games, young children make it obvious how they equip themselves better in the fields of perception and action. But we cannot see in such manifestations how individual children mentally link that which they are doing with that which they have (or have not) projected as a larger goal for themselves in life, goal which may have been inspired by their witnessing what seemed to them inspiring feats. Games may be the channels through which we can reach the dynamics of learning. They may not be the channels for reaching the motivations to go on playing them or for abandoning them to enter into others.

By analyzing all the games children play, we can reach a deeper understanding of how the need to know works in each of us over the first ten years of our lives. Essentially, all our games are expressions of one or more dialogues the self carries on with itself. The dialogues are on matters concerning the self's need to know specific attributes and properties of itself. They are also to know the extent of knowing involved in reaching the point of mastery.

Since energy can be assessed by the self, in general, it serves as the objective yardstick used by the self to move towards mastery while knowing how this is achieved over the duration of one's involvement in a particular game. For example, hopscotch for girls, marble games for boys, are the forms proposed by the self for oneself and for others (at the same level of preparedness) to coordinate judgments of distance entrusted to one's eyes with judgments of throwing-energy entrusted to one's upper limbs. So long as these judgments are far apart there is motivation to persist in playing the game at the stage one is at. Learning is of course the reason for and the outcome of one's involvement in the activities so long as one experiences a challenge and

wants to know how and if, that challenge can be met and a learning integrated. It is then that mastery achieved causes one to leave a game and enter into another which can at times require the mastery of earlier ones.

When using the criterion of the self dialoguing with itself as a probe to know why children play or draw (or any other activity which extends over a certain duration), new insights and findings ensue. It becomes possible to ask proper questions about matters totally neglected and those which escaped one because there were no ways of tackling them before such probes existed. Every scientist knows his work as a succession of dialogues in a certain universe, using probes, which allow entry into the subject and yield information on the matter concerned.

In my epistemological work ( *The Universe of Babies, of Boys & Girls, The Adolescent and His, Will* ) over the last 44 years, I have tried precisely to circumscribe pin-pointedly the dialogues of the self with itself I could watch from birth to adulthood. I looked at what could be seen from outside and labeled play, drawing, questioning, experimentation etc., including that of grownups (specially scientists), to attempt to find out how the need to know leads us to knowledge and know-hows. I am convinced that the vast crops I was able to gather would not have come my way had I not adopted this way of working in which new probes have to be created for each field representing one of the human sensitivities developed in the arts and the sciences. I saw my mind involved in dialogues, and I followed these to their most minute alterations into feedbacks to that which the self was attempting to become aware of. Then looking at others of any age or place in a variety of activities, I could confirm the validity of the approach which became translated into a whole panoply of educational proposals, some of which are known to some of my readers.

But the need to know is wider than that and there are new questions to put to oneself as I shall proceed to do next.



### 3 Knowing Goes Beyond Learning?

The learning which leads to a learned skill or a know-how, results from dialogues of the self with itself. Are there other kinds of knowing which end in something which is totally different?

To answer this question, we can recall a well-known distinction between direct experience and experience by proxy. Often we say that we learn from the latter although we cannot always consider that learning to be a skill or a know-how.

For example, the feeling that the proof of Cantor's Theorem on the transfinite sequence of infinities has an unsurpassable elegance and an extraordinary beauty which is superimposed to our knowing how to present it to others in its mathematical and logical structure. For that we need to have a sophisticated mathematical preparation which may require years of study. But to be overwhelmed by the contrast between the simplicity of the idea behind the proof and the vastness of grasp of the theorem which handles infinities in trans-finite numbers (when each infinity implies eternity to be actually known), is a new kind of knowing. Perhaps all aesthetic knowing is of that kind! Perhaps to know beauty and goodness is of that kind too! Hence all of us have a direct experience of what transcends learning and still know ourselves as growing in new dimensions.

Having found (in the realm of aesthetics) one knowing which does not yield knowledge — although it may be connected to several fields of

knowledge — we may find ourselves encouraged to go a bit further in that direction and see if we find new meanings to the need to know.

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Reading novels or thrillers is common enough but few among us will say that it ends in a specific skill or know-how. We may say that we know that better now which did not come our way as direct experience, and was the object of the theme of a novel. We acknowledge a learning by proxy in letting the experiences of the characters in the novel reach in us an attribute of reality.

The greater the writer, the more his or her characters seem carved out of the material we may call life. Some of them are even “larger than life” as Balzac’s and Dostoevski’s are.

Human interest in fiction stems from a need to know what could have come our way but did not. Clearly the writer’s art is the vehicle for the generation of those statements which trigger the imagery and the feelings which we value because they take us somewhere we have not been or perhaps could not get at.

Knowing lust is everybody’s lot but to be a Baron Hulot by proxy takes us in realms our life and our imagination did not make possible. Knowing and portraying greed or any one of those passions which can be taken to extremes but are not often lived to their paroxysms, gives novelists their chances and us our opportunities to extend them in our armchairs — vicariously yet in a no less real way. We know that innerly, by a raise of our pulse rate or our heartbeat or by our desire to leave the reading there and seek calm in some other activity.

Reading thrillers, we need to know who of all the characters in them has committed the crime around which the novel has been knit. In fact, we don’t care how the writer chose his or her theme and developed the novel, but we care about being led to false hypotheses by the evidence presented, and about recognizing at the end that had we been smarter we would have found earlier what is revealed in the conclusion. In all

this our need to know does not work towards getting something which will become an instrument in future readings, as is the case of most learnings. In fact, we quickly lose interest in any story which is transparent to the point that we could have told it. The interest sustained in these kinds of literature (novels and thrillers) stems from the distance between our humdrum lives and those of the heroes of the stories we get into. All we may end up knowing is the limitation and the narrowness of our lives compared to virtual capabilities of living extraordinary adventures we can get into vicariously, through reading.

Biographies share with novels the capacity to inspire us to grow but because they respect actuality, they come closer to our own lives through the weaknesses and the limitations of the person depicted.

By comparing our ordinary lives to those of people who are either successful in some field of interest to us or to characters whose actions have awful consequences for themselves and/or for others, we reach an area of experience which may have in our case the consequence of making us wiser or simply more cautious. Is that our way of “learning to become wiser” or “learning to be less reckless?”

Humanity as a whole has not yet reached the level of alertness which can be translated into “an education for wisdom.” Each of us in one’s life “learns the hard way” to be less reckless. Parents, in general, do not find their offspring ready to follow their suggestions to become wiser. There does not seem to be any way in which wisdom can be cast into a set of exercises which will yield it. Wisdom is not knowledge, though we can easily acknowledge some moves of ours or of others to be such, because they have attributes which make them recognizable.

The way we know ourselves, as we are revealed progressively through our actions, our reflections, our experiences seems to operate at a level which although connected to these contents, is known to us as transcending them. If we stay with that knowing, we reach in us that which is evolving, in contradistinction to that which grows in us. When we reach our awareness of ourselves we have nothing to pin down, nothing to show as such, but we may be able to induce others to

perceive that in our life there is something at work which makes our sight different, our crops different, our expressions different.

Awareness is not knowledge and cannot be passed onto others in the manner skills and know-hows, information and data can. It is reached individually by a process open to all but not necessarily acknowledged by all. It is often called mysterious and is sometimes reached through conversion or sudden alteration of perception of oneself as a knower and what one can know.

The need to know, in the case of awareness, becomes awareness of one's awareness and is no longer a need, i.e. it loses its affective component though it can summon it, as it can summon the psyche, to be known as such, now, through awareness. If all one finds is a set of mechanisms, then one has remained in the realm of non-awareness and needs to try again. But if the energizing of the mechanisms have been reached, then one can transfer energy and eliminate the dominance of the mechanisms in one's consciousness. One encounters oneself as evolving, as being and living what the self knew how to do so well in utero and in early infancy, i.e. integrate and subordinate, hence having this at one's disposal but not remembered, not recallable. Not as knowledge.

To know oneself as evolving also means that one know oneself as *not* conditioned by the given to the point of only-repeating oneself in one's objectifications. To know oneself, in particular, means that one is not conditioned by the need to know. Instead, one meets reality as never set, never identical to itself as defined by a finite number of attributes: only temporarily static with the potential of being other. This at the personal as well as the collective levels. Then notions become functions of time, linked together by their evolving temporality, not their content.

Then, one sees the cosmos as a variable receptacle for any number of evolving systems which only remain themselves by a fiat of the onlooker and as an expression of the limitations of those who seek to understand it.

Then, one sees the living realms as asking to be constantly recast to accommodate new perceptions and the evolution of life as perpetual testing of what new can be done with the existing energies as they objectified themselves in the multitude of plant forms and animals and species.

Then, one sees humans as replacing worlds which could be perceived and described by others, which are stations of their making through the changed awarenesses. Humans are then those worlds made by that which they found in themselves by becoming aware of their awareness — in particular, that they can lose their evolving selves by adhering to any one view of Man however loftily proposed by anybody. “To know Man we need the whole of humanity” (Goethe), means that no one can tell what is really human. If we use behavior as the probe for knowing and if we “statify” good behavior, conformal behavior acceptable to others in one’s environment, we impoverish the evolving being on the way to capture himself, to get a glimpse of his humanity.

That is why humans have invented experimenting besides experiencing. The latter can be co-extensive with being aware while the former injects the will to generate change, alterations, and see what happens. Whether the experimenting is viable, whether the change it generates can still be called being human or to what extent, whether it can be retained as a possible human form or rejected because of its consequences for oneself and for others, all this is part of experimenting.

In all this, a new need to know makes its appearances. No longer concerned with establishing classifiable inventories of possible behaviors, one enquires about what makes reality, how to catch change in the moment and how to grasp the restructuring of reality at every moment pin-pointedly and as a whole. When one single self reaches this stage of evolution, it is being done on behalf of all selves and a collective evolution ensues, creative of a new world for humans to explore first, and to transcend, later.

Transcendence as the new way of knowing the humanness of humans, never enclosed, never stopped, never reproduced as one of its images, better defines the human.

This need to know is no longer tainted with the psyche which, as the past, offers only the previously integrated realms, but capable of being transcended. The word “need” is still used but to indicate the awareness that the self supplies the will to stay in contact with the dynamics which lead to the knowing, such knowing being known for what it is: to be in time.

Knowing time is one of the by-products of this close contact with the inner dynamics. By experiencing the pulse of time in all we are with, by not reducing time to any other supposedly more primitive entity, we re-instate awareness at the center of all that is human. Awareness may know time. At the same time, time permeates awareness, so that it does not lead to any static entity to be used in logical statements implying temporal hierarchies and, the respect of some precedence.

Aware of its capacity to satisfy if the self notices that this needs to happen for the self to become compatible with action, or with perception (which by the very nature of their energy demand perceptible durations) it recasts itself at once without its roots in the moment and to serve the dynamics of being. The notion of identity is replaced, then, by that of evolution which remains in contact with what was as well as with how it has become what it is and is going to be. The difference between past and present is in the perceptible quality of the presence of the self. Likewise, the future is both perceived as descending by itself and as called by what is. All three together forming a dynamic trinity: function of time generating a fleeting structure which slides on time while it generates it.

This kind of relating to oneself is a way of knowing which restores to all human beings all that they have done with themselves since they managed to separate themselves from the other realms and gave themselves to becoming aware of their awareness.

The difficulty we may experience in letting our self work in this way, can be overcome and by doing so we generate a new learning which we called in a previous issue of this Newsletter “learning to transfer” in contrast to the “transfer of learning.”

Knowing, indeed, goes beyond learning as the above may suggest. But the dynamic unity which can be reached by awareness, in its turn can recognize that dynamic knowing can offer dynamic learning a place which is a reality within the awareness of awareness. All objectifications which were conceived as stratified energy regain their dynamism. Thus, stratification becomes a device which the self is capable of, namely, replacing instants by durations. The illusion of the static can be handled and Reality regains its true nature of being in time, made of time.

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Of course, there is much more to look into for this stress and this shift to become clearer, and one day, perhaps, to become an instrument of study of these fields which remain at the frontier of being for most people except those who give their lives to it and do not compromise its reality under any circumstances. Such dedication is not encountered in the world of our casual, accidental and not too conscious relationships. And yet, dedication becomes inevitable when one sees that the self's evolution is through constant transcendence.

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## ***Advise***

Would you be interested in subscribing to publications connected with Dr. Gattegno's work?

A few people of good will are prepared to give their time to ready material for printing or for audio tape duplication particularly those not available at present: out of print or never published. They suggest such good will should not be wasted as it may not be available again.

## ***Announcements***

“Une Ecole pour Demain” (39 Rue de Brest 69002 Lyon, France) has published two major works among others: *Du Temps* (4 volumes, 1,000 pages), *L’Energie et les Energies* (3 volumes also 1,000 pages). These are transcripts of two 11-day summer seminars in France (1978 and 1980). These texts are considered to offer invaluable material not found anywhere else.

# News Items

Eight seminars in Europe, during the annual November visit, allowed eight groups of people to study a variety of problems with Dr. Gattegno. Some of the same people took more than one seminar. Still, more than two hundred people came to work on awareness and the subordination of teaching to learning. A number of important and challenging matters were looked at from close leading to individual and collective progress valued by the participants.

In England (Bristol and London) and France (Lyon and Paris), there were a number of occasions to test the instrument of considering oneself of the four realms for its effectiveness in seeing more clearly human challenges and how to tackle them.

At the Bristol weekend where most participants were from the United Kingdom and quite a number of them concerned with mathematics education at various levels, awareness remained an elusive notion, although people are readier than in the past to utter the word and try to grasp its meaning in actual situations. As an exercise to become more acquainted with it, the search for some meaning to the words: "I am of the four realms," was proposed. The discussion — while bringing forth how thinking habits can be obstacles in leading to results in investigating new topics — served to produce the examples needed to light up aspects which made almost everyone conceive that awareness was a reality always at hand even when overlooked. Twenty hours spent on refining one's grasp of this powerful instrument of study of human matters had the effect of making people ask for more

opportunities to continue the work. Tentatively it was proposed that in November, 1984, a 20 or 40-hour intensive seminar be organized on “The reconsideration of the history of mathematics in terms of awareness.”

The London, four-evening, 20-hour, workshop was on “ESL, The Silent Way.” Participants (two, from Italy and Germany) among whom there was a Canadian, at present in the United Kingdom, were mostly approaching The Silent Way for the first time. As usual the Sound/Color Fidel was received with mixed feelings and some misgivings. But when compared to the English Fidel it appeared easier to understand them the more complete and more formidable collection of phonemes and graphemes of English. There was not enough time to give a comprehensive treatment of how the colored rods help comprehension of English statements made by pointing at words on the colored word charts hanging on the wall. Still some newcomers said they were ready to start at once to use what they understood of the approach which so clearly subordinates teaching to learning in the field of languages.

David Berrington Davis, principal of the Abon Language School in Clifton, Bristol, not only took upon himself to organize both seminars but acted as host in Bristol and with his wife Ann made life very pleasant at the weekend for a fairly large group of people. Our thanks are owed them for their graciousness.

More than thirty people came to Lyon to work on the theme of “Experiences and Experience” for over ten 2-hour sessions from Friday to Sunday evening.

This was a fruitful seminar whose richness surprised all those present. There were so many highlights that no summary can do justice to its value as a research seminar in the field of personal education and its extensions to others. One session of special interest was the one in which a connection was sought between the sources of human morality and the four realms. This was the first time such a theme was tackled in one of Dr. Gattegno’s seminars and it led to interesting and unexpected insights. It may well become the main topic of a future special issue of

this Newsletter. Since there is no morality displayed in the first three realms and man's history does not cover more than 5,000 years, some of the reflections on how conscience affected men's behavior led the group to see morality as evolving and still doing so. From interdictions and prohibitions it may be moving towards qualifying the affirmative actions which support the evolution of mankind towards humanity.

The four evening 20-hour seminar on "Parents and Children" in Paris attracted thirty keen people who started work on looking at their parents when they themselves were children. Such a beginning seemed helpful since it placed everybody in a position from which criteria could be found to change the perspective to the present one, of being parents. It was essentially an attempt at becoming aware of that which defines the rights of those in the relationship of being themselves and letting the others be themselves.

Focusing upon the various universes children must conquer in order to free themselves to become creative or useful adults, it became clear that parents lose sight of the importance and urgency of their children's involvements in their activities which do not appear so important to the parents. The generation gap results from the complete identification of parents and children alike to the absolutes in which they live passionately and functionally. To make parents helpful to their children only requires that those keep in their recallable experience the instances which resemble what their children are going through now as they did twenty or more years ago, and tell themselves that their needs to know are claiming their attention in specific ways. Since our children behave differently at various ages and puzzle parents differently, there is need to understand the functionality of the various periods in life when we have to conquer universes defined by ourselves. Looking at very young children from close and what they need to know made parents more sensitive to what young boys and girls need to know before they shift their attention to what one must conquer at adolescence. Thus, the years up to fifteen and sixteen became better known and from that knowledge, what to do with oneself as parent to meet the present needs of children at home. The feedback was unanimous: such insights are helpful and further study is a must.

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The weekend seminar that followed in Paris (though very different in so many ways from the other, since its title was: “Is one permitted to be optimistic in a crumbling world?”) allowed the extension of some of the studies of the previous evenings.

For years, Dr. Gattegno restricted his teaching in seminars to matters pertaining to education and to challenges which were more circumscribed. This time the topic covered history, evolution, vast periods of man, kinds of experiences and experimenting, in order to understand how cultures and civilizations come and go, what creates them and what ends them. The focus was of necessity, psychological, because all wanted to understand whether the assessment of today one had reached was valid and worthy of being held. It seemed that the nine 2-hour sessions did help many to have more tools to look into this matter when they went home and reflected on their lives and their attitudes.

The difficulty of extracting meaning about man’s evolution from the knowledge of historical facts — as most people remember them in the way they read history — was overcome by deliberately recasting events in terms of evolution. In particular, reaching the changes in men of the Middle Ages into Renaissance men was experienced as an illuminating illustration of the approach used in the seminar. Specialists among the participants with professional commitments to other viewpoints stated that now all made more sense to them.

There was not enough time to elaborate important applications to present day transitions from a fragmented and violent earth to one in which most people work for the collective good seen as the one which assists evolution in its work on earth.

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In Geneva, the week was segmented into —

- 1 four mornings and afternoons devoted to looking into altering how six year-olds enter into reading, writing and math if traditional teaching is replaced by the subordination of teaching to learning. In the morning, working with about 20 lively boys and girls and in the afternoon with the adult observers, mainly teachers;
- 2 four evenings devoted to literacy for natives and new immigrants;
- 3 a weekend devoted to: “How do children acquire their experience?”

The first segment was complicated by the fact that, while Dr. Gattegno worked with one student or a small group, he did not see to it that the rest were behaving, as is usual in most classrooms, according to a discipline imposed from outside. This upset and disturbed a number of the observers. At the afternoon sessions with all the observers, it was possible to put the gains into relief. And these were considerable. Six year-olds made sense of reading and writing in as short a time of exposure as one hour. A recast curriculum based upon the profound interest of children of that age for perception and action made them tackle matters postponed at least two years in ordinary curricula on the pretext of intrinsic difficulty in the subject matter rather than on not knowing how to engage the children. Many spectacular moments were picked up by all, leaving aside the fact that some of the gains were to last forever and serve the learners in other instances by transfer. Like making sense of reading and spelling, or seeing mathematical notation as a reasonable way of making things clear. Some of the games tried out for the first time proved very valuable and will be retained and disseminated.

Although much can be learned from such demonstrations it is not easy to be sure that teachers benefit from them as much as they could. Much that is helpful remains invisible.

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The evening sessions on literacy started with an — at the time not too successful — attempt at finding out how to use the experience of

students of any age to guide us in ensuring a speedy and lasting transformation of them into able readers and writers. The problems raised are important and could engage the participants for months to come, if not years.

On the practical side the techniques of *Words in Color*, of the microcomputer courseware *Infused Reading*, received some attention from users as well as for the benefits of newcomers who in the field of literacy, only know other approaches. The computer program got unanimous praises and many wish to acquire it.

Writing, which has so many aspects, was also studied in order to define it in the case of illiterates, young or old or not natives. It was agreed that it represents a new set of challenges which were examined closely and led to a new consciousness. The holding of a writing tool and the conventions of writing on a horizontal line, above the line, from top to bottom using shapes made of letters which as vowels respond to certain sounds and as consonants make pronounceable syllables when associated with vowels, spacings between words may all ask for specific exercises. The recognition of how spoken words translate into shapes and how flow of words must be interpreted by the hand putting down their corresponding forms. The slowness of writing as compared to speaking makes other demands since one has to learn to keep in hold words in sequences until the task of putting them down is taken up. The problem becomes worse when thinking — which has a lightning speed — is compared to writing. The modification of behaviors asked by all these adjustments must be trying to new literates of whatever age and need the attention of teachers. Clearly writing has other meanings and some were briefly considered: spelling, grammar, and composition were contrasted with the demands of reading which appeared lighter.

The last session was devoted, half, to a demonstration of how it is possible to make newcomers to a language use themselves so as to produce utterances which are from the start very close to those of natives in terms of sounds, stresses and melody. The other half was taken by an introduction to a study of the spirit of languages.

A Spanish couple (parents of children at the International School) came and sat for 85 minutes facing the French Sound/Color Fidel. During that time they had to acquire the color code and work at producing utterances according to which colored rectangles were touched with a pointer by the teacher. At once it was obvious that such procedure is very effective and easy to understand and follow. In fact, no word of French was spoken by the teacher who only spoke in Spanish to obtain from the students that they did this or that. But the speed and accuracy of the utterances heard astonished all those present including users of the same tools.

Particularly, that the totality of the phonetics of French was met in that short time and could be retained so easily simply because it was used freely to produce sentences which the students received through their eyes in one code (the colored rectangles pointed at) and came out as strings of sounds uttered voluntarily and knowingly by the students. This direct triggering of French sentences by-passed almost all the sources of inhibitions met generally in language learners.

The study of the spirit of languages and especially of French, cannot easily be summarized and we must agree to postpone its presentation, perhaps for a special issue of this Newsletter.

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The weekend seminar on young children's experience, closed this year's tour of seminars by Dr. Gattegno in Europe. The economic conditions in France and its devalued currency reduced drastically the French contingent to the seminar. It usually forms about three quarters of the participants. Still, those who came worked well and hard on a difficult and little studied subject which is barely beginning to attract attention in spite of its importance.

Young children's universes are mysterious, in part because children don't stay long enough in any one spot and our own memory of them left us almost completely. We needed to recapture the reality of the stretches of life which although essential for what we have become, is conspicuous for the absence of its traces in our memories. Time was

spent on the ways available to us to reach that reality and to pass on to participants those instruments which proved effective in such research. To ask the proper questions, to become more and more aware that there are ways of looking at children, ways of making ourselves sensitive to the “nothings” at work in them, helped in activating in us grownups means which contribute to the new epistemology required before we can offer plans, advice, methods of creating the education all parents want for their children, and all educators for their students.

One question was suggested as an example to illustrate such searches: how to make adolescents find studies of geography a proper use of their time and for spontaneously holding their interest? By blending the meaning of adolescence — as the period in our lives when we attempt as thorough a knowledge of ourselves as learners of our affectivity at work after we have mastered our universes of perception and action — and the meaning of geography — as thorough an awareness of our habitat as we could reach — it became possible to propose exercises which would educate that kind of awareness in some of our classrooms in middle schools.

As usual, the instruments of the passionate involvements of children in the numerous activities which occupy years and help them evolve by mastering first the universes of perception and action before shifting to those of affectivity, of the intellect so as to end up in that of social living — where most adults of today find themselves in our western cultures — and called the successive absolutes, it became possible to make sense of our complex lives and the generations’ gaps.

Our young children acquire their experience by being —

- 1 in contact with themselves and their inner shifts of energy, perceptible all the time, while
- 2 they are immersed in their social and natural environments in which so much happens which they cannot grasp in the same ways (since our senses only received impacts from appearances, and therefore a lot of guessing is required) and need to educate themselves

spontaneously and beyond the understanding and grasp of those around them.

Spontaneous education for each of us covers evolution of the self during those years. To understand it thoroughly is a must for this and the next generations so that public education respects evolution and cooperates with it to aim at a more harmonious society and from that, at a more harmonious planet as far as humans are concerned.

Since a number of participants in Geneva had also been in Paris (and some in Lyon too) the two weeks of work in France and Switzerland meant for them a constant deepening of the human education — or education of awareness — we need at this stage of our collective evolution on earth. Besides the sessions at the seminars where talk attempts to be turned into awareness, demonstrations — with participants and children as students and the showing of computer coursewares — it became possible to feel that progress in the science of education and electronic technological progresses were being brought together to serve mankind turn into a throbbing humanity on this small part of the cosmos.



## About Caleb Gattegno

Caleb Gattegno is the teacher every student dreams of; he doesn't require his students to memorize anything, he doesn't shout or at times even say a word, and his students learn at an accelerated rate because they are truly interested. In a world where memorization, recitation, and standardized tests are still the norm, Gattegno was truly ahead of his time.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1911, Gattegno was a scholar of many fields. He held a doctorate of mathematics, a doctorate of arts in psychology, a master of arts in education, and a bachelor of science in physics and chemistry. He held a scientific view of education, and believed illiteracy was a problem that could be solved. He questioned the role of time and algebra in the process of learning to read, and, most importantly, questioned the role of the teacher. The focus in all subjects, he insisted, should always be placed on learning, not on teaching. He called this principle the Subordination of Teaching to Learning.

Gattegno travelled around the world 10 times conducting seminars on his teaching methods, and had himself learned about 40 languages. He wrote more than 120 books during his career, and from 1971 until his death in 1988 he published the Educational Solutions newsletter five times a year. He was survived by his second wife Shakti Gattegno and his four children.