



FOR PEACE+EDUCATION

VANCOUVER PEACE SUMMIT 2009

Tuesday, September 29, 2009 – Orpheum Theatre, Vancouver, B.C.

Educating the Heart – **Creativity and Well-Being**

Panel: His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Sir Ken Robinson, Daniel Siegel, the Blue Man Group, Eckhart Tolle and Murray Gell-Mann. Moderator: Matthieu Ricard.

Dialogue Contributors: His Holiness The Dalai Lama was accompanied on the panel by: **Murray Gell-Mann**, discoverer of the quark and recipient of the 1969 Nobel Prize in Physics, Professor Emeritus of the prestigious California Institute of Technology; **Daniel Siegel, MD**, therapist, award-winning educator, director of the Mindsight Institute, author of *Mindsight: The New Science of Transformation* and *The Mindful Therapist*; **Eckhart Tolle**, spiritual teacher and author of *The Power of Now* and *The New Earth*; **Sir Ken Robinson**, scholar, world renown educator, author of *Out of Our Minds* and other works on creativity, innovation, and human resources, and education professor at the University of Warwick, UK; **Matt Goldman** and **Chris Wink**, founders of the **Blue Man Group**, which recently put education at the forefront of its mission by launching the Blue Man Creativity Center and Early Childhood Program in Manhattan.

Moderator **Matthieu Ricard** is a Buddhist monk and author of *The Art of Meditation*.

After a rousing multimedia presentation by the Blue Man Group and introductory comments from Irving K. Barber, one of British Columbia's most prominent entrepreneurs, the one-hour session began.

Opening remarks: Matthieu Ricard noted that the Tibetan language has a special word for creative thinking, but that there are many other aspects of creativity “in science, in art, in meditation, in neuroscience, in education.” He asked the panelist Murray Gell-Mann to speak about western aspects of creativity.

“It’s the deeper part of the human mind that’s involved in the search for how to educate the heart.” – **Murray Gell-Mann**

“How do you learn problem formulation in a conventional school? That’s the place where creative thinking really comes in, and we need far more exercises in that than merely in problem solving.”

Murray Gell-Mann

Gell-Mann explained how we can deal with the contradictions we encounter in



VANCOUVER PEACE SUMMIT 2009

Educating the Heart - Creativity and Well-Being

our creative process and endeavours. In his field of theoretical science, Gell-Mann constantly finds contradictions. He asked, “How do you get the idea of what [contradictions] to challenge?”

The answers, he suggests, come as insights from deep within us. The creative mind holds on to unresolved contradictions and continues its search for answers. Then, “one day, while cooking or shaving or running, or sometimes by a slip of the tongue, the correct answer may come.”

Gell-Mann suggested that the heart is the connection between creativity and the part of our mind that’s searching for forgiveness and compassion, a part that is “somewhat outside of conscious awareness.”

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Matthieu Ricard then asked Daniel Siegel how he, as a therapist, brings compassion into education and to the lives of other people.

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“Brush your brain every day, just like we brush our teeth.” – Daniel Siegel

Siegel said that we can promote creativity and compassion through education. He believes that the three basic R’s in education must be reflection, relationships, and resilience.

Reflection prevents our brain from becoming “fixed in its way of seeing things” and transforms our belief that “our thoughts and our feelings are the total of our identity,” a belief that imprisons creativity. Creativity emerges when we generate “novelty for the brain.” Reflection is a form of mind-training, one that takes us beyond fixed ways of thinking. Thus, it liberates creativity and keeps the brain young. Siegel compares the practice of daily reflection to daily teeth brushing – a type of “brain hygiene.” Reflection also activates “the compassion circuits of the brain.” He wants daily reflection to be a standard practice in education.

Relationships with others who challenge our fixed ways of thinking and provoke us to discover new, creative ways of thinking encourage compassion and creativity.

With these practices, we develop the third R, resilience.

“By promoting the kind of training that allows us to look inward and liberates us from the way the brain falsely creates identity and keeps us seeing things through very narrow lenses when we could open them wide and feel the freedom of seeing life as it really is and connecting with others in a deep, compassionate, and kind way.”

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 “When I feel compassion, I also feel creativity.” – *His Holiness The Dalai Lama*



Vancouver Peace Summit 2009: Creativity and Well-Being.
 Sarah Murray photo

His Holiness The Dalai Lama differentiated between creativity and compassion. Creativity, he said, is related to intelligence; compassion is related to the heart. Creativity must be provoked. If we have an easy, problem-free life, our creativity may be at rest or imprisoned. Challenges, experience, and contradictions increase creativity.

The relationship between compassion and creativity is not direct. “Compassion opens our mind, and then our mental state remains calm.” In this state of mind, we can then “see reality more clearly.” This is realistic creativity, and requires objectivity about the real world.

Matthieu Ricard paraphrased what His Holiness said: “Constructive creativity has to be attuned to reality.” He suggested that keeping our minds in a “sort of perturbed state” helps us “bridge the gap between the way things appear and the way things are.” He then asked Eckhart Tolle to discuss how creativity comes about when our minds are not involved in constructing a distorted reality.

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 “There is a vaster, much vaster, intelligence in every human being that is non-conceptual. ...I believe that is the source of creativity.” – *Eckhart Tolle*

After “ten thousand hours of practice, then the possibility arises that the vehicle is ready to be receptive to the power of creativity.”

Eckhart Tolle



VANCOUVER PEACE SUMMIT 2009

Educating the Heart - **Creativity and Well-Being**

Tolle began with a soccer analogy. Players who do not pause before attempting a goal are less likely to score; players who first take a moment of stillness have a greater likelihood of making that goal. So it is also with the creative process. When we direct our attention within, we can access a deeper level of being “where all power resides.” It is not about words or concepts, and it cannot be analyzed.

There, in the “deep, intensely alive stillness,” we find the power of “non-conceptual intelligence,” which is the source of our creativity. Stillness alone, however, will not result in arriving at creative answers. Our minds must first be prepared, and this involves what researchers call the “ten thousand hours of practice.”

Matthieu Ricard then asked Sir Ken Robinson how to solve the problem that education is not meeting the wishes of all parents and is not helping children become good, confident, happy human beings.

“If you take a small child into the garden, if you have one, and point at the moon, the child will look at the moon. If you take a dog into the garden and point at the moon, the dog will look at your finger, and ... wonder what your problem is, exactly.”

Sir Ken Robinson

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“We are born with the capacity to ... imagine forwards and backwards, to conceive of a past, to conceive of a future, and not just one future, but many futures, not just one past, but many pasts.” – Sir Ken Robinson

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Robinson’s answer lies in the power of imagination, which “brings to mind things that aren’t present.” That power must be cultivated so that imagination can take the child to the next step: creativity.

Robinson said we are born with the capacity for imagining. Before we can apply imagination, we must be trained to be creative. Creativity flows from our knowledge and skills. The problem in the education system is the belief that we can just “allow people to be creative.” Children are born with a creative potential that needs to be cultivated, just as we cultivate literacy.

Our current education systems, which are rooted in industrialism and based on standardization, teach facts and information but do not help children develop their creative capacities. To help children prosper, we have to revive the heart of education, which is “the minds and hopes and aspirations of the students.”

Matthieu Ricard turned to Matt Goldman and Chris Wink of the Blue Man Group to ask how the Group is helping to fill the gaps in the education system.

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“Creativity has to be sewn into every part of the educational process.” – Matt Goldman

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The mission of the Blue School, explained Matt Goldman, is “to build a harmonious and sustainable world.” To achieve this, education must address the whole child. We must teach them about how their minds work, make them aware of their own process, and help



VANCOUVER PEACE SUMMIT 2009

Educating the Heart - **Creativity and Well-Being**

“Our job, I feel, is now to translate all of what you said about creativity and the process and the workings of the mind into the classroom and apply it to the actual education of the children.”

Matt Goldman

them to bring that awareness to their creativity. Social and emotional learning, along with the skills of empathy and compassion, must be part of every school subject.

Matthieu Ricard asked His Holiness The Dalai Lama to conclude the first session with his views on what modern education is missing, what we can add to it.

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“Peacefulness lives not with intelligence, but with warm-heartedness.”
– His Holiness The Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama reminded us that the 20th century was one of war and violence. Unfortunately, this did not put an end to the problems in our world. It is basic human nature to want to survive and grow, so “the 21st century should be a century of peace.”

His Holiness believes that there will always be problems, as long as human beings have intelligence, different views, ideas, and interests, all of which are potential sources of conflict. To create a century of peace, we must have meaningful dialogue, compromise, and respect for others’ views. “Intelligence has an important role here, but mainly warm-heartedness, compassion, respecting others.”

His Holiness observed that our education system focuses on material values. While these values do provide for physical comfort, they also bring stress, worry, and ruthless competition. The influences of the church and family values have declined to the point where those institutions are no longer taking care of moral principles. “Education institutions alone have both responsibilities, taking care of the brain and taking care of warm-heartedness.”

His Holiness said that he believes the education system is the “key to developing a happier human society,” but there is definitely something lacking. He does not have a solution. He suggested that it is up to educated people like those on the panel to do more study, more research, and come up with concrete ideas and proposals for improving the system.

“Young people are the real people of [the 21st] century. We here belong to the 20th century. Now we are ready to say goodbye, so before our final goodbye is said, we must show some right sort of guide to the next generation.”

– His Holiness The Dalai Lama