

# Reclaiming the Wisdom Tradition for Education

featuring

Matthew Fox, Michael Nagler, Jack Miller, Riane Eisler,  
Robert Inchausti, Gabriele Rico, Joseph Kilikevici

Organizers: Bruce Novak and Stan Scott

**MOUNT MADONNA CONFERENCE CENTER**

overlooking Monterey Bay, California

**May 29-June 1, 2008**

**(Register by Monday, December 3, 2007 to reserve your space and receive a \$100 discount!)**



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Unless there is some kind of spiritual revolution that can keep abreast of our technological genius, it is unlikely that we will save our planet.

—Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation*

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Since the Enlightenment, public systems of education have tended to focus on the efficient transmission of acquired knowledge. Consequently, the deeper aim of education—the evocation of wisdom in the human person—has suffered a temporary eclipse.

Wisdom is personal and compassionate. It is not content to exist within the defined, secure borders of knowledge, which limits itself to proofs and facts. It seeks access to the farther reaches of consciousness where hard lines dissolve, where minds grow and meet, hearts reach out, and the self and the universe begin to converge.

These times in which wisdom is so conspicuously lacking may well be ripe for re-centering people's understanding of the most basic aims of our educational endeavors: for reclaiming the spiritual, humanistic, and philosophical heart of education, and for bringing the findings of science to bear on the expansion of consciousness and the deepening of communication. With these aims in mind, this conference has been designed to consider and further the possibility of broad-based, wisdom-centered education.

Among the questions we will consider are:

- What would our schools and universities look like if they were explicitly designed to promote wisdom as well as to transmit knowledge and skills? How might our understanding of teaching, curriculum, assessment, and other basic features of educational organization change?
- How might we go about eliciting acceptance of and investment in such institutions (both by the public at large and by our own school communities)? If the evocation of wisdom were to become the central focus of education, how might this increase general esteem for education? Enabling more people to see it as possessing its own deep, inherent, humane, and spiritual value?
- How might we reclaim the educational wisdom of the past for the needs of the present? Can we begin to synthesize spiritual, philosophical, and humanistic understandings of the nature and value of wisdom?

- How does contemporary science—in particular, recent advances in the understanding of human evolution and the workings of the human brain—help us understand the nature of wisdom?
- How might the education of teachers, at all levels, be designed to evoke wisdom?
- How can the understanding of wise teaching and learning be extended beyond schooling? Within other caring professions such as medicine and social work? And more generally, in family, social, economic, and political life?
- The further questions that you and others will bring, before, during, and after the conference. (There will be a pre- and post-conference blog with readings and discussion topics.)

Our featured presenters come from a wide range of pursuits. Scholars, teachers, artists, clergy, and activists—all have found their own deeply personal way to wisdom and have helped many, many others do the same.

For the past thirteen years, the annual conferences of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning have been gatherings of greathearted folk from diverse areas and levels of education, engaging in dialogue and reflection on themes of broad and deep concern, and having an amazing experience together in the process. Past conferences are described on our website: [www.aepl.org](http://www.aepl.org).

At the 2008 conference you will find many opportunities to share your thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others, in a setting of remarkable beauty and warmth. If you would like to serve as a dialogue facilitator or make an interactive presentation regarding the conference theme, please submit a proposal, using the guidelines listed on this brochure. You will receive a prompt response.

Our site this year is spectacular, and uniquely suited to the conference theme. Mount Madonna Center is on a mountaintop overlooking Monterey Bay. It is in a Hindu ashram with modern conveniences, scrumptious vegetarian cuisine, master yoga teachers, a health and wellness center offering restorative massage, and an ethic

of truth and love which imbues everything there. Pictures and more information can be found on the Center's website:

[www.mountmadonna.org](http://www.mountmadonna.org).

A relatively brief period of the ancient world in the first millennium B.C.E. witnessed the flowering of major wisdom traditions across Eurasia: Confucianism and Daoism in China, mystical Hinduism and Buddhism in India, prophetic monotheism in Palestine, and, in Greece, tragic drama and the moral reflection that came to be known as *philo-sophia*, or love of wisdom. All arose as efforts to quell through spiritual discipline the violence of empires powered by new technologies, in part by providing their adherents with far deeper forms of happiness than were being offered by those empires and technologies: transmuting desires for outward wealth and power into the search for self-awareness, inner peace, nonviolent action and communication, and reverence for all life. This period has been

called—by philosopher Karl Jaspers and, more recently, the religious scholar Karen Armstrong—the Axial Age, as the development of reflective consciousness independently by each of these cultures at this time became pivotal to later spiritual developments.

Can *we*, in these times of danger, learn to speak, act, write and teach in hopes of a new axial period, consciously global in extent--building on the wisdom traditions of ancient times, but consciously addressing the problems created by the technologies, violence, and global empires of late modernity? Might the first axial age come to be perceived someday as the foundation of an age when the wisdom of each member of humanity may be cultivated with the care once allotted only to the few? When the flower of wisdom will no longer be exotic and rare, but brought to proliferate over the earth?

Please come help us imagine, and begin to enact among ourselves, the adventure of this possibility!

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He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God.

—epitaph of Robert F. Kennedy, from Aeschylus

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To be a philosopher is not, or not merely, to found a school, or to have greater or subtler thoughts than other[s], but so to live wisdom as to live a life according to its dictates—a life of independence, simplicity, magnanimity, and trust.

—Thoreau, Walden

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I believe that we must find, all of us together, a new spirituality. This new concept ought to be elaborated alongside the religions, in such a way that all people of good will could adhere to it. We need a new concept, a lay spirituality. We ought to promote this concept with the help of scientists.

—The Dalai Lama

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# Featured Presenters



**Matthew Fox**, founder, Wisdom University, Oakland CA; author of *The A.W.E. Project: Re-inventing Education, Reinventing the Human*; *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths*; *Creation Spirituality*; *Original Blessing*; and other works. Former Catholic priest (defrocked by then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, for radical views), currently Episcopal priest. See [www.matthewfox.org](http://www.matthewfox.org) for more information.

**[T]he modern age did not give us meaning. Meaning comes from traditions of wisdom, not from traditions of knowledge. The pre-modern world was far better at meaning than was the modern world. And its education was geared toward meaning. So our task today is to incorporate pre-modern wisdom and meaningfulness into our vast store of modern knowledge. Is education up to the task?**

—*The A.W.E. Project: Re-inventing Education, Reinventing the Human*



**Michael Nagler**, Professor Emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature, UC-Berkeley; founder, Berkeley Peace and Conflict Studies Program; co-founder, Blue Mountain Center of Meditation; co-founder, Educators for Nonviolence (see [www.efnv.org](http://www.efnv.org), and [www.metta.org](http://www.metta.org), for more information); author, *The Search for a Nonviolent Future* (2002 American Book Award); co-editor, *The Upanishads*.

**Peace can be institutionalized. When it is, then people will be willing to send war on its well-deserved way to the cabinet of bad memories .... Soul force has never been systematically put to work to create the conditions and institutions of sustained peace .... The task is not so much to stop war as to start nonviolence.**

—*The Search for a Nonviolent Future*



**Jack Miller**, Professor of Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; author, *Educating for Wisdom and Compassion: Creating Conditions for Timeless Learning* and several other works on holistic education; organizer of six bi-annual international conferences of holistic education at OISE (see [www.astralsite.com/holistic](http://www.astralsite.com/holistic) for more information--the next conference is late October 2007).

**The presence that the teacher displays is fundamental to teaching. In fact, if we recall the teachers who have had an impact on us, it is often not the material they taught that we remember but that presence which somehow touched us deeply.**

—*Educating for Wisdom and Compassion*



**Riane Eisler**, author, *The Chalice and the Blade* (called “the most important book since *The Origin of Species*” by anthropologist Ashley Montague); *Tomorrow’s Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education for the 21st Century*; *The REAL Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, and several other works. For more information see [www.partnershipway.org](http://www.partnershipway.org).

**We stand at an evolutionary crossroads in our human adventure on this Earth. We can continue with “business as usual”—even though both science and our native intelligence tell us that the mix of high technology and an ethos of domination and conquest may take us to an evolutionary end. Or we can use the great gifts we were given by evolution to create a new economic story and reality—a caring economics that supports both human survival and human development and actualization.**

—*The REAL Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*



**Robert Inchausti**, Professor of English, CalPoly, San Luis Obispo; student of Wayne Booth; author of *Spitwad Sutras: Classroom Teaching as Sublime Vocation*; *The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People*; *Thomas Merton: American Visionary*; and *Breaking the Cultural Trance: Insight and Vision in America*.

**The search for a single, unified story of human development, which has largely been abandoned by professional philosophers and scientists, has fallen by default to those engaged in the process of becoming human, to those struggling for their rights, their lost histories, their true selves.**

—*The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People*



**Gabriele Rico**, Professor of English and Creative Arts, San Jose State University; author of the best-selling *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Power*; *Pain and Possibility*; *Re-creations: Inspiration from the Source*, and other works; Advisory Board Member of AEPL since its inception in 1993. For more information see [www.gabrielerico.com](http://www.gabrielerico.com).

**Let us begin with the whole, with the fundamental human desire for giving shape to experience, for expressiveness, for creating form and structure out of the confusion that constitutes both our inner and our outer worlds. Natural writing is first of all an act of self-definition.**

—*Writing the Natural Way*



**Joseph Kilikevics**, founder and director, Shem Center for Interfaith Spirituality, Oak Park, IL., student of Matthew Fox, and practitioner of Creation Spirituality and Universal Dances of Peace. For more information, see [www.shemcenter.org](http://www.shemcenter.org). Brother Joe will be leading us in simple, non-threatening art, dance, and music activities to stimulate reflection and promote community throughout the conference.

## Organizers

**Bruce Novak**, has taught English, grades 6-12, and has served in teacher education and taught Humanities, Social Sciences, and Philosophy of Education at the University of Chicago and Northern Illinois University. The author of several articles in academic journals, he is now working on what he hopes will be a popular book: *The Opening of the American Heart: The Great Educational Awakening on the Horizon of Democratic Life*. Currently Immediate Past Chair of AEPL, he has served on its Executive Board for nine years, and has organized three previous AEPL summer conferences, in 1998, 2000, and 2003.

**[M]aybe there is a way in which every student already does have teachers of genius. Maybe we just don't know quite how to tap into the genius that already exists in the teaching force of our society.**

—"Seeing Student/Teacher Relationships as Hidden Dramas of Personal Development"

**Stan Scott**, is professor emeritus of literature, philosophy, and writing at the University of Maine, Presque Isle. He's the author of many articles, as well as *Frontiers of Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Studies in American Philosophy and Poetry*. Stan is a meditator and poet, and is currently writing about the act of reading poetry as a spiritual practice. He is at work on an anthology of literature about nonviolence, and is currently co-chair (with Irene Papoulis) of AEPL.

**[N]urturing [an] uninhibited growth process, in oneself and in others, is . . . the essential gesture of our existence, education.**

—*Frontiers of Consciousness*

## Mount Madonna Conference Center



## PROPOSAL INFORMATION

### 2008 AEPL Conference Reclaiming the Wisdom Tradition for Education

If you would like to serve as a facilitator of a small group dialogue, please describe your interest in the conference theme and your relevant experience (up to 200 words). All facilitators' names will be listed on the conference program.

If you would like to lead an interactive presentation, please provide 1) a title, 2) a brief description of planned activities suitable for inclusion in the conference program (up to 50 words), 3) a detailed description of what you will do, how you will include participants, and how it will address the conference theme (up to 500 words).

Please send copies to both Bruce Novak ([brucenovak@mac.com](mailto:brucenovak@mac.com)) and Stan Scott ([stan.scott@maine.edu](mailto:stan.scott@maine.edu)). You will hear back from us promptly (within two weeks, except around the holidays). For questions about proposals, you may either email or phone Stan Scott (207-838-7927).



# Registration Information

## Conference prices

All prices include registration, meals, Mount Madonna facilities use, and 2008 AEPL membership (see [www.aepl.org](http://www.aepl.org) for benefits), and are per person (not per room).

### Onsite lodgings:

#### Shared bath:

Single (limited) .....	\$650
Double .....	\$500
Triple or quad .....	\$400
Dormitory (5-14 per room) .....	\$325
Campsite, tent provided .....	\$300
Campsite, your tent or van .....	\$275

#### Private bath (very limited):

Single.....	\$750
Double .....	\$550

Offsite lodging: ..... \$250

Rooms at Mount Madonna Center may fill up, but accommodations in Watsonville and Gilroy, each 30 minutes away, are plentiful (and, of course, include private baths, of which there are few onsite, though the shared facilities are ample, located nearby each room, and available to those staying at camp sites.). Transportation will be provided from the Red Roof Inn in Watsonville (near the Pacific Ocean), where rooms have been reserved for conference attendees for \$70/night plus tax (extra for more than two persons per room). **Please make your own reservations by calling (831) 740-4520 and mentioning AEPL.** Requests for rooms at Mount Madonna Center will be filled in the order received.

**After Monday, December 3, all the above rates will be raised by \$100. Register early to assure your space!**

## Discounts

Students, adjuncts, and retirees may deduct \$25 from listed prices. AEPL members with paid 2007 membership may deduct \$20.

Rates for non-participating guests sharing a room with conference registrants (including offsite rooms, for those wishing to share meals and use Mount Madonna facilities): 70% of above prices; children 2-12, 35%.

## Deposits

**\$50 by Monday, December 3, 2007** to guarantee the above rates for all accommodations, onsite and off, with the exception of doubles with private baths and all singles. Because of their limited availability, these accommodations will require a deposit of \$150 per person also by December 3. **An additional \$150 deposit will be due March 15, 2008** (regardless of accommodation type). Balance is due upon arrival (no credit card payments on site).

## Cancellations

Should you find yourself unable to attend, all deposits will be refunded, minus the \$20 membership fee, if we are able. (Thank you for investing in this endeavor with us!) Deposits are fully transferable, if you can find someone else to substitute for you. Any monies beyond the required deposits are refundable at any time should you find yourself unable to attend.

Send registration form with deposit or full payment (checks payable to AEPL) to:

Louise Smith  
AEPL 2008 Registration Co-chair (with Irene Papoulis)  
70 E. Cedar St.  
Chicago, IL 60611

Or register online and pay by credit card using PayPal: [www.aepl.org](http://www.aepl.org)  
Address logistical questions to: Bruce Novak, [brucenovak@mac.com](mailto:brucenovak@mac.com), (773) 480-2146.

# Registration Form

Please complete a separate form for each attendee)

NAME FIRST LAST

MAILING ADDRESS

EMAIL TELEPHONE/FAX

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION (IF APPLICABLE)

AEPL Member  Yes  No

NCTE Member  Yes  No

*(Not required for the conference. We need this information only for the records of our sponsoring organization, the National Council of Teachers of English.)*

## PREFERRED ROOMMATES

Please find me  1  2-3 roommates. I am  Female  Male.

*(For doubles, triples, quads. Check appropriate number and gender.)*

## ACCOMMODATION TYPE

First choice Second choice Rate (first choice)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional years of membership (optional – \$30, 3-yr; \$55, 5-yr) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Discounts \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

DEPOSIT (for first choice—make checks payable to AEPL) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Must be postmarked by 12/3/07 for \$100 early-bird discount.)*

**\$150 additional deposit is due March 15, 2008**

**Balance is due upon arrival**