

DAVID LOYE

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Abstract

This is a reflection, tribute, and appreciation for the contribution that David Loye made to partnership education, embodied in the community of more than 22,000 Montessori schools around the world. As the largest single international education reform movement, the collaboration among David, his wife, Riane Eisler, and Montessori Schools has been significant. It shows great promise for the years ahead to disseminate his findings and integrate them into mainstream education.

Keywords: Riane Eisler; Charles Darwin; David Loye; Montessori; Montessori Education; Partnership Education

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Those who had the opportunity to spend time with David Loye have fond memories. He was a gentle, calming, kind soul. Sitting around his workroom/office, a charming country cottage in the garden of their lovely home in Carmel, California, or walking through the surrounding paths down to the ocean, David would reflect on Charles Darwin and the human condition.

He believed there is a path forward; we can build a better world that is oriented to partnership rather than to competition, selfishness, and violence.

David was a prolific writer, producing new books, essays, and ideas at a pace I could barely imagine.

However, what I most appreciate from the time I spent with him over the years is his character, gentle humor, and sense of poetry, as well as his discoveries and their implications for societies worldwide.

David was a great thinker, scholar, and visionary who helped us see how Darwin's work, obviously among the most important contributions to science in human history, has been widely misunderstood and used to justify inhumane social policies and geopolitics.

David is also a living example of a well-lived and well-loved life. His wife, Riane Eisler, called him a loving partner who exemplified their vision of a partnership world.

We hope that all of us reading this brief reflection and tribute know the essence of what David discovered and attempted to bring to the world's attention. As he tried to understand what Darwin meant when he spoke about 'natural selection' and its implications for human nature and the societies we create, David found that in Darwin's book on human evolution, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871, 2014), there is minimal mention of 'survival of the fittest' (Loye, 2007). In fact, it is only mentioned twice in *The Descent of Man*, and one of these times it was to apologize for using the term in his earlier book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). Love, however, is mentioned in *The Descent of Man* more than 95 times, whereas aggression and greed are hardly mentioned (Loye, 2007).

Friends described Charles Darwin as a very kind man. Nevertheless, his ideas came to be used to justify a dog-eat-dog world, where the rules of nature, survival of the fittest, led to fixed social classes, selfish behavior, fierce competition, and violence. David was puzzled by the paradox. As we know, this led to David's research and his discovery of the widespread misinterpretation and misuse of Darwin's work to justify a culture of conflict and domination.

Darwin recognized humanity's transcendence over the shortsighted, selfish, and violent behavior that many have been taught is human nature. He came to appreciate that human beings' most significant survival characteristics are our ability to work together, to care for each other, and to strive for the common good (Loye, 2007).

Archaeologists recognize that one of the earliest signs of civilization has been found in the skeletal remains of individuals who had sustained a significant injury that had time to heal before the individual's eventual death. This suggests that our ancestors began to care for members of their family group who could not hunt or forage for themselves. While we may never know their thought process, there is so much evidence in archaeological records found in the grave goods buried with those who had died, which can only be understood as acts of generosity and caring.

Many years ago, I remember when I buried a beloved dog. Distraught at my loss, I placed his favorite toy and a bone beside him. It gave me some comfort to think that my little friend would have something he cared about to go with him into the night. At that moment, I felt a great connection with those ancestors that came before me and did something similar when they buried their mothers, fathers, or children.

In a society where physical goods are rare, and their creation takes time and effort, sacrificing any item would seem illogical. However, there is nothing illogical in this 'selfless' act. The old saying is that funerals are not for those who have died but for those who survive; they help us complete the circle, feel the connection, and honor.

DAVID'S CONTRIBUTION TO MONTESSORI AND PARTNERSHIP EDUCATION

Those who have read David's work, heard him speak, or even had the pleasure of spending quiet, informal time with him in intimate settings recognize his contributions on many levels. David influenced people from many disciplines; I work with educators who guide children from very young through adolescence.

As a Montessori educator, I remain focused on the Montessori movement's design of a new, very different form of school, where children can find their own voice; have agency in their lives; and feel how much they are loved by their parents, who are teachers in a system of education that is replicable, adaptable, and sustainable. Montessori schools have survived the test of time, and new ones are created worldwide in every sort of community, affluent and poor. We believe that Montessori schools are a hope for the future, a school for tomorrow's children.

You may be familiar with Montessori schools, or you may not know if the word *Montessori* comes from the latest Italian sports car. They are a worldwide movement of more than 22,000 Montessori schools in 110 countries. Montessori schools teach children how to live. They are probably among the best and most realistic examples of what David Loye and Riane Eisler dreamed of when they discussed 'partnership education.' They went so far as to call on the world's Montessori schools to carry their work forward, inspiring other schools to reconsider their structure, process, and the tapestry of the curriculum.

In Riane's book, *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century* (Eisler, 2001), she describes how to create a school for partnership education. She proposed that schools must create a partnership structure in all relationships throughout their organizations, follow a partnership process for classroom learning and school leadership, and implement a curriculum that teaches the concepts, history, and process of partnership.

Montessori schools tick all three boxes, at least in theory and often in practice. Montessori schools work with children from infancy through high school. They may be large or very small, government-funded, or private, usually nonprofit charitable organizations.

The name *Montessori* was never copyrighted, and Montessori schools are not centrally controlled. Montessori schools can (and do) differ one from the other; however, they

tend to have far more in common with one another. The common thread is that we see education *not* as teaching children the correct answers but as helping them think deeply, think outside the box, and care about others.

Both David and Riane saw and understood that there is something beyond the structure that made Montessori schools logical partners in their dream of helping build a better world. If humans are capable of kindness and caring, or selfishness and violence, the time to influence their destiny is when they are very young. While the work of nurturing our humanity never stops, it is so much easier to prevent than to try to undo years of enculturation.

There is a clear connection between David Loye's research into Darwin's hidden message and Maria Montessori's discovery of the hidden potential within every child. They were already walking down the same path: Maria Montessori, David Loye, and Riane Eisler. Each had a slightly different focus but shared a common understanding of human potential and the fundamental things we need to do to rewrite the future of humanity.

David's insights into Darwin made a significant contribution to the Montessori curriculum and narrative, just as his work with Riane enhanced our curriculum by showing us how to look at the world through a partnership (instead of a dominator) lens.

David's contributions are in some ways so simple but are so profound. His was a life well lived and a mind well exercised. We sincerely appreciate the gifts that he shared while he was with us in this life, treasure our memories, and pledge to carry his message forward.

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