"No man is an island..."

John Cheffers
Boston University, U.S.A.

«No man (individual) is an Island intire of it selfe; every man (individual) is a piece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde...»
(Meditation 17) (1)

The three tenors singing, «My Way», to Frank Sinatra

Such artistic and colorful salute. It is interesting to reflect on what John Donne was trying to say. If he’d said it in 1997, he probably would have said “no individual is an island”, but then he got into enough hot water with the political ramifications of his day so he might have kept it at “no man is an island”. Women over the years have become accustomed to seeing such reference as gender free, a flexibility that has distinguished them in the cause of human education. But enough reference to gender. No individual is an island - does this mean we are our brother’s keeper? It certainly means we have to discuss and learn much more about this
man, the individual. Socrates sets us in motion; «The unexamined life is not worth living»(2). Saint Augustine contributes too; «We are too weak to discover the truth by reason alone»(3). Thomas Hobbes thought man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short(4). Machiavelli took a different approach. He considered that man’s interest was in political power. Man needed to be successful at whatever expense. Initially, one tends to revile his callousness, but it must be said that in a later book to The Prince (5) called The Discourses (6), Machiavelli was much more moderate. Natural goals should be: independence, security, and a well ordered Constitution, functioning in a democracy. The age of enlightenment of Voltaire, Burke, Paine, and Rousseau saw man in chains, but not innately deprived (7). Goethe erected a high hurdle when his man, Faust, sells his soul to the Devil, not for sex, money, or fame but the right to control nature (8). Supreme empiricist, Hume, inferred that man could know nothing because he could not trust his senses (9). This activated Kant who said that all learning comes from the sensory world, but there is a noumenal world as well which cannot be rationalized but which contributes knowledge. We cannot rationalize God. We have to accept him, said Kant (10). It was the Great Compromise; there is a world out there that is continuous and which we cannot feel but we can understand. This gives man supreme control and enables Philosophy to function in its original definition. Man, a lover of wisdom. Fichte ascribed an absolute ego (11) and Hegel said that nothing was unrelated that existed on the face of the earth. His thesis, antithesis leading to a synthesis gave us a solid model that was either attacked or adhered to by many philosophers since 1830 (12). Kirkegaard insisted that man must know himself first (13) and Schopenhauer said all is lost unless man has fundamental will (14). Karl Marx returned Hegelian idealism to materialism but he failed to anticipate that his beloved proletariat would covet the riches as well as the privileged classes (15). Nietzsche said everything and nothing but he wanted the world free of the two great discriminating criteria of morality - good and evil (16). Utilitarians wanted the best for the most, which reduced man to a quantity (17). Comte wanted a synthesis of thought and action, thus rendering anything beyond experience as irrelevant (18). Modern philosophy has tended to opt with Rorty as concern for how useful ideas are rather than with their truth or
falsity (19). Freud excited us all by claiming that man’s problems arise from his unconscious - the id (20). Frege, Whitehead, and Russell saw rationality as mathematical inbase (21) and Wittgenstein wanted use as the chief criterion of judging and interpreting language (22). Derrida deconstructed fixed meaning and rejected dualism like conscious and unconscious and stressed the irreducible excess of language (23). Modern radicals, like Foucault, continue to dismiss cause and effect, truth and falsehood, right and wrong (24). *But these people are wrong, plainly wrong. A world without good or evil cannot exist.*

These various positions speak to the incredible analyses that have gone into the definition of mankind over the centuries. Certainly I cannot leave this discussion without opting for my favorite philosophic definition of the nature of man. I look to Pico Della Mirandola, who sees man as the most fortunate of creatures. He is superior to other creatures and where and when man chooses the good, he is capable of solving the problems of life. Pico says in his wonderful *Oration on the dignity of Man* that man is a source of celebration, not commiseration (25).

So mankind has been thus accorded a multitude of «esses» or essential natures and John Donne, with the typical and intrepid courage of a poet, insists that “no man is an island”. He is thus speaking as a sociologist, a psychologist, a social psychologist, a philosopher, and a mathematician. His «man» cannot exist in solitary confinement. Thus a congregation of men are interdependent. We in Sport and Physical Education understand this to an advanced degree.

(a) *Talents are great and appreciated but when combined or potentiated miracles are achieved.* Michael Jordan, Scotty Pippin, Derek Rodman, et al, triumphed in the National Basketball League yet again by combining super human talents. When Michael Jordan retired to play baseball, the Chicago Bulls were reduced to mortality until he returned. Romero and Bebeto, et al...combined to bring Brazil yet another world cup in Soccer. They played for individual European teams in the interim but when combined were formidable with the round ball. Carl Lewis and Coach Tom Tellez were a formidable combination in Track and Field and so was the presence of Carl’s father
and mother, a national footballer and a 1952 Olympian, who gave Carl singular ambition and incredible support. He is quick to praise his parents as is Tiger Woods of Golf.

(b) Singular acts of creativity astound us and capture our attention. But are they accomplished alone. John Uelses working with Jim Tuppeny at LaSalle University in Philadelphia introduced the fiber glass pole into pole vaulting. Material sophistication now enabled these two to complete the work that began in the 1930’s when the bamboo pole was used. It was now possible to have a push and thrust at the end of the pole, which gave at least two feet extra in height and rewrote the pole vaulting record books. Dick Fosbury defied tradition and introduced his backwards flop over the high jump bar, also accounting for new world records due to biomechanical improvement. One could say that Mozart was a boy genius, entertaining the intelligentsia and royalty of Europe with scintillating brilliance from an early age. On Ebury Street in London there is a plaque on a simple three story building bearing the words “in this house Mozart composed his first symphony. He was eight years of age”. But those who have studied the great Salzburg genius know full well that his father Leopold, his sister Nannerl, along with Haydn and Rossini were very much involved with Mozart’s achievements from a very early age.

(c) Physical Education is essential, not peripheral, in the schooling of the modern child. Reading, writing, and counting are important but they are only part of an individual’s existence. Life must be lived, enjoyed. A balanced agenda is far preferable to a curriculum that produces only geniuses. John Stuart Mill was a motor moron - he couldn’t tie a bow tie and deeply regretted his father’s austerity in keeping his nose to the academic grindstone. Mill could speak ancient Greek and Latin when he was four years of age but he later expressed, ruefully, that he never played Cricket, that he was never able to be a boy (26). The concept of ultimacy as defined by the great David Hemery, is needed here to remind us that more is not necessarily better in the lives of individuals (27).

(d) Sport must share the stage with Physical Education. The glamorous must make a place for bread and butter essence in our daily lives.
In return, we talk about «sport for all» but we must also find a place where intensity and commitment are fully appreciated.

In contrast, globalization, a word very much in fashion today, does not mean that everyone must be involved or universally and equally successful. Certainly all should be invited and provisions should be made for all to succeed but all will not turn up, all will not sacrifice, all will not give the same product. We must live with a distribution of effort and talent. The Physical Educator and Coach can make a stronger contribution in this regard to an understanding of children than mentors in most other subject areas, although this aspect is the same for all subjects. It is so much easier to see talent in the world of games and competitive sports.

(e) *Emotions must figure in our schooling.* The little word “inspiration” is critical for good teaching and successful learning. The emotion producing subject areas in the school curriculum tend to be those subjects relegated to the periphery by the smoke-filled decision making powers in school committees. Music, art, craft, sport, physical education, band, drama, camping, and other excursions inspire children, make them excited and give them reason to be, to attend school, and to commit themselves to a program. We must not relinquish our membership in this treasured company.

(f) *Excellence must not be downplayed and an excellence ethic needs to be promoted.* Excellence involves both effort and product. Mediocrity and early submission form the basis of a slop ethic, which reduces mankind and each individual to relative debauchery. The will to excellence is more important than universal success. Everyone can achieve a measure of success, thus figuring in this will to excellence and no one has ever achieved a final solution. Records will always be broken and this will to excellence is the impetus for record breaking. David Hemery, who took a second off the world record and won a Gold Medal in the 1968 400 metre hurdles, asked himself the question, «How did I get to be so fast?»(28). He has spent a lifetime analyzing the answers. Ben Johnson, on the other hand, ran a magnificent 100 metres race 20 years later in Korea but he got there courtesy of the illegal shortcut - anabolic steroids. The excellence ethic is seen
also in a third individual we shall call everyday Joe or Josephine, whose will to excellence is simply to make the next hurdle. When we use the term “putting people on the stretch” we refer to people being challenged in such a way that their achievements amaze, often exceeding their own anticipations. And it matters not whether the starting point is on the Olympic arena or the back roads of life; what is critical is the effort to achieve, the goal in the larger race of life.

**Skepticism is a fact of life also and tends to be disastrous for the individual.** History is full of examples. There were a group of ancient Greeks who were guilty of paradox mongering; “the right are wrong and the wrong are right”, “You’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t”. Some of these skeptics have displayed strong anti-social behavior in reaction to the system and although we have plenty of examples today, probably none amused more than Diogenes, who in 350 BC., masturbated in the marketplace to show contempt for public opinion (29). Michel de Montaigne, who was a great champion of Health and Physical Education, was also master of the words «What do I know?» (30) Rene Descartes wanted rational thought but struggled for some time to find an acceptable base from which to launch his search; finally it dawned on him that «cogito ergo sum», “I think therefore I am” was an acceptable foundation (31). To doubt is the beginning of science and therefore an important rational base. But to doubt everything is to take the easy way out, to internalize to the point where cause and effect is ignored and mush is introduced.

**NO COMMUNITY IS AN ISLAND**

Round up of the Brumbies by the mountain man in the film «The Man From Snowy River»

A Brumby is the Aborigine name for wild horse.

The clipping is taken from the film, «The Man From Snowy River», originally a poem from Banjo Paterson(Australia’s famous bush poet).
(a)*We cannot have community without leadership*, which can be both autocratic and democratic. Few people have the courage or the ability to chase wild horses down a vertical incline and gather them obediently as our hero did in the clipping we’ve just viewed. This brilliance tends to exhibit leadership as top down in nature and it is necessary for us to realize that some leadership emanates from sheer talent, regardless of our current political persuasion. Not all team captains, however, are the stars of the team. Many times, their appeal to the majority is for different reasons. It might be their unselfish capacity to produce team effort, or that they have a presence that unites normally differing factions within the team. Such leaders tend to be elected and to lead from a genuine democratic authority rather than a “follow the leader” model. John Locke presented his thesis that mankind learns not by genetic infusion but from a state of affairs called the «clean slate» (tabula rasa) (32). If Locke is correct, and many, many people think he is, then education, parenthood, and community modeling are critical in the education of the young child. Worldly possessions may be im proportionate but are legitimate provided they have been earned. He cautions though, that they must not spoil with accumulation, that enough must be left for others, and that the accumulation of worldly possessions must not be harmful to others.

(b)*Interdependence is usually a necessity*. The Olympic Games Opening Ceremonies offer an example of community linkage among diverse interests. They are watched by millions and availability of tickets is rare and expensive. The features are commendably broad based. Many non-Olympic performers are involved. Traditions of peace and fair play are featured. Press, television, and managers combine with ground curators, trainers, costumers, and transporters to produce a spectacle that holds premier place in the world’s great parades. People are happy to rejoice in every aspect of this festival. Handicapped athletes, children, the elite and every form of local custom take part. Surely this is a universally appreciated ritual, yet many of the coaches of the aspiring athletes fear for their charges well-being. The Opening Ceremonies are such a monstrous diversion that some athletes lose sight of their reasons for being at the Olympic Games in the first place.
At the other end of the recreative spectrum, the Village Fair represents a ritual that usually benefits all. The entire village is present, performance and opposition tend to be buried on this occasion in favor of participation. Games, dances, frolic, and socialization become the important goals, yet for this fair to be successful there must be input from energy sources, planners, financiers, parents, kids, police, politicians, churches, schools, community clubs and sporting groups. There is a truly ecumenical spirit. Whatever the prize given it’s certainly not a gold medal. The awards tend to be low cost, relatively insignificant, yet cherished just like the gold medal itself at the Olympic Games. A sobering presence at the Village Fair tends to be the jealousies and rivalries which are acute and debilitating. The adage “there is no smell like a local smell” is all too often exemplified with such a local celebration.  

(c) Traditions and folklore are established in communities which manage to hold themselves together as a coherent group. The keeping of archives and the origins of local games transfix and absorb students of village life in such a way that intergenerational communication is possible. Out of the village Common, for instance, came the game of Soccer. Highland games in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland led to sports festivals, developing a process that was repeated all over Europe and Asia. The early Olympics arose not as a sporting competition, but as a religious festival in which the first four of five days were spent in religious observance. In the year 776 BC., for instance, only one athletic event took place at the Games and that was a 200 metre race called “one stadium”. It was a race around the inside of the stadium. Although one could say that women were excluded and therefore the community was not represented, which is a pity, one could also praise these early villages for uniting the Greek city-states that surrounded Olympia in peace and goodwill.

NO PROGRAM IS AN ISLAND

Videotape called «Play»

The community consists of many diverse tribes. Some of these tribes have fallen into disrepair and have festered in resentment of the more pri-
vileged tribes in society. In the United States, this problem has tended to be played out between blacks and whites, between Jews and Gentiles, between American Indians and the bureaucratic authorities, and between men and women. The tape you have just seen called «play» is a very serious attempt on the part of Boston University to antiquate casual racism through the provision of positive and effective programs. At Boston University we have reached out for equity and decency with our Tuesday/Thursday Program (Table 1 outlines the essential components of this Program, which has been running uninterrupted for over 25 years). So many major achievements have resulted from efforts to serve, research, teacher train, publish, and in the planning of programs that students are amazed at both the difficulty and complexity of this program yet fully appreciative of the effect the program tends to have on their attitudes towards teaching. And it matters not which program is heading a school’s priorities, for that very much depends on the energies of those involved. But certainly programs that have the simple effect of bringing together teachers, administrators, parents, janitors, and local communities are treasured in the specific communities involved. It is at this level that we must deal with anti-social excesses like calling people “jocks” or “stiffs” or “meatheads” or “bird-brains” or whatever. The debilitating effect of the tall poppy syndrome when children are ridiculed for their best efforts just to appease the bile of lazier peers must be reduced at the program levels.

NO CURRICULUM IS AN ISLAND

Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, played by the great Philharmonia Orchestra of London and the magnificent handicapped violinist from New York, Itzack Perlman

Perlman is scarcely ambulatory and suffers significant pain on a daily basis. Yet he is superb in digital manipulation and the interpretation of the moody Beethoven’s musical intentions. He challenges the large ideas of the music and the formidable note structure with an ease that enthralls and amazes. He is able to conjure Beethoven’s concepts and his details in con-
sonance with a hundred other musicians to produce one of the most difficult musical compositions, the Concerto. When first composed, orchestra members in Vienna protested that it was unplayable. With uncharacteristic gentility, Beethoven called them together and said "I know you can do it. Please go home and practice and we will try it again tomorrow." They did and they succeeded. Surely, no curriculum is more exacting as the egos than the matching of the orchestra and the soloist in such a way that a unified whole results and individual egos recede.

In Brazil earlier this year I outlined five organizing centers for the basis of what I consider to be essential for the 21st Century curriculum (34).

1. **Heart/Lung Health (HLH)**

   Children must move daily, if possible for forty minutes to an hour, on activities which help to promote endurance health. In this way, organs will be prepared and strengthened, fat cells restricted, and joy in movement will be introduced where it can become a habit. Muscular endurance can also be introduced as well. Typical examples are walking, jogging, running, cycling, swimming, skiing, and endurance games.

   Children can learn the basics of these activities in school, but must be encouraged from the outset to incorporate this important center during their non-school time also.

   Safe, encouraging locations must be made available for these activities. Pathways, crossing guards, and carefully planned sites for winter sports, water sports, and climbing sports should be available.

2. **Games**

   Children will emulate the popular games of the day, whether the school requires it or not. They will play Baseball, Soccer, Basketball, Track and Field Hockey, etc., because their elders model them. So we must help children to play them better and place the playing in perspective. These we call traditional games and they are important. The phenomenon of new games also fits into this organizing center. Here the games can be changed, substituted for, recreated, or modified in personnel as circumstances prescribe. The rules and regulations of new games are flexible, thus they can be competitive or cooperative, recreational or serious minded, challenging, or resourceful but they are essentially relevant to the needs of the immediate players and must be considered universalizable.
## Table 1 - DETAILS OF THE TUESDAY-THURSDAY PROGRAM

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY 1972-1996**

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduate Coordinator</th>
<th>Research and Instrumentation</th>
<th>Publications</th>
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<td>Development of Batchelder and Keane CAFIAS</td>
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<td>1976-77</td>
<td>Mary Lydon</td>
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<td>Adaptation of Mosston Task Card</td>
<td>Proceedings AIESEP Magglingen, Switz., 1978</td>
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<td>Split, Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>Israel (AIESEP) IASI Conference Paris, June 1997</td>
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3. Movement Linkage

The integration of human movement in other subject areas is not accomplished often, but is rich in potential. When the physical educator sits down with the math teacher and those responsible for Language, Art, Music, etc., and they plan joint curriculum everybody benefits and the children usually enjoy the experience. The covariance of Physical Education and Sport with classroom subjects has been well established but needs to develop in the 21st century. It is my contention that one cannot focus properly on any one specific task without having a perspective of that task. We must then have bilateral thinking. We must reach out in many directions in order to focus better on our chosen objective. What better operation than to prepare the children in the gymnasium and on the playing fields where they usually enjoy their experiences. Such cooperation often explains singular phenomenon more clearly and helps us understand the complexities of our existence.

4. Sports

The current practices of providing intramural and inter-school sports must continue. We can improve their effect by including more children and more sports, but this aspect of children's movement experience is sound. Concomitant emphases can be place on values, structure, self-discipline, teamwork, strategy training, and unselfishness.

5. Non-school Curriculum

Non-school activities endorsed or conducted by schools, as well as church or community institutions, are often as important as activities held within the official school auspice. Camping, hiking, climbing, expeditions, rafting, and specific explorations are excellent experiences for children during their growing years and adults who wish to maintain vibrance to their lives. These activities are often combined with other studied areas and almost always provide enjoyment beyond the norm. When students are part of the planning and execution, they enjoy it more.

Heroclitus, an early Greek philosopher, is attributed with a statement that has been repeated many times; "You can't step into the same river twice" (35). In the early part of the 20th century Alfred North Whitehead said that «there is no such thing as a moment in time»(36). They were both hinting that everything changes but change itself, and that the reality is not
what we see but the process of change. A curriculum cannot be an island, alone and removed from the participants or the passages of time. It has to change. There are some people who believe in change for change’s sake. Their opponents use another adage which is also well known, “if it aint broke, don’t fix it”. So once again the Aristotelian golden mean is useful to describe and implement the change that’s really needed, when it’s needed, and with whom. Clothing fashions come and go, some games are described as new, and change with the weather or the wind but each community is known by its depth of participation and interest. It is a good thing that five forms of Football are played in very different places and enjoyed in Ireland, the British Isle, the United States, and in Australia. Gaelic football, Rugby, Gridiron, and Australian football are situated in restricted areas but the fifth, Soccer, is thoroughly universal. This diversity in the various communities results from a local and global curriculum which maintains integrity but does not function as an island.

**NO FUTURE IS AN ISLAND**

Sarastros’ incredible bass solo from «The Magic Flute»

Very few people can reach the low notes of Mozart’s great bass aria. There is need for incredible talent, which comes both from genetic contribution and much schooling and practice. Problems that can be resolved only by the realization that the future is not something that we struggle with alone. In the community we have brutality and violence, stupidity, commercialization, a hundred «isms» and ideologues and some who will die for their respective positions. It is hard to give radicals credibility when they blow up women and children in London, crowded public buildings in Oklahoma City, and commercial airliners going about the legitimate business of civil aviation. When a handful of people have vision that is above the ordinary, the community must benefit. Visionary activities which result in harm and vicious retribution are scarcely needed in solving the world’s future problems. Aristotle, for instance, gave his answer for political stability as the creation of a golden mean, a position somewhere between tyranny and democracy which produces, on the one hand a strong
middle class and on the other, coaches who take charge yet who are very much aware of the input from various team members. It may bring a smile to the face but I’m not sure that Aristotle didn’t have the modern coach in mind when he advanced his wonderful concept of the golden mean. Physical Education and Sport are magnificent bridges from the left to the right, the old to the new, from stress to accomplishment, and from endeavor to success. The future is not an island if it involves these two curriculum entities in the programs of our community and the children’s schooling within.

«When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book but translated into a better language and every chapter must so be translated». Music and people, people and people, vitality and people, a future for people must heed John Donne’s incredibly famous quotation from his 17th meditation. I turn again in finishing to the ingenious and playful aria of Bird Catcher, Popageno, and His New Love, Popagena, from Mozart’s «Magic Flute».

«And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee» and thee and thee and me.

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