Review Essay

London, Herbert I. (1987). *Armageddon in the classroom.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 127 pp., $9.95 (paper), $22.50 (cloth).

Reardon, Betty A. (1988). *Comprehensive peace education.* New York: Teachers College Press, 121 pp., $13.95 (paper).

Reardon, Betty A. (1988). *Educating for global responsibility.* New York: Teachers College Press, 183 pp., $12.95 (paper).

Modern civilization is dancing on the edge of its grave and each of us are dancers whether we like it or not. The dance we dance is far different in the twentieth century than it ever has been before because for the first time the *real* possibility exists that we as individuals, our parents, and our children will all be cast into the grave in the same death-flash. Our political leaders, drawing upon an infant yet infinitely powerful science, have choreographed our dance so precariously that some of the soft edges have already begun to crumble into the abyss.

Among those who write about our modern flirtation with self-extermination, the two authors considered here, Betty Reardon and Herbert London, could not be further apart in ideology or in their understanding of human nature.

Reardon, Director of the Peace Education Program at Columbia University, and recognized as one of the leading peace educators in North America, defends her outlook towards world peace in *Comprehensive Peace Education.* This book is supplemented by a complete curricula guide designed to assist peace educators from Kindergarten through Grade 12 (*Educating for Global Responsibility*). She stresses peace through cooperation, understanding the enemy, and global, rather than national, awareness. Her ideas have attained sufficient prominence that most peace education programs throughout North America employ her ideas in one form or another.

London, a conservative intellectual who serves as a consultant to the Hudson Institute and is Professor of Social Studies at New York University, disagrees with Reardon's philosophy at every juncture, and proclaims openly that it is not nuclear weapons that civilization need fear, it is the Soviet Union. London's book focuses almost exclusively on nuclear weapons, nuclear war, and how these topics are taught by peace educators to the children of North America (by which he means the United States).

Reardon and London know what they believe, and neither is afraid to say it — this is about the only commonality they share. Reardon promotes "planetary

consciousness'' carried out by ''global citizens'' who will eventually enact ''changes in human consciousness''. Peacemaking includes ''conceiving, gestating, and nurturing those conditions in which all can develop their good qualities, their capacity to be fully human'' (p. 54). Equally vital, ''the capacity to *care* is one for which most peace educators are now consciously trying to educate'' (p. 76). Without doubt, her strategy is to rearrange the person, and thereby rearrange the world. In this regard she is a philosophical mixture of Rousseau, Jefferson, and New Testament Christianity.

Throughout her writing Reardon blends the humanistic subjectivism which flourished in the 1960s with the ''each-individual-makes-a-difference'' political ethos of the 1940s. Her people-first ideology attempts to humanize a society run by multi-nationals, big government, and an entrenched bureaucracy. She exalts the power (political and spiritual) of the individual and by doing so hopes to create a more peaceful world community.

London does not approve of Reardon's philosophy of peace education, and he most assuredly does not condone the way ''peace education'' is being taught in the classrooms of the public school system. He deplores American educators' naive misunderstanding of the U.S.S.R.'s destructive role in modern history. Most painful to Mr. London, however, is that throughout the 1980s *students have been emotionally and intellectually propagandized by peace educators.* ''We find nuclear education to be an exercise in anti-nuclear propaganda'' (p. xiii). Among the villains in this piece, in addition to thousands of public school teachers, are Educators for Social Responsibility, the Union for Concerned Scientists, and the International Psychiatrists to Prevent Nuclear War:

> It is apparent . . . that this nation is facing a scourge. This national scourge masquerades as something called ''nuclear education.'' What it is in fact is the calculated mass exploitation of children for partisan political purposes. It is a contradiction in terms to call ''nuclear education'' education. (p. xii)

Among the more serious defects of nuclear education, according to London, is that it is not intended to educate; rather, *its purpose is to create fear and to exploit the immature emotions of impressionable students.* ''The one and most appropriate aim of the materials now being widely disseminated is the inducement of fear . . . the classroom has become an arena for emotional expression and occasionally . . . a forum for anti-defense lobbyists'' (p. xii).

London's most defensible complaint in *Armageddon in the Classroom* is that peace educators simply do not present ''the whole picture.'' They invariably overlook Soviet brutality (Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* is almost never included in the required reading). They underplay the tactical aspects of international political struggle (*how* Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other formerly sovereign nations came under the domination of the U.S.S.R. is rarely analyzed). They stress cooperation, but rarely mention steel-fisted preparedness. For the most part, London's scolding of peace educators for their inattentiveness to *realpolitik* brings nods of approval from political analysts who recognize that the

world of international politics requires a considerable degree of cold calculation coupled with only a modest portion of warm heartedness.

In a philosophical mode, London vs. Reardon is essentially a contemporary version of Machiavelli vs. Tolstoy, with London extolling the necessity of military power underlying governmental power, and Reardon proclaiming that it is the righteousness and common sense of the individual citizen which serves as the foundation for legitimate government.

Interestingly, for two authors who focus on the ethical and political implications of nuclear weapons (and nuclear war), neither spends much time analyzing what is unquestionably the most significant reality of the entire debate: *nuclear numbers.* The prospect of nuclear war frightens all thinking individuals because of its ability to cancel people and destroy property on a scale never before witnessed in human history. This destructive power is measured in objective terms as well as human terms. In World War II, for example, 20 million Russians died. This is a stupefying number of humans to perish in a military conflict. The individual suffering was horrendous, but when multiplied by millions it attains an even greater horror. As everyone knows, however, *nuclear numbers dwarf even the incomprehendable numbers of World War II.* To understand the gut-level fear which Reardon and most peace educators have of nuclear war one *must*, impossible as it seems, grasp nuclear numbers. Look for a moment at the destructive power of the United States submarine strike force (which represents less than 10% of the United States' nuclear capacity). Doing so will help create a sense of nuclear numbers!

The United States Navy has about 2,700 Poseiden warheads at sea. If one-half of these missiles were launched they would, within less than one hour, devastate all 220 cities within the Soviet Union with a population over 100,000 people. Civilians unfamiliar with the mathematics of nuclear death are stunned to learn that *one* Poseiden submarine could destroy 160 Russian cities, attacking each city with three to seven times the megatonnage that fell upon Hiroshima. These nuclear strikes would, of course, destroy communication networks, transportation networks, airports, public housing, museums, and most of the humans in their proximity. According to one Pentagon report, 100 (only) nuclear warheads delivered to the "proper" targets within the Soviet Union could immediately kill 37 million people and destroy about 60% of Soviet industrial capacity. Bear in mind that the total Russian dead in World War I, the 1918-1920 Civil War, and World War II was about 35 million. In this era of nuclear numbers, those deaths would be equalled in the first hours of a nuclear war.

Proportional death numbers apply to the United States and Canada. The Soviet arsenal is as murderous as ours. Most of the young students about whom Reardon and London debate would be killed, brutalized, or in some other unthinkable way become part of the nuclear numbers, if *for whatever reason* the Soviets attacked North America. Neither author is pre-eminently concerned with nuclear numbers; therefore, both are guilty of impaired analysis. For when all is said and done, it is

their power to kill and exterminate, more than anything else, that makes nuclear weapons the ultimate issue of our era.

As one reads through *Armageddon in the Classroom*, it becomes increasingly clear that London is not afraid of nuclear death. He is numbingly insulated from the terror which nuclear war will be. At one point he comments: "Admittedly, the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons could theoretically eliminate life on this globe. But then again, civilizations have been destroyed by volcanic eruptions" (p. 28). Volcanic eruptions? Nuclear war and volcanic eruptions? This insulation has been transformed and moralized by London into an eerie form of bravery which I call *nuclear heroism*. Nuclear heroism, described in the most elementary terms, is the willingness to die in a nuclear war. It should not be confused with military heroism.

Some peace educators believe that military heroism has brought us to the brink of nuclear war — nineteenth century sabre rattling with twentieth century missles. This is not correct. *Military heroism*, in contradistinction to nuclear heroism, has always placed the highest priority on defending *and preserving*, one's family, one's faith, and one's nation. The soldier died, but his cause lived. Military heroism is heroic because its purpose is the defense of higher values.

Nuclear heroism, which many decent people wrongfully confuse with military heroism, is a different matter. It resembles military heroism in that the hero is willing to die. The willingness of the nuclear hero to accept death is an empty sacrifice, however, because "giving" one's life in a nuclear holocaust does not preserve one's society, it does not protect one's children, and its does not dignify one's country.

After a nuclear war the dead will not be commemorated because their families and friends will also be dead; the dead will not even have a government to memorialize them. Nuclear death preserves no virtue — it is the ultimate non-heroic death. London's willingness to die (along with millions of his fellow citizens) in a "necessary" nuclear war derives from a heroism which, even as recently as WW II, contained an element of honor and valor. In today's world, with omnicidal weapons targeted on every city in the Western World, London's nuclear heroism is merely pathos, no matter how patriotically or sentimentally he decorates it.

Nuclear heroism is a phenomenon of our times. It exists among men such as Mr. London, it exists among the soldiers entrusted to launch nuclear weapons, and it exists among a surprising number of youth who, excepting for nuclear weapons, have the promise of life before them. It is, however, rarely found among peace educators. They believe that real heroes don't take their children to war with them.

Educators have many duties and responsibilities, one of the more important of which is to contain, hopefully even reduce, the pools of ignorance which accumulate wherever humans habitate for more than one generation. This is a challenging task for all educators. Peace educators, however, face an additional responsibility. It is they, in most school systems, who inform the flowering children in their

classrooms that during the past forty years their government has built, installed, and under sufficient duress, will launch nuclear missles which will kill most of the people living in our enemy nations. This is not an easy lesson to teach because children generally are saddened, or fearful, when they learn about such things. The lesson is not made easier when these teachers must also inform their students that they also, in all probability, will be killed when our enemy retaliates.

As *realists*, Reardon's peace educators are committed to informing students about the danger they face in our nuclear world. As *idealists*, they hope to save the children from this danger. As *pragmatists*, however, they know that the best bet to save the adults of this world is to educate their children. As one educator put it, "today's children are their parents' teachers, especially in their capacity to be sensitized to peace concerns." Peace educators have discovered that most parents are simply too pre-occupied with whatever it is that fills their lives to worry about the annihilation of their children.

It is a significant thing what these peace educators have learned about us as parents. The primary axiom of human survival is that the parent must protect the child. Since the vast percentage of the children living within the Soviet Union and North America presently have nuclear weapons targeted on their homes, it is difficult to believe that we are protecting our children.

It is on this final point that Reardon and London most disagree. Each of them is convinced that their philosophy will protect the children they love, London by increasing nuclear arsenals, Reardon by reducing them. History, will be the ultimate arbiter. However, thus far history clearly indicates that we humans are not trustworthy when it comes to killing one another. And since there has never been even one decade of world peace in human history, we had better silence our nuclear weapons before they silence us.

John J. Mitchell
University of Alberta

Duckworth, Eleanor. (1987). *"The having of wonderful ideas" and other essays on teaching and learning*. New York: Teachers College Press, 168 pp., $13.95 (paper).

In *"The Having of Wonderful Ideas,"* the reader is treated to a delightful and stimulating collection of essays drawn largely from the author's extensive Piagetian background, her experiences with the Elementary Science Study, and her innovative work as a teacher educator at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The essays are so consistent in their point of view and insightfulness that one could think that the book was written "of a piece" rather than over a period of at least fifteen years. The present book admirably confirms Eleanor Duckworth's exceptional