

Education, Society, and the Individual: Reflections on the Work of Hermann Hesse

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes the relationship between the individual and society in the work of Hermann Hesse. Paying particular attention to Hesse's last novel, *The Glass Bead Game*, the author argues (a) that for Hesse "self" and "society" are dynamically intertwined and (b) that education plays a key role in linking the two together.

RESUMÉ: Cet article analyse les liens entre l'individu et la société dans l'étude de Hermann Hesse. En apportant une attention toute particulière au dernier roman de Herman Hesse *The Glass Bead Game*, l'auteur soutient a) que Hesse "lui-même" et "la société," sont dynamiquement liés et, b) que l'enseignement joue un rôle clé dans le rapprochement des deux.

The novelist and Nobel laureate Hermann Hesse placed supreme importance on the value of the individual. From his youth Hesse had rebelled against the imposition of social authority on the individual, and he continued this resistance throughout his adult life. The First World War had a profound impact on his thinking and writing. He described this as a "cruel awakening" (Hesse, 1914/1974a, p. 10) and in the years following the War he found himself utterly at odds with the spirit of his times in his native Germany. He spent much of his life in Switzerland. Hesse saw himself as an "upolitical man" and even when writing about the War, he wanted to guide the reader "not into the world theatre with its political problems but into his innermost being, before the judgement seat of his very personal conscience" (p. 11). In Hesse's novels and short stories, many of which have an educational focus, the theme of individual spiritual striving is paramount. His early novel, *Peter Camenzind* (1904/1969), provides a fictionalised biographical account of the title character's life, from his early years in the mountains, through his time as a student and his development as a writer, to his later life of devotion to a disabled friend and his elderly father. *Beneath the Wheel* (1906/1968a) details the traumatic school experiences and tragic post-

school life of a talented student. *Siddhartha* (1922/2000a) takes the title character on a journey of self-discovery, with an exploration of dramatically different modes of life: asceticism, the world of business, sexual liberation, and oneness with nature, among others. *Steppenwolf* (1927/1965) focuses on the mid-life crises faced by Harry Haller, who bears a considerable resemblance to Hesse himself.

In all of these novels, as in most others in Hesse's corpus, questions of social structure are addressed only implicitly. It is not that Hesse ignores the social realm altogether. Social relationships, within and outside institutions, are important in many of Hesse's books. These are often explored through romantic longings, as in *Peter Camenzind* (1904/1969) and *Gertrude* (1910/1974b), or through friendships and relationships of admiration, as in *Beneath the Wheel* (1968a), *Demian* (1919/1999), and *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930/1968b). *Beneath the Wheel* (1968a) provides a sharp critique of one of our most hallowed institutions: the school. Even the restrained *Rosshalde* (1914/1972) can be seen as a quiet questioning of the institution of marriage. *Steppenwolf* (1927/1965) shows that Harry's crises are, in part, a response to the hypocrisy and shallowness of bourgeois social norms. In none of these cases, however, does Hesse make social systems or structures his principal concern. Rather, the focus is more on the individual and how he or she responds to the challenges thrown up by life.

The Glass Bead Game (1943/2000b) is unique among Hesse's novels in the explicit and detailed attention it pays to a form of social organization: the utopian Castalia, a pedagogical province of the future. Like many of Hesse's other books, *The Glass Bead Game* describes events in the life of an individual, Joseph Knecht, but in many ways Knecht's inner life as an individual remains disguised by the form of the narrative. The focus is as much, if not more, on the strengths and limitations of Castalia as a social ideal. This shift in emphasis is foreshadowed in Hesse's second-to-last novel, *The Journey to the East* (Hesse, 1932/1956), with its account of an esoteric League devoted to spiritual enlightenment. In that work, however, the nature of the League itself remains somewhat mysterious. In *The Glass Bead Game* the defining features of Castalia as a social system emerge in full and overt detail. This is initially by way of explanation – in a General Introduction by the narrator – and then via successive chapters detailing Knecht's life in the pedagogical province.

This paper considers the connections between the individual, society, and education in Hesse's work. Particular but not exclusive attention will be paid to *The Glass Bead Game* in investigating that relationship. It is argued that for the mature Hesse, "self" and "society" are dynamically intertwined. Education, it will be suggested, plays a pivotal role in linking the individual and society together. The paper is structured in three parts. The first section comments on the importance of hierarchy and order in Hesse's fictional world of Castalia. This is followed by a more detailed examination of the life of Joseph Knecht, the central character in the book. Joseph, it will be shown, undergoes a process of educational transformation. He comes to appreciate that awakening, as he calls it, is not merely a matter of individual development but a process of reaching out – through education – to the wider world. The final part of the paper reflects briefly on the question of Hesse's alleged elitism and the bearing this has on his view of the relationship between the individual and society. I draw a distinction between *cultural* elitism and *educational* elitism, maintaining that Hesse subscribes to a version of the former but not the latter.

Hierarchy, Order, and Individuality in Castalia

The Glass Bead Game (Hesse, 1943/2000b) comprises three related parts. In the first section the narrator, writing some centuries into the future, provides a General Introduction to the nature and history of the Glass Bead Game. The Game, readers learn, is like a universal language: it provides a means for connecting all disciplines and values. The narrator notes that while the Game had its origins in the ancient spiritual and intellectual traditions of both the East and West, its current form emerged from the ashes of destruction and cultural debasement in the 20th century. Castalia was set up as a pedagogical province to protect and nurture the Game and the rich aesthetic and intellectual traditions associated with it. The second and main part of the book is concerned with the life of Joseph Knecht, who grows up in Castalia and advances through its elite education system. Knecht excels in his studies, and is eventually appointed to the exalted position of Magister Ludi: Master of the Glass Bead Game. While he upholds his responsibilities in this prestigious post with distinction, over time he also develops an increasingly critical view of the pedagogical province. His dialogical relationships with two other characters – Plinio Designori (an outsider with whom he becomes acquainted as a student and enjoys a lifelong friendship) and Father Jacobus (a Benedictine monk in a

monastery at Mariafels, also outside Castalia) – play a crucial role in shaping his critical consciousness. Knecht makes the momentous decision to resign his position as Magister Ludi and leaves Castalia to take on the humble role of tutoring Tito, Plinio's son. He barely begins his new life when tragedy strikes and he drowns while swimming with Tito in an icy mountain lake. The final part of the book is a collection of poems and three fictional autobiographies (Lives), explained in the text as the posthumous writings of Joseph Knecht.

At the beginning of *The Glass Bead Game*, the narrator notes that one of the longstanding principles of intellectual life in Castalia is “the obliteration of individuality, the maximum integration of the individual into the hierarchy of the educators and scholars” (Hesse, 1943/2000b, p. 3). So seriously is this principle taken that it is always difficult and often impossible to obtain biographical and personal information, or even names, for those who have given exemplary service to the hierarchy. “The hierarchic organization,” the narrator says, “cherishes the ideal of anonymity, and comes very close to the realization of that ideal” (p. 3). There are well defined roles for different citizens in Castalia, from the most novice of students to the Masters of the various arts. There is an elitist schooling system, with only the very best boys – and it is an all male hierarchy – making it through to the highest levels. Among the different groupings in Castalian society, the Order of the Glass Bead Game carries a special mystique. Important decisions are made by a Board of Educators. There are clear rules and procedures, and questioning of the Castalian system is rare. Individuals are expected to suppress any sense of self importance in favor of the good of the wider Castalian community.

The idea of obliterating individuality is, however, only partly borne out in the rest of the book. For the narrator makes it clear at numerous points that positions of leadership in the hierarchy are held in great esteem. The Music Master is revered, not just by Knecht, but by others who come into contact with him at different points in the story (e.g., Petrus, who idolizes the aging Master). At the apex of the Order of the Glass Bead Game is the position of Magister Ludi, and not only Knecht but other Magisters are venerated. Magister Thomas von der Trave, Knecht's immediate predecessor, is spoken of in glowing terms, and Magister Ludwig Wassermaler, who “reigned during the era of Waldzell's most exuberant passion for the Game” (p. 249), is remembered to the present day as a figure of legendary importance.

Names, then, are not forgotten altogether and the deeds of those named are acknowledged and accorded deep respect.

Individuality seems to want to push itself forward despite the narrator's best intentions. A clear portrait of Knecht's distinctiveness as Magister Ludi emerges. The narrator seems to make a special point, later in the book, of showing how Knecht can be compared in greatness to Magister Wassermaler yet also be distinguished from him. Knecht's succession to the Magistracy following the death of Master Thomas von der Trave is described precisely in terms that demonstrate his unusual individual strengths and the bearing these have on the shape and character of his term in office. Individuals, then, do not disappear altogether and the hierarchy not only remembers but cherishes the names and people behind them that have made Castalia what it is.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that certain forms of individuality are suppressed – sometimes brutally so. Knecht's friend Tegularius (a character Hesse modeled on Friedrich Nietzsche) lives, as it were, “on the edge” throughout the novel. He is described or portrayed at various points as oversensitive, over bred, morose, socially inept, sickly, and arrogant. His brilliant intellect is recognised but he is regarded as utterly unsuitable for higher office and leads a precarious, cloistered existence within a closed Castalian world. Knecht's excellence in the role of Magister Ludi is demonstrated, in part, by his ability to draw out the best from Tegularius – harnessing the latter's intellect for the development of a new and memorable approach to the Game shortly after taking office – while taking care not to place him in positions for which he is manifestly unsuited. Later, concerned at the impact his decision to leave the Order will have on Tegularius, Knecht has Tegularius undertake some background research for his Circular Letter to the Board of Educators. Tegularius, with his instinctive tendency toward rebelliousness, relishes the opportunity to uncover evidence and develop arguments against the Castalian hierarchy. Tegularius survives – but only just.

Another individual, Bertram, is not so fortunate. Bertram is Magister Thomas von der Trave's “Shadow” (Deputy). When Thomas falls ill, Bertram is, in keeping with Castalian tradition, not considered as a candidate for the Magistracy. The Shadow, the narrator informs us, is expected to stand in for the Master when necessary and is thus an important person in the hierarchy. But on becoming the Shadow, a member of the elite gives up any further ambition and allows others to stand ahead of him when a replacement in the Magistracy is required.

Bertram is treated with almost sadistic coldness by the other members of the elite. He is despised for his shortcomings in organizing the annual Game festival. Following the festival, he is, in effect, forced to take a vacation and never returns to the Order. He is found dead in the mountains, the enmity of the Castalian elite having been so intense that his fatal fall "strikes the reader as nothing short of an execution" (Friedrichsmeyer, 1974, p. 284).

So, how are we to understand the relationship between the individual and society in Castalia? On the face of it, Castalian society is, as Durrani (1982) points out, hostile to expressions of individuality. The most loyal members of the hierarchy – Thomas, Alexander, Dubois – are, in Durrani's words, also the "least admirable personalities" (p. 667). Those who demonstrate individual self-will – Bruder, Tegularius, Petrus, Bertram, and Knecht himself – ultimately become victims of the system. Despite this suppression – or perhaps *because* of it – the authenticity of the individual never disappears. A clue to understanding this lies in Hesse's own words. Hesse claimed that he was at odds with "political thinkers of all trends." "I shall always," he said, "incurably, recognize in man, in the individual man and his soul, the existence of realms to which political impulses and forms do not extend" (Hesse, 1914/1974a, p. 11). Hesse appeared to be an example of what *The Glass Bead Game* conveys in fictional form. He was an individualist who rebelled against an authoritarian German regime. Despite being ostracized for his beliefs he went on to speak out, repeatedly, against the destructive impact of Nazi policies, attitudes, and practices. In one sense there were realms within Hesse to which the political impulses of his time did not extend, and yet the very fact that he was able to assert his individuality by resisting the social trends of his time was indicative of the influence of those times on Hesse. Hesse was neither separable from those times nor reducible to them. He was, as Paulo Freire (2004) would have put it, *shaped* but not *determined* by his circumstances. This point can best be fleshed out by examining the life of Joseph Knecht.

Awakening, Education, and the Wider World

In his younger years, Knecht's attitude toward the Order and those who teach in it is one of reverence. His support for Castalian ideals is called into question by Plinio in their youthful exchanges, but Joseph lacks the maturity to live comfortably with the uncertainty engendered by these debates. His responses to Plinio still have a somewhat reactionary and defensive character and he appears, at times, to concentrate more on the

art of verbal contestation than the ideas themselves. He is still learning how to probe and explore with the kind of open-minded, questioning, investigative spirit that will come to characterise his later life. These qualities begin to develop through Joseph's years of private study following his graduation from the elite schools of Castalia, and they are extended during his time with Father Jacobus. Through Father Jacobus, Knecht learns how to put Castalia into broader historical and social perspective. This proves pivotal in the formation of Knecht's later critique of Castalia. Castalians not only do not embrace an historical view of the world; they emphatically reject it and consider themselves to be, in a sense, beyond history. Knecht's questioning and discussion to this point had always been within a narrow part of the Castalian environment. Taken outside this, albeit to another cloistered world, he has the opportunity to participate first-hand in a way of life, in the customs and practices, of another group of people. Knecht's growing maturity in this phase of his life becomes evident in the way he not only learns from Father Jacobus but teaches him. There is much that Father Jacobus has to learn as well, and Knecht's relationship with him is more one of respect than reverence. Dialogue and a spirit of mutual inquiry prevail.

Through his dialogical relationship with Father Jacobus, Knecht comes to see that Castalia came into being through the decisions and actions of human beings, is sustained by the ongoing work of others in the outside world, and will one day be superseded by new social arrangements, as has always been the case throughout human history. Senior figures in the Order of the Glass Bead Game venerate their beloved Game above all else and see Castalia as the pinnacle of cultural and intellectual achievement. They are, however, too complacent – too smug and unreflective – in holding this view. They are, for the most part, unwilling to put it to the test in active conversation with others from outside the pedagogical province. They are, to use another Freirean expression, "too certain of their certainties" (Freire, 1997). Knecht's appointment as Magister Ludi takes him to the summit of the Glass Bead Game hierarchy; yet even during his moments of greatest success in the Magisterial role Knecht has doubts. He comes to realize that Castalia – with its rigidity, its hierarchy, its isolation – imposes limits on those who take its ideals seriously and is already in decay.

As Knecht matures, he develops an increasingly sophisticated understanding of his own transformation. He sees this as a form of awakening. Shortly before his departure from the Order, Knecht reflects

on how his understanding of awakening has changed. In his earlier days,

[he had] considered his own special kind of perception – that way of experiencing reality which he called “awakening” – as a slow, step-by-step penetration into the heart of the universe, into the core of truth; as something in itself absolute, a continuous path or progression which nevertheless had to be achieved gradually. (Hesse, 1943/2000b, p. 357)

As a youth he had been aware of the need to acknowledge the outside world, represented by Plinio, yet he had also seen himself (as had most Castalians) as separate from and superior to this. He had at one time been able to embrace a simplistic idealism in his view of Castalia and its relationship to the rest of the world.

[He had seen] the Order and the Castalian spirit as equivalent to the divine and the absolute, the Province of the world, Castalians as mankind, and the non-Castalian sphere as a kind of children's world, a threshold to the Province, virgin soil still awaiting cultivation and ultimate redemption, a world still looking reverently up to Castalia and every so often sending charming visitors such as young Plinio. (p. 357)

Knecht's life had seemed to unfold in a progressive way, from his decision (despite doubts) to commit himself to the Glass Bead Game to his eventual appointment as *Magister Ludi*. On the surface, he had taken a series of steps on a seemingly straight road – “and yet he now stood at the end of this road, by no means at the heart of the universe and the innermost core of truth” (p. 358). He had come to realize that the present moment in his process of awakening – his sense of why he had to leave the Order to take up a life of teaching – was, like all previous moments, “no more than a brief opening of his eyes, a finding himself in a new situation, a fitting into new constellations” (p. 358). His path, he now saw, had “been a circle, or an ellipse or spiral or whatever, but certainly not straight; straight lines evidently belonged only to geometry, not to nature and life” (p. 358).

Prior to his departure from Castalia, Knecht meets with his colleague Master Alexander. Joseph feels regret that Alexander cannot understand his reasons for wanting to leave the Order. For Alexander, Knecht's decision is an inappropriate assertion of his (Joseph's) individuality, an abandonment of the principle of respecting the hierarchy and authority of the Order. He cannot see, as Knecht does, “that the apparent wilfulness of his present action was in reality service and obedience, that he was moving not toward freedom, but toward new,

strange, and hitherto unknown ties" (p. 359). Knecht sees himself as "not a fugitive, but a man responding to a summons; not headstrong, but obedient" (p. 359). For Knecht, the decision to leave is a commitment to serve others; it is a form of sacrifice, rather than self indulgence. Alexander, bound more tightly to the Castalian way of life and view of the world, cannot see this. After his meeting with Knecht, Alexander finally breaks down some of the emotional barriers that had prevented him from connecting in a human way with Knecht. He realizes that he had come to love and admire his colleague. But he does not convey these feelings to Knecht, and Joseph leaves as planned.

Awakening, as Knecht understands it just prior to his departure from the Order, is not merely a matter of individual development or of truth and cognition but of becoming involved with the wider world. That Knecht dies before experiencing anything other than a small fraction of what this new world has to offer may be his destiny, but it is also an invitation to imagine what might have been. This is not idle speculation, as Bandy (1972) suggests, but an interpretation and extension of what is already there – already present in Knecht and his shifting consciousness of himself, his purpose, and his relationships with others (cf. Cohn, 1950). Bandy emphasizes the extent to which Knecht has been influenced by Castalia. Knecht has lived in the pedagogical province most of his life, and the Castalian system has played the dominant role in shaping him as a human being. But there is no one way of being a Castalian, and Knecht's individuality cannot avoid breaking through the conformity and rigidity of the hierarchy. This, indeed, is the final mark of his greatness: that he had the insight and the courage to recognize, in a reasoned and balanced way, Castalia's flaws and to leave behind the trappings of office for a humble life as a tutor.

Individualism, Cultural Elitism, and Education

One of Hesse's interpreters, Stanley Antosik (1978), sees *The Glass Bead Game* as a reflection of Hesse's own inclinations as a cultural elitist:

Here a caste of patricians subsidizes a priestly elite that serves as the final arbiter in all cultural and educational matters. However fantastic, this medieval utopia was not intended merely to lengthen the list of ideal societies conceived by people over the ages. Since the early 1930's, Hesse believed that a League of Journeymen to the East would help lay the groundwork for the actual emergence of a Castalian elite. He even thought of himself as the spokesman (*Sprecher*) for an existing League drawn from widely-scattered and

anonymous German youths, some of them his correspondents. That it was a part of his private world and no one else's failed to perturb Hesse. A bold response was called for by the grave consequences of Hitler's rise to power, and this was Hesse's way of making it. Besides, he was an old hand at blurring the distinctions between the imaginary and the actual. (p. 67)

I think Antosik is only partially right here. I would want to draw a distinction between a certain kind of cultural elitism and an alleged *educational* elitism. Hesse, it seems to me, was a cultural elitist in the limited sense that he valued what he saw as the greatest and most noble artistic, intellectual, and spiritual achievements of human beings down through the ages, within both Eastern and Western traditions. The need to honor these achievements is clearly conveyed in a number of his novels and non-fiction writings. *The Glass Bead Game* is unique in its imaginative development of a social system specifically devoted to upholding these traditions and their highest expression – in the future – through the Glass Bead Game. But Hesse, in my view, was not an educational elitist. *The Glass Bead Game* makes this point in the most dramatic and memorable terms: Joseph Knecht, the central character in the novel, gives up everything – his prestigious post at the summit of the Castalian hierarchy, his colleagues and friends in the Order, and the way of life to which he had become accustomed – for the sake of educating a single youth.

Knecht realizes that much as he loves the Glass Bead Game and the traditions associated with it, Castalia as a society is doomed to disappear. In his Circular Letter to the Board of Educators, in which he requests approval for his decision to leave the pedagogical province and outlines his reasons for doing so, he draws attention to the fundamental importance of schools and of teaching. The title "Magister Ludi," he reminds his colleagues, was originally intended to mean schoolmaster. The more imperiled Castalia becomes, he says, the more the country will need its teachers, "its brave and good schoolmasters." Teachers, he argues, "are more essential than anything else;" they are needed to give the young the ability to make judgements and distinctions, to serve as examples of honoring the truth, to show faithfulness to the things of the spirit, and to respect language. This applies, he stresses, "not only for our elite schools, which will be closed down sooner or later, but also and primarily for the secular schools on the outside where the burghers and peasants, artisans and soldiers, politicians, military officers, and rulers are educated and shaped while they are still malleable children." This,

the departing Magister Ludi believes, is where the foundation for cultural life is to be found. "More and more," Knecht concludes, "we must recognize the humble, highly responsible service to the secular schools as the chief and most honorable part of our mission. That is what we must seek to extend" (Hesse, 1943/2000b, p. 342).

The views expressed in this Circular Letter, if we take them to be representative of the mature Hesse and not merely Joseph Knecht, carry all the more weight when considered against the background of Hesse's own experiences with the education system. Hesse felt severely repressed by his schooling and rebelled strongly, creating a great deal of tension within himself and with his teachers and family. There is every reason to believe Hesse wanted us to take Knecht's position seriously. Hesse had labored over *The Glass Bead Game* for more than a decade. He thought deeply about the book and the philosophical questions posed by his narrative. The book says a great deal about what Hesse himself came to believe, even though *The Glass Bead Game* is not a didactic text. The closest it comes to this is in the General Introduction provided by the narrator at the beginning of the book. But as the reader progresses through the book, traveling with Joseph Knecht on his educational journey, it becomes clear that much of the rest of the novel is intended to trouble the picture of Castalia painted by the narrator. The narrator, readers learn, is a representative of the Castalian elite assigned the role of writing a biography of Joseph Knecht. As a member of the Castalian hierarchy, the narrator has an interest in portraying the achievements of the pedagogical province in a particular light. The narrator is steeped in Castalian culture and adopts the same stiff, official, strangely detached tone typical of many of Knecht's colleagues in the Order of the Glass Bead Game. Yet, even the narrator himself cannot avoid being moved by the story of Joseph Knecht and it is apparent that as the main part of the book progresses the narrator's mode of expression becomes slightly less stilted, more empathetic and *human* in character. The narrator himself, then, despite being a staunch member of the hierarchy, begins to show a certain individuality.

A comparison between *The Journey to the East* (Hesse, 1932/1956) and *The Glass Bead Game* is instructive in seeking to understand Hesse's position on the relationship between the self, society, and education. *The Journey to the East*, while introducing a social element in the form of the League of journeyers, concentrates on the *self* development of the central character, H.H. – and on the development of his consciousness in particular. There is an implied view of education

lurking in the shadows of *The Journey to the East* but this remains underdeveloped in the novel. H.H. lapses into despair following the disbanding of his group of Journeyers to the East. This event was precipitated by the disappearance of the servant Leo from H.H.'s group. H.H. constructs his involvement with this group of journeyers as the only meaningful experience of his life and spends much of the book living in a dream-like world of memories associated with his time in the League. His education, such as it is, consists in a series of relatively abrupt revelations. Leo, he learns, is still alive. The League has never disappeared; instead it is H.H. who has abandoned the League. Leo, it turns out, is President of the League and H.H. must follow his lead – indeed, *become* him – if he is to know and fulfil himself. Education thus exemplified becomes a process of *letting go*: letting go of that which troubles the self, of tensions and contradictions, of questions and doubts, in order to be transformed into the Other by faith. In *The Journey to the East* the Other is represented by Leo, who is seen as a kind of higher self for H.H. In *The Glass Bead Game*, by contrast, education is portrayed as a process of more deeply understanding the self and society by interacting *with* the Other. Blind acceptance of social norms, while endorsed by some in the Castalian hierarchy, is contested by Knecht as he progresses in his educational journey. Questions are not counter-productive in this model of education; rather, they are essential to it. Doubt and uncertainty are not shunned as disturbances of the soul but seen as vital for the self's good health and continuing growth. The self is shaped by others but not reduced to them.

Norton (1973) draws attention to the combination in Hesse's life and work between, on the one hand, a certain kind of self-distancing from society and yet, on the other, an intense concern with human problems. Hesse believed that human transformation would require spiritual reorientation rather than blind reliance on technological developments and political systems. This belief, in Hesse's later years at least, was not so much a reflection of an escape from reality as a pragmatic and practical response to the shortcomings of "romantic individualism and political ideologies run rampant" (Norton, 1973, p. 137). Hesse wanted to hold on to the best traditions of the past while also being prepared to consider what at first might seem novel or even absurd in the future.

[In Norton's words] although [Hesse] remained very much an "outsider," he increasingly became aware that he could not become so involved in his personal problems that he would lose sight of the

central truth that the individual's fate is in many ways bound to that of society. (p. 137)

Hesse's exploration of the relationship between the individual and society in *The Glass Bead Game* has its roots in his wider belief system. Hesse, while acknowledging his Christian background, was heavily influenced by Eastern mysticism and sought to synthesize insights from a number of different spiritual traditions. The ideal of Christian love was important to Hesse but this went beyond the notion of treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves. As Seidlin (1950) observes, "the Christian Hesse again and again substitutes for Christ's words, 'Love Thy neighbor as Thyself' the Buddhist's 'Love your neighbor for he is yourself'" (p. 342). There is much in *The Glass Bead Game* that recalls Dostoevsky's idea, expressed most tellingly and memorably in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1991), that we are responsible for all. For Hesse, or at least the mature Hesse, the individual cannot be separated from society. To respect the integrity – the uniqueness – of one individual is simultaneously to respect the integrity of *all* individuals.

Our thoughts and actions have consequences for others, some of which will be self-evident, immediate, or dramatic, others of which will be subtle and indirect but long lasting. *The Glass Bead Game* shows, through both the main part of the book and the three fictional autobiographies, how this process occurs. Joseph Knecht is not only himself but also, in a certain sense, the Music Master, Plinio Designori, Father Jacobus, Fritz Tegularius, and many others. These people have a deep impact on Joseph's life: they, in considerable part, make him the distinctive Castalian that he is. Yet, he also has a significant influence on their lives. Plinio's youthful exchanges with Joseph, for example, provide the foundation for a lifelong relationship with the pedagogical province. And Father Jacobus not only teaches Knecht, developing within him a hitherto uncultivated appreciation for history, but also learns from him, acquiring a less jaundiced and more open-minded view of Castalia and its role in preserving intellectual culture.

Concluding Comments

It was no accident, I believe, that Hesse allowed the central character in *The Glass Bead Game*, Joseph Knecht, to develop an increasingly critical view of the pedagogical province and to see education as a key to overcoming the stagnation of Castalian society. Knecht's critical consciousness develops through dialogue with others (principally but not

exclusively Father Jacobus and Plinio Designori), and allows him to examine not only Castalia but *himself* – and his life's purpose – in a new light. This is arguably the most important theme of the novel and it reflects the process Hesse went through in pondering his own educational biography. Hesse had an unhappy time at school, but he never rejected all educational ideals. Almost all of Hesse's novels are concerned in some way with a form of *self* education – or, to put this more precisely, with the education of the self. *The Glass Bead Game* shows, more clearly and fully than any of Hesse's other books, how the education of the self is necessarily intertwined with the education of others.

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