

A Volume in **Current Perspectives in Holistic Education**

Education for Awakening

An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education
Second Revised Edition



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Yoshiharu Nakagawa

Education for Awakening

Education for Awakening was the first book-length discussion of Eastern approaches to holistic education and this revised edition presents an even more integrative landscape. Combining the wisdom of the East and contemporary embodied pedagogies, Nakagawa shows what a truly integral educational vision looks like—a vision that will inspire both teachers and students to unpack the spiritual depths of learning and re-engage education with greater meaning, compassion, and wonder.

—**Jorge N. Ferrer, PhD**

Author of *Participation and the Mystery: Transpersonal Approaches to Psychology, Education, and Religion*

In this stimulating and illuminating book, Dr. Nakagawa draws upon his deep understanding of Western, Asian and indigenous paths to full human development to demonstrate that they are complementary elements in a comprehensive holistic philosophy. This is a work of ambitious and impressive scholarship, describing a holism that is truly whole.

—**Dr. Ron Miller, founding editor of *Holistic Education Review***

Education for Awakening is remarkably “nutrient dense”; like a perfect food, it provides rich, comprehensive, accessible nourishment. With a vast reach of Eastern and Western thought, it grounds Holistic education in a multi-dimensional reality that engenders an expansive view of both education and of the human being. It brings clarity to worldview and contemplative direction for world presence—helping to open self to world. This a rare and outstanding resource that understands the potential for education to transform consciousness and culture.

—**Tobin Hart, PhD Professor of Psychology
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**An Eastern Approach to Holistic
Education**

Second Revised Edition

By

Yoshiharu Nakagawa

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*In memory of my parents,
Nakagawa Morio and Sueko,
and of my mentors,
Ishii Takahiko Sensei,
Katagiri Yuzuru Sensei, and
Hayashi Nobuhiro Sensei*

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FOREWORD

The first version of *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education* by Professor Nakagawa was published in 2000. The field of holistic education has grown and expanded since its publication. One of the main factors in this expansion is the leadership of Professor Nakagawa, who co-founded and led the Asia Pacific Network for Holistic Education with other holistic educators. The network has sponsored conferences in Japan, Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia.

I am grateful that he has given us this revised and expanded version. This book is a foundational text in holistic education because of its theoretical contribution to the field. The amount of literature that Professor Nakagawa has examined and included in this book is impressive; however, even more impressive is how he has integrated this literature into a coherent whole. His discussion of Japanese theorists at the beginning of the book is central to his conception of Eastern thought and his overall framework. Professor Nakagawa also provides a detailed discussion of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism and their relationship to holistic education. The book is not limited to Eastern thought as he demonstrates extensive knowledge of Western thinkers such as Aldous Huxley and Ram Dass, thus revealing how Western and Eastern thought relate to one another.

Professor Nakagawa has updated this book with more recent literature in holistic education and contemplative education. One of the major additions in this version is the second part of the book that focuses on educational and contemplative practices. These practices include four different “Ways”—awareness, action, compassion, and art—and help holistic educators apply the ideas presented in this book.

The beauty of this book is that the ideas are presented clearly and concisely, but in a manner that does not compromise their depth and complexity. With its comprehensiveness, *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education* helps us see the vastness and depth of the philosophical

roots of holistic education. It is an invaluable text for holistic educators seeking to understand the theoretical foundations of the field.

John (Jack) P. Miller
Professor of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE, University of Toronto

PREFACE

The present work is the second edition of *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education*. The first edition was published in 2000 by the Foundation for Educational Renewal and has been thoroughly revised and updated for this edition.

Integrating holistic education with Eastern thought has been my primary concern since I started studying holistic education in the early 1990s. This book explores some of the contributions that Eastern thought can make to the current discussion of holistic education.

The Eastern view of holistic education has theoretical and practical aspects. Part I (Chapters 1–6) explores theoretical issues and describes a systematic view of holistic education, mainly drawing on essential ideas in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Part II (Chapters 7–10) focuses on practical ways relevant to holistic education, such as awareness/mindfulness, action, compassion, and art. This work also attempts to synthesize Eastern and Western approaches to holistic education.

NOTES

As for Japanese thinkers and scholars, names are given in the traditional Japanese order of surname first, with the exception of D. T. Suzuki.

This book uses the Wade-Giles romanization for Chinese terms because this system is widely used in the related literature.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C. = Chinese; J. = Japanese; P. = Pali; S. = Sanskrit.

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I am also grateful to Dr. Ron Miller, who published the first edition and generously permitted me to make the second edition. I want to extend my gratitude to Professor Emerita Aostre Johnson at Saint Michael's College, Professor Sean Kelly at the California Institute of Integral Studies, and Associate Professor Sachiko Gomi at Western New Mexico University for reviewing this work and giving me valuable suggestions. I also thank Associate Professor Anton Sevilla-Liu at Kyushu University and Mrs. Catherline Sevilla-Liu for polishing my writing and making this book more accessible. I appreciate Ms. Sophia Lorusso's help in editing this book.

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INTRODUCTION: HOLISTIC EDUCATION AND THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

THE EMERGENCE OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Pioneers of Holistic Education

Holistic education as a formal field first appeared in the late 1980s and has since spread and achieved global recognition, but core ideas have existed across ages and cultures. Scott H. Forbes (2003) traces the roots of holistic education back to some of the founding thinkers on education, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), and Friedrich Froebel (Fröbel, 1782–1852). Furthermore, Socrates, Plato, and Johannes Amos Comenius (1592–1670) have provided essential ideas relating to the field. The theories and methods of Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori are outstanding examples of a holistic approach to education.

More recently, various ideas of humanistic and transpersonal education were explored in the pioneering works of George Isaac Brown (1971), Gay Hendricks (Hendricks & Roberts, 1977), George B. Leonard (1968), Abraham H. Maslow (1971), Clark Moustakas (1966), and Carl R. Rogers (1969). For example, Hendricks and James Fadiman (1976) wrote, “Human beings are whole beings, with cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual potentials. Transpersonal education *is* education for the whole person, and views the school as a place where this wholeness can be supported and encouraged” (p. vii). According to Ron Miller (1997), the first holistic education

movement emerged within a small circle of humanistic and transpersonal psychologists in the late 1970s; however, they did not reach a comprehensive conception of holistic education (pp. 195–201).

Since the late 1980s, holistic education has expanded through the efforts of educators and theorists who introduced the concept of *holism*. Milestones during this period include the publications of John (Jack) P. Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum* in 1988 and Ron Miller's *What Are Schools For?: Holistic Education in American Culture* in 1990, the beginning of the journal *Holistic Education Review* (later *Encounter*) in 1988 (with Ron Miller as the founding editor), and a series of conferences on holistic education (Chicago in 1990 and Colorado in 1991). As a result of these conferences, the Global Alliance for Transforming Education (GATE) published a vision statement, *Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective*, in 1991 (Flake, 1993). Since then, many more educators and scholars have joined the holistic education movement, which has progressed into a force to transform modern education (Gallegos Nava, 2001; Hart, 2001; Johnson & Neagley, 2011; J. P. Miller et al., 2014; J. P. Miller et al., 2005; J. P. Miller & Nigh, 2017; J. P. Miller et al., 2019; R. Miller, 1991b, 1993).

The Importance of Worldview

Holistic education has been keenly concerned with *worldviews* in education. Ron Miller (1991a) points out that conventional education designed for the industrial age has been based on a materialistic worldview, a reductionist attitude, an economic orientation, and divisions between groups. He adds, “Conventional education serves to perpetuate this worldview” (p. 1). However, a real turn is taking place from an industrial age to a post-industrial age. In this coming age, a holistic worldview facilitates a reverence for life, an ecological perspective, a spiritual view of a person, and a global perspective. Holistic education is “the application of this post-industrial worldview to the challenges of raising children” (p. 2).

Similarly, in *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, Fritjof Capra (1982), a renowned scientist and author, brings attention to a fundamental shift from the mechanistic or Cartesian-Newtonian worldview to the “systems view of life” across broad areas of human life and society (Chapter 9). The systems view recognizes “the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena—physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural” (p. 265). Furthermore, in *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*, Capra (1996) remarks, “The new paradigm may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts” (p. 6). Capra calls this paradigm an “ecological view.”

Holistic education involves the *perennial philosophy* as well as an ecological (systemic) worldview. John P. Miller (2019) sees the perennial philosophy as a foundation for holistic education. These two strands have influenced theories and practices of holistic education. In addition, holistic education has introduced contemplative practices to realize these perspectives. As we examine the ecological worldview in Chapter 4, the following section focuses on the perennial philosophy, which is more relevant to an Eastern view of holistic education.

THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Features of the Perennial Philosophy

Aldous Huxley (1946), an influential novelist and visionary thinker of the 20th century, published a critical anthology, *The Perennial Philosophy*. His perspective of the perennial philosophy primarily explores “the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds” (p. 2). It also involves “the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being” (p. 1).

The perennial philosophy has existed in the world’s wisdom traditions as essential teachings. For example, Huxley (1972) regards the *Bhagavad Gita* (*Song of the Lord*), a well-known Indian classic commonly called the *Gita*, as perhaps “the most systematic scriptural statement of the Perennial Philosophy” (p. 23). He summarizes four doctrines of this philosophy (pp. 14–15). First, the phenomenal world is the “manifestation of a Divine Ground.” Second, one can realize the Divine Ground by “direct intuition.” Third, one possesses “a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self.” The eternal Self is of the same or similar nature as the Divine Ground. Fourth, the purpose of human existence is to recognize the eternal Self and to attain “unitive knowledge” of the Divine Ground.

In *The Wholeness Principle: Dynamics of Unity within Science, Religion & Society*, Anna F. Lemkow (1990), a holistic theorist, identifies the principal themes of the perennial philosophy with “the oneness and unity of all life; the all-pervasiveness of ultimate Reality or the Absolute; the multi-dimensionality or hierarchical character of existence” (p. 23). The ultimate reality is transcendent and immanent—it is beyond anything, yet pervades everything. Another critical aspect of the perennial philosophy is the notion of multidimensionality; the ultimate reality manifests itself through multiple dimensions. Lemkow explains, “Each dimension or level of being produces the next, less inclusive level, from the most unitive to the most particular” (p. 38). In this respect, the perennial philosophy

regards consciousness as more fundamental than material form. It also sees a human being as a microcosm of the macrocosm. Human beings and the universe are similarly constructed and inseparably connected: “Just as the universe is composed of a hierarchy of levels of being, so is man” (p. 36).

In *Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition*, the religious scholar Huston Smith (1976) illustrates a standard view of traditional cosmologies that has four levels of reality: the terrestrial plane, the intermediate plane, the celestial plane, and the Infinite. These levels correspond to four levels of selfhood: body, mind, soul, and spirit. In this scheme, the mind is distinct from the soul and spirit. The soul is the core of our individuality, and the spirit is the element that is identical to the Infinite.

Lastly, Ken Wilber (1997), a philosopher known for his Integral Theory, states that “reality is composed of several *different* but *continuous* dimensions” (p. 39) and outlines five levels: matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit. Spirit is pure awareness that is transcendent and yet immanent. Wilber states, “Absolute Spirit or reality is not hierarchical.... But it manifests itself in steps, in layers, dimensions, sheaths, levels, or grades” (p. 45). Like Huxley, Wilber describes the goal of human life: “The central claim of the perennial philosophy is that *men and women can grow and develop (or evolve) all the way up the hierarchy to Spirit itself*, therein to realize a ‘supreme identity’ with Godhead” (p. 39). In addition, he notes that the crucial difficulty in modernity lies in the collapse of the inner realm (soul and spirit) to the outer realm (matter, body, and mind).

The Multidimensional Framework of Holistic Education

John P. Miller (2019) formulates five tenets of the perennial philosophy. The first three are as follows:

1. There is an interconnectedness of reality and a mysterious unity in the universe.
2. There is an intimate connection between the individual’s inner self, or soul, and this mysterious unity.
3. Knowledge of this mysterious unity can be developed through various contemplative practices. (p. 22)

These tenets are almost identical to Huxley’s doctrines. Divine Ground in Huxley’s summary is what Miller calls a “mysterious unity.” The inner self or soul corresponds to the eternal Self. Contemplation is a way to enhance intuitive knowing beyond discursive reasoning.

Furthermore, Miller’s formulation includes both inward and outward paths. The following fourth and fifth tenets address values and social activity on the outward path:

4. Values are derived from seeing and realizing the interconnectedness of reality.
5. This realization can lead to social activity designed to counter injustice and human suffering. (p. 22)

In his important article, “Holism and Meaning,” Ron Miller (2000, Chapter 2) describes a coherent, holistic theory of education based on multidimensionality: “I believe that the key is for holistic theory to describe *multiple levels of wholeness* that are each appropriate to particular intellectual, existential, or practical issues” (p. 22). This theory outlines five levels: “the person, the community, the society, the planet, and the cosmos” (p. 23). The whole person comprises intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects. Drawing on the perennial philosophy presented by Lemkow and Smith, Ron Miller defines the cosmos as the spiritual dimension of reality.

Huxley (1992) describes a multidimensional view of education, which looks similar to Ron Miller’s theory:

Education ... aims at reconciling the individual with himself, with his fellows, with society as a whole, with the nature of which he and his society are but a part, and with the immanent and transcendent spirit within which nature has its being. (p. 101)

Jorge N. Ferrer (2017), a distinguished scholar in transpersonal psychology and integral studies, presents a view of the whole person in his “participatory approach” to integral education: “The participatory approach seeks to facilitate the cocreative participation of all human dimensions at all stages of the inquiry and learning processes. Body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness are considered equal partners in the exploration and elaboration of knowledge” (p. 126). The participatory approach overcomes cognitive-centered methods commonly found in modern education. The learning process needs to emerge from the collaboration of all human attributes (see also Chapter 10, *Embodied Creativity*).

TOWARD AN EASTERN VIEW OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Eastern Thought as Perennial Philosophy

Since the first edition of this book was published in 2000, I have further explored holistic education from Eastern perspectives (Nakagawa, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2019, 2021). Eastern philosophies, as found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, can contribute to holistic education because

they have the core elements of the perennial philosophy. They assume the ultimate reality, which is diversely called *brahman*, *nibbāna/nirvāṇa* (extinction), *śūnyatā* (emptiness), and *Tao* (Way). They also commonly describe multiple dimensions. Additionally, they offer contemplative practices to realize their teachings.

Indeed, Eastern views and practices have been introduced into different fields, yet only a few studies exist in education (Eppert & Wang, 2008; Ergas & Todd, 2016; J. P. Miller & Nakagawa, 2002). This book examines Eastern views to find their possible contributions to holistic education. This study draws on various sources from Hinduism (the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and Advaita Vedānta), Buddhism (the Buddha's teachings, Mahāyāna [Great Vehicle] philosophies, and especially Zen), and Taoism (Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu). It also discusses critical ideas from Confucianism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sufism. Furthermore, it focuses on sages such as Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Jiddu Krishnamurti. This work also attempts to combine Eastern and Western ideas.

The Flow of the Following Chapters

This book has two parts. Part I (Chapters 1–6) examines theoretical aspects, and Part II (Chapters 7–10) explores practical approaches. Chapter 1, Eastern Ways of Thinking: Four Japanese Philosophers, elaborates on essential features of Eastern thought through four Japanese thinkers: D. T. Suzuki, Nishida Kitarō, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and especially Izutsu Toshihiko. In particular, Izutsu has inspired my theoretical framework and in-depth analyses throughout this book.

Chapter 2, Multidimensional Theory for Holistic Education: An Overview, outlines the five dimensions of reality as a foundational theory of holistic education. These dimensions include the *objective reality* of separate things, the *social reality* underlying objective distinctions, the *cosmic reality* of nature and the cosmos, the *infinite reality* at the ultimate depths of existence, and the *universal reality* that is the unified wholeness of all reality. Eastern philosophies recognize the function of the mind to articulate objective distinctions. Eastern culture also describes numerous symbolic pictures of cosmic reality. Moreover, Eastern philosophies delve into the infinite and universal dimensions, which have not been sufficiently elaborated on in the theories of holistic education. Eastern approaches to holistic education aim to realize the wholeness of being through a twofold way of seeking and returning.

Chapter 3, Communication and Communion: A Philosophy of Education, introduces two categories: communication pedagogy and communion pedagogy. Communication pedagogy explores how communicative

interactions construct the objective world. Communion pedagogy concerns the cosmic, infinite, and universal dimensions where everything is interconnected and unified. This chapter examines communion pedagogy theories developed by Friedrich Froebel, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Rudolf Steiner, and Maria Montessori. It further explicates the meaning of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) and the selfless self as an essential Eastern view of the self.

Chapter 4, *Relational Reality: Ecology and the Buddhist Perspective*, expounds on the relationalist view of reality. This chapter compares the ecological idea of interconnection with Buddhist concepts such as dependent-arising and interpenetration. These Buddhist concepts, refined through the Buddha, the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) thought, Nāgārjuna, and Hua-yen philosophy, disclose the depths of relationships. Hua-yen philosophy describes the most profound view of the interpenetration of all things, providing a critical concept for holistic education.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss Eastern views on pedagogical concepts. Chapter 5, *Eastern Pedagogy I: Education for Liberation and Self-Inquiry in Hinduism*, examines the aim of education as liberation and the path of self-inquiry. Self-inquiry goes beyond the surface self and leads to the true self (*ātman*), identical to *brahman*. This chapter highlights the educational ideas of Tagore, Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo, as well as the *Upaniṣads* (*Upanishads*), the *Bhagavad Gita*, Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara (Shankara), and Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings.

Chapter 6, *Eastern Pedagogy II: Nature, Silence, Unlearning, and Development*, offers radically different perspectives on pedagogy. Taoist education involves radical naturalism because it seeks a fundamentally natural way by returning to the Way (*Tao*). Eastern thought sees that language causes delusive perceptions and hinders enlightenment. Instead, silence is of the highest importance. Zen uses verbal activities such as *mondō* and *kōan* to go beyond words. Eastern thinkers celebrate unlearning, and Zen Master Dōgen teaches us to forget the self so that our original face will appear. This chapter explicates the *Ten Oxherding Pictures* in the Zen tradition to provide an Eastern view of development and non-development.

In Part II, Chapters 7–10 explore essential ways in the East. Chapter 7, *The Way of Awareness*, expounds on awareness (mindfulness) practice for holistic and contemplative education. This chapter highlights Aldous Huxley's idea of the "nonverbal humanities" and his commitment to the Alexander Technique. It also argues for somatic education, such as Sensory Awareness and the Feldenkrais Method. Furthermore, Krishnamurti's idea of awareness, Buddhist meditations, and G. I. Gurdjieff's theory of consciousness are discussed. This chapter clarifies that mindfulness is not merely a subordinate method for wellness but a primary practice for cultivating pure and nondual awareness as a distinctive state of consciousness.

Chapters 8 and 9 discuss some of the social implications of Eastern philosophies. Chapter 8, *The Way of Action*, focuses on action. Eastern

philosophies do not think highly of becoming efficient doers in the social system; instead, they illuminate different aspects of action. The *Bhagavad Gita* describes the path of action (*karma yoga*), and this chapter refers to Ram Dass's exposition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. As deep ecology and engaged Buddhism suggest, inner transformation leads to outer change; however, the Eastern approach goes deeper into the fundamental unity before any duality occurs. This chapter finally explores the action of enlightenment, which typically shows the Eastern way of action.

Chapter 9, The Way of Compassion, examines Nel Noddings' concept of caring and the Buddhist four immeasurables (loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity). It then explores the Mahāyāna way of the *bodhisattva* in cultivating compassion for others' liberation, referring to the teachings of the Dalai Lama, Śāntideva, and Chögyam Trungpa. This chapter further examines the path of love and compassion in Hinduism, Sufism, and Buddhism. The *Bhagavad Gita* introduces the path of devotional love (*bhakti yoga*), and Sufism stresses cultivating the heart and love. Pure Land Buddhism focuses on developing a compassionate heart.

Finally, Chapter 10, The Way of Art, explores creativity in Japanese art. Influenced by Zen, traditional Japanese arts flourished, such as the Nō play, the way of tea, the way of flowers, calligraphy, ink painting, gardening, etc. This chapter describes the way of art as a spiritual cultivation. It further examines Zen Master Takuan's teachings on no-mind and Yanagi Sōetsu's idea of Buddhist aesthetics.