

## *Further Comment*

The Editorial Board welcomes comments on articles, reviews, and letters that have appeared in the *Harvard Educational Review*. Longer pieces are published in this Further Comment section. Authors of the articles under discussion are invited to respond: a response from Jesse Goodman will appear in a future issue.

### *Critique without Difference: A Response to Goodman*

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In "Change without Difference: School Restructuring in Historical Perspective," Jesse Goodman offers his critique of the "third wave" school restructuring movement and highlights the history of the fields critiqued in an effort to show that the traditions of those involved in this movement cause them to propose an agenda of social functionalism, individualism, and expertism for school reform.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that due to a reliance on technology, a faith in efficiency and productivity, and a history in instructional systems management, these current "re-structuralists" propose nothing more than a return to the past.

We wish to take issue with many of Goodman's assertions. In the process, we hope to make clear the true values that underlie the systemic transformation movement. We also wish to point out some inherent contradictions in Goodman's argument, take issue with a historical approach that freezes disciplines in a single moment, and suggest that critique in the service of evolution of a discipline is more useful than what Goodman has offered.

#### Focus of Inquiry

What specific perspective or field is Goodman critiquing? He suggests that those he critiques represent an intellectually cohesive "group of instructional and systems designers and educational technologists" (p. 1). However, Goodman's ar-

<sup>1</sup>Jesse Goodman, "Change without Difference: School Restructuring in Historical Perspective," *Harvard Educational Review*, 65 (1995), 1-29.

ticle critiques a number of researchers from disparate fields of study with little in common other than a desire to transform schools, which Goodman himself shares (Goodman, 1994). Faculty working in departments of instructional design and educational technology for the most part have little interaction with, and little in common with, those in systems design, although that has begun to change with the formation of a division for systemic change in the Association for Educational Communications and Technology.

How did Goodman decide which researchers to lump together into his category of "third wave restructuralists?"<sup>2</sup> Not all of the researchers he cites are transformationists, nor are they necessarily antithetical to the argument that Goodman makes in behalf of his own efforts at transformation in schools. Banathy and Darling-Hammond are not affiliated with departments of instructional design or educational technology. Banathy, who is generally recognized as the grandfather of the systemic transformation movement in education, is a systems designer with a broad interest in social systems; he is not an educational technologist. A more appropriate term for Darling-Hammond is a policy researcher. Molenda is an educational technologist, but not a systemic transformationist. This bundling of a wide variety of researchers and literature into a single category falls short of providing a grounded position to critique.

Some logical coherence should have provided the basis for Goodman's bundling. For instance, he might have considered the membership of a particular association, such as the International Systems Institute, and then critiqued each of the members' texts.<sup>3</sup> Another option is that Goodman could have focused solely on Reigeluth's (1987) article, "The Search for Meaningful Reform: A Third Wave Educational System." Certainly an examination of the discourse representative of a single perspective would have resulted in a more useful context for critique. There is simply no disciplined inquiry associated with this sort of intellectual gerrymandering.

Goodman's intellectual gerrymandering is further manifested in his omission of systemic transformationists who embrace a progressive agenda. Examples in this area include work in community participation (Carr, 1993, 1994), values negotiation among community members (Lee, 1994), alternative governance structures (Brock, 1994), and a litany of authors who are devoted to engaging school communities in the creation of their own futures. Sizer's increasingly systemic view of educational change would make him a good candidate for inclusion, yet Goodman paradoxically refers to him in support of his criticism of the systemic transformation movement. By ignoring much of the work that is being done by people with a systemic transformation perspective on education, and by lumping in the work of people who do not have a systemic transformation

<sup>2</sup> Although Goodman refers to "third wave restructuralists," "restructuring" is a term that many in the field of systemic transformation believe does not accurately characterize our focus on fundamental transformation. Therefore, we will use the more appropriate term, "systemic transformationists."

<sup>3</sup> The International Systems Institute is an association headed by Bela Banathy, Alison Carr, Patricia Jenlink, and Charles M. Reigeluth are fellows of this institute, which holds an annual conference focused on transforming social systems and systems of human learning.

perspective, Goodman has done a disservice to those who are working within that perspective, as well as to the concept of critical discourse itself.

### Informed but Not Constrained by History

One of the most troublesome tactics that Goodman's critique employs is the focus on a historical perspective that locks a field in place. Goodman points to Kleibard as substantiation for consideration of history and underlying assumptions, indicating that unless we consider the history, we are doomed to create change without substantial difference. The unfortunate result of this sort of historical consideration is that Goodman freezes researchers in what they wrote years ago, and also in the early ideas of their field, which are judged as being incapable of change. If we accept Goodman's assumption that a historical analysis of the roots of an ill-defined field limit it forever, then none of our disciplines may waver from the "true" path laid out by their founders.

It is a most frightening view that a field cannot evolve into something significantly different. It is all the more alarming a viewpoint considering that the field at issue has transcended its roots in audio-visual media and military instructional systems development, and evolved into a multi-faceted group of systems thinkers, designers, philosophers, and cognitive scientists who are interested in advancing human learning through social systems thinking, emerging technologies, constructivism, and change theory.

### Common Ground: The Values of the Systemic Transformation Movement

There are several areas where Goodman and the systemic transformationists agree substantially. This is one of the reasons why it is important to respond to Goodman's mischaracterization of the work and to point out the commonalities. We agree that it is important to understand a movement by examining its underlying values and assumptions. Therefore, we have organized this portion of our response to his article according to the values that we embrace: social functionalism and human development, empowerment and engaged communities, technology in the service of educational transformation, systematic in the service of systemic and instruction in the service of education, individual needs, and throwing off the constraints of the system.

#### *Social Functionalism and Human Development*

Goodman criticizes social functionalism and opposes it to social democracy (pp. 4-6). His concern for cultural reification in contrast to social amelioration is valid and should stand at the forefront for all who participate in systemic transformation research and practice. Nonetheless, the critical perspective Goodman takes is characterized by a dialectical "either/or" thinking that is emblematic of an outdated, positivistic mindset. Why not consider an educational system that combines the goals of fostering democratic values, social justice, personal fulfill-

ment, and social development with an interest in preparing people for productive working lives?

The literature on systemic transformation for the most part places equal if not more emphasis on values of human development and social democracy. While Banathy provides a set of exemplar core ideas for functions and purposes of a future system, those functions should not be confused with functionalism. In fact, many of Banathy's ideas express values that are clearly in alignment with the sort of social democracy Goodman advocates:

We have failed to match the advancement of technological intelligence with an advancement in socio-cultural intelligence and wisdom. . . . The development and nurturing of such intelligence and wisdom will be proposed as THE key challenge to education. (Banathy, 1991, pp. 24-25)

And:

Educational systems should nurture the entire range of existential experience: the social, cultural, ethical, economic, physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral domains of the life of the individual and the society. . . . The individual's development is best facilitated if his or her uniqueness is recognized, respected, and nurtured. . . . There are differences among learners existing in many dimensions; acknowledgment of and respect for these differences are essential in offering resources and arrangements, and creating a climate for learning. (Banathy, 1993, p. 33)

Seldom does Banathy mention preparing learners for jobs in any of his writings.

Reigeluth presents a balanced view of developmental, democratic, and functional values in virtually all of his writings about systemic transformation. For example, in the article Goodman cites, Reigeluth (1987) states: "And those goals go beyond the intellectual development of the child; they may extend to the child's physical, social, moral and psychological development, depending on the parents' wishes" (p. 8).

Thus, Goodman's characterization of the field of systemic transformation as strictly social functionalist is inaccurate. In fact, transformationists share many of Goodman's goals for future educational environments: goals such as fostering a participatory democracy, not only in the processes utilized for transforming the current system, but also in the new system of human learning; and goals such as schools that work for children and that employ collectivist learning approaches.

#### *Empowerment and Engaged Communities*

Goodman states that the systemic transformation movement "place[s] teachers and their students in the passive role of merely getting prepared for a destiny that someone else has determined for them" (p. 7). He characterizes the movement as advocating "top-down . . . reform" (p. 25), and criticizes the systemic transformation movement as forwarding a particular agenda (p. 7). These claims could not be farther from the truth. This movement has advocated broad-based stakeholder involvement from its inception. Both Banathy and Reigeluth

strongly advocate the involvement of all stakeholders, which extends beyond the teachers and students to which Goodman limits himself.

The passive role and top-down approach Goodman accuses the movement of advocating are strongly contradicted by the "user-designer" approach advocated by Banathy and most other systemic transformationists, as well as systems designers in general. Banathy (1991) states:

Understanding systems design and recognizing the power it offers for the transformation of education are prerequisites for engaging a community in the design of its educational and human development services. This understanding and realization cannot be limited to a few. (p. 165)

In fact, one of most common axioms invoked by systemic transformation agents in conversations is the aboriginal saying, "If you've come to help, you're wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let's work together." People with this philosophy don't impose an agenda on others.

While it is true that Reigeluth (1987) offers a vision of a "third-wave educational system," he, with "a small team of theorists and practitioners, parents and teachers" (p. 7), developed this vision as a vehicle for helping stakeholders to jump out of their current mindsets about education. That is why, notwithstanding the blueprint he offers, he advises readers to "develop a comprehensive blueprint for an ideal third-wave educational system, with considerable involvement of educational analysts, practitioners, reformers, parents, and students" (pp. 6-7). In his recent writings, Reigeluth consistently calls for broad stakeholder involvement in the transformation process (1993a). An indication of his evolving position on stakeholder involvement is exemplified in his (1993b) writing:

There should be a large *number* of people involved from the early stages. They should represent all the groups that have a stake in the educational system, including community leaders and conservative elements in the community and school system. (p. 319)

In fact, the involvement of the community in systemic transformation is the focus of several articles in the field, including one by Carr and Reigeluth (1993). There is simply no agenda to relegate anyone interested in the changes taking place in schools to a passive, deterministic role in which they are manipulated for a social functionalist agenda. An example of the empowerment language that is used by systemic transformationists is found in Banathy (1993):

We consider the system we design as a human activity system, in which human beings are the most valued and to be served by the system. We believe that it is our destiny, and it is within our power to guide our own evolution and the evolution of our system toward a better future for all, and create just systems of education for future generations. (p. 33)

Goodman's characterization of the movement as manipulative and top-down is the antithesis of what theorists in the field stand for, and it reveals a lack of

familiarity and understanding of the readings he critiques, as well as a decontextualization of their meaning.

*Technology in the Service of Educational Transformation*

Goodman suggests that those interested in systemic transformation wish to "mindlessly prioritize" (p. 7) technological solutions over social visions so that they can "determine, control, and limit the experiences of teachers and their students" (pp. 13-14). First of all, little mention is made by most systems transformationists on the matter of technology. Secondly, the values of manipulation, control, limitation, and determination are antithetical to the values held by the systemic transformationists. Banathy's (1991) listing of *exemplar* values that might be espoused by a group engaging in his transformation process clearly illustrate the gap between Goodman's characterization and the meaning of the texts he critiques:

- There are two absolute values: the individual and the global system of humanity.
- The most valuable resources on earth are . . . the unique potential residing in the individual, in the family, and in our various social systems.
- Among the highest order values of human rights are the freedom and right to learn.
- The attainment of inner quality of life and its enrichment should be central in life's aspirations.
- High value should be placed on ethical, moral, and spiritual development and cultural diversity, while we aspire to articulate and live universal values.
- The increasing significance of maintaining interpersonal and social relationships is a key value in societal life, coupled with the value placed on cooperation.
- Among all the societal functions provided to individuals and collectively to the society, the nurturing of learning and human development is of the highest value. (p. 81)

There is no mention of technology whatsoever in Banathy's sample values. Technology does not supplant social vision in Banathy's or Reigeluth's work. Some educational technologist literature does exist to suggest a strong technology agenda (e.g., Finn, 1960; Hyer, 1968), but that perspective is not held by systemic transformationists. Some of the more recent work in systemic transformation has instead focused on the ways in which technology can be used to assist those interested in transforming schools (see, e.g., Collins, Morrison, & Newman, 1994; Frick, 1991) and to explore how current technologies might help people build community and work together to transform education (Frick, 1994).

Goodman also criticizes and limits technology as a divisive and solely individualistic tool:

It is software that largely reproduces the nature of curricular and instructional design currently used in the vast majority of conventional schools throughout this

century, discounts the education of children as an interpersonal and social activity, and . . . isolates both teachers and students. (p. 14)

This argument is well-made, based on some of the early developments in technology, such as curricula that were essentially little more than page turners or glorified flash cards. However, with the advent of constructivist learning theories and associated problem-based learning approaches in computer learning environments, the potential of technology to enhance social and cooperative learning has greatly increased. Rather than being divisive and isolating, technology is now a powerful tool for fostering communication and collaboration.

Most importantly, transformationists still do not view technology as "prioritized over the other equally (or more) valuable social visions" (Goodman, 1995, p. 7). Rather, we view technology as one possible means for accomplishing the priorities that communities establish for their children, which hopefully will evolve toward those exemplar values expressed by Banathy (cited above), which we sense will be increasingly important for individuals and their communities.

#### *Systematic in the Service of Systemic and Instruction in the Service of Education*

Goodman makes a common error in confusing systemic with systematic and in confusing instructional design with educational systems design. "Systemic" is a holistic view, a way of thinking that recognizes that complex systems are dynamic, are nested within larger systems, and contain smaller subsystems that are inter-related and interdependent. For example, a systems thinker recognizes that transformation in schools cannot be done in isolation from the larger social system in the community, and it cannot be limited to small pieces of the system. "Systematic," on the other hand, is frequently — though not always — linear. Systematic approaches often use a step-by-step process that, when used well, may produce reliable results. It is a disciplined way of approaching a problem, isolating the need, and positing solutions. It is not unlike the traditional scientific method of inquiry, yet it is not the same as systemic. Some systemic approaches are systematic, but most transformationists believe that the transformation process is not linear and does not often produce reliable results. Many also believe that transformation should be approached in a disciplined way, and in this sense would advocate that it be systematic.

Many systematic models focus on instruction. Here, Goodman makes a similar error in confusing instruction with education, and he suggests that systemic transformationists wish to use instructional design models for the creation of new systems of human learning (p. 13). Instructional design models are by their nature too limited to be useful in the service of whole-school transformation. Instructional change alone represents piecemeal change, which is clearly denounced by Reigeluth (1993a, 1994). Instructional design may or may not be a useful component of a larger systemic transformation effort.

#### *Complex, Dynamic, Painful Process of Negotiating Transformation*

Goodman states that "restructuralists conceptualize an education uncluttered by messy personal relationships" (p. 14). This is far from the reality of the texts

Goodman considers. In fact, Reigeluth (1987) envisions that future educational systems will place greater emphasis on personal relationships:

Children are exposed to a variable environment in which caring guides and assistants nurture their development and encourage them to alternate regularly between learning activity and social interaction, free play, exercise, and/or rest. (pp. 9-10)

Goodman also assesses the transformation movement as one that relies on "self-proclaimed" experts to make the change process less painful. Quite the contrary, an examination of the relevant discourse on systemic transformation warns of a need for facilitators, not experts, a role in which Goodman himself serves (Goodman, 1994). A closer examination of the discourse finds a denunciation of expertism for the facilitator. Reigeluth (1993a) says, "Furthermore, the facilitator must not view herself or himself as 'the expert'" (p. 320). Likewise, Jenlink (1993) advises strongly against expertism:

From my view no one can afford to become an expert in the traditional sense, and have the stakeholders become dependent on the expert. You're a facilitator. You're a mediator of meaning in the chaotic swirl of change. You help to facilitate understanding. At times, you are an expert-assistor, an advocate. There are a lot of different roles you can take on. But if you ever get caught in the primacy of being an expert in that system and the ego involvement of being the one and only knowing person about what needs to happen, you take away the responsibility as well as the opportunity of the stakeholders to own the process. (p. 11)

Facilitators can be very helpful to the educational transformation process if they have some experience with the obstacles and processes involved in systemic change, which requires a systems view of education with all its interdependencies. The facilitators, however, may be internal or external, and their roles are to be of service to and to take responsibility with the others engaged in the process. The facilitator in systemic transformation is often instrumental in helping all the stakeholders in a community to dialogue on beliefs and values about education. The facilitator is not an expert in the sense of telling anyone what their beliefs and values should be: his or her role is to help people to understand why others believe and value what they do, and to find some common ground. This fosters a change or evolution in many of those beliefs and values and an amelioration of the often long-standing adversarial relationships among some stakeholder groups. The facilitator also helps the stakeholders explore the ways in which their communities and society in general have been changing over the past thirty years, and how these changes affect education. This exploration, combined with a visioning process, usually helps the stakeholders to transcend their current conceptions of schooling and to envision new and different kinds of education. In addition, the facilitator encourages the group to ensure it has included all the important stakeholder groups as decisionmakers in the process. Finally, the facilitator seeks to provide valuable support to the participants, fostering a sense of social responsibility and self-directed action characteristic of a participatory democracy.



*Individual Needs*

Goodman suggests that systemic transformationists would like to increase the individualism that has served as "the framework for the way schooling has been conceptualized and structured throughout this century" (p. 17). Goodman's characterization of individualization as a program that has been widely implemented in our current educational system is partially inaccurate. Sarason (1995) supports this by stating, "We are not in the mess we are in because of the laws of chance, but because pedagogy for respecting individuality has *never* been an overarching purpose of schools" (p. 143). In fact, the current system is highly standardized and organized around group-based progress. Such common educational methods as tracking and ability grouping are the educational equivalent of "batch processing" in industry. As Reigeluth (1994) describes:

Our industrial-age system presents a fixed amount of content to a group of students in a fixed amount of time, so it is like a race in which we see who receives the A's and who flunks out. Our current system is *not* designed for learning; it is designed for selection [or sorting students]. (p. 7)

Goodman claims that "it is individualism that is largely responsible for [the group nature of today's schooling]" (p. 18). In fact, it is more likely that the sorting focus of the current system is responsible for it. The system is standardized so that all students in a class must learn the same things at the same rate so that norm-based grading can sort the students into laborers and managers. Goodman's claim that the current system is designed to meet individual students' needs is not well supported by these authors' experiences or the literature in educational reform.

It is a fair characterization to say that many in the systemic transformation movement would like to increase the amount of individual attention and pacing that students receive in their educational experiences. Transformationists do not focus on the individual to the exclusion of group experiences that build a sense of community. Banathy's value statements above clearly illustrate this. One in particular, "Developing and maintaining creative and cooperative interpersonal and social relationships are key values in societal life," stands in sharp contrast to Goodman's characterization of transformationalist as valuing individuals "as more important than societal associations" (p. 16). Transformationists do envision a different paradigm of education — one that fosters meeting individual needs through collaborative learning, one that focuses on *learning* rather than sorting students.

*Throwing off the Constraints of the System*

As noted above, systemic transformationists call for a transcendence, a leaping out beyond the mindset of the current system. This "design" approach, in which the entire community is encouraged to participate, moves away from many of the constraints of the current system. Goodman points to several examples of change "without difference" in his critique. He points out the failures of Individually Guided Education (IGE), saying IGE "reinforced the ongoing practices,

curriculum content, and attitudes found in these schools" (p. 3). But is that what really happened, or is the failure of this program the fault of a lack of understanding on the part of developers of the ways in which systems resist change? Due to the interrelationships among parts of a system, if a change is incompatible with existing parts, it will try desperately to stamp out, accommodate, or co-opt the change. This tendency has been at the root of similar failures for a wide variety of reform efforts, including Dewey's progressive education program, not because of their agenda, but because of the system itself. It is more likely that the opposite of what Goodman suggests is what really happened: the "ongoing practices, curriculum content, and attitudes found in these schools" (p. 3) subverted the fundamental differences that IGE represented.

Casting off the mindsets that limit our educational future to the trends of the past encapsulated in the systemic artifacts such as classrooms and group-based learning requires the sort of community transcendence that Banathy (1995) advocates:

Only if we individually and collectively learn to understand and apply the systems view shall we be able to see the world anew, and only then will we be able to see, reconceptualize, and redefine education as a social system. Only then can we engage in the design of systems that will nurture learning and enable the development of the fullness of human potential. Systemic change in education can be realized only if educational communities all over the world learn to develop a systems view. (p. 57)

The power of Banathy's language contrasts with Goodman's characterization of systemic transformation as "change without difference" (p. 1).

### Systemic Transformationist Values

Goodman states that, "If we are to understand a given educational reform movement, then it is more important to examine its basic values and principles than the types of pedagogical activities or structures it champions" (p. 4). We could not agree more, and we wish that he had done this. In the absence of such an examination, we have organized this section of our response to highlight several of the key values of the systemic transformation movement. There are two basic categories of values, those having to do with the process for transforming an educational system, and those having to do with what the new system should be like. They are expressed primarily as a search for common ground with Goodman and as a response to his critique.

Systemic transformationists stand for a process of change that transcends the current educational system and engages a broad base of community stakeholders in the messy, sometimes painful process of openly negotiating a future for their children's education. We balance social functional goals of employment with goals of social democracy and human development. We seek, through idealized design, a social-utopian conception of educational systems that is tempered with a sensitivity to the socio-historical nature of education and the functions it serves in a changing democracy. Technology and facilitation are seen as important

tools that may help us in the development of new systems of human learning that focus on learning instead of sorting. We seek to connect the participants in systemic transformation through an inherently democratic process of holistic educational systems design that recognizes the clear and present need for conjoining citizens in assuming responsibility for change.

### Contradictions

There are some curious contradictions in Goodman's arguments. He criticizes the systemic transformation movement as forwarding a particular agenda (the inaccuracy of which was addressed earlier). In fact, Goodman has a strong agenda of his own, one of social democracy.<sup>4</sup> Goodman's agenda is exemplified when he writes:

As previously mentioned, we share Dewey's view that education should help people live more democratic lives. As a way of life, democracy implies an appreciation for individual diversity balanced by a sense of social responsibility for the common good. We view our work with teachers and principals as an opportunity to create an education that will empower them and their students to build a more democratic and caring society than presently exists in the United States. (p. 127)

This directly contradicts his call for a community to decide collectively what they want their schools to be like.

In many ways, we agree with Goodman's criticism of the current state of schools and the history that has brought us to this point. However, we feel that communities must truly be empowered to make decisions that might not fall into Goodman's or anyone else's agendas, but rather the collectively generated agenda of each unique community. It is our role as facilitators to help communities clarify their beliefs, values, and visions about education, and hope that in that process those beliefs, values, and visions will evolve to a better alignment with the needs of children and their communities. If their visions fall into a category with which our sensibilities disagree, then we may choose not to continue to work with them. But we must not impose our agenda upon them, be it social democracy or social functionalism. We believe the stakeholders must make the final decision. Goodman characterizes systemic transformationists as driven by "ideological dogma" (p. 25), yet his agenda as summarized on page 23 seems to come far closer to that than the stakeholder-based, process-facilitated orientation of the transformationists.

### In the Service of a Learning Discipline: Critique with a Purpose

Critique is the way in which we are able to stand back from ourselves and truly see shortcomings. Critique is a very important part of self-renewal and change.

<sup>4</sup> A more expanded discussion of the agenda of social democracy can be found in Goodman's 1994 article, in which he addresses the conflicts posed by the desire for grassroots reform and the desire to advance his own agenda (pp. 125-131).

Goodman falls short of providing the sorts of critiques that would be useful for considering growth opportunities for the field of systemic transformation. With a sort of resignation, Goodman avoids some of the more sophisticated yet more useful flaws in the current conception of systemic transformation. One flaw maybe seen in the inherent effects of holistic emphases in systemic transformation.

A serious concern over the complexity of considering the macro system has recently sprung up. Under the rubric of losing the trees for the forest, we have focused on the nature of broad systemic transformation. It is possible that this field has under-emphasized the strength of small changes in individual classrooms and the sorts of investigation that are still needed at the teaching/learning level in order to inform the larger design process. Recent alliances between systems designers and instructional designers (or educational technologists) hold some promise for addressing this concern.

The goal of working with communities on broad issues of educational transformation may be idealistic. There exist few, if any, real examples of systemic transformation that fit the description of the creation of just systems of learning that transcend the current system. Issues associated with the power exercised in the system are not paid as much attention as needed in order to be significantly integrated as an attribute of systems theories. Is it naive to think that if we simply bring people together to have conversations, they will manage somehow to work things out and to transcend the power relationships that are reflected throughout society? If this belief is naive, then we must expose power relationships and help communities build relationships and trust that may create the space for expressing their values, beliefs, and visions of what schools could be.

These kinds of critiques help the field to evolve, to expand perspective, and, in essence, to become a learning discipline. On the other hand, an inaccurate critique founded on social functionalism, expertism, and individualism serves only to tie us to a history of reform that freezes us in an unevolving state and is thus incapable of helping us to grow.

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