

**2015 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship Third Prize Winner
(Josiah Taylor, Trillium Charter School)**

Educations Role In Creating A Just And Peaceful World

Over the last few thousand years humans have become the dominant species on Earth, playing the central role in all events and orchestrating reality in ways comparable to ancient gods. Modern humanity clothes the planet, and nothing remains unaffected by our plight. Each day of existence marks another revolution of the living experiment we seem to be, in which mere animals strive for more than survival, but fulfillment too.

This has brought us to a strange point, where one can look around and see two different worlds. The Earth itself: enigmatic, beautifully fractal, alive--and the human world--anything manifested from our minds. Our methods are so effective that our world is becoming exponentially larger than the natural one, for good or ill.

How did this happen? Once we were indistinguishable from regular primates, but even before tools we were on a track toward sentience, as our primary asset for survival was our brain. Some accredit our success to intelligence. That's only partially so. Chimps, elephants, and dolphins are all intelligent, self-aware animals, but if that was all it took they would already be on a path toward higher consciousness. What's special about humans is a tradition we use in tandem with technology, society, and language, which allows us to leap ahead over time. That tradition is education.

Education takes place among other animals, but with humans there's a striking difference. Using creativity and language we've built a system of accumulating information which acts as a superconscious for humanity, independent of any individual. Though everyone someday dies, the combined experience of us all is carried on. Just as every cell of the body dies and regrows many times over while the mind remains constant. The superconscious of humanity continues to grow so long as the species remains.

Education is many things, from instructor and pupil, to the monk seeking answers in meditation, to a toddler learning to speak by mimicry. It's the collection and propagation of knowledge that fills our lives. It's history, math, philosophy, and science. Everything we do, everything we are, is because of this; because of education.

Through education we are allowed this life of infinite potential, where we can understand everything. We already have the knowledge to create a peaceful world, all that holds us back from that--from compassion for all life--is ourselves. It's imperative we realize this.

Our growth without limits has been unchallenged for centuries. As a result we've grown more powerful than wise. With power we've developed a schizophrenic personality involving wasteful, often insane treatment of ourselves and the planet. Interlaced in economics and religion is the assumption that we are somehow more important, more deserving of life, than our earthly kin. This is evidenced from the holocaust of livestock, to the ease with which we gut the planet of resources, to our automatic tendency to kill bugs and rodents that near us for the sole reason of getting them away. To imagine being treated with such contempt is scary.

Not to say we're evil, but within humanity there is an abundance of destructive behavior. Just as we can create harmony and beauty, we create misery and disaster. From the Garden of Eden to Nuclear Warfare, and every stop between, we are a massive power to be applied in any way to the universe. Using our ability to learn, dream, and care, we can create a cornucopia future for the whole Earth. Otherwise, our energies will be expended on whatever urges come along.

Education isn't just a way for us, it's *our* way. The Human way. How we use it today determines everything.