Ba Luvmour: Welcome to *Meetings With Remarkable Educators*. This podcast is brought to you in part by you, our friends and supporters at [patreon.com/remarkableeducators](https://patreon.com/remarkableeducators). Each podcast is a dialogue between me, Ba Luvmour, and an educator who sees the greatness in their students and touches the whole of their being. These educators defy generalizations. So here's a little bit about what they've done and how I know them.

Ba Luvmour: To my mind, David Marshak is the owl of holistic education. Indefatigable, alert, attentive educator, mentor to many fine educators. Encyclopedic historian, David's hand print is all over the holistic education landscape. His book, *The Common Vision*, helped legitimize spirituality as integral to holistic education. His extensive experience, starting in a New England prison in the '70s, to helping found and then accepting the first presidency of SelfDesign Graduate Institution, with a long professorship at Seattle University in between, reveal a person able to listen, participate, and impart wisdom to those he touches. Like I said, an owl.

Ba Luvmour: David is the founding president of SelfDesign Graduate Institute, a low residency and online graduate school, engaging learners in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and New Zealand, in a learning community of care. David is the author of *Evolutionary Parenting* and *The Common Vision: Parenting and Education for Wholeness*. These books describe the evolutionary insights of Sri Aurobindo, Rudolph Steiner, and Hazrat Inayat kahn, in regard to the unfoldment of children and teens from birth to age 21. According to these three teachers, the future of our species depends on our capacity to parent and educate our young in ways that promote the evolution of consciousness, and nurture the unfoldment of each individual's potential. Hello David, and welcome. Nice to have you here. And it's great to renew our friendship, which goes back to what, 1992, was it?

David Marshak: I don't know exactly. Back there in the midst of time, but I don't know exactly...

Ba Luvmour: It was in Guadalajara that we first met.

David Marshak: Yeah. But we had some contact before then. But I think we didn't actually meet until Guadalajara. And so that was 2001.

Ba Luvmour: Really? Oh, I thought it was much later than that....or earlier.

David Marshak: Because it was after 9/11 and it was like, a couple months ... It was right after 9/11, and the security level was at a really different peak than it had been before 9/11. So that's why I remember the timing.
Ba Luvmour: Nice.

David Marshak: But I certainly was very familiar with your work before then. I think we did have some email interaction before that, as well.

Ba Luvmour: So I'm interested in what attracted you. How did you move to holistic education? I know you were a professor at Seattle University. Were you doing holistic education there?

David Marshak: Not really. Let me speak to the first part of the question first, and then I'll get to the Seattle U part. So I've had a really interesting career in the sense that the first time that I was formally an educator I was in charge of an educational program at the New Hampshire State Prison. This was back in 1972, and I was 22. Most of my students were between the ages of 19 and 22. And they were pretty much all kind of incompetent drug dealers. Because to get sent to maximum security prison you had to have three or four busts. To have three or four busts you had to be incompetent. And they were all pretty predictable. They were young men who they had abusive parents, abusive fathers. They had substance abuse issues in the family. They had their own substance abuse issues.

I mean, it was every cliché that you heard was being played out. And of course, most of them had learning disabilities of some kind or another that had not been identified in the public school system and had not been addressed. So for the most part they were reading at the fourth and fifth grade level. And it was just obvious to me that if I wanted to do anything useful with them I had to do something other than school, because they hated school. And it was clear that they hated school for a very good reason; because school had been a place that had been very hostile to them. So I just really began to use my own intuition about what was it that would be engaging for these young men, that would get them interested in learning.

Ba Luvmour: So you're saying it was trial and error and just trying to connect to these young people and figure out what could stimulate them.

David Marshak: Well, the very short version of it was I had this brilliant insight. I'd never read Paulo Freire, but I knew later on when I did read him that I came across the same insight that he did. It was I had this idea where I thought well, what do people in prison want to know. They want to know about what's going on in the outside world. So I went down to the distributor of the New York Times in Concord, New Hampshire and I had $25 a week. That was my budget. So I talked him into giving me 30 daily copies of the New York Times for my $25 a week. And most of my students couldn't read the New

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York Times because it was at 12th grade level then. They were reading fourth, fifth grade.

David Marshak: But we had a couple of guys ... In addition to the failed drug dealers we had a couple of white collar criminals. We had one Stalinist failed bomber. [laughter] No, really we did. And then we had one really, really brilliant African-American man who had been sent there to get him out of the Federal prison system because he was a leader of other men. So we had five or six people who could read it and we had 22 who couldn't. And over a period of time ... We spent about half the day, we had four hours a day, sitting around reading the paper. And by December everybody could read it. Actually, by November everybody could read it. Because the Freirian principle is you have motivation and you have content that people want to read, and you have support, people learn to read.

Ba Luvmour: Wow. And so that opened you to the understanding of connecting to people, relationship, all those holistic education principles?

David Marshak: Well, it gave me confidence in my own intuitive responses to other human beings who were in need, and whom I had opportunity to support and help. So it wasn't that it illuminated it for me. It was there in some way or another and I just began doing what I thought was right. And not everything worked, but the fundamental responses really worked. And there was real ... We got to a point with those men, where at the beginning ... One of the things in prison is that people don't listen to each other. So we got to a point where we could sit around in a circle with a talking stick and have hour long conversations about our lives, about their lives. And they would listen to each other because they evolved their capacities as human beings to be human. And it was tremendously inspiring to me, both that this was happening and that I could trust my own intuitive approaches to working with other human beings.

Ba Luvmour: That is an abidingly interesting story. And I didn't know it about you, and I do really appreciate hearing it. How does it move into holistic education? I mean, when did you go to India? When did you do all that work around Steiner and...

David Marshak: Well, that was later on ... The first year I taught in the prison. The next year I helped to start an alternative high school in New Hampshire. Our kids in the alternative high school were on their way to prison. So it was like yeah, it was...

Ba Luvmour: Yea, in those days, that's what an alternative high school was.

David Marshak: Right.

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Ba Luvmour: Absolutely.

David Marshak: And then I went and taught in public schools for three years because I wanted kind of to see what it was.

Ba Luvmour: What did you teach in public school?

David Marshak: I taught English and then I created psychology. I have a psychology program in a public high school in Connecticut. And I only lasted three years. I couldn't...

Ba Luvmour: You couldn't deal, huh?

David Marshak: Well, I liked the kids, but I couldn't deal with the fact that you couldn't change the structure. And of course, the structure in public schooling is a big part of the problem. The structure is designed to limit the nature of consciousness, to limit their relationships, to limit the learning and to keep everybody controlled.

Ba Luvmour: And also the implicit power structure in the infrastructure. Okay, we're all a class. But if someone's out of bounds you're going up the ladder to the principal or the superintendent, and that whole implied threat that runs through the infrastructure.

David Marshak: Right, the whole nature of power. But even though, actually in the '70s things were looser, because the '60s on one hand, there was the rebellion against racist, classist schooling, which had some impact. And then the '70s there was this reactionary push back. But things in this particular school and a lot of schools were looser than they are now because we've had this incredible standards-of-testing authoritarian intensification of the modernist regime, which is still in place now.

Anyway, to get to my story, at the end of three years I ran off to graduate school. Because I needed to get out of the system; I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do next. And again, to say how did I get into holistic education, I mean, I was very much... even as an undergraduate, a student initially... of Marxist critiques and then of Jungian [Carl Jung] and then of... I was very much influenced by William Irwin Thompson.

Ba Luvmour: Where did you go to graduate school?

David Marshak: I went to Harvard. And I went there kind of... It's a little bit ironic because I went to Yale as an undergraduate. And that was kind of unthinking. And Harvard was my fifth choice. That's a whole long story. But it ended up being exactly the right place because I got to...
work with a man named Donald Oliver. And Donald Oliver is one of the more significant teachers in my life. Because he was someone ... He was an interesting mix. On one hand there he was at Harvard, kind of in the belly of the beast. But he was a radical cosmologist.


Ba Luvmour: Yeah.

David Marshak: And Don was a pretty irascible character. He also was a sexist. Donald is dead now, so I can say this. And I wouldn't say it if he were alive, because it might offend him. But one of the things that Donald did is that on one hand he was a brilliant teacher. You would be in a conversation with him and you would be grasping for something. And he would help you get it. He was so good. But at the same time, he often treated women badly.

Ba Luvmour: Well, he treated me badly at first. Because he presented first. It was everyone just present. And I asked a simple question, and he treated me like I was a Harvard undergrad who had to defend. And you know me, David. I'm like, whoa. I'll back off here, because I'm okay with myself and I don't need to go there. But then when he came to my talk he was incredibly gracious and he loved Natural Learning Rhythms [now known as: Natural Learning Relationships].

David Marshak: Right. So you experienced the bi-modal part of his character. But if you had been a woman, it would have been worse. And so maybe by that time ... One of the things that I contributed to Donald, because he was intimidating, is that I confronted him about the way he treated women and pushed him back. And there was some movement, at least the time that I was around. But Donald was really ... He had this capacity of rounding up groups of graduate students. We had our own program, and so it really was a community. It wasn't just him. I mean, he was certainly very helpful to me, but there was a community of colleagues. And we engaged in inquiry together for a couple of years. And then Harvard's really expensive, so if you can't finish your dissertation you have to go work. So but it ended up being the right place for me to go.

Ba Luvmour: You are the fifth or sixth person in this podcast who did something important, then taught in a public system, then felt constrained, and then went to graduate school, and then came back with a
holistic perspective. It's amazing. I keep seeing it over and over now.

David Marshak: Well, I think part of that ... I mean, there's another part of my story, which I'll get to in a minute. But part of the university, for all of its limitations and all of its corruption, is that the university is one of the few domains in the culture where there is freedom for real inquiry. And real inquiry is supported and there are ... I mean, I don't know where the nature of the holistic education special interest group of the American Educational Research Association is now. But when I was the program chair for that group back in 2004, 2005, 2006, there were about 150 members. So that meant that there were at least 150 scholars out there in different universities who identified in one way or another with holistic education. And of course, the problem was that 95% of them, they were the only one in their department.

Ba Luvmour: Right.

David Marshak: They were the only one in their school. Part of what the special interest group did was to create some sense of community. And of course, Jack Miller's conferences and work did that as well for some of the same people and some different people.

[Note: listen to Podcast #1 to hear Jack Miller's interview]

Ba Luvmour: Yeah. What I hear is that these different aspects of holistic understanding just kind of ... You just came across them. You saw them. You had the inner knowing already of them, the connections made. And then you went ahead and began to actualize them.

David Marshak: Yeah. Well, as you know, I'm someone who finds a lot of value in descriptions of stages of consciousness development. And so one of the qualities of the 1960s, and growing up in the 1960s, is that there were a lot of people who were accessing post-modern consciousness. And so there was support for that. I mean, I can remember going back and being ... My first memory of post-modern consciousness was I was at a bookstore in Greenwich Village. I was either 14 or 15, probably 15.

Ba Luvmour: What year were you born? Because I was there too when I was 14 and 15.

David Marshak: I was born right at the end of 1949.

Ba Luvmour: I was born in '47.

David Marshak: Okay.
Ba Luvmour: I was walking down 8th Street once and remember those hawkers used to be outside the little coffee shop, come in, $1.00 a charge and you get a cup of coffee?

David Marshak: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ba Luvmour: So I'm sitting there in this coffee shop and this guy comes on stage. And to make a long story short, it's Bob Dylan. Oh, my God. I thought it was great. The opening person was Cher. It's just like, that's what it was then. That's what it was like.

David Marshak: Right. I was there like, a year or two after that. And so when I got into the other ... and it was The Other End, The Bitter End or The Other End. But I actually didn't even pay. I snuck in the back door. And Bob Dylan was long gone, but I did get to see Eric Anderson and Tom Paxton. So it was pretty good. But in the bookstore I was just wandering around, and I came across Paul Goodman's book, *Growing Up Absurd*. Just the title hit me and I sat down and started reading it. It made sense to me. So that book doesn't make sense to you unless you're in post-modern consciousness ... Because he's coming ... It's a post-modern critique.

Ba Luvmour: You better inform our listeners exactly what you mean by post-modern consciousness.

It's teaching story time. Briefly, teaching stories invite us to see the world with a new perspective, often featuring a wise person, a wise fool, or a trickster animal. They can be humorous and often have many shades of meaning shining throughout the story. I have told teaching stories for the past 40 years and I love them. And I have to tell you, each time I tell one I learn much more myself. This story is called, *I'm an Adult Now*.

Ba Luvmour: The wise fool and his son were taking their salt to market. They had loaded the donkey, putting in the saddle bags on the left and the right equal amounts of salt so that the load would be balanced and they would have success in bringing it to market. However, on the way there was a rickety bridge that they had to cross. The wise fool went first and his 14-year-old son brought up the rear. Halfway over the bridge the wise fool turned around and saw that the load was unbalanced, that the left load was drooping and needed to be rebalanced. So he turned and called out to his 14-year-old son, "Rebalance the load. Pull it up on the left." Now think about it. Because this, he really meant pull it up on the right. But his son, being 14-years-old, had always been known to his father as contrary. So his father thought oh, I'll tell him to pull it up on the
left when I really mean the right. And then he'll pull it up on the right.

However, his son went to the donkey and pulled up the load on the left, causing everything to become unbalanced, and all the salt to fly off the bridge and into the torrent below. "Fool! You've always been contrary. I told you to move up the left hand load thinking you would move up the right hand load. Why this time, of all times, did you listen to me?" And his 14-year-old son pulled himself up to his full height, turned to his father and said, "I'm 14 years old now, and a responsible adult. And so I can follow directions."

Let's have some fun interpreting this teaching story. Become a Patreon Supporter at patreon.com/remarkableeducators, and you have access to our detailed comments on how this story applies to education and parenting. Of course, it's just our perspective. The fun comes with community dialogue, as the many shades of the teaching story come alive. See you there.

David Marshak: I would imagine that everybody listening is familiar with developmental models for individual human beings going back to [Jean] Piaget, for example. The notion that there are stages that we go through as we grow up, and that these stages are radically different, particularly in terms of cognition, but also in terms of emotion, in terms of the physical body, and in terms of access to soul and spirit, as well. So there is a developmental model called Spiral Dynamics that has grown up over the last 45 years, initially created by the work of a man named Clare Graves. And then it's been added onto in certain ways and developed by other people that says that in fact there are stages of consciousness that Homo sapiens, that the human species, has gone through over the 55,000 years and that we have been equipped with our full frontal lobes.

Ba Luvmour: I thought it was 100,000. That's okay. We don't have to do that.

David Marshak: No. Sapiens goes back 200,000 actually.

Ba Luvmour: Right. I know.

David Marshak: But the claim to, which I think is really ironic, the sub-species of Homo sapiens is actually Homo Sapien Sapiens. And that's a little bit of arrogance there on our claim; but with the idea that the full frontal lobes are available in the brain. So there are different stages. And so for example, in our society today the three most common stages, and I'm going to use the language, the terminology that's
used by a guy named Steve McIntosh rather than Clare Graves or Don Beck or Ken Wilbur. Because I think McIntosh’s terminology is simpler.

Ba Luvmour: Well, it's really yours now if you're talking about someone else's. You're making it yours.

David Marshak: Well, it is. But I want to cite my sources here.

Ba Luvmour: There he goes. The Harvard graduate school still speaks. Let's just say, friends out there, I know David, and this is from him and his heart and his beingness. He's very polite. He's always been. But okay, go ahead.

David Marshak: So traditional consciousness ... And this really goes back 4,000 or 5,000 years. It begins to show up with for example, the beginning of Judaism is really the beginning of monotheism. Or you see some of this in early Hinduism, as well.

Ba Luvmour: Some people claim Homer.

David Marshak: Well, Homer is a whole other ... Let's not go there. Right? That's a whole other thing.

Ba Luvmour: We're leaving you out, Homer.

David Marshak: Because Homer ... There's actually two parts to Homer. That's a different story.

Ba Luvmour: All right.

David Marshak: And so you see this today. And so one of the claims of the developmental model is that they're both positive and negative qualities in each of these stages. So we see traditional consciousness today being mostly manifested by fundamentalists. And it's come to a point where while there's a lot of positive in it, it often manifests in really negative ways. And the way to understand this is that we see traditional consciousness or fundamentalism, that the structure transcends the content. So there are fundamentalist Jews, fundamentalist Christians, fundamentalist Muslims, there are fundamentalist Hindus, in Myanmar there are fundamentalist Buddhists, there are fundamentalist Atheists. It's a structure of absolute hierarchy and absolute certainty about authority. It tends also to be hostile to women.
Ba Luvmour: So when you say the content is not as important as the structure, you mean that no matter what the authority puts forward, because it comes from an authority, therefore that's what should be done.

David Marshak: Right.

Ba Luvmour: So that's the ethics of it.

David Marshak: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ba Luvmour: Okay.

David Marshak: So in the evolutionary model, the next stage is modernism. And modernism, although it showed up a little bit in Athens and the Golden Period of Athens, as a major cultural force it dates really back to the end of the 16th century, the beginning of the 17th century. And so, we live in a culture created by modernism, and the great gifts of modernism are reason, science, technology, democracy. These are all profoundly positive evolutionary manifestations in the history of the species.

Ba Luvmour: So what's the relationship then, between structure and content?

David Marshak: Well, with modernism the relationship becomes clearer, because there aren't multiple contents. There's a single content.

Ba Luvmour: Okay. I'm a little lost. Help me out.

David Marshak: Okay.

Ba Luvmour: What do you mean by a single content?

David Marshak: The content of modernism is that reason is the highest good.

Ba Luvmour: Ah.

David Marshak: And so then it gets manifested in these different ways. If you go back, the early prophets of modernism on one hand were people like John Locke who were the kind of theorists of Democracy, The idea that human beings have rights. One of the great documents of modernism is the US Declaration of Independence. So then you also see in the articulation of science, these are the two main domains, and then science eventually evolves into technology.

Ba Luvmour: So then singular content means everything is subsumed into reason. Reason is the content field in which everything is organized around.
David Marshak: Right. But the reason also gives us power. The power comes from the application of reason. Science comes from the application of reason. So we live in this culture that is still unfolding modernism. It’s not like Democracy is universal. It's not, of course. But at the same time, because we have had hundreds of years now of this manifestation, modernism is also corrupted. And we see that. One way to think about this is that … one of the qualities of reason in modernism is linear causation. So you have a cause, you have an effect. You have a cause, you have an effect. The reality of the biological world is that it’s ecological. It's systemic. So what happens if you dump oil wastes into the Cuyahoga River and set it on fire, it'll burn.

I mention that because that’s an example that came up in some of the discourse recently about the Clean Water Act in the United States. But one of the ironies is that the fire in 1969 that got all the attention, I just learned this the other day, was actually the 12th time that the Cuyahoga River had been on fire, beginning in 1892. So it’s not only about the phenomenon. It’s about where the consciousness is of the people in reaction to ... So what was different in 1892 was that the river burned, killed people, burned bridges, burned buildings, and then they just rebuilt them. They kept dumping the stuff into the river. But by 1969 there was enough consciousness of the next level, post-modern consciousness or ecological consciousness, that people looked around and particularly young people and said this is insane to have a river burning. We’ve got to do something about this. So that’s the post-modern consciousness, is really just beginning to evolve in large numbers of people in the last 60 years.

Ba Luvmour: So it says that ... What post-modern consciousness says is that we have to be conscious and responsible to the whole, all of the effects of our activity, and to where it’s coming from in us, our motivations, that kind of thing?

David Marshak: Well, right. ... whatever system; so the biological system, the ecological system, the system of the person. Reason is not our only capacity as human beings. We have emotions. We have intuition. We have bodies. Now we know, of course, that we have brain like cells in our hearts and in our guts. Well geez, that’s really interesting. Because pre-modern cultures talked about the heart and the intelligence center in the belly for thousands of years. This is not new to human beings. It was only in the modern era that we ignored this stuff, because we said well, obviously the center of intelligence is the brain.

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Ba Luvmour: So bring it back to education now and help us out. Are all these three aspects of consciousness evident in education right now?

David Marshak: Absolutely. The simplest way to distinguish between modernism, which is basically the way we run our public schools ... You know, the Prussians invented modernism. And one of the things that we forget, because of World War II in particular and because of the insanity of the Hitler regime and the dramatic fall of status in Germany and the world because of that, and between 1750 and 1910, Germany was the leading scientific and technological nation on the planet, much more so even than England. The United States was a backwater ... Germany led the way for 140 years. The Germans invented, the Prussians in particular ... Because Germany as a nation state didn't exist until 1870, and the Prussians invented common public schooling. They invented most of the features. Of course, this is what drives me crazy if I get into this. Most of the features that we would see in your neighborhood elementary school, public elementary school in the United States, were invented in Prussia in 1810.

Ba Luvmour: Oh. So David, I want you to go more into the spiritual aspect of this. You have a tremendous background. One of your books that's moved me tremendously, The Common Vision, and so I know you're talking about environment and I know we're talking about consciousness. But now you've just referred back to the individual person. And you've indicated both in the brain cells in various parts [of the body] and our three centers of intelligence and that sort of thing. But how does that play out in education and especially the spiritual aspects of it? Because I get emails all the time, what do you mean by a non-sectarian spirituality? And I try to ask each of us to answer that question.

David Marshak: Okay. I want to answer your previous question first. And then I'll come to that.

Ba Luvmour: Rock and roll.

David Marshak: Okay. So the real simple distinction between modernists and post-modern education is that modernist education, and everybody knows this, is the banking model. You take the stuff outside the learner, outside the kid. You want to put it in their head and then you want to test them, make sure that's there. Post-modern education, everything starts from relationships. So that's the simplest distinction. If you're looking at a learning environment and the relationships between the teacher, the adults and the children or teens, and among the children and teens, if those are
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relationship between the teacher and the parents. And it's transformative.

Read the book. *Kids Need a Teacher for More Than One Year*. It just illustrates that even in the constraints of the modernist system you could actually transform what goes on in the interior. Now I would actually say if we actually got that going in a large way, it would actually blow up the system. Because then people would get to a point where they'd be at critical mass and they would say to the exterior power structure, leave us alone.

Ba Luvmour: Thank you. So let's go over to the spiritual aspect that I'm obviously so interested in and want to keep learning about.

David Marshak: Okay. Just to go back to the story then, I have my own personal experience back in the 1970s as sort of a pretty lousy meditator and a...

Ba Luvmour: Whatever that means.

David Marshak: Well, I have had a really ... I lived in my head as a child and so I had a very strong habitual norm of being in my head. So being in your head is not the place to be when you're trying to meditate.

Ba Luvmour: My understanding of this, and I do want us to kick it around a little because I find it fun, is that as long as you're observing what's going on it really doesn't matter what's going on. It's not the content, but the awareness of the content.

David Marshak: Well, that's absolutely true. But when you're 25 and you can't get this shit out of your head, this stuff out of your head...

Ba Luvmour: You can say shit. It's fine.

David Marshak: It doesn't feel that way. Let me say that. And I also had different kinds of dipping into different spiritual teachers work. And each time I had a very strong negative relationship with any kind of authoritarian stuff going on. And since that was sort of the norm for most of the spiritual teachers who came from India who were around in the '70s, my own experience was really pretty frustrating at the time. And so the bottom line is I, one evening, had an intuition that came to me to study Rudolph Steiner. And I knew a little bit about him. I didn't know much, but I knew that there was something called the Waldorf School. And Sri Aurobindo, who I knew nothing about and I don't think I'd ever heard his name, and Hazrat Inayat Khan, and I had certainly never heard his name ...

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And the nature of my relationship with my intuition in my life is that I pay attention to it. So I thought this was so clear.

Ba Luvmour: But I thought you were only in your head.

David Marshak: Well, my intuition was in my head. Right?

Ba Luvmour: Oh, come on.

David Marshak: So it was so clear to me that I spent the next five years, six years studying the three of them. And the irony of this is that because during that time I was a doctoral student at Harvard, I had access to the Harvard University Library, which I don’t know where it is now but it at that point claimed to be the most extensive university library collection on the planet.

Ba Luvmour: More than the ... What is it? The Bodleian [Library] in Oxford?

David Marshak: Who knows what's true. Harvard claims that they're the best everything. But it turned out that they did, in fact, have ... In the Divinity Library there's, I think, 12 or 13 volumes of Hazrat Inayat Khan’s, ... I think he only wrote one book, but the rest is his talks. He was a Sufi, so he talked and they would write it down.

Ba Luvmour: I'm familiar with all these people from my own independent studies.

David Marshak: So they had his collected works. They had all kinds of stuff from Steiner. And then...

Ba Luvmour: Aurobindo's thousand page books?

David Marshak: ... they had a whole shelf of publications from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which I later learned were there because of Pitirim Sorokin. Do you know Pitirim?

Ba Luvmour: No.

David Marshak: So Pitirim Sorokin was a Russian and he was born into the upper class in Russia. His initial claim to fame was that he was the chief aide to Alexander Kerensky, who was during the six months after the czar was killed, before Lenin took over, Kerensky was the prime minister. So Sorokin was a young hotshot in his 20s. And then when Lenin took over the Russian aristocracy all ran to London. Sorokin eventually came to Harvard as a professor and Sorokin was a very interesting sociologist, but he was a sociologist in the early part of the 20th century. He was a social theorist and he wrote a lot.

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of ... I mean, I read a lot of his stuff. He wrote a lot of really interesting material. But it turned out that he was actually a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the mother, which of course, he hid from the people at Harvard because it would have been completely unacceptable in the 1930s, '40s, '50s. But he collected this collection for me. For me, it was for me.


David Marshak: It was just for me, because nobody would ... all this stuff was really filthy. And one of the things that I did was I cleaned it. And this was another part of the story where I had one of my colleagues in my doctoral program worked in the library part time. And when I found this shelf ... I mean, literally it was a shelf. It was like, three times the size of the shelf over there. It was like, six feet high by six feet wide. Five or six shelves of pamphlets and books and pamphlets, you know, they published all kinds of stuff.

Ba Luvmour: Sure.

David Marshak: And it was all covered with dust. And so I went to my friend and I said can I get somebody to clean this before I ... and she kind of looked at me like, "Are you crazy? We don’t have time to ... " So I said, okay. Well, can you show me how to clean it? She said, "Well, we can't do that. You can't clean the books." I said, "Well, yeah I can. Just give me the cloth." So I did. I was in the bowels of the library. It's like the seventh level down, cleaning all these pamphlets. It was great. I mean, I had a great time. It was like, an act of devotion. Anyway, that's where it started.

Ba Luvmour: Well, that's interesting.

David Marshak: Okay. So what I discovered, and this is the core of my work, is that around 1910 Steiner and Aurobindo and Inayat Khan each articulated a very detailed map of human unfoldment between birth and age 21. And it's essentially, I believe, I would argue, it's the same map. They had different cultures, which Steiner had to deal with translators. With Inayat Khan he had to deal with the fact that he was a Sufi and he didn’t necessarily talk directly. But about this, he talked pretty directly. And then Aurobindo was great because he wrote in English. He was very clear, once you understood his system. He was a very clear writer.

So the three of them articulated this map of human unfoldment from birth to age 21 that describes the unfoldment potential of the physical body, the emotional body, the mental body, and the soul and spirit, and that pretty much everything that's been discovered...
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by developmental psychologists beginning with Jean Piaget and all of the people who have followed in his footsteps who have looked at this, fits within this same map that these three men created. And Maria Montessori had half of the map. She had the body part and she had the mental part at the same time in 1910.

Ba Luvmour: Wow. That was so much in those early 1900s, wasn't there, in science, and literature, general semantics? Just this tremendous explosion.

David Marshak: Well, we haven't caught up to ... I mean, my work has really been about taking that information out of the spiritual teacher category and making it available to wider audiences in the English speaking world.

Ba Luvmour: Well, that's really interesting because it leads to the question that I've been incubating as we speak. And that is you work with people in a master's program that you helped create, SelfDesign Graduate Institute, by the way. And we always respect and honor SDGI at the end of every podcast.

David Marshak: Well, thank you.

Ba Luvmour: Well, thank you for making us part of the faculty.

David Marshak: You're very welcome.

Ba Luvmour: And one of the questions we have endlessly is how do we allow new educators to come forward with this deep understanding. And to use the term post-modern, really extends back into self-reflection so that they're at least embodying it or participating in it in a way that it's not some objectified series of information that's just going to be transmitted, but is actually a living, breathing event. And I know in the schools that I've run, and you know about them, it's been very hard to find really good teachers. And I know Paul [Freedman] up on Orcas Island, also he always writes to me, do you know anyone. Debbie Millen out at Wingra [School], same thing. So what do you see in that? Have you had success in that? And what would it look like and what can we do here? Because to me that's probably the most important social justice question I know right now.

David Marshak: Yeah. I mean, I certainly don't know the answer to that question. So I just will put forth some ideas.

Ba Luvmour: And your experiences, too. You've been working at this.
David Marshak: Well, the difference with SelfDesign Graduate Institute is that we actually don't have a lot of learners who are focused on the education of children and I think that's because people look at this whole school structure and the apparent impermeability of its manifestation in our societies. And so I don't know. ... I wonder about the path forward. I think I had a learner a couple years ago who was really excited about reading what Buckminster Fuller had written about education. And I actually had never ... I mean, I knew about Bucky Fuller, of course, but I had never come across his writings about education. For some reason I just never paid attention to it. And she was really interested in it because Brent Cameron had really been influenced a lot.

David Marshak: Brent was a founder of SelfDesign in Canada. And so I did a directive study. At SelfDesign Graduate Institute we have courses and we have directive studies. And the directive studies come from the learners. So this directive study came from this learner but it was really my directive study, too. We did it together. It was great. And it brought me back to what Bucky Fuller says about change, which is, don't try to change the existing institution; create new ones. And I think given the fact that modernist schooling is the most reactionary manifestation in our culture, the place to go is elsewhere.

David Marshak: So for example, more and more in the last year I've been intrigued by the structure of the SelfDesign Learning Community program in British Columbia. And this is a synthesis between public education, government support education, and family learning. And it does require ... It's not home-schooling, because there's a relationship between what the family engages in in learning for the child and the curriculum of the province. But the province also pays for it. So it's not dependent on the family being able to afford it. So that's a big deal. And it's really the only large scale model that I'm aware of anywhere where there's a synthesis between schooling in some kind of conventional notion and home-education. Home-education is the pre-modern form of learning. Everybody learned at home before school. Before the Industrial Revolution, everybody learned at home except for a few boys in the upper class who went off to school. And so we're coming to the end of modernism. The modernist structures are breaking down. I mean, Democracy is breaking down.

Ba Luvmour: I'm working, as you know, you've put me in touch ... I have 20 or so learners in the British Columbia SelfDesign system that I've just started working with. And they are among the most enthusiastic and quick learning support people I've ever seen. And of course, I've done so much work in my life around family with Josette, with
myself, all those family programs we ran and so on. So they are just excited and into it. And it's really enlivening for me to be part of it.

David Marshak: Well, I mean, one of Brent Cameron's elements of genius in creating this program, and I want to acknowledge he didn't do it alone. There were other folks helping him with it, is this notion of the learning consultant. So this is a whole new vision. So the learning consultants...

Ba Luvmour: New? Or isn't that pretty much what Carl Rogers was saying in the '80s and late '70s?

David Marshak: Well, yeah. But to manifest it on the scale where you have 2,500 families-

Ba Luvmour: 2,500?

David Marshak: Yeah.

Ba Luvmour: Oh, that's great.

David Marshak: No. This is a large scale social manifestation. And the learning consultant ... and just for listeners who are not aware of the program, although you can go to SelfDesign.org and learn about it, the learning consultant works with the family and with young children, primarily with the parents. And then as children get older they work more and more with the child or with the teenager. They support the parents.

Ba Luvmour: Yes. The people I'm working with are looking for a lot of conversation. How can we bring Natural Learning Relationships [whole-child development] to the parents? Do you have something simple? So I'm sending them docs so that they can begin to talk about supporting the whole child.

David Marshak: And so this is to finish this thought. And then I just had a brainstorm here that I want to get to. So this notion is that the parents are not alone. In homeschooling, the parents are alone.

Ba Luvmour: Well, they make collectives.

David Marshak: They do make collectives.


David Marshak: Right. But they're primarily alone in the responsibility. In the SelfDesign program they're engaged with a learning consultant. Of

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course, this could only exist because now we have broadband internet. So there’s a quality of relationship. Some of them do use the telephone, but they really do use video chatting. And there’s a quality of relationship that comes because of the video chatting, because people can see each other’s faces.

Ba Luvmour: I’m surprised at how much relationship is possible there. I was skeptical. But every time I’ve done it, it has been successful.

David Marshak: So this brings this technological innovation into play and makes possible ... what’s really a new form. This has become clearer and clearer to me in the last couple of years, actually the last year, that SelfDesign program in British Columbia is really a new form. And what’s exciting about it is that one of the larger societal trends is that more and more people are going to be working at home. And this is already happening and it’s going to intensify. So it makes possible ... It's not a return to pre-modern education, but it's an innovation that takes some pre-modern elements and integrates them with the modern, with the post-modern, and then begins to have Integral qualities. Because the nature of Integral Consciousness is the capacity to, as Ken Wilbur says, transcend and include. So you've evolved to a higher level of consciousness, but you can include positive elements from previous stages.

Ba Luvmour: Great. Well, we have about five or ten more minutes, so did we cover the brainstorm?

David Marshak: No.

Ba Luvmour: What's the brainstorm? And then I'm going to have one more question after that, that's important to me, which is asking you to give advice. There are a lot of people now who are listening to this podcast. There’s a lot of people who are starting to ask, is there a different way in education? There are a lot of borderline people, people on the border looking to move over. As you say, there are a lot of people who work at home now who really want ... and we see this really in dads a lot, who really want that relationship with their children and so on. So we want to give them some support to allow them to step into the deeper aspects of education.

David Marshak: Okay.

Ba Luvmour: But first, your brainstorm.

David Marshak: Well, it just struck me as you shared the eagerness of the learning consultants that you're now engaged with, to learn about your work, your work and Josette's work, of what a beautiful match that is for

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them, for the SelfDesign folks. And it's a whole other set of tools for them in working with families. And what could evolve, and this is something ... I probably will get to a point where I want to work on this in a more programmatic way, is when these 20 people or so begin to talk with other learning consultants about what they're learning from you, there will be interest among the other learning consultants. And so we may want to create something more explicit so that Natural Learning Relationships becomes a more integral part of SelfDesign.

Ba Luvmour: I would love it. And of course, you've been just incredible in bringing all these kinds of things, actually to fruition. It's always been ... Josette and I talked about it as inspiring all the time. But just to follow through on that, it is the community that I feel we are most connected to. I love that, who they are, what they've chosen, the opportunities they have, and that they have a financial support. Because so many holistic enterprises suffer from lack of financial support, so that the district is paying them to hang in. Boy, it's fantastic, just fantastic. I'm just thrilled by the whole thing.

David Marshak: Well, it's an interesting ... I mean; the political climate in British Columbia is interesting because the previous government, which was a conservative government, articulated this agenda that they wanted to provide a personalized education to every child in the province. So once they articulated that we began to hang our program on that. Of course, they don't have a clue about how to do that.

Ba Luvmour: Of course.

David Marshak: They also didn't fund their initiative. So now the other party, which is a center left party, is in power. And so far they haven't really done anything about education. They have many other fish to fry. But it's not clear that they support this agenda, either. But it's also not clear that they're hostile to it. So one of our efforts, one of the values of getting big aside from being able to serve more families, is to really have some more clout in the political domain. And we've been working on that, as well.

Ba Luvmour: Which I admire tremendously. I do. So give your advice, if you will. What would you say? I'm a parent. I'm coming to you and I'm saying you know, I notice my child's not happy in the public school. I'm concerned about them having success in this society; about learning the tools that they need to go ahead and be successful in this society. I want more relationship. I have some time to be with them. I just don't know really what to do. What are my steps? Start from where I am and step me through how I move.
David Marshak: Well, that's a great question. I think the first thing that I would say about that is *be in the present*. I have a profound faith in the capacities of the human organism to unfold into its potentials if it's nurtured in its present, in each present along the way. And so I think this notion of worrying about what kind of work will my child have or will they be financially successful or will they be able to compete, misses the point. Because there's really no way to know what the society will be like in 10, 15, 20, 25 years that your child's going to grow up into. We don't know. I mean, again, if you think about the differences between even 2000, so 18 years ago and now, there's no way we could have predicted the way this has unfolded.

But you do know your child in the present. And the quality of attention that you can bring to your child is really ... By paying attention to who is your child as a human being and what is it that serves your child's unfoldment as a unique human being, and even that quality of attention, I think, begins to change the whole challenge of parenting. Because then as you get to know your child in the present, it often becomes or usually becomes clear to you what is it that your child thrives on. And again, that's what I would say to you. What is it that your child thrives on? You don't need to worry, I would argue, about ... I mean, I'm not saying that you want to give your child complete control of their lives; because that's not realistic, either. But this notion that I absolutely believe, and this comes from my reading of Steiner and Aurobindo and Inayat Khan, is that the soul knows what it needs at every age.

So the question is, *how does the soul manifest itself?* And the way that they describe this is that the soul manifests itself through the child's interest, through the child's curiosity, through the child's expression of will. And will is really different than desire, and that's a critical distinction. Because we all have a desire nature and our desire nature is not necessarily good for us. We'd like to have sometimes a fourth cupcake or a fifth cupcake.

Ba Luvmour: Or a second.

David Marshak: That's the desire nature. But the will is a really different quality. And again, parents can really get clear about that distinction just by looking at yourself, feeling into yourself. What's that distinction between the desire nature and the will? One of the things if you go and look at the lives of a number of quote/unquote famous people who have been unschooled, one of the common patterns is that their parents recognize their genius. And I use that word ... Michael Meed talks about genius a lot ... and he's really talking about the *expression of the soul*. And he's using genius in the way that the Greeks did. But that the unique capacity and qualities of each
individual ... And I say that literally. I'm not speaking figuratively. I'm speaking very much literally. So to really attend to that and support it, recognizing that things also will change, that what is the most profound interest of the seven-year-old might become very different when they're 11 or 12 or 13.

Ba Luvmour: It will become very different. But that's really okay. That's fine because they-

David Marshak: Or sometimes it won't. Sometimes there's a clarity...

Ba Luvmour: I know.

David Marshak: ... that expresses itself at three. I mean, Mozart...

Ba Luvmour: I know what you're saying.

David Marshak: But again, he's not that unique. That's the piece that I want to get at. Another part of this is, one of the things we do in this society, we pick out these 15, 16, 17-year-olds who are changing the world, and we say wow. Isn't that really exciting? Aren't they unique? Well, they are unique. But that capacity exists in every adolescent.

Ba Luvmour: It's the absolute ... You know, I was walking with my son Albee the other day and he said, you know, I've been thinking about faith. He said, and I've come up with this idea. He said, to me faith is just the sure and certain knowledge that everyone has greatness and wholeness in them just ready to come forward. Isn't that a great definition?

David Marshak: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ba Luvmour: I though, yeah, Albee. Thank you.

David Marshak: Absolutely.

Ba Luvmour: Thank you. Okay. Well, thank you David. I think Josette wants to come in and snap our picture. So that's where we'll go now.

David Marshak: Thank you. This has been fun. I've enjoyed the opportunity to have this conversation.

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