

## **Examining Ritual in a Reggio-inspired Preschool**

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*Working and researching in a Reggio-inspired preschool for one year allowed me to witness repeated rituals of schooling, especially the walk-around-the-candle birthday ceremony. In this paper, I focus on the importance of ritual to human endeavors and share the educational, transformational, and caring quality that these rituals hold for children and adults. I give examples of three rituals for three different age groups that provide a sense of the importance of these rituals to the continuity and richness of this community of learners. I hope to have made the important point of how parents and others affiliated with any school are partners in each child's education, their transformation, and their transcendence into educated individuals, which comes with involvement, seriousness, and responsibility on the part of everyone involved with the child's life.*

***I felt my parent's tender touch, the sounds of the street,  
Birds singing, water rippling about me on waves of mother ocean  
When I was born, my birthday was made!***

Many writers in modern times mourn a decline of rites of passage or rituals that transmit enduring human values and cultural traditions—rituals that reflect the uniqueness or specialness of a culture, society, or of a person. Bird (2008) noted that rituals are “culturally transmitted symbolic codes that are stylized, regularly repeated, dramatically structured, authoritatively designated and intrinsically valued” (as cited in Browne, p. 19). Beane and Doty (1975) stated that rituals require and produce action, performance, and transformation. And of schooling, Bell (1997) noted that many people “compare the whole educational process to ritual” with the focus on “fundamental forms of socialization that involve the internalization of cultural values” more so than imparting information (p. 152).

Ritual helps humans cope with those crucial moments of birth, death, marrying, coming of age, graduation, and yes, even smaller transitions or progressions such as birthdays. Dorsa (1995) noted that researchers in child development agree that ritualization is vital for a child's psychological health. Parents in world cultures have always been concerned that their children acquire an appreciation for the awareness of passages that allow smoother transitions from one life stage to another, or that require deeper understanding of the past to make clear the present.<sup>i</sup>

In many postmodern paradigms, a surge of interest in ritual is noted, often through developing a sense of community that is based on the perceived need for a kinesthetic and collective way of making a meaningful life. The popularization of Reggio Emilia inspired approaches particularly in early childhood education in the United States manifests a well-conceived interest in ritual (see <http://www.reggiochildren.it>; *American Journal of Play*).

Schools that abide a Reggio Emilia philosophy employ many rituals, rites of passage, and traditions that ring familiar in school cultures. Among these are gift giving, sing-a-longs, meeting circles, performances, and celebrations of the community and individual children, which include birthday celebrations. Reggio rituals are not just for children; they are for parents, teachers, and members of the community as well. They are a form of fellowship, or *communitas*.

According to Edith Turner (2011), who continued the ideas of her husband Victor Turner (1969), *communitas* is a “relational quality that provides a sense of sharing and intimacy among persons going through some threshold or limen (liminality) in life together. . . . The bonds of *communitas* that are felt at liminal times are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, non-rational, existential, and ‘I-Thou’ (in Martin Buber’s sense)” (p. 98). Coming from an anthropological stance, one of her claims is that, “*Communitas* is inspired fellowship, a group's unexpected joy in sharing common experiences, the sense felt by a group when their life together takes on full meaning” (2011). A form of *communitas* exists in many Reggio-inspired schools where children look forward to certain daily rituals. In the following sections, the reader can get a sense of how common experiences are highly meaningful to children and adults alike, in addition to the importance community involvement plays in these rituals. I taught in a Reggio-inspired school where group meeting times are important daily rituals.

The group always sits in a circle for arrival meetings and final meetings each day from September through June. Some groups even call it circle time. It is a time of bonding, of holding on before daily ritual separation or reuniting. Children seem to find comfort in the security of the circle. After morning meeting circle, parents usually say goodbye and leave their children with teachers and friends for the day. But today, parents hold children on their laps while some children sit nearby on pillows, or snuggle next to other parents or teachers as a special ceremony begins. I share stories of three birthday celebrations at three age levels at one Reggio-inspired preschool. The first story is told from what may have been thoughts of a child during a birthday ceremony, known in the school as “walk around the candle.”

### **Ritual Number One in the Allen Room, Ages 2-3**

It's my birthday! Why are birthdays so special, I wonder? Why am I so excited? My parents are here for our celebration. They seem excited too. As my teacher lights the big candle and places it in the center of our morning circle of friends and family, she smiles in my direction and says, "Hello Everybody. Today is a special day. Antonio will walk-around-the-candle three times in celebration of his third birthday. First, we will hear a birthday story from his parents for the year from 0-1, then the year from 1-2, and then 2-3. After each story for each year, Antonio will walk around the candle one more time. We will sing our birthday song, Antonio will blow out the candle, and then we have a special gift for Antonio from the class. Let's begin."

Now I get to hear special stories about me as I sit between my Dad on one side and my Mom and little brother on the other. I snuggle closer even though Mom and Dad told me what might happen. Here come the stories:

Before I was one: (Mom told the story.) When I was a tiny baby, Mom danced me to sleep as I listened to the sounds of music. The rhythms lulled me to sleep she said. I really like music.

Now I get to walk around the candle for year number one. I am very brave to do this by myself. I walk around the candle one time. Then I walk very quickly back to my space.

After I was one and before I was two: (Dad told the story.) Mom, Dad, and I often visited the library. Dad and I tried to find Clifford's hiding place. I like Clifford and I like reading. One day a man came with a guitar. The strings went "pling, pling, pling." Now, I play my own music. And one more thing, this year Mommy's tummy grew bigger and bigger, and we went to the hospital when my little brother was born. I was excited to have a baby brother. I walk around the candle once more with much more confidence than the first time 'round.

After I was two and before I am three: (Dad is telling the story.) Dad read *Goodnight Gorilla* almost every night, and I put my finger on the purple house. I like my Spanish book about Margarita and Dolly. Also, I sing "This old man. . ." almost every day, and dress up in my old Halloween costume; I like Bob the Builder.

After I was two and before I am three: (Mom is telling the story.) This year we traveled to a special place for my birthday. I had a piñata. All the boys tried to hit it. . . Now, I really like *Caps for Sale*. Dad reads it over and over and over. I have many favorite books and songs. I'm a big boy now. Mom says so. I feel myself smiling all over! My friends are singing "Happy

Birthday to you. Happy Birthday to you. . .” And it’s time to blow out the candle. I walk to the candle all by myself, blow out the flame with a big “whoosh,” and run back to Dad’s lap.

Everyone applauds. I am so proud to be three!

My friends have made a gift, and a special messenger from the class gives it to me. It is wrapped to hide what’s inside. I love surprises! And I love presents and opening them by myself! Hastily, I pull back the paper to find a beautiful clay tile with a big “A” for Antonio on the front. Friends made special imprints on the clay with special birthday messages just for me. I love that each of us has a personal stamp so we can send messages to each other and know who they are from. Mom reminds me to say “Thank you” to everyone! Maybe birthday celebrations are special because that’s how I feel today—very special. I feel so good to be me!

Ritual requires that we slow down, pay attention, focus our energies as a group and as individuals, and for the time lose ourselves in the concentrated activity. For this event, Harrison (1913) in *Ancient Art and Ritual* pointed out that we make preparation and in doing so, delay the event, delay expectation, cause a waiting usually not without anticipation of the upcoming acts. Through these preparations, people make meaning for life through acts that require effort to bring to fruition. Whether art making, music, poetry, or prose accompany such acts, as is true in most rituals, the making slows us down in anticipation of the event; often music allows us to ponder the lyrics and/or rhythms in relation to the event. We plan, forecast, anticipate, suppose, remember, imagine, presume, and go beyond the self in this collaborative preparation of ritual and artifact.

### **Ritual Number Two from the Bullock Room, Ages 3-4**

During morning meeting, we all form a circle with big long pillows while parents who can stay hold children on their laps or sit close by. After singing our Bullock Room song, “Friends, Friends, One, Two, Three; All my friends are here with me. . .” we begin the focus on today’s birthday celebration for Shawn.

On birthdays, many more parents attend the official celebration with us. The two teachers begin to spread a large birthday canvas on the floor and place the candle in the center. The cloth is special; it provides a defined space on which to execute the ceremony. Children tuck their legs tight to make room for the cloth. A teacher lights the candle and smiles lovingly in Shawn’s direction as she says, “It’s a special day today. It’s Shawn’s birthday. Shawn will walk around

the candle four times today!” Excitedly Allen spoke out, “When we were in the Allen Room, we were little, but then we got big and so we moved into this room, a big room, the Bullock Room. Marty added, “And next year, I’ll be bigger and go into the Clooney Room. Shawn will too!” And the teacher confirmed, “That’s right! (Smiling) Now, to start the celebration, let’s sing the birthday song, then Shawn’s parents will tell us their favorite stories about Shawn. Everyone eagerly sings as Shawn snuggles closer to his parents while everyone sings “Happy Birthday to you. . .”

In preparation for birthday rituals at the beginning of the year, parents are asked to think of a favorite story about their child to share with the group of friends. Each child is honored on their special day. The stories range from favorite music, to tender moments in time, or favorite trips and adventures. Each family decides what to share and how to do it. Everyone listens with anticipation as the stories begin.

Shawn’s parents had three stories to share on this day:

Story # 1: (Dad is talking.) “Everyone knows Shawn likes to wear Spiderman and Batman costumes to school on occasion. What you may not know is that every Saturday Shawn and I get up, have breakfast of cranberry juice and cereal, and watch Power Rangers on TV. And then we wrestle together because Shawn pretends he is a Superhero and Dad is the bad guy.”

We become conscious of the preciousness of time that parents are able to spend with their children doing routine things they like to do together. In those small repetitious acts are the makings of bonding traditions—even watching Power Rangers with Dad on Saturday mornings is a type of family ritual.

(Dad continues talking.) “Shawn used to play with a whole bunch of these plastic friends, but now he has only two special friends, Santa the Tiger and Gobi the Teddy Bear. He sleeps with these every night.”

Story # 2: (Mom is talking.) “One weekend not long ago, our family went down to the Solomon Islands where we rented a boat. Shawn wanted to drive, so the driver helped him drive the boat. He went fast and made squiggly patterns. Then we stopped and fished. Shawn caught fish after fish after fish, but his older sister didn’t catch any. She was a good sport though. Then we went back home.”

When we know that in the Bullock Room, children have been constructing boats in the block area and pretend fishing all year, making their own poles and drawing fish to catch, the

idea of reliving a boating and fishing experience is much more meaningful to each child. The children listen intently.

Story # 3: (Mom is talking) “Shawn used to go to the doctor a lot. He is getting more and more brave. The other day he got a shot, and he was so brave that he didn’t cry at all.” Of course, many children eagerly related similar memories of bravery.

From the looks in the parent’s eyes and the admiration in the somewhat shy eyes of the child as he glances at parents, teachers, and other friends, one can feel the love and empathy among those present. When we know that this child has had health problems for many years and that his parents have had great concerns over this condition, these stories become all the more poignant.

The teacher said, “Thank you for sharing those stories with us. Now, Shawn, it’s time to walk around the candle.” So, Shawn walked around the candle four times for his four years of life. Everyone in the circle counted aloud, “One, two, three, four” followed by energized applause and “yeahs.” Then Shawn hurried back to snuggle between his Mom and Dad as his birthday committee, comprised of four friends whom Shawn chose from the class, prepared to deliver his gift.

This special gift took lots of preparation. On the first day, the committee met to determine some words about their friend Shawn. They decided what is unique or special about Shawn, what he looks like, what he likes to do, who he likes to play with, where he likes to go, his favorite foods, why they like Shawn as a friend, and any other information they can notice from their classroom friendships and perhaps play dates with Shawn. These questions about someone other than the self can be quite difficult for three and four year olds. Well thought-out teacher questions assure higher quality responses. Finally, a teacher takes the words to put them in some order that will become the frontispiece for the birthday gift book. The words are also read during the birthday celebration just after the gift is opened.

The birthday committee met on a second day to draw portraits of Shawn by observing him in a special pose and costume that he could choose from the Dramatic Play resources or bring from home. The pose was digitally photographed and printed in color for everyone to draw. Friends looked carefully at the pose and costume with the purposeful guidance of the teacher, and put in as many details of Shawn as possible. These drawings go into the birthday book along with other drawings by friends that were drawn over the days before his special

birthday celebration. The teachers assemble the writings, drawings, and photographs of the pose and of the birthday committee, cut a backing for the small gift book, and help assemble pages with a special ribbon.

Digitized photographs are taken routinely each day, especially during the birthday ceremony to capture memories of family, friends, and the honoree. These photos along with the written version of the parent's stories, children's drawings, and the birthday story, all comprise a page in a loose-leaf binder of the *Bullock Room Birthday Book* to which children and parents have access all year. The page becomes a part of the gift portfolio with examples of drawings, paintings, clay work, writings, and other special works presented to children in another ritualized ceremony to take home at the end of the year. This book is also on display outside the room, so that everyone can share each friend's special day.

On a third day, the committee met to design a special wrapping paper just for Shawn. They know him well by now, and were able to think about symbols for the paper that Shawn might enjoy. This time the committee decided to make wrapping paper with superheroes. And they used precut people forms in gold, glued strands of ribbon and thread for spider webs, and selected collage materials that might represent symbols worn by superheroes. They wrapped the book when the glue dried. And this day the committee, all four holding onto the gift book wrapped in its special covering, slowly walked over to where Shawn sat to present the gift. He eagerly received it and began to pull back the paper. As he unveiled the special gift, a teacher read the committee's prose:

*We have a riddle:*

*His name starts with the letter S*

*And he looks like he has brown hair*

*Nat says, "He always wears superhero suits"*

*Sometimes he wears shorts and a shirt*

*But mostly superhero suits because he likes them so much.*

*Nat says, "His talk is quiet."*

*Andrew says, "No, not when he is a superhero."*

*Lon says, "He draws really well."*

*Mary says, "He made the Mouse King in clay"*

*Who is he? Why yes, it's Shawn!*

*Shawn likes dramatic play  
He loves to be the hero  
And wear capes a lot and carry a sword  
He likes to draw things before he makes them  
Shawn loves to go fishing from the boats we build in the construction area.  
He even made his own fishing pole and we all made a boat.  
Nat says, "He always plays with me."  
We like to play *The Nutcracker* with everyone  
Shawn loves to play *The Mouse King*  
Sometimes he plays the Prince and dances with Clara  
And when he dances, he spins and bends.  
Sometime he paints stories at the painting center  
Lon says, "He likes to play pirates with me"  
Outside, he likes to jump and run races  
Especially the marathon  
He loves playing with all his friends.  
Happy Birthday, Shawn!<sup>1</sup>*

As Shawn heard the words and looked over the drawings, he smiled a very big smile, and at the end, everyone applauded excitedly again. Those special words are known, respected, and remembered by each child who contributed. When children invest themselves in a project, they remain highly interested and motivated throughout. They are eager to listen for proof of their investment. The ending of Shawn's ceremony culminated with a ritual wish as he blew out the flame. Again everyone applauded.

Parents and teachers hardly hold back tears as the ceremony progresses. The growth and turning forward in time of one more year in the life of their precious child is befitting tears. For all of us, this loss of one year of preciousness gives way to another year of anticipation, bringing that mixture of bittersweet and hope. The ritual builds on the fellowship and community building that are meaningful to the children.

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<sup>1</sup> This prose is from the author's memory of what friends said about their birthday friend.



Cagliari, a central teacher or *pedagogista* of the Reggio philosophy commented, “Our schools are founded on a culture of cooperation as a chosen value. We are deeply convinced that participation is a necessary value for the future of our community” (Cadwell, 2003, p. 186). When parents gather together, they feel the solidarity of one for another. . . . a term which may be interpreted as inclusiveness (Cadwell, 2003, p. 187). The call for children is the same as that for parents: listening, participation, meeting, exchange, discussion, and responsibility (Cadwell, p. 187). Birthday celebrations seem to bring out the best of this culture of cooperation for community, parents, and children.

### **Ritual Number Three in the Clooney Room, Ages 4-5**

It’s time for another birthday in the Clooney Room. Mila has on a beautiful light green, print dress. She wanted to dress up because today is her birthday celebration. Forming the circle are nine parents, and fourteen children who are almost, if not already, five years old. Everyone including the teachers sit on the outer edge of the 8’ x 10’ colorfully painted birthday mat that was a gift to the school and made by a parent of a child who was at the preschool the previous year. A teacher quietly lights a large white candle placed in the center of the mat, and says, “Are we ready to begin?”

Mom, Papa, and Mila’s big brother are here, and Mila sits on Papa’s lap. Mom begins to tell the story of her life year by year:

“When Mila was one year old, she learned to walk. This was a special event for Mila because she spent one whole year in a body cast. She was a very determined little person.” (Mila walked around the candle.)

“When Mila was two years old, she started at this school. She was a bit shy in the beginning, but soon made lots of friends.” (Mila walked around the candle the second time.)

“When Mila was three years old, she learned to fly! She jumped from a swing two times. She wanted to fly so badly. She believed that if she kissed her elbow, she would turn into a fairy and be able to fly. Of course, she tried to find a way to kiss her elbow!” (Mila giggled and walked around the candle the third time.)

“When Mila was four years old, she lost her first tooth. And with her brother’s help, she learned to swim. She stopped sucking her finger, and listened to her first chapter book. She also figured out alternatives to the word ‘NO!’” (Mila walked around the candle the fourth time.)

One of her teachers added, “This was also the year that Mila met all the new friends in the Clooney Room. So that is Mila’s story. What comes next, everyone?” The group began singing, “Happy Birthday to you. . . .” The teacher said, “Today, Mila is five years old. It’s time to walk around the candle one more time, to make a wish, and blow out the candle!” Mila did just that, with smiles and a run back to Papa’s lap.

For the birthday gift, the teachers and children assembled a special book with a story for Mila written and illustrated by a birthday committee comprised of a small group of children. The book, approximately 8” x 10” in size, contained images from work in children’s constructed environments and work with light and shadow. For a long while, children in the Clooney Room had been interested in light and shadow using the overhead projector. This story’s theme and method using the overhead projector and small figures was chosen by children and teachers after observing and discussing Mila’s preferred interests for work or play. The work for this particular book lasted two weeks. The teachers and children spent many hours scanning and printing digitized images, and editing images and text to the children’s satisfaction. Those making the book were sworn to secrecy so that Mila knew little about the product before her special birthday celebration. Thus, this day was filled with the excitement of secrecy and surprise! The teacher asked, “Are you ready to hear your story Mila?” Mila nodded “yes” shyly and managed a warm smile as she snuggled on Papa’s lap. She looked around to see the smiling faces of some of her friends and family in the room. As the teacher showed the beautiful images and read the illustrated story, Mila and the group listened very intently.

### ***Winter Fairies on the Blue Pond***

*Once upon a time there was a BIG snowstorm one winter. Trees were covered with snow and the ground was really white with snow. A porcupine lived under the tree with his friends. His name was Porkie. Porkie had a rose bush in front of his house, but it was covered with snow. Before the winter, Porkie picked all the rose petals and put them in his little house so he could eat them over the winter. He also had water from the Blue Pond in small cups. He collected snow in cups because the snow would melt into water. During the winter, they got really hungry and somehow they ate up all the food! After that they had a fight over who ate more food. Finally, Porkie said, “Stop fighting!” and they stopped. They went outside in the snow to look for food. (They were looking in all*

*different directions.) They came to the Blue Pond. There were winter fairies floating on boats made out of chestnut shells. Porkie said to the winter fairies, “We ran out of food. Could you please help us?” They said, “Yes! We’ll go ask the Spring Fairy Queen to come out and make roses bloom again. When the winter fairies got to the Fairy Palace, the Spring Fairy Queen was asleep. The winter fairies sprinkled snow on the Spring Fairy Queen. She did not wake up. So they had to drop a big piece of snow—plop-- right on her head. The Spring Fairy Queen woke up and said, “Why did you do that?” The winter fairies said, “We have some friends who need your help, so it can be spring again.” After a minute she woke up. She waved her friendship wand and whispered a magic word. The magic words were, “Spring, Spring—make the nature smell like spring. Make the flowers bloom and squirrels come out, birds chirp, and trees grow new leaves!” The grass started to grow, and the flowers started to bloom and the ice melted. Porkie and his friends said, ‘Thank you!’ to the Spring Fairy Queen. They found a lot of food. The End.*

Applause and smiles followed as the teacher carefully handed the book to Mila. With Mom’s prompting, Mila said, “Thank you” to the group and teachers for the lovely gift. A warmth and appreciation beamed from her face as her Mom and Papa smiled, squeezed her arm, and held on tightly to their daughter. With teachers prompting, the group chimed, “You’re welcome.” The sense of achievement and giving of a gift that took time to conceive and execute gave an obvious satisfaction as seen beaming from the faces of all children who participated in the event. Certainly the integration of literacy, aesthetics, technologies, and art studio skills including photography, reflect many of the “hundred languages” of children (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998), as evidenced in this classic example of emergent curriculum that Reggio favors (see [http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p\\_10/qk1g\\_pd\\_mod3\\_exa1\\_emerg\\_curric.pdf](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/qk1g_pd_mod3_exa1_emerg_curric.pdf)). A swelling sense of pride becomes visible in expressions of accomplishing a difficult task that is well received and appreciated by all.

## **Conclusion**

Perhaps children and everyone involved feel that connection to the energies of life through birthday celebrations. In this Reggio-inspired school, moving from one room to another

seems to signify a kind of transformation, of growing up and growing bigger, the hope of achieving greater freedoms, actually a transformation in social status in one sense, as Allen and Marty talked about in the Bullock Room. Each child has a birthday celebration in the room, with celebrations included near the end of the school year for those whose birthdays are in summer. This ritual seems to unite friends and family, child and adult, and re-ignite special memories and hope for the future.

Maslow (1968) termed this kind of experience as having a transpersonal effect or a state that is bigger than (a person) is; in the search for transpersonal experience, people often turn to ceremony, ritual, rites of passage, or celebration to find regenerative effects for this transformative process or state of awareness. Such is the case in Reggio-inspired schools in developing a sense of caring community and creating special memories, or peak experiences (Maslow), that may last a lifetime. Noddings (2002) pointed that real caring requires consistency of caring over time between the carer and the cared-for. The continuity of the walk-around-the-candle ceremonies from age 2-5 supports a strength of caring that children can be sure of.

The Reggio Emilia approach is based on the belief that children are powerful people who are able and have the right to construct a meaningful education in communication with one another and with caring, respectful adults (<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/pioneers-our-i-loris-malaguzzi-founder-reggio-emilia-approach>). This type of educating is built on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in which "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978), p. 86). Similarly, Lewin (1995) remarked that this practice is based on a "social constructivist model that supports the idea that we form ourselves through our interaction with peers, adults, things in the world, and symbols" (as cited in Cadwell, 1997, p. 5). Thus, a self-confidence can be presumed.

According to New (as cited in Hendrick, 1997, p. 227), Malaguzzi was a leader of the school from 1945 to his death in 1974; he felt that schooling as a "system of relationships" not only endorses but makes possible high quality and enduring social relationships in the lives of young children and provides the means to advocate more effectively on behalf of young children. To be that advocate for the rights of children and youth, all schools need the participation of parents, and in Italian Reggio-Emilia schools, parents make that commitment to be a partner in

their child's education before the child can attend (personal notes, Reggio Emilia Study Group, 2014). In addition to the teacher, who is a partner, nurturer, guide, and facilitator for the child's successful open-ended discovery and problem-solving experiences, likewise the parent and community are partners in this collaborative relationship. Of this collaboration, Cadwell (2003) says that we must always consider the importance of, "why we do what we do with children and to evaluate whether what we are doing is worthy of their intelligence and time" (p. 80-81). Spaggiari (1993) noted that in Reggio schools, parent and family participation is essential and an intrinsic element of collegiality and integration of different wisdoms (as cited in Cadwell, 1997, p. 6). This variety of wisdoms from diverse people enriches the children's education.

Having opportunity to teach and do research in a Reggio-inspired school for one year, in this article I was able to share insights and implications concerning the richness to be found in the walk-around-the-candle ceremony as ritual. I have shared the transformational and caring quality of these rituals for children and adults, and how Reggio Emilia approaches embrace ritual as a part of their total philosophy. One could say that the daily research documentation on the part of teachers (Reggio Kids, importance of documentation section, para. 1), and the everyday routines that are performed as a part of the philosophy are indeed ritualistic and offer the structures that enable emergent curriculum within that social constructivist foundation. The rights of a child include involvement from people who realize that childhood "is the result of a shared effort," and that "a child is not a citizen of the future but of the present." (personal notes, Reggio Emilia Study Group, 2014). Additionally, I hope to have made the important point of how parents and others affiliated with any school are partners in each child's education, their transformation, and their transcendence into educated individuals, which comes with involvement, seriousness, and responsibility on the part of everyone involved with the child's life.

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<sup>i</sup> Many rituals are healthy and contribute to the vitality and security of life. Others are abusive and harmful as represented in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925/1926) and in a well-known short story by Ursula K. Le Guin (1973), *The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas*.