

The Psychology of the Integral Society

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Michael Laitman

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With America's education system in a state of disrepair—as evidenced in 2010's critically acclaimed documentary *Waiting for Superman*—it's clear that significant change is required in order for conditions to improve.

One radical plan comes from Dr. Michael Laitman, the founder and president of the Bnei Baruch Kabbalah Education & Research Institute. According to him, education must be tailored to the concept of a society where every aspect of the world is connected. Those who understand that and go along will survive. "The adults are still in a transition phase, while the children are already ripe for it," Laitman writes.

This book is structured as a series of conversations between Laitman and co-author Ulianov, a professor of psychology at Aesthetic Education Institute in Moscow. Ulianov asks the questions and Laitman provides the answers, which illuminate his philosophy and the steps instructors, parents, and students can take. Though the material gets a little dense—after all, we are talking about rebuilding society—readers will leave with some significant matters to consider.

Laitman proposes a complete overhaul regarding how kids are currently prepared for the adult world. According to him, children need to build a relationship with real life, instead of just sitting behind a desk from ages six to eighteen—when they're suddenly expected to be on their own. Students should also be exposed to life's negative aspects, with examples such as touring prisons and rehabilitation centers, which will steer them toward an early adulthood with more perspective. That bit is essential, since Laitman advises that students start college at age thirteen. "A child has to be taught to self-develop, to observe himself and others, and how to communicate with others," the author explains. "But the most important thing is to teach him to understand the world he lives in. A person has to understand his essence and his goal in life."

It goes without saying that Laitman's master plan will not satisfy everyone. However, what's expressed in *The Psychology of the Integral Society* should also get people thinking about other possibilities. In solving any difficult problem, all perspectives need to be explored. As a society, we spend so much time competing and trying to get a leg up that the concept of simply working together sounds groundbreaking in itself—since Superman is still nowhere in sight.

PETER CROATTO (December 20, 2011)

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