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**McGILL UNIVERSITY**

**GUIDING THE RELIGIOUS RESPONSE OF ADOLESCENTS:  
AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**DARYL BAMBIC**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE  
STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION AND  
PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION**

**McGILL UNIVERSITY**

**MONTREAL**

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Guiding the religious response of adolescents

To Simon, who always understood my necessary absence,  
to Luci, who never faltered in her support  
and to Tom Francoeur, a kindred spirit.

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Recalling the Mandate of Religious Education

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## Abstract

A review of the models of religious education reveals their weaknesses and limitations. The tension among the models and the leading theorists arises from the divergent understanding of the relationship of religion to education as well as the concept of personhood. The transcendent nature of persons is argued from both a psychological and philosophical perspective. The nature of the religious experience as well as religious development is examined in both adults and adolescents. Given the transcendent dimension of human nature, as witnessed through the religious response, it is argued that the first order activity of religious education should be the development of adolescent spirituality.

## Sommaire

Un survol des models de l'enseignement religieux révèle certains conflits et lacunes. Au coeur de ce débat se trouve de divergentes compréhensions du rapport entre la doctrine religieuse et l'enseignement, ainsi que les différents concepts philosophiques de la nature de l'être humain. La nature transcendante de l'être humain est affirmée en examinant des auteurs dans les domaines de la philosophie et de la psychologie. La nature de l'expérience religieuse ainsi que le développement religieux chez l'adulte et l'adolescent sont traités. Etant donné l'aspect transcendant de la nature de l'être humain, tel que témoigné par l'expérience religieuse, il est proposé que le développement de la spiritualité chez l'adolescent soit la préoccupation première de l'enseignement religieux.



## Introduction

The subject of the present thesis, guiding the religious response of adolescents, comes as a partial answer to several questions that I asked myself at the onset of my teaching career. As a teacher of Moral and Religious Education for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, I had the privilege to hear and read some of my students innermost thoughts about their life and life in general. Their questioning ranged from the egotistical concerns of daily life, to worries about their future and even the survival of the planet. However, everpresent in the questioning, was a deeply spiritual current that asked such things as, "Why is the universe here?" and "Who can find truth?" Often times, those hard questions were directed at me, not because the students believed that I could answer them, but more because an answer was urgently needed to relieve the inner distress caused by the question.

My students have taught me a great deal. They have revealed a rich and complex spirituality that lives in their hearts. Their caring is intense and equally passionate, be it for an animal, a marginalized group in society, or the health of the planet. They have convinced me of their prophetic leanings, of their compassion and desire for justice. More importantly, they have, in a sense, commissioned me to find answers to our questions, namely: "How should religion be taught so as to make it relevant?", and "How can religion be taught so as to infuse

and enthuse the adolescent heart?" The present thesis is an attempt to answer our common questions.

Chapter one asks the question, "What is the nature of religious education?" and will concern itself with examining various models, originating in Britain and the United States. A review of the literature will reveal a framework for understanding and classifying the theories into four models.

Chapter two will engage a discussion between the different models, highlighting the lacunae of each. It will be shown that the essential debate as to the nature of RE revolves around the relationship of theology to education. Finally, it will be shown that Michael Grimmitt, the British RE theorist, offers a possible reconciliation between the newest existentialist model and the phenomenological approach.

Chapter three raises ontological concerns and addresses the issues of the transcendent nature of man. Investigating authors such as Louis Dupré, Viktor Frankl, Nikolai Berdyaev and Abraham Heschel, will reveal that despite the impossible task of proving man's transcendent nature, the unshakable and authoritative nature of religious experience points to the inevitable conclusion; the transcendent dimension of human experience is undeniable. The truest and deepest part of humanity, paradoxically, seems to elude definition.

Chapter four has two concerns; the first section will delve deeper into the nature of the transcendent dimension by examining the religious responses of persons through the phenomenon of religious experience. The concept of the religious response of persons will be proposed as an alternative way of understanding religious experience. As well, some key elements in the religious experience will be examined. The last section of chapter four will focus on the manner in which the religious response develops and evolves in a person. Theories of religious development from Pierre Babin, James Fowler and Sam Keen will be examined.

The final chapter will build on the conclusions of the previous chapters in order to propose a philosophical basis from which to argue that RE should be concerned with developing the religious response of adolescents, or their spirituality. If the transcendent dimension is a fundamental aspect of human nature, and if, as Grimmer maintains, the first order of education is inquiry into what it means to be human, then RE must address the spirituality of adolescents. Based on the insights from the philosophers and theorists discussed in the earlier chapters, a tentative definition of the nature of spirituality will be proposed. It will be argued that the essential task of RE today should include the development of the religious response of adolescents.

## Chapter One

### A Review of the Religious Educational Theorists

#### 1. Aim

This chapter will engage a discussion between the theorists in the field of religious education by way of proposing a provisional framework classifying the authors into four models. This framework is by no means original or comprehensive rather it serves to facilitate the discussion by situating the various authors in relation to one another. This framework is as follows:

- a. Traditional-Theological
- b Confessional
- c. Phenomenological
- d. Existential

Each model will be discussed by presenting several of its representative authors. The central question asked will be, "What is the nature of Religious Education?" or more precisely, "What is the general aim of Religious Education?"

#### 1.2. A word about models.

I have chosen the term model over other possible alternatives such as perspective, approach or theory. In doing so, I note Gabriel

Moran's objection to the term because, as he says, it implies a consensus of what is being modeled and continues to obscure the central question of the nature of 'religious education'.<sup>1</sup> Depending on the context, this activity of inquiry into the religious dimension of life might be called Christian Education, Religious Instruction, Catechism, World Religions, Religious Studies, or Moral and Religious Education. Each title carries a particular understanding of the relationship of religion to education, as well as different philosophies of both religion and education. I agree with Moran's observation but despite the difficulties, choose to use the term model for its more complete meaning. 'Model' implies a philosophical inquiry and a system ensuing from that inquiry, similar to the term paradigm. For this reason, model will refer to a distinct approach to the nature of religious education.

## 2. Traditional-Theological Model:

The history of the traditional-theological model of religious education has its roots in Church history and its involvement in education. The distinguishing characteristics of this model are apparent in its aim; namely to nurture the student in the Christian faith by proclaiming the message of God's redemptive work for humankind, through Christ. The emphasis is on doctrine, the content is biblical and the teaching methods are traditional (subject-centered more than child-centered). Its style is evangelical; to proclaim the good news. The teacher is required to be a committed Christian, who

by his zeal for the Kingdom of God and faithfulness to the message in his teaching, will achieve the desired goal of faith and commitment on the part of the student, who is the recipient of an authoritative and divine message. 2

Two early theorists in of the traditional-theological model were Josef A. Jungmann and Johannes Hofinger.<sup>3</sup> Religious education is seen as synonymous with preaching the word of God and history is taught from the point of view of the history of redemption.<sup>4</sup> The central theme in this approach is the mystery of Christ and the desired goal of religious instruction is to impart true knowledge of the faith.

Jungmann and Hofinger were representative of a reform movement in traditional German catechetics that rejected the uninspired methods of rote memorization of creeds and doctrine. They called for an infusion of joy and relevancy in teaching the Christian faith. Their goal was to impart correct knowledge and inspire religious living. 5 When contrasted with RE theory today, Jungmann and Hofinger seem antiquated but in actual fact, they were quite modern in proposing a shift from a subject-centered teaching of doctrine to a greater concern for the psychology of the child. 6

Randolf Crump Miller and C. Ellis Nelson are two other current representatives of the traditional-theological approach. They both assert that the RE teacher must first and foremost be a theologian because Christian education is defined theologically. Miller's slogan is "Theology in the background: faith and grace in the foreground."<sup>7</sup> For

them, Christian education is nurturing students in the faith and this is achieved by encouraging theological inquiry. The relationship between theology and education is a direct one and a God-centered content is never secondary to techniques and methods used. Educational inquiry centers around investigation into Christian doctrines.<sup>8</sup>

### 3 The Confessional Model

This model sees the nature of religious education as being primarily a religious activity and the aim as educating for the purposes of commitment to the Christian faith. Its methods and approaches are as varied as its representatives. Be it the social-science approach of James Michael Lee, the developmental approach of Ronald Goldman, the shared-praxis approach of Thomas Groome, or the socialization approach of Bernard Marthaler, the primary function of the confessional model is to extend the work of the church in schools and to aim for a commitment to the Christian faith. It is decidedly not pluralistic in the sense that it fails to include other world faiths and assumes a homogeneous religious composition in the classroom. Strictly speaking, the traditional-theological model should be a subset of the confessional model for their aims are the same. However, distinguishing them in this way enables one to appreciate the differences in the philosophies of education. The confessional model is more child-centered than subject-centered, though theology still informs its pedagogy.

In some ways, the classification of 'confessional' for the above authors is simplistic and perhaps an apology is in order. They have all contributed greatly in the field of RE and as in the case of Ronald Goldman, been instrumental in changing directions in RE. The exhaustive work on the nature of the teaching and learning process by James Michael Lee and the immensely challenging and exciting combination of politics, theology and educational philosophy in the thought of Thomas Groome deserve separate classification for their approaches are so different. However, for the sake of answering the question as to the nature of RE, it seemed expedient to unite them because of their common aim of nurturing the student in the Christian faith.

Thomas Groome points to the commonalities between religion and education and he defines the religious dimension as the drive that impels us on the human quest for transcendence.<sup>9</sup> Inspired by Alfred North Whitehead, Groome concludes that education is implicitly a reach for the transcendent insofar as it aims to move us beyond present limits to the full realization of our potential.<sup>10</sup> In this way, education and religious education share a fundamental commonality for they are both concerned with the transcendent. Groome concludes that the purpose of educating is to empower the quest for human freedom in the three dimensions of the spiritual, the personal and the collective. In the spirit of Paulo Friere and liberation theology, to educate oneself is to free oneself and the quintessential model for human freedom is Christ and the redemptive work of God in the Easter

Event. We are set free from sin, which alienates us from communion with God, from one another and finally, from ourselves. Groome's vision of Christian education is highly political and immensely challenging because it will not tolerate structures that rob human beings of their freedom and dignity, which is their proper spiritual heritage. 11 The method is one of shared praxis, meaning action that is collectively reflected upon in the light of the Christian story. Tracing the philosophical roots of the term praxis, from Aristotle to Marx and finally to Friere, he situates the notion firmly in the biblical tradition of sharing the good news and reflecting upon, as a group, the personal and social implications of Christ as Liberator. 12 Groome may be situated in the confessional model in that the approach is one that uses the Christian story, but his aim is nothing short of revolutionary and this way, he stands out as being exceptional. Christian religious education, for him, is nothing less than the promotion of human freedom.

James Michael Lee and Berard Marthaler view RE as primarily a process of socialization into the Christian community. Lee aptly uses the term 'instruction' to describe his goal of shaping student behavior so as to reflect the principles of Christian living and sees the aim of RE as the fusion of Christian understanding, action and love. Religious behavior, like any other is learned and the teacher is a powerful agent in modifying the student's behavior..13 For Marthaler, RE has the three primary objectives of growth in personal faith, promoting religious affiliation and the maintenance and transmission of a religious tradition. 14

Ronald Goldman made important contributions in the 60's by bringing an awareness of the developmental nature of faith and learning. In England, Goldman marked the beginning of a major shift in awareness away from subject-centered RE towards a child-centered approach. Using Piaget's constructionist-developmental theory, Goldman postulated that children develop intellectually in stages and therefore, their readiness for understanding religious concepts follows this development. Certain religious truths were better taught and received if presented at opportune moments of 'ripeness', keeping in mind that the key to their understanding lay in the realm of the emotions.<sup>15</sup> He also advocated the importance of relating the content to the child's experience and so developed his 'life-themes' approach.

The child in the pre-religious stage of development (corresponding to the pre-operational) is incapable of conceptualizing religious truths without distortion and content must be closely related to their concrete experiences.<sup>16</sup> Goldman recommends the indirect method which uses the child's natural sense of wonder and awe at all of creation to evoke the awareness of the divine. In the sub-religious stage (corresponding to the concrete-operational) children are ready to absorb much data and are better able to relate the facts to their own life, however they are still limited by distortions which frequently reduce the spiritual truths of Christianity to 'pre-Christian' concepts. In this sense, the sub-religious is synonymous with the pre-Christian.<sup>17</sup> In the religious stage, beginning in pre-adolescence (corresponding to the formal-operational) it now becomes possible to

introduce the more complex Christian theme of redemption. The adolescents increased range of emotional experiences and wider social interests, make it possible for a more direct approach. However, the emotional needs of the children (feeling secure, experiencing love and a sense of belonging) must be heeded at all times RE is to be seen as a natural part of life.

Goldman rejected the moral and cultural arguments favoring the teaching of Christianity because the social aims should be secondary to the salvific ones.<sup>18</sup> The aim of RE should be an understanding of the Christian faith and Christianity should be taught for no other reason except for that it is true. For this reason, he is properly situated in the confessional model of RE.

#### 4. The Phenomenological Model :Some Factors in the Shift of Models

Partly due to Goldman's work and the greater awareness of the child's needs and partly because of the theoretical work done by Ninian Smart, the end of the 60's in Britain was the birthplace for the shift from the confessional to the phenomenological model. The new found spirit of ecumenism after Vatican II, coupled with the fundamental cultural transformations in Europe, Canada, the United States and elsewhere, (brought about by changing demographics, urbanization, and the impact of technology on all aspects of life) birthed a new awareness of religious plurality in the field of RE.<sup>19</sup>

By the 70's, there was widespread agreement that the nature of RE must be educational rather than religious and the teaching of religion should aim at an intellectual understanding of many religions rather than a commitment to the dominant religion of Christianity. This shift in awareness found expression in several agreed syllabuses in Britain and in the U.S., 20 the popularity of the model was so great that it was deemed the 'New Orthodoxy'.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1 Some characteristics of phenomenological model of RE

Based on Ninian Smart's typology of the six dimensions of religion, this model of RE proposes to put aside value assumptions and judgments for the sake of investigating the phenomenon of religion as it expresses itself in the fundamental nature of man. Objectivity is the goal and impartiality is the method used to enter into the experience and self-understanding of the religion from the view point of the believer. By standing back and temporarily suspending one's own viewpoint, it was thought that the students could empathetically understand what it would be like to be a Jew, Hindu, Muslim or any other faith that was the object of study. Imaginative empathy and objective inquiry were essential tools for a sympathetic and descriptive understanding of religion. For the sake of establishing RE as an academic field of study and distancing it from any suspicion of faith nurturing, the truth claims of religions were set aside and emphasis was put on presenting 'the facts of religion' so as to assure the RE the status of objectivity and a legitimate academic subject in

the curriculum. RE was to be no different from any other subject. In this way, the phenomenological model was well suited to the new religious plurality, developing influence of the secular vision of man and nature and to the criticisms of the confessional model.

#### 4.2 Leading theorists of the phenomenological model

Among the long list of names of those who contributed to RE as an academic construct, the two most important ones must be its founder, Ninian Smart and its American supporter, Gabriel Moran. Although authors such as Jean Holm, John Hull, Edward Hulmes, Robert Jackson and W. Owen Cole are notable but will not be treated here for the sake of brevity.

Ninian Smart was among the first authors to assert the primacy of the educational element in RE. By his typology of religion, he established religion as an outward looking, open system which could be understood by its six dimensions. Just as one would hold a diamond and examine its many facets, so too could the phenomenon of religion be understood from the point of view of its doctrine, myths, ethics, rituals, social organizations and the personal experiences of the adherent. These six dimensions, divided into the parahistorical group (see the first three mentioned) and the historical group (see the last three) constituted a unity in a plurality. In order to understand one group, a reference must be made to the other one. In this way, a parahistorical treatment of the historical is just as possible as a

historical treatment of the parahistory. In other words, Smart made it possible for theorists of RE to affirm that history could understand faith and other disciplines had something to say about theology. The previously closed door of theology had been pried open by Smart and this enabled RE to assert its claim as being a subject of academic inquiry into the study of religions. He concluded that "there seems to be no ground at all for by-passing historical and descriptive studies of religion out of a suspicion about certain parahistorical claims made on behalf of Christianity. 22

Smart maintained that theology was not a closed system and to conceive of it as so was plainly inadequate. 23 In fact, theology possessed an 'inner logic' which gave it an outward look towards other disciplines, especially philosophy and science. Religious truth was too important to be left to the biblical theologians and philosophical inquiry too important to be left to the philosophers alone. To study humankind is a participatory activity which should be informed by many disciplines and points of view. Just as the theologians must open the doors of inquiry and dialogue to the secular humanists and agnostics from various disciplines, so should the unbelieving sceptic take seriously the parahistorical claims of religion. To divorce the study of history from the ideas that formed it, or to separate the historical from the parahistorical, is to handicap the educational enterprise.

The aim of RE, according to Smart, is to teach for intellectual skills (such as thinking and judging) which increase the student's

capacity to understand religious phenomenon. 24 Indoctrination and evangelization has no place in academic inquiry. He suggests that instead of imparting the faith, this approach may produce atheists and non-Christians. A more rational inquiry into religion might produce more converts, and for the right reasons. 25

Gabriel Moran believes that RE, or teaching religion as he prefers to call it, must take place in the context of a continuing conversation with other religions and RE should have an important place in the curriculum as a legitimate field of study. 26 In his book, Interplay: A Theory of Religious Education, he proposes the notion that religious education is not something that happens only in the classroom and he calls upon other institutions and communities to share in this responsibility. In this way, the school would be liberated from the role of faith nurturing which is a form of religious education but not one compatible with an educational activity and therefore best suited to the faith community and the family. An 'interplay' of communities and a distinction between education and schooling would bring the fullest understanding of religious education.

According to Moran, teaching is the act of showing someone how to do something (so everyone is a teacher) and school teaching is showing someone how to use words and concepts in order to better understand their world. 27 Therefore, the nature of RE is academic and its primary aim is to render religious language and texts intelligible to the student by approaching the material with reverence, sympathy and objectivity. 28 In this way, RE promotes a greater

appreciation of one's own religious life and diminishes misunderstanding, biases and ignorance about other religious faiths.

In his next book, Religious Education Development: Images for the Future, Moran surveys the development theories of Piaget, Kohlberg, Fowler and Egan to propose his own grammar of religious development. According to Moran, religion is defined as whatever keeps open the process of development.. 29 His thesis is that if education (and specifically RE) is seen as developmental, then the four forms of education (family, job, schooling and leisure) may all interact to contribute to the religious education of a person. 30 Religious education is a journey that begins long before the classroom and that does not end until death.

Each stage in life has its particular pattern of development. The 'simply religious' phase begins in childhood and is expressed in the primordial religiousness of little children, for whom questions of origin and purpose are natural because all of life is perceived as 'wonder'ful and imbued with the divine. As the young child grows out of the sense of unity, into a perception of duality, he begins to identify with with a group, a religious story and enters into the phase of 'acquiring a religion'. The division of the world into us and them is necessary for his sense of belonging. Growing naturally into the rational adolescent, he falls into necessary disbelief and rebellion. Moran notes the crucial difference between disbelief and unbelief and proposes that this dismantling of the religious system is a necessary prelude to asking deeper questions. With the movement away from the religious to the

philosophical, the adolescent grows to full religious maturity capable of symbolic understanding and contemplative detachment. 31

Morans theory of the six 'moments' of religious education is important because it makes clear the nature of religious education; namely that it is a life long process which is properly guided and nourished by the various 'forms' or communities within we we grow, work and play. Religious education is a life long journey towards which many contribute.

Moran refines his theme of religious education as development in his next book, Religious Education as a Second Language, when he adds that the development (or growth) of the individual has no end point. Education, which is not the same as schooling, has no end point. He defines education as "the reshaping of life's forms with end and without end." 32 The play on the double meaning of end is intention and in the first instance, it is taken to mean purpose or aim. In the last instance, 'end' means conclusion or termination.

Religion, as Moran sees it, is a term that has a double meaning. It refers to beliefs, practices and rituals as well as the designation of an academic field of study. In this way, the term religion is an abstraction. He criticizes the designation of RE as teaching 'about' religion because it becomes a second abstraction. The British designation of religious education is also deficient because it implies teaching teachers how to teach religion. 33 Furthermore, how can education be itself the object of instruction when the context is the

schoolchild? Both the U.S. and Britain shy away from its true appellation, which for the sake of clarity, should be teaching religion. According to Moran, teaching religion means talking about the way religious people act.

The act of teaching has three forms of speech; the homiletic, the therapeutic and the academic. The homiletic discourse requires a freely gathered community as well as an agreed-upon text. If these two conditions are not met, homiletic speech may degenerate into negative sermonizing and becomes morally inappropriate. The therapeutic discourse aims to heal conflicts and refrains from prescribing how the world should be. This is the language necessary for a description of feelings. As with the homiletic, this form of speech may also be inappropriate in the classroom for it may undermine the objective status of RE. Moran suggests that the proper form of language for teaching religion is academic discourse for it is one step removed from ordinary life and its nature is to examine speech itself. It is a speech about speech, which means that we do not have to agree on the texts, but only possess some knowledge about them in order to converse together. 34 Academic discourse is the proper language for teaching religion because it allows a temporary suspension of conviction for the sake of examining assumptions.

## 5. The Existential Model

The existential or experiential model of RE, though present during the 70's when the phenomenological model was making waves, was not as influential as the latter for several reasons which will be examined in the second chapter. This model may be seen as a reaction to what became phenomenology's weakness; a dry and inert imparting of facts for the sake of objectivity. The existential approach begins with the premise that religious concepts emerge out of man's natural sense of wonder and awe; an innate spirituality. In contrast to phenomenology which maintains that religion is a *sui generis* experience and may not be reduced to any other form of experience, the existential model assumes that all human experiences are potentially religious. In this way, the starting point for RE should be the student's own experiences which, because of man's fundamental spiritual dimension, have the potential for serving as an interpretive bridge to religious concepts, symbols, doctrine and the like. The task of the educator is to enable the student to intelligently and reasonably reflect on his own experiences while relating them to universal religious concepts.

Two important exponents of the existential model to be treated here are John Wilson and Raymond Holley, both British RE theorists. Wilson postulates a concept of religion by describing the *sui generis* activity of being religious rather than the traditional method of defining the term. The word religion embraces three categories; namely a mode of behavior, a system of beliefs and the affective

phenomenon of emotions. The first two categories are inadequate for understanding religion because of the impossibility of certainty as regards a person's true intentions. It is not because a person attends temple services and espouses creeds that we may say characterize them as being religious. Only the affective phenomenon, such as praying, revering, worshipping, being in awe, adoring, praising, sacrificing and other emotions may be properly called religious. Concepts such as 'ultimate concerns' and 'ground of being' are more descriptive of 20th century apologetics of religion than of religion itself. According to Wilson, "any concept of religions as a sui generis activity ought to rest primarily upon a central emotion, the emotions of awe; and upon a central activity, the activity of worship.". 35 This is so because central to the religious attitude, is the feeling of there being something 'greater' and 'more important' than oneself, or as Rudolf Otto referred to it, 'creature consciousness'.

The educational aim of RE, according to Wilson, beomes an education of the emotions, requiring an attitude of change, rather than instruction in creeds, dogma, sacred writings or history. The content of RE should be determined by its relevancy to the affective and psychological life of the student. The task of the RE teacher is widened to include helping the student relate religious objects, symbols and concepts to their own feelings and experiences. This demands a relationship of trust between educator and students and in some ways, Wilson admits, RE is more analogous to certain types of psychotherapy than to subject-teaching. 36

Wilson regrets the degeneration of RE into a course in comparative world religions with dry facts and vague religious statements. While RE is never to be confused with indoctrination, the other extreme of false neutrality and objectivity is no better. In the interests of the students and religion itself, RE must not shy away from the task at hand; namely initiating students into various religious forms of thought and activity in such a way that they are helped to become better informed and reasonable in the sphere of religion. 37

Raymond Holley continues on with Wilson's ideas and adds some essential ingredients by developing the notion of religious understanding. Just as intellectual understanding is characterized by such functions as intuition, imagination and creative insight, so to religious understanding may be described by the same functions. The primary difference between intellectual understanding and religious understanding is that of the discernment of ontic values such as love, patience mercy, pity, charity, humility and self-sacrifice, to name but a few. Holley dubs them ontic values because they constitute the essential spiritual nature of a person and are distinct from moral, social, aesthetic and intellectual values. Ontic values are the determinants of all other values and do not require justification on the basis of desirability or rationality but solely because of their ontological status as constitutive of man's spirit. 38

Holley asserts that a scholarly understanding of religion and religious understanding are two separate activities because the former is functioning at the level of theorizing. In this way, a scholar of

religion is no different from any other scholar in that he is engaged in reasoning about an academic discipline. However, if the scholar is to acquire a higher order of understanding, he must be able to 'get inside' the thought forms of the religious believer and sympathetically share the feelings. If he is unable to do this, the scholar's understanding will remain shallow. 39 Holley concludes that for any deep scholarship, some level of religious understanding is necessary.

Religious understanding, while not entirely dependent on a scholarly understanding of religion, may be deepened by it. Holley concludes that religious understanding is the intellectual perception of ontic values in spiritual terms and that RE must be concerned with provoking, deepening and broadening spiritual awareness. The aim of the teacher is not to nurture, convert or socialize the student in any one faith but to provoke spiritual insights and aid in the scholarly understanding of religious phenomena. 40 RE will promote an awareness that spirituality is not solely a question of intellectual study but primarily a mode of life, an attitude of holiness and an awareness of personal transcendence.

RE may not be reduced to or subsumed by a course in Moral Education or Personal Development because of its content and aim. While RE is concerned with moral values and social attitudes, its primary goal is to enable the discernment of ontic values and in this way does not seek justification in any other discipline. RE's aim is not evangelical but is utterly educational. Holley warns that any curriculum which ignores the spiritual dimension is incomplete and

potentially fragmenting. He maintains that RE is "neither a luxury to be jettisoned at a time of economic crisis nor a 'fringe' subject to be taught solely by the lowest paid, least experienced probationary teacher but is logically central to all educational activities." 41

## 6. Summary

This chapter has examined the principal religious educational theorists by their classification into four models; namely the traditional-theological, the confessional, the phenomenological and the existential. Some brief attention has been paid to cultural factors contributing to the shift from one model to another, although this has not been an important consideration.

The central question of the relationship of religion to education is critical in determining the nature of RE. If religion, or theology, is to inform the educational enterprise, or pedagogy, then the model chosen will be the confessional one. If it is possible to assert that religion is an academic construct, and therefore the same as any other subject in the curriculum, the approach will be the phenomenological one with its accompanying methods of neutral and objective investigation into faith claims. The existential model stands at the beginning of a new movement in RE that seeks to bridge the distance between the confessional and the phenomenological model.

Without addressing the controversial issues surrounding the strengths and weaknesses of the various models and authors, I have

attempted to give a brief introduction into the sometimes complex and always challenging conversation regarding the nature of religious education.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. Gabriel Moran, "Philosophies of Religious Education Among Roman Catholics," in Changing Patterns of Religious Education, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 42.

2. Harold W. Burgess, An Invitation to Religious Education (Mishawaka, Indiana: Religious Education Press Inc., 1975), p. 30-38.

3. Joseph A. Jungmann, Handing on the Faith: A Manuel of Catechetics (London: Burns & Oates, Ltd., 1959), pp. 114-123.

4. *ibid.*, p. 107.

5. Johannes Hofinger, S.J., The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957), p.17.

6. Moran notes that Hofinger and Jungmann were actually revolutionary forces in the Catholic Church. Moran, *op.cit.* in Taylor, p. 43.

7. Randolf Crump Miller, "Christian Education as a Theological Discipline and Method," ed. John H. Westerhoff, III (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1978), p. 114.

8. C. Ellis Nelson, "Theological Foundations for Religious Nurture," *op. cit.* in Taylor, p. 19.

9. Thomas H. Groome, "Christian Education for Freedom: A 'Shared Praxis' Approach," ed. Padraic O'Hare, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 11.

10. Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), p. 21.

11. Groome, *op. cit.* in O'Hare, p. 33.

12. Groome, *op. cit.* Christian Education, pp.153-199.

13. Burgess, pp. 127-160.

14. Berard L. Marthaler, "Socialization as a Model for Catechetics," op. cit. in O'Hare, p.77.

15. Ronald Goldman, Readiness for Religion (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.43.

16. Ibid., p. 47.

17. Ibid., p. 48.

18. In the period following the Second World War, it was thought that teaching Christianity and the promotion of the Christian ethic would help to build the foundation needed for a strong democracy. Ibid., p. 59

19. Nicola Slee points to the secularization, pluralization and marginalization of religion in society as the most important factors in this cultural transformation in his article "Conflict and Reconciliation between Competing Models of Religious Education: Some Reflections on the British Scene," British Journal of Religious Education vol.11 no. 3 (Summer 1989): 128.

20. John Hull, "New Direction in Religious Education," Journal of Religious Education vol. 78 no. 3. (Summer 1983): 395.

21. Gabriel Moran, Religious Education as a Second Language (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1989), p. 97. (Hereafter referred to as Second Language.)

22. Ninian Smart, Secular Education and the Logic of Religion (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 92.

23. Ibid., p. 90.

24. Ibid., p. 97.

25. Ibid., p. 99.

26. Gabriel Moran, Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 1981), pp. 11-17.

27. Ibid., p. 71.

28. Ibid., p. 74.
29. Gabriel Moran, Religious Education Development: Images for the Future (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Winston Press, 1983), pp. 157-165.
30. Ibid., p. 129.
31. Ibid., pp. 147-181.
32. Moran, op. cit. in Second Language, p. 49.
33. I prefer to use the term 'religious education' despite Moran's convincing objections for the sake of facilitating the discussion. Ibid., p.131.
34. Ibid., pp. 79-85.
35. John B. Wilson, Education in Religious Understanding (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), p. 20.
36. Ibid., p. 40.
37. Ibid., p. 9.
38. Raymond Holley, Religious Education and Religious Understanding (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 109.
39. Ibid., p. 125.
40. Ibid., pp. 145-146.
41. Ibid., p. 169.

## Chapter Two

### Changing Models in Religious Education

#### 1. Aim

This chapter will examine the tension among the models of religious education presented in the first chapter by returning to the central question posed earlier; namely, "What is the general aim of RE?" The shift from one model to another represents a different understanding of the nature of RE in public schools both in England and the United States. As the confessional model fell out of favour and the phenomenological model reached its zenith, some theorists recognized that the affective and spiritual dimensions had been sacrificed in the name of objectivity. The existential model stepped into the picture but it also was suspect. The experiential approach seemed too subjective and it was often confused with faith nurturing and a falling back to the confessional model. In this debate about the relationship of religion to education, Michael Grimmitt's theory will be presented as an alternative to the tension among competing models. The wisdom that Grimmitt brings to this ongoing conversation about the nature of RE is illuminating and exciting because he shows how the dichotomy created between objective and subjective is a false one. RE is learning about and learning from religion. The goal of education in general and RE in particular is about increasing self-knowledge and self-awareness by examining the ideologies that influence the beliefs, attitudes and values we hold.

## 2. Weaknesses in the Confessional Model of RE

In chapter one, the traditional-model was treated distinctly from the confessional one because it was asserted that the former's emphasis on doctrine and traditional teaching methods was substantially different from the style of the latter. For the purposes of this chapter, the two models will be treated as one because they share the same general aim; namely the transmission of the Christian religious heritage and the induction of the student into the Christian faith.

The confessional model has a long and illustrious history of initiating the younger generation into the Christian traditions. This model belongs to a time very different from today; a time when religion provided the essential content of a uniform cultural ideology, homogeneous Christian values and identity. Witold Tulasiewicz, a lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Cambridge, recalls in his article, "Teaching Religion" the history of the confessional model. He writes;

*"Historically religions have expanded by conversions, achieved by nurturing, persuasion, teaching, coercion or force. Peaceful conversion is the result of the impact of socio-political machinery, with the required legislation introduced by those with the power to do so; and education, as the deliberate process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes, is one of the main means of achieving it."*<sup>1</sup>

The religious ideology, supported by the political structure, was assumed, unquestioned and predominant. It was especially unchallenged by the secular, scientific-materialist ideology. Nor was it challenged by the fact of religious pluralism, abroad or at home in smaller communities. As expressed in the Agreed Syllabuses of Britain in the 20's, 30's and 40's, pluralism was understood as different Christian denominations. The faith was one, in Christ, and the ultimate goal of RE was to nurture the faith of the students in the escatological hope of preparing an entire civilization for the Kingdom of Heaven. 2

The confessional model has been largely rejected, by many RE theorists today as incompatible with the secular and plural nature of modern society and the needs of the children in the classrooms of the state-operated public schools. Despite the shift in emphasis away from doctrine and an increased concern in the 'how' of RE as witnessed by the social science approach of James Michael Lee, for example, it is generally agreed that RE may not, and must not, assume a Christian heritage on the part of the student, or a Christian end-point in the curriculum design. John Hull, in his article, "New Direction in Religious Education", sees that with "the increased plurality and secularity of British society in more recent years and with the rise of a view of education which seeks to foster a more critical and more autonomous individual, the Christianising period of religious education has largely come to an end." 3

Unless in the case of a private, denominational school, chosen by the parents because of its religious character, the confessional approach is deemed to be antiquated, unsympathetic and dangerously coercive in the multi-faith classroom of today. Moran reminds us that teaching for the transmission of a particular faith is a normal religious enterprise and an acceptable part of RE, but it is only one part of it and should not be the concern of the public schools. This type of homiletic speech used in the discourse of RE requires a freely gathered community as well as a consensus on the text to be used. 4 This is most certainly not the case in a great number of public school classrooms. Furthermore, Moran continues, this approach to RE implies a religious superiority and betrays an attitude of arrogance as it presents Christianity as the only true religion, or the only one worthy of study. 5 He uses Goldman's comparison of the sub-religious phase to a 'pre-Christian' stage as an example of this religious arrogance endemic to the confessional model. Despite Goldman's important contribution to an understanding of child psychology and religious development, Moran maintains that to ultimately structure the curricular design around Jesus the Good Shepard or any other exclusive Christian theme is to engage in indoctrination and religious nurture, not religious education.

According to Moran, the very term 'religious education' implies religious pluralism, otherwise it would be called 'Christian education' or 'Catechetics'. He says, "A religious education that lacked all religious pluralism would come close to being self-contradictory; at the least it would be unnecessary."6

The context of RE today is one of increasing pluralism, of shrinking boundaries, of increased awareness of competing cultures and ideologies, both religious and secular. If the context reflects the reality of the 'global village' then the content must in some way, be broadened so as to enrich the insights of the students to the diverse religious communities that share a seemingly ever shrinking planet.

The most cogent argument made against the confessional model is that of Michael Grimmitt. In his book, Religious Education and Human Development, Grimmitt makes clear that the essential problem in RE today is the nature of the relationship between religion and education, both of which are ideologies with accompanying value assumptions. According to Grimmitt, Christian absolutism, which is the hidden value assumption in the confessional model, is incompatible with the educational enterprise of RE. State schools in a multi-cultural and multi-faith democracy, cannot embrace as educational principles, what are for one religion, its tenets of faith. 7 More will be said about Grimmitt's theory at the end of this chapter.

A further example of this widespread rejection of the confessional model is evident in the report done by Glen Watson for the Ontario Ministry of Education in 1990, inquiry into the question of compulsory RE for elementary public schools. In his report, Watson recommends that a multi-faith, non-denominational program called Religion Studies, be implemented. He estimates that such a program would be compulsory and require no need for exemptions because "its purpose, should not be to indoctrinate or instruct in any particular

faith, but rather to learn about religion and to develop an awareness and understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of those who are followers of major living religions." 8 Watson continues to say that this type of program would not only encourage the desired goal of religious tolerance in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society, such as is Canada, but would be a major catalyst in the spiritual growth process, which should be recognized as an essential element of the education of the 'whole' child.

## **2.1 A word about indoctrination, evangelization, nurture and tolerance.**

Before continuing the discussion of the weakness of this model, it would be important to examine the meaning of several often used words in the criticisms leveled at the confessional approach. The necessary nuancing of the words will help to show that some charges of indoctrination are really charges of 'over influencing'.

### **a) Indoctrination:**

There was a time when to be a good indoctrinator was a compliment for it meant that one was in full possession of Christian (or other ideologies) doctrine and was competent in the transmission of these difficult ideas. However, today images of coercive brainwashing techniques come to mind when this word is used and it fills us with indignation at the theft of human dignity and freedom. The range of possible meanings attributed to indoctrination stretches from the

obvious and overt techniques easily recognizable by most, to the subtle propaganda disseminated by any political party attempting to control an ignorant population and remain in power. What is the correct understanding of indoctrination? Is it accurate to say that the confessional model of RE is indoctrinary? I assert that it is not.

The critical difference between indoctrination and other forms of influence, such as effective television advertising, is precisely in the question of freedom; an indoctrinator ignores the choice of the individual and forces ideological content on the victim, by using a variety of techniques. While it is true that indoctrination shares some characteristics with socialization and should never be equated with education, it is uniquely different in the aspect of freedom. By denying the person the right to choose, which is an essential component in the act of faith, the indoctrinator successfully achieves his end of bypassing reason and freedom.

This is not the case in the confessional model, not even in the traditional-theological approach to RE because faith is an act of freedom, a relationship of trust between man and God. One cannot force faith, it is born (or given by Grace) grows and flourishes, or it is absent. Both Groome and Marthaler reject the accusation of indoctrination. Therefore, confessionalism, inappropriate though it may be for today's secular, pluralistic classroom, may not properly be said to be indoctrinational. Insofar as opposing points of view are hidden and the doctrine is presented as authoritative and normative, it might be correct to deem this model a form of propaganda and an

antiquated pedagogy but it would be incorrect, in my view, to equate the confessional model with indoctrination. Simply put, faith cannot be commanded by man but freely chosen or given by God.

**b) Evangelization:**

Evangelization involves the passionate advocacy of one's ideological or faith position. The movement is to convince, to sway and to exert influence in the thinking of one person to what is presumed by another person, to be the better way. In religious terms, its aim is to spread the faith and often educational objectives and techniques are used to further its end. Evangelization is the zealous promotion of a point of view believed to be of great worth. Good teachers, concerned parents and effective salespersons may adopt evangelatory techniques from time to time. Politicians are exemplary evangelists. The confessional model of RE may be said to be evangelical and not educational. While this is true, it must be admitted that teachers are expected to exert a positive influence on students and occasionally, evangelical zeal, or enthusiasm, may be an effective technique.

**c) Nurturing:**

It is clear that the confessional model is one that seeks to nurture the development of a faith, however the essential problem lies not with the act of nurturing per se, but more with the presentation of one faith as authoritative in a multi-faith and secular context. As with

evangelizing, teachers are called upon to nurture the child in their development of self-esteem, affectively and cognitively. Nurturing is the act of creating conditions necessary for the growth and flourishing of another human being. Education, and religious education, cannot escape the role that it has in nurturing children but nor must it ignore its complimentary mandate of intellectual development. If teachers were never expected to nurture their students, governments would have long since replaced them with Skinnerian learning machines or computers.

**d) Tolerance:**

A great number of RE theorists, school administrators and government officials claim that an effective course in world religions will help to reduce religious intolerance. If one were to take seriously the reflections of politicians, one could conclude that tolerance is to be considered a supreme value, enshrined in the invisible Canadian identity. Canadians congratulate themselves for being a tolerant society. It would behoove anyone, especially educators of religion, to stop and re-examine the nature of tolerance. A very fine line separates tolerance from intolerance and in volatile political climates, any minor spark could set fire to the flames of intolerance. The Jews of Nazi Germany were 'tolerated' before being systematically exterminated as a 'final solution' to their problem. We tolerate things that we have little ability to change. Inevitable sicknesses such as colds and flus are tolerated. Taxes are tolerated. Human beings, in their richness and complexity are not and should not be in the same

category of things to be tolerated. The one who is different, who feels marginalized and who stands out, wants to feel accepted and to belong to the group. Tolerance is not a substitute for acceptance. Religious education is not about teaching for increased tolerance. It is an end in itself and need not seek justification outside itself because human beings are fundamentally spiritual. 9 RE is not reducible to an instrument of the prevailing political ideology of the time.

### 3. Weaknesses in the Phenomenological Model of RE

As a reaction against accusations of RE being indoctrinary (incorrect though they may be), the proponents of the phenomenological model put great effort in demonstrating their differences with the confessional model. Their approach was claimed to be neutral, open and they assumed a position of religious equality as regards for questions of conflicting truth claims. In a move away from nurturing in the faith and charges of evangelization, phenomenology stressed the educational and academic nature of RE. Ninian Smart established its status as a subject like any other. Gabriel Moran, in all his books, re-affirms this position. However, phenomenology's efforts to disassociate itself from the confessional model, swung too far to the opposite end of the pendulum. Many have accused theorists and educators of the phenomenological model of overemphasizing facts and knowledge to the detriment of the affective element in learning and child development. For a time, RE had

become, a dry and inert imparting of religious facts divorced from any reality relevant to the student.

The phenomenological model presumes that students will be able to 'bracket-out' their own beliefs and judgments in order to empathetically enter into the religion from the point of view of the believer. Many critics question the feasibility of this higher-order skill for young children and remind us of the origin of the model; it was designed by a university professor and meant for more mature students. Others maintain that requiring students to 'bracket-out' questions of competing truth claims is symptomatic of a greater spiritual malaise of our time and an educational 'cop-out'.<sup>10</sup> Now, more than ever before, is the time to address these issues, not run from them.

Michael Grimmitt penetrates the heart of the issue when he claims that use of the phenomenological method of non-evaluative description invalidates the educational process. The very nature of educational inquiry demands critical evaluation. One can not learn if one is being prevented from judging and evaluating. Furthermore, and more importantly for the question of the nature of RE, Grimmitt holds that the "fundamental task of schools and their curricula is to promote in pupils increased consciousness of ideological influence on their attitudes and values and on the way they see the world and themselves."<sup>11</sup> Grimmitt continues, that in order for phenomenology to be honest it must admit that their approach is no more neutral or objective than the confessional approach. Indeed, the secular

assumption of objectivity is as much an ideology as a religious philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

It was said that the phenomenological model claimed neutrality in regards the thorny questions of value judgments and truth claims made by the various religions. For the sake of neutrality, religions must be relativized and religious truths trivialized. The effect of this is to reduce the rich complexity of religions to manageable curriculum commodities, thereby giving the appearance of picking and choosing from competing faith systems as if one were choosing fruits at the market. From the point of view of the believer, this approach is offensive for he does not see his religion as a 'belief system' equal to that of any other 'belief system', such as are the secular and humanist ones. A person's religious faith is a highly emotive and critically important consideration not to be treated lightly, nor as a commodity from which one can choose.

Raymond Holley maintains that we cannot 'shop for faith', to continue the metaphor. 'Religion is caught, not taught', the saying goes. Holley agrees and argues that the presumed aims of the phenomenological model of RE are impossible for a neutral choice is logically impossible. One must always choose from the point of view of comparing one alternative against another one, one belief system already held, against another one being considered. To choose presupposes a pre-existing structure and to encourage students to choose from several alternatives, when a belief system is already in place is nothing better than evangelization. <sup>13</sup>

In the worst case scenario the neutrality and religious relativity that phenomenology implies may lead to profound scepticism, agnosticism and possibly even nihilism. Presented with a series of choices that appear to all be of equal value despite the divergent truths claimed, against a cultural backdrop of the overwhelming acceptance of the scientific-materialist's point of view, it is easy to understand how the student may be lead to disbelief or a further devaluation of the spiritual perspective. The irony of this accusation is that the phenomenologists are now the ones being charged for turning students towards agnosticism and disbelief.

#### 4. Weakness in the Existential Model of RE

Gabriel Moran is an outspoken critic of the existential model of RE. Firstly, he maintains that therapeutic discourse, which is the form of speech for this model, is not suited for the classroom.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Wilson himself admits that good teaching of this type would tend to strongly resembles some forms of psychotherapy. Although this approach may have some limited use in very particular situations, it should not be the thrust of RE because it too easily oversteps the boundaries the academic and falls into the realm of personal discovery and subjective feelings.

The task of the educator is not to invade the privacy of the student by encouraging them to expose, for public discussion, their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings. To do this would not only

be disrespectful of the student's right to privacy but also confer far too much power in the hands of the teacher. Some critics maintain that this approach is strangely reminiscent of the confessional model in that it is overly zealous in its desire to evoke certain spiritual feelings and a faith commitment on the part of the student.

Moran argues that even if this approach could be pedagogically justified, it would still be inappropriate because few teachers would be competent enough to walk the fine line between combining the cognitive learning with the affective elements of personal experience. Furthermore, the existential model is too demanding of the students in that it requires a high level of interpretative and self-reflection skills that most do not possess.<sup>15</sup>

The emphasis on the affective dimension of student learning would make evaluation practically impossible, say some critics. How would one evaluate progress? The neglect of the cognitive and intellectual aspects of RE is dangerous and will only result in confusing this approach with the confessional model. To blur the boundaries between the objective and the subjective is to plunge RE back into the murky seas of control, coercion and faith nurturing.

##### 5. Michael Grimmitt: RE- learning about and learning from

Michael Grimmitt seeks to find the middle path and reconcile the tension between the religious and the educational components of the

RE equation. Both the phenomenological and the existential model bring valuable insights into the conversation regarding the nature of RE. The former maintains that religion may be studied objectively, as an academic construct and the latter affirms the primacy of the personal existential dimension in the appropriation of religious concepts. Even Moran grudgingly admits, that the content in RE must somehow be related to the learners experience.<sup>16</sup> For Grimmitt, the value of both models is obvious. He proposes that by recognizing the values assumptions behind both the educational and religious enterprise and by situating the primacy of the development of self-awareness (and especially the spiritual consciousness,) at the heart of RE, the tensions are reconciled. RE becomes learning about religions in order to learn from them, meaning growth in self-awareness and in spiritual, moral and religious consciousness. What follows will be a brief presentation of Grimmitt's main ideas.

Grimmitt begins his book by examining theories of knowledge and concludes that knowledge has intrinsic, social and functional worth. One theory of knowledge maintains that facts can be known objectively. (This will be re-examined later on in context of the contribution of the area of the New Physics for the reconciliation between Science and Religion.) Another theory insists that objective knowledge is impossible for everything is a question of perspective and knowledge is a socially agreed-upon construct. Grimmitt transcends the dichotomy by examining the functional aspect of knowledge; namely that as a society, we agree on the knowledge that is worthy of being passed on to the next generation. This discussion of

knowledge is important because it is critical to understanding the false dichotomy between the rational and the irrational, the objective and the subject, the cognitive and the affective. This dichotomy has long influenced RE because of where the different theorists situate the nature of religion and the nature of education. Grimmitt is wise in transcending this opposition and recognizes that it is precisely in the dialectic between the opposing poles where true learning takes place.

Ideologies, based on theories of knowledge and defined as a socially founded thought systems that function through social structures, are value laden and carry hidden assumptions.<sup>17</sup> Grimmitt places philosophies of education and philosophies of religion within the context of his definition of ideology. Ideological influences on educational values reflect a particular view of science, of knowledge, of politics, of economics and of the relationship of the school to this larger context. (If this were not so, then all subjects in the curriculum would enjoy equal status and equal treatment. Sadly this is far from the case.) According to Grimmitt's definition of ideology, it is safe to say that religion is also subject to ideological influences. Therefore, both religion and education are ideologically value laden enterprises with different starting points, truths and assumptions about theories of knowledge. Grimmitt concludes that the educational enterprise should not present itself as being value-neutral and feign objectivity. Rather, it should be honest about its value-laden secular approach and make those hidden assumptions clear to the students, especially in the case of RE.

The essential problem of RE is the competition between two sets of ideologies, the educational and the religious. Grimmitt believes that in such a situation where 'something has to give', for the sake of the student's increased understanding of religion and self-awareness, the price should be paid by religion and not education. He says, "If there is a price to be paid for establishing a relationship between education and religion, then it seems to me, that the cost has to be met by the religions, not by education".<sup>18</sup>

Grimmitt bemoans the school's over-insistence on cognitive goals for student. What the schools should be doing, is giving the students opportunities to reflect on who they are, and the ideological influences that shape their beliefs, attitudes, values and thinking.<sup>19</sup> The first order activity in any theory of education is answering the question, "What does it mean to be human?" According to Grimmitt, to be human means to hold and formulate beliefs about ourselves and the nature of our experience. Holding and formulating beliefs are not optional activities but a human given. <sup>20</sup> Humans hold numerous beliefs, religious, political, scientific and so on. Therefore, he concludes that a religious faith response is not contradictory to any other description of man for it simply interprets experiences within a transcendental framework.

Human beings are constrained to hold beliefs and to choose between competing beliefs. This is the unavoidable condition of human nature because we cannot be value free in our thinking and because the act of holding, formulating and choosing beliefs is

fundamental to living and to discerning meaning in life. The 'reserved' or 'suspended' choice of phenomenology is still a type of choosing; it is choosing to not choose. Furthermore, it is not worthy of human beings because it ignores and limits freedom. A person who cannot choose between beliefs is one who refuses the responsibility of freedom and cannot bring meaning to their life.

An act of faith is the conscious choice of a belief or value, involving evaluation and commitment. To hold a belief is an act of faith and in this scheme, an essential element in being human. The question of value, commitments and religious beliefs (among others) now becomes central to any educational curriculum. Grimmitt's theory of education then is the process by which students explore what it means to be human, to make, hold and formulate beliefs. These humanising concerns of education should logically include other subjects in the curriculum and should also inform RE. The concerns of RE then become examining the human givens and core human values that create the religious and spiritual consciousness with which we formulate and hold beliefs. Effective RE informs as well as transforms because the student is also learning from religion. This increased self-knowledge is the result of reflecting on one's self-consciousness (moral, religious and spiritual) and beliefs. Grimmitt concludes that RE is the promotion of critical self-awareness through the study of religions. 21

## 6. Summary

This chapter has examined the weakness of the confessional, the phenomenological and the existential models of RE. It was proposed that the essential key to understanding the difficulty in answering the question regarding the nature of RE lay in the relationship of religion to education. The confessional model maintains that theology (or religion) should inform pedagogy. This gives the dominant religion established in the political structures of a society, control over the content and methods used in RE. The phenomenological model, asserting the rise of the secular state and the challenge of religious pluralism, argued for the establishment of religion as an academic construct and for an objective and neutral study of the subject. The existential model attempted to respond to the overcompensation by the phenomenologists on the side of fact and information, but were rightly criticized for neglecting the cognitive for the affective, thereby robbing the subject of its 'objective' status and falling back into the errors of confessionalism.

Michael Grimmitt theory of RE was presented as a reconciliation between the false dichotomy of objective and subject because he attempts to situate both religion and education as powerful ideologies that play important roles in shaping how people believe. The essential nature of the human situation was one of holding and formulating beliefs. Therefore, education and RE in particular, should address the question of the process of becoming human, of holding beliefs and of increasing self-awareness of the influences at work in this process.

The next chapter will examine the transcendent nature of persons, especially in the work of Louis Dupré and Victor Frankl. Others authors will be included in the research into the inherently spiritual nature of persons. The aim of the chapter will be twofold; a) to establish the transcendent nature of self and b) to examine the nature of the religious response.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. Witold Tulasiewicz, "Teaching Religion," in World Religions and Educational Practice, edited by Witold Tulasiewicz and Cho-Yee To (London: Cassell Publishing, 1993), p. 12.

2. Slee, op. cit. pl 127.

3. Hull, op. cit., p. 393.

4. Moran in Second Language, p. 85.

5. Moran in Interplay, p. 15.

6. Gabriel Moran, "Religious Pluralism: A U.S. and Roman Catholic View," in Religious Pluralism and Religious Education, ed. Norma H. Thompson (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988), p. 37.

7. Michael Grimmitt, Religious Education and Human Development, (Great Wakering, Essex, England: McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd., 1987), p. 48.

8. Glenn Watson, Chairperson, The Report of the Ministerial Inquiry on Religious Education in Ontario Public Elementary Schools (Toronto, Ontario: The Ontario Government Bookstore, 1990), p. 2.

9. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy translated by John W. Harvey, (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 140.

10. Slee, op. cit. p. 131 (In defense of the phenomenologists, Moran, says though complete understanding of a religion's self-understanding is impossible, it is still better to be an honorary Jew, or an adopted Jew than a hater of the Jews. A little understanding is better than none at all. See Moran cited in Thompson, p. 54.)

11. Grimmitt, p. 45.

12. Ibid., p. 46.

13. Raymond Holley, "The Impossible Aims of Religious Education," British Journal of Religious Education vol 5. no. 2 (Spring 1983): p. 67.

14. Moran, Second Language p. 75.

15. Ibid., p. 105.

16. Ibid.

17. Grimmit, pp. 33-49.

18. Ibid., p. 46.

19. Ibid., p. 97.

20. Ibid., p. 75.

21. Ibid. p. 205.

## Chapter Three

### The Transcendent Nature of Persons

#### 1. Aim:

The goal of this chapter will be to propose the transcendent nature of persons without which any discussion of spirituality or religious education would be pointless. Various perspectives will be considered; the psychological, the philosophical, the scientific and the theological. The insights from authors such as Viktor Frankl, Louis Dupré, Nikolai Berdyaev, Abraham Heschel and others will contribute to affirming this unique and illusive human reality. The harmony of voices from the different disciplines will add credence to the long-held theological doctrine of man's transcendent nature.

#### 2. The limitations of definitions

In proposing the transcendent nature of persons, it would seem logical to begin by defining the term. One possible understanding of transcendence may be derived from the verb form of the word; meaning to go beyond pre-determined physical and social limitations. One might say that with effort, enthusiasm and a good education, it is possible to transcend the limits of poverty. The word may also be employed in a psychological sense to describe how a person achieves

self-actualization or individuation, thereby transcending the barriers set by a selfish or fearful ego. However, these definitions would be incomplete insofar as they point more to actions rather than a state of being.

I suggest that an accurate and complete definition of man's transcendent nature is impossible. That man is capable of being more than what he appears to be is a human truth to which the religions of the world attest. However to capture the essence of this part of human nature is impossible because of the ineffable mystery that is being. An entire human history of experience, complete with its religions and philosophies, points to this paradoxical experience. Human nature occupies two worlds simultaneously, the physical and the spiritual. From the experiences of the extraordinary, mystical type, to the simple act of choosing truth and freedom or an awe-filled moment of love, we can infer that the transcendent dimension is a fundamental aspect of human nature.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the task of describing the ineffable, (because by its nature the transcendent shares in God's ineffable character), the following authors from various disciplines, will be presented in an attempt to contribute to the conversation regarding the the transcendent nature of persons.

### 3. The psychological perspective:

Ann and Barry Ulanov are Jungian psychotherapists with a Christian theological background. In their book, Religion and the Unconscious, they attempted to establish a dialogue between theology and depth psychology. The Ulanov's succeed in interpreting religious realities, such as the soul, in a psychological language that is neither reductionist nor simplistic but respectful to the theological perspective and very insightful.

#### 3.1 Primordial experiences and the function of religion

For religion, primordial experience would mean the encounter with the original mystery that is God. For depth psychology, it is understood as those powerful events that give meaning to life. Primordial experiences are not to be equated with the unconscious, though its contents are chiefly made up of unconscious material. These experiences that can shake us into ecstasy or shatter us into insanity, invoke the responses of awe, fear, wonder, terror and gratitude. The primordial experience is ultimate in the sense that it possesses the power to change life's direction and serves as the foundation upon which all meaning rests. The power of this raw experience is mediated to the conscious mind through the special language of the unconscious that Jung called non-directed thinking.

The function of religion is to offer containment for these primordial experiences by providing balance and a safeguard for sanity. The interpretation of the primordial experience in the light of tradition and dogma is crucial for it offers the sense of belonging to a larger group of individuals who have also shared in the primordial experience. Religion also provides a transcendent frame of reference for interpreting the event. This is important because the experience may be misunderstood within any other category.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2 Soul and Psyche: Signposts of the Transcendent

It would be exceedingly difficult to offer a definition of the psyche that would be acceptable by all. Perhaps a functional approach is required. The Ulanov's describe the psyche as consisting both of the unconscious and the conscious. It deals with the fantasy world of dreams figures and the movement of thought and feeling across all levels of consciousness. The life of the psyche is defined by its functions and limited to the biological location of the physical body. <sup>2</sup>

The notion of the soul is even more difficult to define. It could be said that the soul is the invisible but essential dimension to human life which is best described as spiritual. The soul inhabits the body but is not limited by it and is commonly believed to be 'given up' at the moment of death. The soul is the meeting place of the divine and human. It is the source of purpose and wholeness for human life.

Neither descriptions are adequate but they may be helpful in demonstrating the qualitative differences between psyche and soul. The function of the psyche is to enable (or disable, in the case of mental illness) developing personhood. As such, it enables a person to become a self in relation to others. The soul supplies the desire necessary to become a self but is less concerned with self than the psyche. This is so because of the great paradox that many religions point to; namely that the self must be lost before it can be truly gained. It is only in the complete giving and emptying out (kenosis) of the self does one discover the depth and true nature of self. Unlike the psyche, the soul cannot be defeated by sickness. The soul provides the desire towards individuation, a willingness to be our own person as well as the recognition of another's right to do the same. Therefore the soul may be said to be the meeting point of self and other and that which brings an awareness of the transcendent dimension. 3

According to the depth psychology, the soul feeds the psyche with desire, will and attention necessary in order to achieve individuation. The soul is not defeated, nor is it dependent on the body or the psyche. The soul is the meeting place of the personal and collective, the human and the divine, the immanent and the transcendent. The figure of Jesus Christ, is the perfect symbol for the soul because in him we see a harmony of immanence and transcendence, of humanity and divinity.

### 3.3 Viktor Frankl and logotherapy: remembering the transcendent in psychotherapy

The Austrian psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, holds as a starting point, the transcendent nature of persons. For him, successful therapy must incorporate the three dimensions of man, the somative, the mental and the spiritual. It must also recognize the primacy of the will to meaning over the will to pleasure (Freudian psychoanalytic tradition) and the will to power.(psychotherapy). 4 Frankl's approach, called Logotherapy, compliments both psychoanalysis and psychotherapy because it places the spiritual dimension of man at the heart of questions of illness, wellness and the search for meaning in life.

Psychoanalysis focuses primarily on the will to pleasure and understands the person as driven by unconscious sexual instincts. Pleasure becomes the ultimate principle by which the complexities of human nature are interpreted. Psychoanalysis claims to have a complete picture of man, but Frankl sees it as incomplete and more of a caricature of human nature rather than a total picture. 5 According to Frankl, this approach is inadequate, for pleasure alone cannot give meaning to life. Pleasure is not the goal of human life but rather the consequence of attaining goals. Neither are joy and happiness ultimate ends, for as emotional states they are dependent upon values which possess a transcendent nature. Frankl believes that man does not want to be happy so much as he needs a reason to be happy. 6

While psychoanalysis emphasizes the will to pleasure, psychotherapy enlarges the vision of man, focusing on the will to power. 7 Its task is to understand the patient's symptoms as a signal of psychic distress. The patient is attempting to absolve himself of guilt by projecting the psychic dis-ease onto an external symptom. In this way, the symptom bears the guilt and not the individual. The therapist's role is to enable the patient to realize his responsibility, thereby empowering the ego to take steps towards psychic health.

Each of these therapeutic approaches claims to have a complete picture of the human being. However, Frankl maintains that they remain incomplete unless the spiritual dimension of the person is addressed. Logotherapy understands that the root cause of psychic illness is spiritual disease. By sidestepping spiritual issues and explaining them away as infantile wishes or by numbing the patient's pain with tranquilizers, therapists risk the possibility of devaluing the transcendent dimension and misunderstanding the true nature of the illness. 8 The will to meaning must be considered as a fundamental dimension to man, along with the will to pleasure and the will to power.

For Frankl, man is a spiritual being by virtue of his freedom to actualize values. This gives him the power to bestow meaning to life. To be free is not to be limited by factors such as instincts, heredity or social conditioning. To recognize that a person is a product of a variety of factors exerting influences during certain critical periods of development does not deny the fact freedom. According to Frankl,

"man is that entity who has freed himself from whatever has determined it, transcending the determinants either by conquering them or submitting to them." 9 To say that hormones or chemicals in the brain are a determining factor in behavior, does not mean that they alone are responsible for causing the behavior. If this were so, then humanity would be little more than a slave to the environment, suffering under the pitiful illusion of freedom. Frankl does not seek to oppose nature against spirit, for both mind and matter are a part of man and are equally contingent upon each other. Man's true nature and therefore the source of psychic health is the recognition of his citizenship in two realms, the transcendent one and the physical, immanent one. He must learn to balance these two worlds and never lose sight of his freedom, for herein lies the spiritual nature.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.4 Actualizing values and the will to meaning

As previously mentioned, Frankl asserts that the will to power and pleasure are not ends in themselves and therefore incapable of giving meaning to life. Only the actualization of values may occupy this role because it alone points to the transcendent nature in man. Frankl speaks of three categories of values: the creative, the experiential and the attitudinal. Action provides the arena for realizing creative values. In the development of talents, accomplishments and life's work a person may realize these creative values. When the possibility for action is denied, experience becomes the arena for realizing values. Life can hold meaning even in the

absence of action. The grace-filled experience of one ecstatic moment can retroactively bestow meaning on an entire lifetime. Man is always free to choose the manner in which he will receive life's experiences. This choice is determined by attitudes and values. When confronted by a destiny impossible to alter, or by restrictive conditions, man is still free to choose the attitude with which to face the suffering. 11

As a concentration camp survivor, Frankl witnessed the range of human reactions to inhumane conditions deftly designed to dehumanize. The interests of the prisoners degenerated to the most basic of levels, the instinct to survive. Some chose suicide and others became megalomaniacs when given insignificant responsibilities in the camps. However a small number triumphed morally and spiritually, despite the dark times and became examples for others, of compassion, hope and dignity. According to Frankl, the important factor in the person's ability to maintain dignity was the adoption of certain attitudes in the face of inconceivable suffering. The camps may have stripped away the external signs of freedom, but no one and nothing possessed the power to enter into the spirit and decides in its place, how to think. In the final analysis, man alone is responsible for his attitudes and this perhaps is the most important freedom. When the body is in chains, the spirit is still free. To abdicate one's responsibility for choosing values and attitudes is to give away one's very humanity, one's freedom and ultimately, spirit. 12

The fact that some prisoners in the camps retained their freedom to choose attitudes, testifies to an inner spiritual support system

created by freely chosen beliefs and values. Though these seem like harsh words for anyone touched by the inhumanity of Hitler's final solution, man's responsibility to remain free, is Frankl's unshakable conclusion. Freedom is not something that you have and therefore may lose, rather it is a state of being that connects us with our transcendent nature. 13

#### 4. The philosophical perspective of Louis Dupré

In his book, Transcendent Selfhood, Louis Dupré traces the loss of the transcendent beginning with the early Greek philosophers in the sixth century B.C. through to the rise of objectivism, as seen through such major thinkers as Freud, Marx and Neitzche. Dupré shows how the transcendent nature of man was increasingly misunderstood and consequently replaced by the belief that human nature, mind and existence were things that could be objectively studied by empirically verifiable methods. This loss of the inner life was matched by the decline in the experience of the sacred and an increasing emphasis on the transcendence, rather than the immanence of God. The sacred was defined in opposition to the secular rather than being understood as encompassing all of human experience. For the religious person living in a secular culture, religion had become a private affair and modern peity turned inwards.. 14

According to Dupré, moral attitudes and ideals are examples of how the self may express its transcendent nature. 15 Love and

compassion, as ethical ideals, will lead the self beyond itself to the discovery of a paradox; the good life must be defined in terms of more than the good. These ultimate values are at once ancient religious rules to be followed and ideals that afford man a glimpse of the transcendent. Conscience and the ability to perceive the divine command in the moral imperative are further proofs of the transcendent nature of the self.

Mental illness and society's treatment of the mentally ill may also provide clues for understanding man's transcendent nature. In worldview where the inner self is reduced to an epiphenomenon of the brain and where to be 'normal' means to accept alienation and estrangement from one's deepest level of being, the mentally ill may bring invaluable lessons. In order to survive in such a world, the self learns to deny its spiritual nature. Most people adapt to the climate unquestioning and learn to tolerate a certain degree of spiritual tension and anxiety. Others do not and develop symptoms of varying mental illness as ways of coping with alienation from their deepest self. Dupré sees the mentally ill as symptomatic of a deeper problem; a sick society that has sacrificed the spiritual dimension of life for the empirically verifiable objective reality. In a context where estrangement from one's authentic spiritual nature constitutes normality, the mentally ill are better placed to regain authentic selfhood because they, at least, are aware of their mental anguish and spiritual suffering. 16 Therefore, mental and spiritual suffering hold out the possibility of redemption, wholeness and healing because of the unique opportunity for the discovery of the true depth and height

of the self. In a time where teen suicide is at an alarming zenith and the school drop-out rate seems like a runaway train, Dupré's message that deep spiritual suffering is a sign of our society's sickness, would stand out as a prophetic voice in the wilderness for adolescents of today.

Dupré further suggests that philosophers have developed an inadequate notion of selfhood because they have not looked beyond the empirical self. The classical cartesian dualism states while mind and matter are separate, the mind is dependent on the body and may not exist apart from it. While not denying this assumption, Dupré argues that psychic states, while being supported by the body, may transcend the body. In this way, the experience of the mystics may be included because the concept of self must be informed by actual experiences.

Mystical experiences point to the transcendent dimension and reminds us that the soul is the sanctuary where the divine and human touch. Supported by the investigations of William James and the centuries of mystical experiences of saints and ordinary people alike, Dupré concludes that this 'deeper self' witnessed by the mystics, must be included into an authentic concept of self. The characteristic vision of the mystics, with its noetic quality, the mind escaping the duality of ordinary consciousness. In bypassing the normal channels of sensory perception and intellectual judgment, the subject/object dichotomy is dissolved and a unique and direct experience of the self is possible. Dupré concludes that to fail to include the full range of human

experiences in the concept of self is at least, inadequate and worst, dehumanizing. In limiting the concept of the self to only those experiences which may be empirically verifiable, the complete nature of man, including the transcendent dimension, is lost and self-realization is jeopardized. 17

#### 4.1 Personality as an expression of transcendence

The Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev, situates the true nature of man, beyond biological, social or psychological categories and in the realm of the personality. Not born of the family or the evolutionary process, nor reducible to externals, personality opposes determination and belongs to the inward world of the spirit. To achieve personality is to be freed from any structure that may enslave, be it social or psychological. Personality is the existential center of man, the highest expression of freedom and the mystery of man created in the image of God. 18 Berdyaev affirms that man lives in two worlds. The divine which transcends man is united with the human in the expression of personality. The paradoxical truth of man's nature is not reduced to dogmatic formulae and intellectual concepts but is witnessed in actual experiences.

According to Berdyaev, all are born with the potential for the realization of personality. However, its birth is fraught with enormous difficulties. The whole of man's mission in life is to respond to the call from within to realize his transcendent nature, the personality. This

self-realization is the action of the spirit freeing itself from all that would condition, determine, rule and enslave it. Slavery is defined as the ejection of human nature into the world of externals. The objectification of human nature results in its enslavement to the world of objects. This implies more than the desire for possessing things; it speaks of an inner desire to be possessed by something other than the self, to abdicate one's responsibility for choosing freedom. The world of slavery is the world of the spirit alienated from itself. 19

Berdyaev maintains that both the master and the slave consciousness are illusory conditions because they first exist in the structures of consciousness. The master consciousness is that which exists for itself but is only derived through the consciousness of the slave. On the other hand, the consciousness of the slave is the existence of himself only for the other. The master and the slave consciousness are correlatives and neither can exist without the other. The consciousness of the free man exists for himself but reaches out in freedom and compassion to others. 20

The master has no real power because he is dependent upon the slave for recognition. "The master knows only the height to which the slave will raise him." Torture and death are expressions of powerless because true power is not to be identified with any form of violence but rather with the uplifting of another person in a combination and harmony of energies. It could be understood as 'power with' rather than 'power over'. True power transforms and liberates, it does not destroy and enslave.

The slave is one who has abdicated his responsibility to choose and allowed himself to be lured into the exaltation of power and the objectivization of the human spirit. Slavery is passivity and the denial of the truth that the starting point for the condition of slavery is existential. Berdyaev acknowledges that the struggle between freedom and slavery is carried on the outer world of politics and economics but he insists that this condition is first and foremost a structure of human consciousness. From an existential point of view, the struggle of the slave for freedom is an inward, spiritual struggle against falling into the same traps that enslaved the master; namely the identification of power with violence and the objectification of the human spirit. 21

The journey to the freeman consciousness is fraught with great hardship and difficult choices. The freeman is not the slave turned upside down, for this only creates a more ruthless master. The freeman has recognized that true freedom can only come from a change in the structures of consciousness. As long as man possesses the will to power and domination, he will not be free because true freedom recognizes the dignity and freedom of others. Revolutions do not create free men unless slavery is destroyed at its roots; at the level of consciousness. Freedom is a spiritual condition that is expressed in the concrete acts of love, of valuing truth and choosing the higher values. In a world where matter appears stronger than God, the one who strives for freedom and thus for true personality, should remember that those values which appear to be crucified are

the ones that will bring us freedom from bondage. In freedom we acquire personality and give full expression to our divine-human nature.

## 5. The quantum self: transcendence in the New Physics

The suggestion that science could have anything to contribute to the discussion of the transcendent nature of man initially seems absurd. Scientific knowledge involves physical realities that may be empirically proven mathematically. The Cartesian division between mind and matter and the powerful metaphor of the machine quality of the universe, nature and human nature have left a profound mark on the twentieth century psyche. There is deep scepticism towards any proposition, thing or theory that does not have its basis the paradigm of scientific materialism. This is true for most people in the sciences as well as the general lay population. However, ideas are changing.

Since the turn of the century, there have been a significant number of discoveries that have contributed to the field known today as quantum physics. The classical worldview of cartesian dualism and the paradigm of scientific materialism were challenged by the discoveries of people such as Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrodinger, to name only a few. 22 Since then, people such as Fritjof Capra in his book, The Tao of Physics and Amit Goswami in his recent publication, The Self-Aware Universe, have done important work in translating scientific discourse into intelligible

concepts for the layperson. 23 Capra pointed out the tremendous similarities between the ideas of the New Physics and ancient Eastern mysticism. The paradigm shift happening in physics may be rebirthing an ancient idea of the universe as an organic, dynamic, unified whole. 24 The reverberations of Capra's writings are still making waves. Goswami continues the parallel between physics and Eastern mysticism by proposing that monistic philosophy, and especially Hindu religious philosophy, may resolve many of the paradoxes encountered when the paradigm of materialism attempts to explain quantum properties. The following will be a brief explanation of the recent contribution of the New Physics, in the voice of Goswami, to the general discussion of the transcendent nature of man.

The scientific paradigm that so completely invades every aspect of life today is known by many names; scientific materialism, Cartesian dualism, scientism, Newtonian paradigm or simply scientific 'truth' to the layperson. The assumptions upon which this paradigm, (which will be referred to as scientific materialism) is built are the following:

- a) strong objectivity: an objective material universe exists independent of human beings and their perceptions of it;
- b) causal determinism: all outcomes (effects) may be determined if the initial conditions and the forces acting on the object in question (cause) are known;
- c) locality: objects exist separately and independently of each other and in order for interaction to occur, it must do so via local signals;

- d) materialism: consciousness is an epiphenomena of matter,  
produced by the brain and reducible to brain matter. 25

### 5.1 Paradoxes of a changing paradigm

The contribution of quantum physics to the discussion regarding the transcendent nature of self lies in the discovery of the role of consciousness in scientific observation. In order to expand on this point, some mention of the properties of quantum 'objects' will be given. A quantum, which is defined as the lowest denomination of energy or other physical quantities that may be exchanged, is said to exist as both a particle and a wave. As a wave, the quantum object can exist in more than one place at a time. However, the instant that human consciousness observes the quantum phenomena, the wave collapses and shows itself as a particle. The quantum object may cease to exist in one place and then simultaneously appear in other place, but it has not gone through the intervening space. To further muddy the materialist mind, the manifestation of the quantum object, caused by observation, simultaneously influences its correlated twin object, despite the distance separating the two quantum phenomena. 26

Clearly, these quantum objects are not behaving as they should, according to the scientific-materialist's paradigm. How can matter change its nature because of human observation? How can particles appear, disappear and reappear somewhere else? How can one particle, observed in one laboratory, communicate with another

particle hundreds of miles away? These paradoxical questions raised by quantum physics might be answered by the philosophy of monism. Goswami argues that the seeming paradoxes disappear when the assumptions of the scientific-materialist's paradigm are replaced by monistic idealism which maintains that consciousness, not matter, is the ground of all being.

The quantum objects are not behaving as we think matter should because of our assumptions about the nature of matter and the relationship between matter and consciousness. Matter was once understood as a physical, observable, predictable substance. At the turn of the century we discovered that matter could also be wave-like energy. Now, Goswami is proposing that what was once thought to be 'matter' is actually consciousness, appearing as matter. This is the only explanation, according to him, that explains the quantum paradoxes and the very obvious relationship between mind and matter. Consciousness, not matter, is the ground of all being. Matter is produced by consciousness and not the other way around. Spirit and matter are not opposites but two aspects of being. In short, the only possible way to explain the quirks of the quanta is to propose the transcendent domain of reality and the primacy of consciousness. Goswami proposes that consciousness itself is transcendent. 27

The surprising conclusions that Goswami arrives at are not accepted unanimously in the scientific community, nor among physicists working in the area of the New Physics. However, as a

theory among others within the changing scientific paradigm, it is helpful in explaining some of the paradoxes of quantum mechanics. It would be important to remember that what science seems to be discovering, namely the transcendent nature of consciousness, has been a fundamental premise in mystical traditions and religions for millenia. 28 Both mysticism and physics claim to be a search for the truth about ultimate reality. It would seem that both have a great deal to say about the transcendent nature of man.

#### 6. A theological perspective on the transcendent nature of persons

In Judeo-Christian theology, the starting point for any discussion about the nature of man is the creation story and the doctrine of 'imago dei'. Genesis affirms that God created man and woman in God's own image and likeness. The implications of this affirmation are profound. Man is both creature and a creative partner with his Creator. Man's place in creation is distinctive, not only because of his rational nature but because of his spiritual nature. In a sense, man's truest essence resembles that of God. "Just as God opens himself into the creation and pours out being, and therefore has 'letting-be' as his essence, so man is most truly himself and realizes his essence in the openness of an existence in which he too can let be, in responsibility, in creativity and in love." 29 Although all of creation participates in God, man's special destiny is understood as the fullest possible

participation in God. It is our transcendent nature that enables the discovery of this destiny.

The inspiring Jewish theologian, Abraham Heschel, states in the beginning of God in Search of Man, that "the grand premise of religion is that man is able to surpass himself; that man who is part of this world may enter into a relationship with Him who is greater than the world; that man who is conditioned by a multiplicity of factors is capable of living with demands that are unconditioned." 30 The 'proof' of man's transcendent nature, according to Heschel, is clearly witnessed in his capacity for perceiving the sublime, being in awe and wonder and sensing the mystery of creation. In fact, for Heschel, the root of sin is indifference to the sublime. He says, "the surest way to suppress our ability to understand the meaning of God and the importance of worship is to take things for granted." 31

Heschel often repeats the prophetic exhortation of Isaiah, to 'lift up your eyes and see'. The sublime is everywhere, just look. The sublime "is that which we see and are unable to convey...it is the silent allusion of things to a meaning greater than themselves." 32 The ability to sense the sublime and to be in awe lies at the root of the sense of mystery and the religious attitude. The sublime is not a fact to be proven or disproven, not a thing or a quality, but a happening, a marvel and an act of God.

The human capacity to be in awe is fundamental in Heschel's thinking and forms the cornerstone of his book. Without awe, wonder

and wisdom are not possible. To be in awe, is to possess the sense for the transcendence. The insights achieved from awe, that are the beginning of wisdom, are better conveyed in attitudes than in words because the transcendent dimension is always ineffable. One may not define God, one may only respond to God. 33 Awe precedes faith and makes possible the sense of mystery. Not a problem to be solved, nor equated with the unknown, mystery is an ontological category of being, a dimension of existence that may be experienced at all times.

Mystery and awe make possible the experience of the transcendent dimension to all of creation. More than a feeling, these experiences are responses of the heart and mind to the fact that there is more meaning to reality than the soul can absorb. The ability to be in awe, so basic to human existence, is the ability to perceive the question that God asks of us. It is not man who asks "Does God exist?" but rather God who is asking us a question. Man is free to answer or not but, unless awe, wonder and the human heart are dead, man cannot survive unless he discovers what is being asked of him. 34

## 7. Summary

This chapter has presented various perspectives concerning the transcendent nature of man. Depth psychology turns to primordial experiences and the nature of the psyche in order to carefully and tentatively speak about the soul. Frankl's Logotherapy situates man's transcendent nature in his will to meaning and the freedom and

responsibility he exercises in adopting attitudes and actualizing values. Dupré traces the loss of transcendence from the rise of the 'objective' sciences. As the external world became secular, the domain of the sacred became the interior private world of the religious person and God was perceived as increasingly distant. The presence of the mentally ill is a reminder of the consequences of alienation from our spiritual self and the religious experience of persons should serve as an indicator that the concept of personhood must be enlarged to include all of man's experiences.

Berdyaev resembles Frankl in making freedom the ground on which man's spiritual nature rests. Only by achieving the state of consciousness which rises above the temptations from the will to power and domination, or the lure of slavery, can man truly recognize his divine nature. From a radically different approach, Goswami concludes that consciousness itself is transcendent and is the fundamental link in the cosmos between objects and people. A paradigm shift from scientific materialism to philosophical monism is what he proposes for resolving the paradoxes of quantum objects. 35 Finally, the stunning insights of Heschel remind us that no proof is needed to discover man's transcendent nature. The biblical exhortation to 'Lift up your eyes and see' tells us that meaning and glory are everywhere. We need only cultivate the ability to perceive the sublime, for this is at the root of awe and wonder. The fact that man can wonder at the mystery of creation is proof enough of our transcendent dimension. It is God who asks the question to man and our life depends on understanding what the Creator is asking.

From the authors presented above, a tentative conclusion is possible. The transcendent dimension, which all the authors claim as constituting part man's true nature, is fundamentally an experience. Though it seems possible to offer psychological, philosophical and scientific 'proof' for transcendence, the real 'proof' would seem to be primarily residing in the realm of experience. Rather than a concept to be proven, it is an experience to be lived. Essentially mysterious and ineffable, our truest nature deftly defies accurate description, but makes itself known whenever we choose freedom, act out of love and stand in awe.

The following chapter will examine two expression of this transcendent nature; namely the phenomena of religious experience, and the process of religious growth in faith. Where possible, the experience of children and adolescents will be highlighted.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. Ann and Barry Ulanov, Religion and the Unconscious (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 1-36.
2. Ibid., p. 82.
3. Ibid., p. 92.
4. Viktor Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 5. Frankl criticizes the pansexualism of psychoanalysis for making a caricature of human nature.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 161.
7. Frankl uses the term psychotherapy to refer to the school of humanistic psychology, which he complains, wrongly presumes the membership of Logotherapy. See The Unheard Cry for Meaning. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 64.
8. Ibid., pp. 66-69.
9. Ibid., p. 78.
10. Ibid., p. 82.
11. Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, p. 97.
12. Frankl, Unheard Cry for Meaning, pp. 44-63.
13. Ibid., p. 97.
14. Louis Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 18-30.
15. Ibid., p. 36.

16. Ibid., p. 45.
17. Ibid., p. 104.
18. Nikolai Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom translated from the Russian by R.M. French, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 45.
19. Ibid., pp. 20-58.
20. Ibid., p. 60.
21. Ibid., pp. 59-67.
22. See Thomas Khun's seminal work , The Structure of Scientific Revolutions vol. 2, no. 2, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), for a fuller account of how paradigms shift.
23. The reader may also see Capra's second work in this same area entitled The Turning Point (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).
24. Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1975) pp. 21-31.
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27. Ibid., pp. 65-145.
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29. John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology , second edition, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 230.
30. Abraham Joshua Heschel, God in Search of Man (New York: Meridian Books Inc., and The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), p. 33.
31. Ibid., p. 43.

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33. Ibid., p. 160.
34. Ibid., p. 113.
35. Goswami, p. 11.

## Chapter Four

### The Nature of the Religious Response

#### 1. Aim

The previous chapter was concerned with the arguments for the transcendent nature of persons. The present chapter assumes this transcendent quality as its premise. That we are material and spiritual beings is the present starting point. The concern turns now to how this spiritual nature is manifested. The aim of chapter four will be to highlight two particular religious responses; namely the religious experience and the process of religious growth. What is the nature of the religious experience and in what way do faith and spiritual consciousness develop?

#### 2 The Religious Response

The term 'religious response' is used to describe a wide continuum of possible human reactions, (such as thinking, feeling, knowing, believing, doing or worshipping) to a perceived transcendent reality. From the barely religious, to the saintly actions of the most devout, human beings have responded to a perceived presence, a sense of Ultimate Being or a transcendent reality, forming a higher order within which this world and life finds its meaning. From the simple prayer of a child to the elaborate Hindu 'Kumba Mela' ritual,

performed once every two hundred years, when the alignment of the stars is believed to bestow the Ganges river with extraordinary, spiritual power to cleanse the soul, the religious response of the human being is the recognition of and reaction to a perceived transcendent reality.

### 3. The Religious Experience

I have chosen to examine the phenomena of religious experience because of its uniqueness and its ordinariness. It is unique, because in no other area is the perception of the divine so palpable and immediate as in the religious experience. Bernard Lonergan refers to them as the peaks of the soul, or the *apex animae*. These moments, or states of consciousness or mystical states, as some would name them, are unique in their ability to remind man of his citizenship in two worlds. As Heschel might say, "God is asking you a question. Can you hear?"

However, religious experiences are immensely ordinary in a reassuring way. One need not be a mystic atop a mountain to perceive God's question for these moments can be found in the most ordinary of activities or places. It is said of Maria Montessori, that even the simple act of peeling a potato could provoke one of her famous homilies on the glory of God's creation and the urgency of man's responsibility to continue God's work.<sup>1</sup> Religious experiences are evident in people from every walk of life and at almost every age.

Marsha Sinetar, in her book Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics has as her premise that religious experiences are available to anyone who takes the decision to embrace fully their most cherished values, accepting the consequences and changes in lifestyle that this implies. 2 Cultivation for the appreciation of the sublime is the first step to harvesting a consciousness that will possess the ability to be in awe and stand in wonder at the surplus of meaning in creation.

### 3.1 The Problem with Religious Experience

The notion of religious experiences suffers from a dual affliction which I have deemed 'elitist obsolescence'. The first part of this malady is the antiquated notion that religious experiences come only to the spiritual elite, the initiated enlightened ones. This point has been briefly dealt with above and will return later in the chapter. However, the most serious part of the affliction results from a worldview that denies the reality of the transcendent dimension, treats mystery as an obsolete notion and consequently equates religious experience with varying types of mental illness. Stanislov and Christina Grof, in their book Spiritual Emergency concur with Dupré's assessment that the mentally ill are symptomatic of a culture alienated from its spiritual nature. The Grofs rightly point out that "the mystical nature of many experiences in nonordinary states of consciousness puts them (the mentally ill) automatically into the category of pathology, since spirituality is not seen as a legitimate dimension in the exclusively material universe of traditional science." 3 If psychosis is defined as a

"deep disruption of the ability to perceive the world in normal terms", then the Grovs propose that perhaps the time is ripe to redefine our current thinking about the meaning of normality, mysticism and psychosis. 4

The paradigm of scientific materialism has wrongly disseminated its belief in the obsolescence of mystery and other spiritual realities. To some extent, the discipline of psychology is guilty of having collaborated. If psychology attempts to subsume theology and spiritual realities by renaming the transcendent as the collective unconscious, then the soul becomes absorbed by the psyche, religious experiences are replaced by peak experiences and God is, at best, a projection of wishful fantasies. In order to cure the notion of religious experience from its affliction, the transcendent dimension of personhood must occupy a central place. In this way, the first step may be taken in restoring the appreciation of sublime and the recognition of mystery as natural, human abilities that constitute not only our spiritual nature but the highest expression of our humanity.

### 3.2 The Nature of the Religious Experience

I have suggested that the the religious experience is a natural human activity of perceiving the transcendent and standing in awe of this reality. In this way it is both unique and ordinary because mystery is not hidden but available for all 'who have eyes to see'. Cyril Chiasson, in his Doctoral thesis, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and

the Psychology of Religious Response, questions the truncated way in which the discipline of psychology has understood religious experience. 5 Traditionally, religious experience has been viewed as distinct and extraordinary moments of reality where the divine realm breaks in on the human realm resulting in visions, lights and signs of ecstasy. Chiasson warns against perpetuating the false dichotomy of matter and spirit. Instead of asking, "Which are the significant data of religious experience?", the question should be, "Which data of experience are of religious significance?" The former question represents the traditional approach to studying religious experience as isolated moments of extraordinary reality. The latter question expresses a shift from Cartesian dualism to a view of matter as infused with spirit. Chiasson is not suggesting that all experiences will be religious ones but only that because of this shift in perception, (already advocated by Heschel and others in chapter three) religious significance might emerge within the ordinary realm of reality. If we affirm that the ground of Being is our being and therefore conclude that the transcendent is an integral part of human nature, we must also conclude that to situate religious experiences outside the realm of the human, would be like the proverbial man standing on a whale fishing for minnows or looking for God while standing on holy ground.

### 3.3 Religiously Significant Data of Experience

I have argued for the ordinariness of religious experience and against the false dualism of matter and spirit that perpetuates the

antiquated notion that these experiences belong to an isolated, supernatural realm. This being so, it still remains critical to any study of religious experiences to attempt to assess the nature of these moments. Two highly regarded works in this area are Evelyn Underhill's Practical Mysticism and William James' Varieties of Religious Experience. Though their approaches are different, Underhill and James agree on certain common characteristics in the religious experience. While it would be quite impossible to offer a structure into which all the religious experiences would neatly fit, it would be expedient, for the sake of understanding, to suggest the following common traits of the transformative, the transient, the noetic and the passive.

### The transformative

That religious experiences are transformative would appear to be self-evident. If we consider that the experience is essentially one of transcendence, of melting ego boundaries and an expanded sense of self, of being connected to an infinite reality, with all the peace and sense of purpose that these experiences bring, it would be difficult to imagine remaining unchanged.

William James speaks of the gradual and sudden conversion experiences resulting in a changed personality and a sense of being born anew. 6 This metamorphosis is brought about by a three characteristics in the conversion experience; namely a sense of

assurance that all is well with the world, the certainty of truth to the experience and finally, a seemingly renewed and beautified world.

Edward Robinson, in his book The Original Vision discovered that four and five year old children were having powerful religious experiences, the effects of which lasted a lifetime. Robinson and Sir Alister Hardy of the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford, collected the testimonials of more than 4,000 adults, recalling moments of childhood that may be properly called religious experiences. 7 Affirmations such as, "The most profound experiences of my life came to me when I was very young, between four and five years old" or "I just know that the whole of my life has been built on the great truth that was revealed to me then" were commonplace in their research. These experiences were both transformational as well as foundational for they provided a sense of meaning and truth that served as a source of comfort in difficult times.

### **The transient**

The religious experience is necessarily transient because the large amounts of emotional energy expended during these moments would be impossible to maintain. As well, the characteristic expansiveness of mind and restructuring of ego boundaries so common in these experiences could not endure without some danger to the psyche's ability to integrate the formative moments. 8 Stanislav and Christian Grof have researched this area they call divine madness and

have established a 'Spiritual Emergence Network' to aid those having psychic difficulty 9

### The passive

The religious experience may not be commanded and in this way is said to possess a passive quality. Preparation, in the sense of an awareness of the mystery, performing spiritual exercises and meditation may help in making a person more receptive but are no guarantee in themselves. It would seem that the religious experience has a will of its own and appears according to its own schedule.<sup>10</sup> William James has described the hidden psycho-logic operative in the conversion experience. A person's sense of sin, wrongness and incompleteness, combined with an intense longing to embrace a positive ideal, create a state of conscious straining which correspondingly releases unconscious forces. An invisible scene has been set for reconciliation, integration and healing of the divided self that is experienced as an intense, unasked for religious conversion.<sup>11</sup> Despite James' detached, psychological approach to studying the phenomena of religious experience, he did not take a completely deterministic point of view and left a margin of possibility for the action of the Spirit, or higher spiritual agencies, as he called them.<sup>12</sup>

Edward Robinson recounts of the experience of a young child observing a colony of ants and his sudden understanding that people were like the ants; unaware of the giant observing them, aware only of

their little piece of the earth but despite their small stature, a significant part of the whole.

*"I had the power to destroy or scatter it (the colony) and I was completely outside the sphere of their knowledge and understanding. And suddenly I was tiny - so little and weak and insignificant that it didn't really matter at all whether I existed or not. And yet, insignificant as I was, my mind was capable of understanding that the limitless world I could see was beyond my comprehension. I could know myself to be a minute part of it all. I could understand my lack of understanding. And yet, because there was this glimmer of understanding, the door of eternity was already open. My own part, ...became in that moment a reality...I was at the same time so insignificant as to be almost non-existent and so important that without me the whole could not reach fulfilment."* 13

This account demonstrates the unasked-for quality of the religious experience. The fact that children are capable of such profound experiences shows more than the passive nature of these states but call into question many assumptions about their capacity for comprehension and knowing at a young age.

### The noetic

The religious experience is said to be noetic in that it brings a type of knowing through experience, unlike the knowledge from discursive reasoning. The certainty of this knowledge is not questioned and as in the example above, may endure a lifetime. Consider the following quotes from the experience of young children:

*"There are moments of pure joy with a heightened awareness of one's surroundings, as if a great truth had been passed across...At times it feels that the physical brain is not big enough to let it through."*

*"At these times of knowing I did not see quivering colours, nor feel huge, nor hear strang inner hums; but rather I saw the ordinary world very clearly and in infinite details, and knew it to be all joined up, and all made of one primal substance or life force." 14*

These moments of insight and flashes of understanding are paradoxical in that they inevitably leave the person, young and old, alike, absolutely certain of the apprehended truth but unable to express what they know by experience. The ineffable aspect accompanies the noetic one like scent to a rose. Heschel reminds us that the ineffable is a synonym for hidden meaning and it refers to the correlation of the known and the unknown. This experience is the sense for the transcendent, "a dimension so real and sublime that it stuns our ability to adore it, and fills us with awe rather than curiosity."<sup>15</sup> The religious experience makes obvious the paradox of man's transcendent nature; apprehending the great truth and meaning of life, man knows that he know incompletely and cannot express that which he knows most certainly. Man is infinitely aware of his finiteness.

### 3.4 Connectedness: The Essence of Religious Experience

I have suggested four characteristics in religious experiences common to all ages. The highly personal nature of these moments make it impossible to affirm a structure beyond that which has been proposed above. Indeed, Sir Alister Hardy has attempted a classification model for more than three thousand accounts of religious experiences and admits that such a division is at best provisional and incomplete.<sup>16</sup> However there is one quality that while not present in the same way to all, runs through the accounts like a thread through a tapestry. It may be expressed as a sense of unity or oneness, of belonging to the whole, of connectedness to a reality greater than oneself, or of a harmony of opposites. This quality, which I shall refer to as connectedness, brings the reassurance of belonging and a vision of oneself as inextricably linked to all of creation. Alienation from self and others is perceived as illusory and terrible anxiety of feeling alone in the cosmos is left behind in the rapture of feeling that one belongs to something larger than oneself. The divided self is reconciled to itself, or in Hindu terms, the knower and the known become one.

The oneness of creation is at once a key concept in many of the world's religions as well as a visceral, ineffable experience of the mystics and contemplatives. It would seem that the sense of connectedness is a sign of a highly developed mystical consciousness as well as a trait common to most religious experiences.<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, the sense of self is not lost but somehow heightened. Teilhard de Chardin would say that 'union differentiates'. Matthew

Fox, in his book The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, explores this theme further when he writes, "Mysticism announces the end of alienation and the beginning of communion, the end of either/or relationships...and the beginning of unity...There is a unity in diversity, a diversity in the union of love."<sup>18</sup>

Bernard Lonergan compares the ability to love unconditionally with the experience of loving God because both require that the ego, or self, be transcended.<sup>19</sup> The religious experience is essentially one of being in love with God. This expresses itself as a desire for knowledge of God and a longing for union, both of which are satisfied by the sense of awe and bliss that the religious experience brings.

In many ways, this mystical bliss is comparable to the lover's bliss when joined with the beloved. The enchanting images of the bride and bridegroom in Solomon's Song of Songs touch our hearts with this ancient comparison. In the mystical union of sex, the lovers paradoxically experience a sense of completion, of being added to while also letting go and losing oneself. The religious experience and the sexual/mystical experience resemble one another in other ways. Both require surrender and are about the experience of love, both express a deep desire for union and possess the ability to make us whole, both can instill a sense of belonging and imply an authentic encounter with the 'other', and finally both can increase the quality of life and are distinctly human.

In summary, the first part of this chapter has dealt with the religious experience as the quintessential religious response, an expression of man transcending himself in an awe-filled encounter with mystery. Rather than the isolated experiences of extraordinary reality, I have suggested that religious experience is quite ordinary to the consciousness open to the sublime. These experiences are typically unpredictable, transient moments that transform attitudes, values and behavior in remarkable ways. There is a certainty of having grasped an ineffable truth and a powerful sense of belonging and connectedness that brings meaning and purpose to life.

#### 4. Theories of religious development

Human beings are most human when they realize their transcendent nature through love of others and love of God.<sup>20</sup> As with any ability, its complete blossoming is dependent upon a variety of factors such as a nurturing environment that reflects a daily concern for the spiritual well being of people. But what makes us grow spiritually? How do we best encourage and guide this innate religious response? Before these questions may be answered, another must be asked. How does the human being develop religiously and grow in faith? The following section will examine the contributions of Pierre Babin, James Fowler, and Sam Keen to this area of religious development.

#### 4.1 The difficulties with theories

Many developmental theorists, are indebted to the ground-breaking work of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson for the concept of religious development as a process of growth through distinct stages, characterized by psychological and cognitive development. However, there is much divergence in this area and it would seem to be impossible to agree upon a meta-theory or a uniform model encompassing the different perspectives. William Rogers suggests that this difficulty in agreement regarding the nature of religious development is inherent to the notion of truth itself. Consider the nature of a penny. To an economist, a metallurgist and a small child, the 'truth' of the penny is described according to their particular concerns and perspectives. The analysis of the penny, be it functional, in terms of its buying power or magical, in terms of its ability to procure candy, is determined by the conceptual framework of the person involved in its analysis. 21

Consider also, the parable of the devil and his colleague, who were taking a leisurely stroll one day, while discussing the recent successes in their work. A man walking towards the pair, spied Truth lying in the gutter and bent down to pick it up. The man shoved Truth into his pocket and scurried off towards home. "Master!", the devil's colleague cried out, "Did you see that? What are we to do? If we don't intervene, this man will undo all our fine work!" The devil grinned a sly grin, as only he can do, and replied assuringly, "Don't worry my

good friend. We shall follow the man home and help him organize, apply and categorize the Truth he has found.

Instead of a meta-theory for religious development, perhaps teachers of religion would be better served by a metaphor borrowed from Maria Montessori. Children are like plants, growing in the sun and flourishing with the proper nourishment given at opportune times. Developmental theorists are like the botanists describing the process of photosynthesis. After much divergent analysis, the mystery of the relationship between the sun and the plant remains untouched.

It is significant that after years of researching the moral and spiritual growth of children, Robert Coles has resisted developing a theory for his insights.<sup>22</sup> In the same vein, Edward Robinson expresses hesitance at the dismantling of childhood as if it consisted of analyzable sub-components.<sup>23</sup> According to him, Piaget's view of childhood was limited and paternalistic. Subsequent theories of religious development in the Piagetian cognitive-developmental style are to be suspect, in Robinson's opinion, for their unquestioning assumptions of the superiority of adult reality over the inferior perceptions of the child.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, the transformative power of the religious experience that may not be commanded, predetermined, plotted or even expressed in words, remains homeless in the religious development theories, with the brave exception of Sam Keen. It would seem that the mystery of man's transcendent nature defies classification. In the end, the different theories of how and why

people develop religiously would seem to be, at best, partial and not definitive descriptions.

#### 4.2 Pierre Babin and the adolescent crisis of faith

Pierre Babin studied adolescents in France for many years and concluded that adolescence marks a crisis in the process of growth. This was a period of moral, spiritual, intellectual and psychological change; a time during which the demands on the adults was exacting. The natural inclination of the adolescent towards idealism and his innate sense of the sacred, coupled with the absence of effective modeling of spiritual values by adults, leaves them prey, Babin believes, to the ambivalence of their natural instincts <sup>25</sup>

There are three factors predisposing the adolescents growth in faith; their sense of the sacred, their moral life and need for redemption, (wholeness or healing). According to Babin, the adolescent may come to an indirect experience of the sacred a variety of ways for he possesses a natural tendency towards the absolute, as witnessed in his love of extremes. Also, the adolescent's entrance into the mysterious world of love and sex, coupled with a tendency towards pantheism and a deep reverence for nature, all predispose the teenager towards the sacred. Furthermore, his insecurity about his position in the world naturally makes him desire to reach towards ideals so as to feel God.<sup>26</sup> A second factor in the adolescent's religious growth is the powerful impetus of moral aspirations, such as a desire

for truth and justice. Babin sees this as a natural consequence of the pursuit of the ideal self which characterizes this period. Despite their apparent rejection of law and authority, because of its seemingly arbitrary, 'externally-imposed' nature, adolescents are capable of loving the law, especially those recognized as necessary for personal success. Finally, the third factor predisposing the adolescent in religious growth is an acute awareness of their failures, moral weakness and need for redemption. Babin underlines the importance of this awareness for it may lead either to humble conversion or to proud rebellion and rejection of spiritual help. This critical time is what Babin refers to as the fundamental ambiguity of the adolescent because he may just as easily embrace, more fully, his faith or he may reject it completely. Adults have a critical part to play in faithfully modeling transcendental values if the general religious education is to be fruitful. If the adult society fails to transparently actualize spiritual principles in their daily lives, the message they send to adolescents is one of hypocrisy, thus adding to adolescent scepticism and rejection of their faith.<sup>27</sup>

Babin marks three stages in the growth of faith, beginning in pre-adolescence, which he situates from eleven to fourteen years of age.<sup>28</sup> The essential activity of this stage is a breaking away from family influence and moving towards autonomy. Psychologically, the adolescent vacillates between the security of childhood and the strange new world of adult impulses, that pushes him forward, despite his fear. Religiously, the child seems to reject faith, however this is a rejection of the form and not the content. There is a growing

awareness of the discrepancy between what adults say and do, consequently resulting in a harsh questioning of the truthfulness and sincerity of parents. This is aggravated by the lack of convincing spiritual models in the adult world and tremendous pressure from his young peers. The adolescent will naturally tend to reject the parental world, with its accompanying values and belief in God, in search of his own identity and independence. It is crucial that spiritual values be reflected in the teenage culture as well as in the adult world, if a lapse of faith is to be avoided.<sup>29</sup>

In pubertary adolescence, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, the adolescent's reason and will is strongly affected by biological instincts and natural ways of thinking and feeling. This produces a twofold result; a) it confers superior powers onto the lower biological drives and b) colours his sense of the sacred with a type of mystical, sentimental pantheism. The new discoveries of love and sex tend to create a climate of fear and anxiety. Unable to discuss issues relating to sexuality with his parents, the adolescent feels isolated and closed off from God. The sexual and the spiritual are estranged in his mind. Directly related to this strong instinctual nature is a deep appreciation of nature mysticism and a strong, but sometimes unusual sense of the sacred. Adolescents will typically become pantheistic in worship and look for rational proof of a universal God, as they believe is evidenced in nature, rather than accept the God of history and revelation.<sup>30</sup>

During this time, the adolescent rejects all constraints. His prime concern, second only to his biological-sexual drives, is to assert his freedom. Babin says that he "talks endlessly about freedom, without realizing that what he calls freedom is in reality only a state of egocentricity and radical loneliness in which he adores himself as his own end."<sup>31</sup> Thirty years after Babin's study, his observations of the pubertary adolescent ring remarkably true. The current teenage fascination with anarchy, esoterism, parapsychology and satanism is typical of this age group.

The final stage of growth between seventeen and twenty years of age marks a turning point for the future path of the individual. No longer victim of capricious needs and moods, the intellect emerges victorious and the chaos of puberty subsides. The earlier drive to be different, is replaced by a need to fit into the adult world of which he now feels a part. With his new found rationality, he expresses the doubts and corrosion of values and faith he experienced earlier. The problem of evil and the awareness of the failure of freedom pose serious moral challenges to the existence of God. The scepticism of teachers and the false dichotomy between reason and faith, science and religion, may do great harm to the young adult who is looking to fit into a social order, that seemingly holds no place for God. Instead of affirming or negating faith, the adolescent may refuse to choose, resulting in an incomplete evolution and stunted religious growth. However, Babin is an optimist and believes in the strength of adolescents. He applauds their astonishing vitality, sensitivity and audacity of hope despite the insecurity of the time.

#### 4.3 James Fowler's six stages of faith development

According to the theologian and developmental psychologist, James Fowler, faith is a partially conscious, complex process of making meaning. This universal human phenomenon is essentially an relational activity, implying trust, loyalty, attachment and commitment between persons. Individuals develop in what Fowler calls the triangle of faith; namely the relationships between the self, others and the centers of supraordinate value, or the ultimate environment (expressed by the Judeo-Christian term of the Kindgom of God). Faith is the action of growing, knowing and being, in we understand our relationship to self, each other and shared values and causes.<sup>32</sup>

Fowler is conscious of the lacunae in both Kohlberg's theory of moral logic, which does not include the fact of conscience or the presence of faith, and the Piagetian bifurcation of thinking and feeling, to which Robert Kegan's theory of ego development fell prey.<sup>33</sup> Both types of theories have failed to account for the role of risk, passion and subjectivity in faith building. Fowler claims to have solved this problem by focusing on what he calls the 'logic of conviction' (or the domain of faith) as a more comprehensive knowing, transcending but including the traditional focus on the logic of rational certainty. There are certain situations, or moral dilemmas, for which rational analysis and a clarification of values and options are insufficient because they provide no criteria for judgment. In these situations, it is the

conviction of faith and not moral or rational logic that enables a person's choice.

Fowler identified six stage-like positions, developmentally related in the process of ego-faith building. The movement through the stages is not automatic nor entirely determined by biological, cognitive nor psychological development, because readiness for stage transition may also depend on unpredictable variables such as the strength of faith and ego. The stages are the following:

1. Intuitive-Projective
2. Mythic-Literal
3. Synthetic-Conventional
4. Individuative-Reflective
5. Paradoxica-Consolidative
6. Universalizing

The first stage marks the beginning of the child's self-awareness and emerging awareness of family and cultural taboos, such as death and sex. The imaginative process makes this a time of fantasy and powerful images that express the child's sense of security of the world. The emergence of concrete-operational thinking is one factor marking the transition to the second stage of mythic-literal faith. The child of stage two appropriates for himself the belief system of his community of faith. The earlier imagination gives way to a more linear and narrative construction of meaning. Symbols are one-dimensional and

the child at this stage is unable to step back and reflect on the story's meaning.

As formal-operational thought appears, the child becomes able to reflect on the meaning of contradictions. His world now extends beyond the family and his faith is challenged to grow as it accomodates a new basis for self-identity and outlook. This synthetic-conventional stage typically appears in adolescents who struggle between peer acceptance and establishing autonomy. Uncertain of their own identity and unable to withstand the opposition necessary for an independent perspective, the person at this stage must learn to balance the authority from self (or conscience) with the authority of others. Values and beliefs are deeply held but not necessarily reflected upon. Fowler describes the stage three person as dwelling 'inside' their ideology or faith, because of the inability to objectively examine assumptions.

The individuated-reflective stage four reflects the successful resolution of the tension between the cost of being an individual and the acceptance needed from the group. The self, previously defined by others, asserts its new identity, independent of the judgment and reaction of others. This person is now able to relativize their inherited world views, making an evaluation of that belief system possible.. Symbols are interpreted in a multi-dimensional way, allowing for different realities and perspectives to add to their own faith. The new-found confidence in the rational and critical thought may prove

to be dangerous if the person falls into a second kind of narcissism, reminiscent of an earlier stage.

The emergence of the paradoxical-consolidative stage five is set by the disillusionment with the over-zealous dichotomizing logic of stage four. The person at stage five demonstrates an ability to tolerate, appreciate and learn the truth from paradoxes. The 'both/and' proposition, as opposed to 'either/or' thinking, may be entertained without threatening identity or faith. Religious symbols and myths are understood as partial and relative to the community's history however the person is not trapped in relativism but is able to make a faith commitment because of an innate trust that truth will show itself. Typically, this stage appear during mid-life.

According to Fowler, the hypothesized sixth stage of the universalizing faith is exceedingly rare because of the very real sacrifices required by the individual. These are people, the likes of whom the world enjoys only rarely and who generally incarnate such universal principles as love, justice and freedom. Their entire lives are dedicated to the realization of these transcendent values and their radical commitment to re-making the world starts political movements, as in the case with Martin Luther King or frees a country from imperial domination, as with Mahatma Gandhi. Fowler includes people such as Abraham Heschel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Thomas Merton in stage six.

Despite the saintly appearance of the stage, people at stage six are not perfect. Fowler admits that "greatness of commitment and vision often coexists with great blind spots and limitations."<sup>34</sup> However, in these persons of universalizing faith we see a total dedication to transcendent values that makes no compromise in the face of adversity. People in stage six are inspirational to some because they incarnate the spirit and the hope that God is real, but are regarded as subversive to others who would sacrifice truth for the status quo.

#### 4.4 Sam Keen's Stages of Loving

Borrowing somewhat from Fowler but taking an unorthodox approach unique to him, Sam Keen, in his book The Passionate Life, suggests a different understanding of spiritual development. With the passion of the poet and the discernment of the philosopher, Keen walks his reader through a dazzling journey of the human spirit, beginning and ending in the same place, with love. Life is a circle, not a linear journey and being a circle, the traveller leaves home only to return to the same place after a long trip. The image of the circle suggests that there is no real progress, because the dark side of our shadow is ever present and the impulse to do good or evil are near to us in the depth of our own unconscious. Neither can the journey be compared to a spiral ascent up the mountain because a child can be more loving than an adult. 'Progress' for Keen consists in returning to what we once knew as children.. Love is Keen's presupposition as he

sets out to ask normative questions, not descriptive ones, about the human journey.<sup>35</sup>

Love, or as Keen names it, the Erotic Quotient (E.Q.) is an impulse that links us to the whole, an ontological drive towards reuniting what was separated and the energy of connectedness. The force that propels growth of the psyche is none other than love. In short, we age in order to become lovers and the price of growth are the wounds of love. Conversely, the wounds of childhood map out the important lessons to be learned in later life. Matthew Fox, in an interview several years ago, said that the Cosmic Christ brings more than light to the world; he brings his wounds. Meditating on our woundedness can be the key to growth, wholeness and compassion in a universe where even divinity is wounded.<sup>36</sup>

Keen describes five discernable stages in this lifemap of the lover. They are the child, the rebel, the adult, the outlaw and the lover. The stages are distinguishable by their matrix which nourishes them and the boundaries that limit love. The first stage of the child expresses itself in primal bonding to the mother and to nature, in innocent play and powerful imagination. The self and the world are discovered through the five sense in an unashamed, hedonistic manner. However this initial freedom is soon thwarted by the invisible barriers of guilt and shame as cultural taboos are unconsciously transmitted. The natural eros of the child is twisted in the name of cultural norms and social adaptation. Anxiety, caused by the threat of abandonment, keeps the child well within the norms of

right and wrong. Thus, childhood becomes faulted and eros perverted. The child learns the lesson of conditional love, erotic poverty and becomes terrified of his own sensuality. The wound of love that the child brings to the stage of the rebel, and indeed the rest of life, is his insensitivity to pleasure and an inability to experience happiness. Keen calls this the 'normal perversion of anhedonia'.<sup>37</sup> The deprivation of love during childhood creates a society with a consumerist ethic, that objectifies in order to possess. Not being held leads to a grasping, addictive posture that experiences love as ownership and perpetuates the master-slave drama. In the initial movement of the psyche towards re-unification with the whole, the erotic impulse, or the natural instinct of love, has been suppressed in favor of conformity.

The next stage of the rebel may begin as early as the 'terrible twos' when the child asserts his will in a declaration of independence and continue into adolescence, as the child moves from the matrix of the family to that of the peers. The emergence of the rebel is healthy sign because it marks the movement of the psyche towards individuation, or wholeness. The young child learned to compromise his deepest eros for conformity to the rule of law, thus guaranteeing parental love and acceptance. The adolescent rebel is declaring his true feelings, desire and thoughts, that as a young child he learned to hide. By challenging parental and adult authority, the rebel is attempting to re-integrate the initial experience of love and union, hidden deep in his unconscious since childhood. This is the time of self-discovery through anger, romance and the love of ideals. The

passion of love affairs is central to the healthy development of the rebel for it feeds their love of ideals. Self-interest is abandoned and the instinct for adoration is opened as adolescent hearts go out to one another. The first sexual experiences bring the impression of communion, of re-uniting the self to the whole, of ending alienation and especially, a sense of belonging. Love, passion and sex provide the impulse to transcend the self because it satisfies the hunger for meaning and brings the all important sense of meaning to a typically confused and insecure adolescent world.

The heart will inevitably be broken its pain and disillusionment will serve as the catalyst for the quest of unconditional love. In the best case scenario, the young adult will have learned true compassion and avoided falling into the trap of the romantic myth that makes the lover a thing to be possessed. The rebel's spark will not be perverted by adopting defiance as a way of life and dividing the world into camps of villains or victims. Nor will the spark be extinguished by the fear of reprisal that creates the polite pathology of ultra-conformists. The rebel's fire will be the protection and strength the tender heart needs, as it fights for justice and quests its way back to the original experience of unconditional love.

The rebel becomes the adult by internalizing the myth of culture, adopting its official symbols and playing according to the rules of the game. As the rebel increasingly adapts to the body politic and adopts the 'consensus reality' or prevailing ideology, the status of adult is conferred. The rebel's matrix of his peers is replaced for the larger

matrix of culture, social, political and corporate ideology. The romance of youth fertilizes itself in marriage and offspring, as men and women deepen their bonds and connections. The perversion of the adult stage lies in the danger of an over-identification of self with the group. As with the adolescent rebel, the influence of the group is very powerful. However, the rebel's saving grace is the 'eros factor' or the urge for romance and passion, that expresses itself in adoration of the beloved. The adult's trap lies in replacing adoration of the beloved for the adoration of the group. In the drive towards normality and acceptance in the group, the adult may sacrifice love of spouse and children, for love of job and work. Typically, this stage produces a mentality that divides the human community into two antagonistic groups of 'us' and 'them'. Keen calls this erotic crippling and perversity of normality that defines belonging in terms of negation of others and fear of differences. The instinctual impulse to love and compassion is crippled by the adult consciousness that has limited belonging to a cultural group and consequently alienated 'all those who are not like us'. This consensual paranoia that Keen describes as typical of the adult consciousness is easily seen in the soldier who massacres because he is 'just following orders' or the anti-abortion activist who would shoot the doctor to save the life of the fetus.

The liberation from the perversity of normality comes when the adult, with the courage of the hero, begins the solitary journey outside the social consensus. Initially declared as the enemy, a heretic and a rule-breaker, the outlaw may eventually be recognized as the new cultural hero or heroine and unwillingly become the center of a new

cult. Keen compares the birth of the outlaw to the flight of the flying fish; leaping over the water, the fish becomes conscious of having been unconscious of the water and discovers air as an alternative. Propelled by the spirit of love and the desire to be autonomous, the outlaw moves outside the consensual reality. The outlaw is moved by his deepest impulses towards authenticity recognizes the authority of personal conscience over laws and social norms. However outlaw's matrix, his inner world and personal conscience, may also become his trap and the perversion of this stage if he falls prey to diseased individualism.

The lover is the outlaw that has realized the terrible paradox; the ego must die to itself if the true self is to emerge. The path to wholeness leads to the cross and the lover is the resurrection of the crucified outlaw. The wounds of love, once experienced as an alienating void are now felt as the mystery of compassion that binds us to the holy. The lover is the mystic who willingly forgets the ego for the rewards of self-transcendence. The rewards are great; the glimpse of unity and the experience of connectedness between self, others and the cosmos. This is not a static state, but one that is constantly re-created and may happen thousands of times in a lifetime and always in the twinkling of an eye.

The lover returns to the original experience of unity and connectedness by recognizing his partialness and the illusion of separateness. Keen refers to this as the 'big paradox', the experience that the self is both unique and an integral part of the whole, "that the

self, like light, is simultaneously a particle and a wave. The outlaw sees the self as an autonomous center in a Newtonian world; the lover experiences the self as a vibratory event within a quantum world - a spirit".<sup>38</sup>

The long odyssey from the original experience of wholeness back to the lover's unitive vision of connectedness through compassion, is the human journey of ego, to self and finally to transcending spirit. Every stage, or part of the journey, with its peculiar pitfalls and perils holds a different lesson for the emerging lover. Keen draws on poetic imagery and witty metaphors to weave a compelling story of psychological and spiritual growth. He also draws on ideas from other authors in the field. Robert Kegan builds his theory of ego development and spiritual growth around the idea of oscilation between inclusion and autonomy, a theme which is apparent in Keen from beginning to end.<sup>39</sup> James Fowler's stage four and five, the Individuative/Reflective and Paradoxical/Consolidative are apparent in Keen's description of the outlaw and the lover. However, to some extent, it may be said that the theories resemble one another because in their similarities, we see a glimmer of truth about human religious growth. The self and its belief system does not exist, live and grow in isolation but rather will always search to understand itself in relation to both the human and transcendent other.

Keen's original contribution lies in his situating the drive behind the growth to wholeness as a movement of the spirit towards the ecstatic experience of love. Although his starting point is the child and

the end point is the lover. Keen acknowledges the possibility of the shock of wonder and the glimpse of unity all throughout the stages. The quantum shift in consciousness from the mythical to the mystical is possible because of the action of the spirit and an encounter with the holy. The journey towards wholeness and love is circular, not linear. Abraham Maslow's pyramid of the hierarchy of needs and self-development ending in self-realization is replaced by the circle of compassion and the energy of love that is essentially indefinable but defines us all.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to examine the nature of the religious response and its development. It was suggested that a meta-theory of development was problematic and undesirable because human nature, with its qualities of freedom and transcendence is inherently indefinable. Spirit resists classification but welcomes poetic descriptions and metaphors.

The contributions of Pierre Babin, James Fowler and Sam Keen were discussed as partial metaphors of spiritual growth. Babin identified the adolescent sense of the sacred and intense moral idealism as important factors in the growth of the religious faith. Awareness of personal limitations and moral weakness, make the teenager ripe for a conversion of faith. Babin is courageous in his analysis for he places partial blame for the adolescent's turning away

from God, on the shoulders of the adults who fail to model transcendent values.

James Fowler situates religious growth in the process of meaning-making and faith commitments. Faith is a mode of being and knowing, a way to make sense of the world and give purpose to our life that is grounded in our relationship with others. The triangle of self, other and shared values is the matrix within which the self grows to maturity. Movement through the stages is a complex dance of biology, cognitive growth and psychological security as the self constantly shapes itself according to the meaning and sense it makes from life.

Sam Keen takes a philosophical, poetic approach to development choosing the terms metaphor and map over theory. In any investigation of the human spirit, a theory must always be secondary to the symbol and poetic image because theories tend to become creeds and cannot hope to be the final word in the complexity of the human transcendent nature. According to Keen, human development can be described as the drive of the psyche towards love. The initial experience of unity and connectedness is the beginning point of the child and the end point of the mystic-lover. The arduous and treacherous journey is marked by the lure of the illusion of separateness, of individuality and us versus them thinking. At every stage, the emerging lover is faced with the choice of freedom in love or a false sense of security in merging self identity with the group. Ultimately, if the still, small voice is heeded, the illusion of

separateness crumbles and the reality of connectedness emerges as a permanent perspective.

This chapter also examined the phenomena of religious experience as a quintessential expression of man's transcendental nature. In the religious experience, the human being responds to a perceived dimension, to a question being asked of him. Abraham Heschel said that the experience of wonder was man's awareness of God's question.<sup>40</sup> It was also suggested that this experience of awe and wonder was ordinary and integral to human consciousness rather than miraculous and isolated moments of a supernatural reality. The religious experience was shown to be possible at any age and its insights preserved well into adult life. Finally, the experience of connectedness and unity, of harmony and belonging bring a sense of purpose and meaning to life that appears as a frequent theme in mystical consciousness and world religions.

The final chapter will address the question of the transcendent in education. Drawing on arguments from chapters three and four, I will attempt to identify the constitutive elements in spirituality. Based on this, I will argue that the content of religious education courses be structured around the adolescent religious response.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

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23. Robinson, p. 17.
24. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
25. Pierre Babin, The Crisis of Faith (Montréal: Palm Publishers, 1963), pp. 26-54.
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28. Babin's study is more than thirty years and sometimes seems outdated, especially in regards his assumptions of the role of the church in adolescent life and the identification of the age of the stages. Most would agree that pubertary adolescence of this decades begins earlier than fourteen. Nevertheless, his general reflections of the psychology of the adolescent are remarkable accurate and timely for today's world.

29. Babin, pp. 80-89.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### HONOURING THE TRANSCENDENT IN EDUCATION

#### 1. Aim

This final chapter will propose an alternative approach to religious education, namely by placing the spirituality of adolescents front and center in pedagogical considerations. Drawing on the insights of authors mentioned in previous chapters, I will tentatively describe the nature of spirituality by suggesting four constitutive elements. Finally, I will propose that the development of spirituality form the backbone of any religious educational enterprise that seeks to make itself meaningful to students.

#### 2. Recalling the Mandate of Religious Education

In chapters one and two, different models of RE were explored. The strength and weaknesses of the various approaches were examined and Michael Grimmitt's view of RE as human development was offered as a possible reconciliation for the tension between the phenomenological and the existential model. Grimmit suggested that RE is concerned with 'learning about and learning from' religion. The goal of RE, according to him, is the development of self-awareness and a critical consciousness of the influence of various ideologies on the

process of making and holding beliefs. Since religion and education were essentially both ideological systems, the enterprise of RE implied an inevitable clash of ideologies. This being so, Grimmitt believes that religion and not education, should pay the price of compromise. Theology must not inform pedagogy. Therefore, the goal of RE is to acquaint the student with the great religious traditions of the world in order to understand the way in which belief systems have shaped the self understanding of the believer. As well, the student will be able to apply these same insights towards his own self-understanding and understanding of the influences of non-religious ideologies in shaping his own belief systems. An example of this would be the paradigm of scientific materialism that holds material and empirically provable phenomena to be the sole criterion for the real. In Grimmitt's view, RE could be instrumental in a student's recognition of the assumptions and beliefs underlying science that form his own beliefs about the world. 1

According to Grimmitt, RE is also concerned with the development of the student's spiritual consciousness, which is not the same as a religious consciousness. He defines the latter as "an internalized framework of religious meaning within which the individual consistently represents his or her total experience to him or herself." 2 It would be a mistake to assume that the spiritual and religious are the same and Grimmitt maintains that we question the assumption that awareness of the spiritual dimension of life is synonymous with or dependent upon, informing the students of traditional forms of institutionalized religion. 3 Although Grimmitt

places moral, religious and spiritual consciousness in a similar category because they are all concerned with 'synoptic meaning', he does reserve a unique place for the spiritual.

### 3. Spiritual Consciousness

Spiritual consciousness is foundational to being human and serves as the source of the human capacity to value because being human means making and holding beliefs. 4 In this way, the spiritual is distinguished from the religious and the moral as an irreducible category. Grimmitt suggests that spiritual consciousness is indwelling in the student's own consciousness. Firstly, he admits the possibility of religious experience in young children and the impact of this on their belief system. 5 Secondly, spiritual consciousness comes to the child through core values, which are essentially spiritual values. 6 Grimmitt believes that spiritual awareness may be developed through teaching because RE is concerned with the exploration of core values in many religious traditions. However, he is reluctant to endorse the existential approach to RE because of the problematic concept of religious experience as well as difficulties inherent in its pedagogical implementation. 7

Grimmitt concludes that spiritual consciousness is an inherent and irreducible human phenomenon that is the source of the human capacity to value, formulate and hold beliefs. Created partially by core values and partially by authentic religious experiences, spiritual

consciousness is evident in the very young and may be developed through education. In fact, its development lies at the heart of RE. This is a vital and urgent task, according to Grimmitt, because both the religious and the spiritual consciousness are in danger of being impaired to the point of becoming vestigial. 8

But what is spiritual consciousness? That it should have something to do with the spiritual seems obvious enough, but anything beyond this simple affirmation seems impossible because according to Grimmitt, the "odd thing about the spiritual is that it defies this type of classification." 9 Thus far I have agreed wholeheartedly with Grimmitt and have esteemed him to be among the most complete and philosophically thorough RE theorists that I have read to date. However, on this point I differ and suggest that not only is it possible to venture further into a description of the spiritual, in order to illuminate the nature of spirituality, but that it is essential to do, if RE is to be relevant to students.

#### 4. What is Spirituality?

It would seem a herculean and presumptuous task to attempt to 'define' anything so complex as spirituality. An introductory reading in this area will quickly reveal an wealth of insights, many of them varying in interpretations, of this quintessential human quality. However, I believe that at least four constitutive elements, belonging to the generic human phenomenon we call spirituality, may be

identified. The following is a personal contribution to the question of "What is spirituality?"

Man possesses a transcendent dimension and is capable of sensing this dimension in religious experiences that are both unique and ordinary. As an incomplete being, he grows towards an ever inclusive and more compassionate state of being. In this way, it may be suggested that spirituality is the heart-felt response to transcendental values. It is 'heart-felt' because spirituality is essentially an affective phenomenon that includes the cognitive. Charles Davis, in his book Body as Spirit: The Nature of Religious Feeling, describes feelings as total bodily responses to reality. A feeling is not an emotion for the latter is better understood as bodily agitation resulting from an affective state.<sup>10</sup> Nor is a feeling to be opposed to reason because it includes the rational. One could not have a feeling for a given situation if there had not been a prior rational appreciation of the situation. Intellectual apprehension is the first step towards an affective response and therefore, the intellect is necessarily subsumed in the concept of feeling.<sup>11</sup> Davis concludes that feeling is a broader activity than thinking and that genuine affective responses are in part, rational responses. Feelings should not be dismissed from pedagogical language because of our prejudice towards the emotive, but rather they should be understood as a different mode of cognition. Values are primarily apprehended by feelings. Abstracts concepts will be difficult to grasp if the student is fearful and therefore, affectively closed to the idea.

Nikolai Berdyaev also confirms that spirituality is about feeling when he says that "Personality as an existential centre, presupposes capacity to feel suffering and joy."<sup>12</sup> In order for the freeman, who has rejected both the master and slave consciousness, to achieve personality, which is the expression of the transcendent in the human, he must first suffer greatly. Acquiescence in slavery diminishes suffering and the struggle for freedom necessarily gives rise to greater suffering. Man shows his worth in his struggle for freedom and his capacity to endure pain for the achievement of this goal.

Spirituality, as a heart-felt response to transcendental values, is a form of knowledge different from the illumination of the mind. Father Bede Griffiths, a scholar and Benedictine monk living in India since 1955, has spent most of his life reflecting on common themes in Christian and Indian spirituality. For Father Griffiths, spirituality is the transformation that results from living simply and experiencing the presence of the sacred. All of life is sacred to the Indian mind, from walking, dressing, bathing to performing daily rituals. He says, "For me, the great discovery in India is the discovery of the sacred. Here one is still living in the old 'sacral' universe, which means everything to me."<sup>13</sup> The mirroring of God in everything and everyone becomes deep kind of knowing that cannot help but be transformative. Faith, (to be distinguished from belief) is the transformation of the person as a result of seeing the universe as a sacred place. This experience brings with it a desire to live simply and in harmony with nature and other people, in small communities that will promote this vision. Father Griffiths is encouraged that through

the findings of modern science, exploring questions such as the fundamental order of the universe, (as was briefly presented in chapter three with Amit Goswami), the efforts of ecological movements and the dialogue between Eastern and Western spiritualities, the Western world will recovery its vision of the sacred universe. 14

As a heart-felt response to transcendental values, spirituality symbolizes that which is most human in us and will therefore reject that which dehumanizes. When man is alienated from his deepest self and from authentic loving contact with others, when he no longer perceives the sacred as indwelling in the world and in others, then he loses his humanity. That which expresses man's spiritual nature, also expresses most exquisitely his human nature as well. This is the glorious paradox of *imago dei*.

## 5. Four Heart-Felt Responses that Constitute Spirituality

Far from being a complete description, the following is offered as a preliminary understanding of spirituality. Given the transcendental nature of persons, the fact of religious experience at all ages and the growth of self towards expansive loving, it would seem that awe, compassion, connectedness and freedom are essential elements found in spirituality. Among these four elements, awe is to be the single most important one in conferring the essence of 'spiritual'. The experience of unity, or connectedness, compassion and freedom may

all be claimed by the secular domain. Only the experience of awe, the perception of the universe as a sacred place and the touch of wonder is sufficient unto itself as a criterion for spirituality. 15

### 5.1 Awe: A Heart-Felt Response to Mystery

Rudolf Otto, in his seminal work, The Idea of the Holy, describes the numinous as the experience of the 'mysterium tremendum' that brings with it awe, fear, fascination, terror and a sense of our creaturliness.<sup>16</sup> Otto maintained that this feeling of the numinous was a primal element in the human psyche, irreducible to another category and arose naturally in human development. He cited the early religions in human history with their magical rites, beliefs in souls and spirit, worship of the dead and other evidences of 'animistic' thinking to prove his point.<sup>17</sup> According to Otto, the human process of development as witnessed by the study of history, permeated the rational with the non-rational to lead to a deepening of the concept of God. That which was experienced as numinous in a general way, became imbued with elements of rationality, purpose, personality and morality thus bringing the concept of the holy. The numinous first became the deity, and then God, to whom ethical qualities such as ultimate goodness are attributed. 18 Otto's remarkable conclusion is that the holy is an a priori category of mind. 19

For Abraham Heschel, the ability to be in awe is the cardinal attitude of the religious person and 'proof' of man's sense for the

transcendent. The insights and knowledge derived from awe are better conveyed in attitudes than in words because of awe's ineffable signature. Heschel would disagree with Otto that fear is connected to the experience of awe, for fear is the anticipation of pain or evil and this cannot be associated with God. Rather, love and joy are the feelings of awe. The person who stands in awe, aware of their creaturliness, desires to draw closer to the source of the presence of awe, rather than shrink from it. <sup>20</sup> For Heschel, awe is the sense of wonder inspired by the sublime and felt in the presence of mystery.

If awe is the sense of wonder, what then is wonder? Sam Keen succinctly describes wonder as the ability to perceive with reverence and love. This ability is not unique to mystics but natural in children and a prerequisite for authentic humanness. <sup>21</sup> Keen describes two types of wonder; the ontologic that asks why things are and the mundane that asks how things work. The pursuit of scientific knowledge is not necessarily opposed to wonder, as the following quote from the physicist Stephen Hawking illustrates.

*"Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?"* <sup>22</sup>

Mystery, also associated with wonder, should not to be equated with ignorance or that which is vaguely known. Consider the birth of a child; physiologically this event is well-understood but

experientially, it remains as mysterious and wonder-filled as ever. In mystery, the boundaries between subject and object becomes porous as is the case in some religious experiences. The object or person perceived is not a thing but a subject, possessing a certain presence. In mystery, the relationship between observer and observed carries an 'I-Thou' quality rather than 'I-it', as Martin Buber revealed so well. In mystery, it is difficult to achieve the distance necessary for dealing with the thing or person observed as an object. Keen compares this to the experience of being in love, where the identity and existence of the lover and the beloved become fused. Amit Goswami spoke of the same encounter with mystery when he suggested that consciousness and the material world were inextricably intertwined.

Awe, wonder and mystery, according to Keen, form the basis for ethics. If humanity had not been previously impressed with the wonder of human life and the grandeur of the soul, a reaction of horror in the face of violence and degradation, such as brings war, would not be possible. If nothing is sacred and wonder-filled, if nothing may be considered inviolable in principle, then ethics would be based on terror and utilitarianism; the value of something would be determined by its capacity to be useful. The primacy of wonder must be stressed for herein lies the human capacity for reverence, love and the ability to value subjects in their own right. <sup>23</sup> Heschel expresses the consequence of losing the ability to wonder when he writes; "...we have not only become convinced that we are the masters of the earth; we have become convinced that our needs and interests are the ultimate standard of what is right and wrong." <sup>24</sup>

In conclusion it may be said that the ability to be in awe is a natural human capacity that expresses itself when we are moved by love and express reverence for creation. The shock of wonder, (why things are or that anything exists at all) opens us to the mystery, which is perceived as a presence, or to recall Heschel, to hear the question being asked of us. To live an awe-filled life is not to be carried away in constant mystical rapture but simply, as Matthew Fox puts it, to live life for its own sake. 25 The experience of awe, stands at the heart of spirituality. It is that which moves us to prayer, fills us with the desire to praise and reminds us of our insignificance in the cosmos. In the words of the psalmist; "I look up at your heavens, made by your fingers, at the moon and stars you set in place- ah, what is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him?" (Psalm 8:3-4 quoted in the Jerusalem Bible.) Or in the words of Albert Einstein; "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed." 26

## 5.2 Compassion: A Heart-Felt Response to Others

For Matthew Fox, spirituality is the human growth process for which there is no limit, the constant expansion of the divine potential in us all. Rather than climbing up Jacob's ladder, as if down implied

bad and up implied good, Fox sees spirituality as the expansiveness that comes from compassion. Examining the sermons of the Meister Eckhart, the German Dominican mystic and theologian (c.1260-c.1329) Fox shows how compassion, as the fullness of spiritual maturity, includes both the consciousness of our interdependence (or connectedness) and a concern for justice. Spirituality, as compassion, is both mystical and prophetic. 27 According to Fox, spirituality is not a private affair, but as the art of living life deeply in love, it is concerned with the welfare of others and with justice in the world. 28 Caring for others, the ability to give of one's self, to suffer another's pain and rejoice in their joy, in short, compassion, is at the heart of spirituality. Not pity, but celebration, not sentiment but mercy and justice-making, compassion is both a divine attribute and a human one as well. It is the action that we take because of the awareness of the interconnectedness of all creatures in our common kinship with the universe at its Creator. 29

Jacob Needleman, in his book, A Sense of the Cosmos, understood compassion to be an attribute of consciousness in a conscious universe. He describes an encounter, in which he asked a strange woman for help. Witnessing her struggling between the desire to help and the fear of a stranger, Needleman was overcome by an extraordinary experience of love, the likes of which he had never known. From this encounter, he concluded that love must be understood as an objective, cosmic phenomenon if it is to be understood in its essence. 30 More than a peak-experience, the experience of cosmic love, according to Needleman, is proof that man truly lives between two worlds, the

divine and the human. The experience of 'cosmic love' is the moment when the human touches the mystery of the divine outpouring of love.

Love; the proof of human transcendence, the stamp of the Creator, the common denominator in our humanness, that which connects us and the only thing that brings meaning to life. Love is the song that humanity has sung since its birth and will continue to sing forever because it is the only thing that makes sense when we perceive the question being asked of us. In the pale pink light of a winter morning, dawning over the frozen human misery at Auschwitz, Viktor Frankl stood transfixed by the wondrous truth of love. He wrote; "The truth - that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of man is through love and in love.*" 31 Love is grand and sublime, mysterious and ordinary, of ultimate importance and available to all. From infant to octogenarian, love alone fills the void, propelling us forward in growth and providing the will to live.

Scott Peck courageously wrote a definition of love in his popular book, The Road Less Traveled. He defined it as "The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." 32 Love is not an instinct, rather it is a choice that we make to grow into a larger state of being. This includes the selfless love of others as well as the love of self. His definition is reminiscent of the greatest commandment for the Christian; to love God with all our heart

and soul and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. (Matthew 22: 34-40). This is the essence of a spirituality named compassion.

### 5.3 Connectedness: A Heart-Felt Response to the Cosmos

The ability to be in awe brings a sense of the sacred and an openness to mystery, which in turns brings the experience of love and compassion. The experience of connectedness is a corollary to compassion. Empathy and reciprocity enables us to imagine what it must feel like to be the other. The commandment of 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' is the energy of compassion expressing itself in reciprocity and connectedness. When the other is experienced as 'Thou', there is a recognition of a common humanity connecting us all and objectification into an 'it' becomes impossible. The military knows this well for the first step in becoming a good soldier to believing the propaganda that the enemy is somehow less than human. It is easier to kill an 'it' than a human being who resembles you in a shared humanity.

Sam Keen spoke of love as being the prime mover in the growth of the psyche towards the stage of the lover. Movement throughout the stages expresses itself as desire for unification with the matrix; the mother, the peer group, the adult community, the self and ultimately the whole. The process of growth may be understood as the tension between desire to belong, to fill the emptiness of the void, and the desire to assert the identity of the self. The lover emerges as the

understanding dawns that the autonomous self is paradoxically gained in union with others or as Teilhard de Chardin said, "Union differentiates." Father Bede Griffiths describes it this way: "in consciousness there is a pure identity, but in love there's never pure identity because love involves two, and yet the two become one. That's the great mystery."<sup>33</sup>

The absence of love that brings alienation from others and from self is healed by the experience of connectedness. This is a common theme in the writings of the mystics and the great religious traditions of the world. Salvation and redemption, the end point of many religious philosophies, salvation, is the possibility of the ultimate experience of connectedness; namely the union of the human with the divine. The ritual of the Eucharist expresses this well; by sharing the body and blood of Christ, the believer is united to him. Hindu philosophy speaks of the achievement of Nirvana, when the soul is absorbed in blissful union with the One. The obstacle to Nirvana is the illusion that the self is separate from the rest of humanity and the cosmos. Karma is overcome when the individual realizes that every action and thought will return to him in some way. Compassion for others is also compassion for self. The goal of salvation is achieved when humanity is reconciled to itself and thus united to divinity.

The experience of connectedness, of belonging to something greater than oneself, is the healing balm for the existential cry of "Am I alone?" The greater our compassion, the larger we feel and the more connected we become. Responsibility, empathy and the desire for

justice are signposts of this experience. Keen would say that the goal is to widen the range of empathy so that connectedness may extend to beyond our small group.(age, race, sex, or socio-economic status) to include the larger group of the human community. Both Lawrence Kohlberg and James Fowler include this vision of cosmic belonging as end points in their developmental process because the individual's concerns transcend the particular and reside in the universal. Despite the assertions of developmental theories and psychologists, the religious experience of many, including the very young, testifies to the experience of connectedness. As was the case with the young boy observing the ants, as cited in chapter four, the sense of belonging to the whole seems to break through at unexpected moments and is a function of wonder, awe and compassion. As we move out of ourself in the expansiveness of love, we discover our intimate and inextricable connection with others.

#### **5.4 Freedom: A Heart-Felt Response to the Truth of Spirit**

Nikolai Berdyaev, Abraham Heschel, Viktor Frankl and Sam Keen would all agree that without the precondition of freedom and the ontological category of the human spirit, development, growth or transcendence is not possible. If we are not free, then dynamic growth becomes static existence, love becomes possession and responsibility for decisions becomes conditioned responses or biological instincts. The imago dei in which man is created, that bestows the potential for transcendence, also bestows freedom. Man is

always free, even if it means saying no to God. The prophets knew this well and they also knew the price of their refusal. Jeremiah felt the fire burning in his heart, imprisoned in his bones, when he refused to speak of Yahweh. (Jeremiah 20:9) If love is the cornerstone of the house of spirituality, then freedom is the ground upon which the house rests. It is the sine qua non of the heart-felt response to mystery. Man must be free in his response, or else man is not human but a machine.

Star Trek, the popular television program about space exploration, describes this well. In one episode, commander Data, the robot-android speaks of his existential crisis when, upon first coming to 'consciousness' his creator informs him that he is 'just a machine'. Data's choice was clear; if he chose to believe that he was just a machine, he could never rise above his programming and fulfill his dream to become human. The robot-android chose to believe that he was free to transcend his limits in his goal to achieve humanness.

Viktor Frankl built his entire psychological theory of Logotherapy on this idea of human freedom. His experience in the concentration camps of Dachau and Auschwitz left him convinced that, in the final analysis, man is free. This freedom expresses itself in the spiritual responsibility to make choices for the values we actualize. Even in the most unhuman circumstances, when the body is in prison, man is free to choose the manner in which he will face suffering. Despite the inevitability of certain death, this freedom to choose brings meaning to life, however painful or short it may be. The Buddhist

truth that life is suffering may be rephrased as, 'life is suffering and suffering may bring meaning.' For Frankl, responsibility for making choices and thus, bringing meaning to one's life, is the very essence of human existence. 34

Freedom is the necessary condition for human existence.<sup>35</sup> If man is not free, then he cannot make meaning because he is incapable of authentic choices. In books and articles spanning four decades, Frankl consistently describes an ever increasing existential vacuum which he calls 'the collective neurosis of our time'. The prime symptom of this neurosis is a pervasive feeling of meaninglessness.<sup>36</sup> "Our industrial society is out to satisfy all needs, and our consumer society is even out to create needs in order to satisfy them; but the most human of all needs, the need to see a meaning in one's life - remains unsatisfied." 37 This existential frustration and absence of meaning has the three fold effect of depression, addiction and aggression. 38 However, this meaningless is man suffering under the illusion of his victimization and enslavement by the external forces of technology or the internal drives of instincts. His liberation lies in the realization that freedom is a part of his being, something that he is rather than something that he owns. Just as transcendence is an integral part of human nature, so too is freedom. In the movement to re-sacralize the world, that Father Bede Griffiths spoke of, humanity will surely realize that the model of the machine and the rat do him no justice and that his salvation lies in his freedom to respond to the world with reverence and compassion. .

## 6. Teaching for the Development of Spirituality

There are many RE theorists who would not agree that the goal of RE should be the development of the heart-felt response to mystery, to others, to the cosmos and to the truth of the spirit. Some might disagree for fear that the task would be too difficult. Others might be dissuaded fearing an exaggerated emphasis on the affective and experiential domain. Michael Grimmitt would agree and in fact, the development of the spiritual, moral and religious consciousness is the main concern of RE. Grimmitt tells us that spiritual consciousness is foundational to the moral life and the ability to value, but he does not venture further. Consequently, his curriculum is based not on the constitutive elements of spirituality, but rather on key concepts in world religions issuing from shared human givens and core values. I propose to retain Grimmitt's idea of 'learning about and learning from' with one change; namely, the curriculum content would issue from the four constitutive elements in spirituality. For example, consider the Grimmitt's chart below. 39

| <u>Core Values</u>                                       | <u>Substantive Religious Categories</u> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. The value of order, meaning and purpose.              | - Providence                            |
| 2. The value of human life                               | -The Sacred                             |
| 3. The value of a just society                           | - The Law                               |
| 4. The value of an individual's right to self-fulfilment | -The Soul                               |

- |                                                                                                                   |                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 5. The value of ethical endeavour<br>and the necessity of exercising<br>moral responsibility                      | -Discipleship                         |
| 6. The value of commitment to<br>inter-personal relationships<br>and to the notions of 'family'<br>and community. | -Priesthood/<br>community of<br>faith |
| 7. The value of human spirituality                                                                                | Revelation/Worship                    |

Grimmitt has united the idea of human givens and core values to substantive religious categories and in this way, his curriculum easily lends itself to teaching a plurality of religions. While the development of spiritual consciousness is desirable, it would result only as a secondary effect of studying the key religious concepts. Consider the chart below, where the human givens and core values have been replaced by the constitutive elements in spirituality and substantive religious categories replaced by key concepts in religious thought. The effect that these changes have is to shift the emphasis from religious content to the development of the religious response in the student. The key concepts in religious thought may also be extended to include key issues in life. For example, teaching about the various religious beliefs surrounding animism, could easily marry itself to talking about ecological concerns, man's relationship to the earth and finding the divine in nature. Pierre Babin has demonstrated that adolescents have a natural attraction for nature worship. This natural religiousness should be emphasized by including their own feelings about nature and the state of the planet.

## Constitutive Elements in Human Spirituality

## Key Concepts in Religious Thought

- |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. <b>Awe:</b> openness to mystery,<br/>spontaneous stirrings of numinous<br/>emotion, appreciation of the sublime,<br/>sense of wonder.</p>           | <p>Worship, prayer and<br/>meditative practices,<br/>animism, belief in souls,<br/>ancestor worship, magic.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>2. <b>Compassion:</b> openness to others,<br/>empathy, reciprocity, self-sacrifice,<br/>desire for justice and dignity of<br/>persons, love.</p>       | <p>Love of God as reflected<br/>in love of neighbour, love<br/>as road to salvation,<br/>comparing ethics based<br/>on the commandment to<br/>love, Christ, the Buddha,<br/>other religious figures<br/>motivated by love of God<br/>and compassion for his<br/>fellow human being</p> |
| <p>3. <b>Connectedness:</b><br/>unity in diversity,<br/>union of opposites,<br/>openness to the cosmos,</p>                                               | <p>Nirvana, law of Karma,<br/>Golden rule, macrocosm<br/>as reflected in the micro-<br/>cosm, community, sense<br/>of belonging to the whole,<br/>Yin/Yang</p>                                                                                                                         |
| <p>4. <b>Freedom:</b><br/>openness to our true<br/>nature in truth, taking<br/>responsibility for choices,<br/>actualizing values, making<br/>meaning</p> | <p>the truth that sets us free<br/>human will and human<br/>nature, the law that frees,<br/>the love that frees,<br/>freedom from illusions<br/>bind, nature of the soul</p>                                                                                                           |

The existential model of RE assumes that because of man's fundamental spiritual dimension, the starting point for RE should be the examination of the student's own experiences because they serve as an interpretive bridge to religious concepts, symbols and doctrine. Some even suggest that the goal of RE should promote religious experience itself. Brendan Carmody uses Bernard Lonergan's definition of religious experience( being unconditionally in love with the transcendent) to argue that the goal of RE be the transformative religious experience of the student. 40 Despite the fact that the religious experience is essentially a gift from God, RE could facilitate the transformative experience by tracing a path that leads to self-transcendence.

In some ways, the proposal of this thesis, to teach for the development of spirituality by structuring the curriculum around its four constitutive elements, is not dissimilar from the existential model. It is true that openness to mystery, compassion, connectedness and freedom possess the potential for powerful religious experiences. The important difference is that I am arguing for the development of a spiritual consciousness via the constitutive elements in the phenomenon of spirituality rather than a religious experience per se. In so far as experience may be understood as a 'heart-felt response' to the transcendent dimension, then I would concur with the existential model.

Clive Beck has also argued for the primacy of spirituality in RE. In his article, "Education for Spirituality", he attempts to identify the characteristics of a spiritual person, having previously argued that a 'religious' person is not necessarily virtuous or spiritual. The essential qualities of the spiritual person are awareness, breadth of outlook, a holistic perspective, a sense of wonder and gratitude. He names other qualities such as courage, hope, detachment, and love as universal characteristics of the spiritual person. Next he argues that education for spirituality rather than for religion, may be key in reconciling the religious and secular concerns represented in education, because both the believer and the atheist may be spiritual. 41 Furthermore, spiritual education is interdisciplinary in nature and may draw on the best of various disciplines.

It would seem that Clive Beck has touched some important concerns but intends his article to be only a preliminary step towards a future discussion, for his development of a philosophical rationale for teaching for spirituality is superficial. What is needed is an in-depth discussion among RE theorists concerning the concept of the person and the role of spirituality in education, in light of some important paradigm shifts that question the primacy of scientific materialism and its tyrannical strangle hold on concepts such as 'real' and 'valuable'. If it may be established, as I have attempted to do, that the concept of the person must include the transcendent dimension, then the next logical step would be to honour this in the educational enterprise. Given that education is more than skill training and that schools have a higher mission than preparing workers for a work-force, it would

seem imperative that the spiritual aspect of human nature be addressed throughout the curriculum.

## 7. Adolescent Spirituality

Since the writings of Goldman and Babin, there is a remarkable absence of literature about teenage spirituality. Adolescent psychology and moral development, rather than spirituality, seems to be the primary concern of psychologists. Robert Coles has written about the spiritual, moral and political life of children. He has also written extensively about adolescents. However, despite his great insights and seemingly endless energy, he has had little to say concerning adolescent spirituality. One must wonder why so little is being said about teenage spirituality.

To the untrained eye, the adolescent might fit the stereotype of the counter-culture rebel more than the questing spiritual seeker. However, it would be unfortunate to be deceived by appearances and conclude disinterest on their part. Despite my lack of data and supported solely by personal observations spanning six years of experience as a religion teacher, I would suggest that adolescents are very concerned with spiritual matters. It might be suggested that the high suicide rate in Québec, the aggression and depression that teachers witness in their students is a type of negative proof of their spirituality. Their emotional suffering may be an indication of spiritual issues not being addressed. Frankl pointed out that the

neurotic triangle of suicide, aggression and depression was in fact a spiritual problem resulting from an inability to make meaning.

As well, I would further suggest that in order to evoke an honest interest in dealing with spiritual matters in the context of the multi-faith and largely secular classroom of the 90's, the subject may best be addressed in 'neutral' terms of human spirituality. In short, dealing with common human concerns such as belonging, unconditional love, human dignity, freedom and justice may easily be presented as spiritual issues thereby creating a bridge between the adolescent experience and the possible integration of values, beliefs and concerns from the traditional institutionalized religions.

Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan studied the transition of adolescents from the convention to the post-conventional stage of moral reasoning. They discovered that the identity crisis was appearing at an earlier age, without the background of necessary moral development and in the context of a questioning counter culture that offered half-answers to questions prior to their asking. Their conclusion was that "the adolescent is a philosopher by nature and if not by nature, by countercultural pressure...If the high school is to offer some purposes and meanings which can stand up to relativistic questioning, it must learn philosophy." 42

Jacob Needleman says that philosophy is the art of helping man remember the questions of meaning and sadly, he notes that "Our culture, our society has no place where the ultimate questions are

honoured as questions. 43 Abraham Heschel echos a similar idea when he warned that forgetting to ask the important questions was responsible for declining interest in religious matters and not science and secular society. Furthermore, religion itself is partly to blame for its own demise because its creeds become meaningless when it speaks more with authority than compassion. 44 I suggest that it would be a sad mistake to conclude that adolescents are not concerned with their spiritual growth. Rather, it would behoove educators to honestly appraise the context and content of RE classes and ask themselves the questions, "Is this course making a difference in their lives? Am I turning them on or turning them off?"

## Summary

This chapter has suggested that spirituality, though difficult to define per se, may be described by four constitutive elements. They are awe, (an openness to mystery), compassion, (an openness to others), connectedness, (an openness to the whole), and freedom, (an openness to the truth of spirit). Of these four elements, it was suggested that awe be the central feature of spirituality. Consequently, if spirituality may be said to be a heart-felt response to transcendental values and if spiritual consciousness is at the heart of the human capacity to value, then it would seem logical to assert that teaching for the development of spirituality be a central goal of RE.

This being the case, it was suggested that key religious concepts in the curriculum arise from the four central elements in spirituality. In Grimmer's seven core values, the value of spirituality has been given preeminence for determining curriculum content because, as chapters three and four have suggested, the spirituality and the religious response is central to human nature. To underestimate the importance of spiritual development in the curriculum would be a misunderstanding of human nature and the religious response.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. Grimmitt, (op. cit. in chapter two) pp. 194-229.
2. Ibid., p. 167.
3. Ibid., p. 184.
4. Ibid., p. 128.
5. Ibid., pp. 180-182.
6. Ibid., pp. 131-132.
7. Grimmitt warns that the term religious experience is ambiguous and teachers are not adequately trained in this area to help students understand the nature of their experience. Also, from the point of view of the atheist, this model is quite objectionable as it is seen to encourage indoctrination. pp. 187-191 in Grimmitt.
8. Ibid., pp. 134-135.
9. Ibid.
10. Charles Davis, Body as Spirit (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 2-6.
11. Ibid., p. 2.
12. Berdyaev, (op. cit. in chapter three), p. 27.
13. Renée Weber, "Sacred Simplicity: The Style of the Sage," cited in Dialogues with Scientists and Sages: The Search for Unity (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1986), p. 160.
14. Ibid. p. 163.
15. Hardey, (op. cit. in chapter four), pp. 131-134.

16. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy translated by John W. Harvey. (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 12-24.
17. Ibid., p. 124. It should be noted that the use of the term animist sometimes may be perceived as pejorative. Considering the great tradition of the mystics who experienced God's immanence and much as his transcendence, as well as the work of those such as Griffiths, we should re-evaluate the hidden message behind this word.
18. Ibid., p. 110.
19. Ibid., p. 175.
20. Heschel, (op. cit. in chapter three), p. 77.
21. Sam Keen, Apology for Wonder (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 15-17.
22. Stephen W. Hawking, A Brief History of Time (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 174.
23. Keen, Apology for Wonder p. 30.
24. Heschel, p. 35.
25. Matthew Fox, On Becoming a Musical, Mystical, Bear: Spirituality American Style (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 33.
26. Albert Einstein, "Strange is our Situation Here on Earth", cited in, The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990), p. 204.
27. Matthew Fox, Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation (New York: Image Books, 1980), p.46.
28. Fox, Musical, Mystical Bear p. 156.
29. Matthew Fox, A Spirituality Named Compassion and the Healing of the Global Village, Humpty Dumpty and Us (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Winston Press, 1979), p. 34.
30. Jacob Needleman, A Sense of the Cosmos (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1975), pp. 125-126.

31. Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 57.
32. M. Scott Peck, M.D., The Road Less Traveled (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 81.
33. Weber, p. 171.
34. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning p. 131.
35. Viktor Frankl, The Unheard Cry for Meaning (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 53.
36. Viktor Frankl, "On the Shoulders of Giants," The Educational Forum vol. 54 no. 3 (Spring 1990): p. 241.
37. Ibid.
38. Viktor Frankl, The Unconscious God (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948), p. 96.
39. Grimmitt, p. 131.
40. Brendan Carmody, "Religious Experience as a Goal of Religious Education," Lumen Vitae vol. 36 no. 3, 1981, p. 290.
41. Clive Beck, "Education for Spirituality," Interchange vol. 17, no. 2, (Summer 1986), p. 290.
42. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, "The Adolescent as Philosopher: The Discovery of the Self in a Postconventional World," cited in Twelve to Sixteen: Early Adolescence edited by Jerome Kegan and Robert Coles, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 177.
43. Jacob Needleman, The Heart of Philosophy (New York: Bantam New Age Books, 1982), p. 75.
44. Heschel, p. 3.

## Conclusion

### Consequences of Teaching for the Development of Spirituality

I would suggest that one of the consequences of teaching for the development of spirituality might be a liberating sense of empowerment that comes when one's deepest convictions and experiences are reflected in a social institution that wields tremendous power in one's life. Coping with the demands of school and making sense of a curriculum that often times seems irrelevant is an important factor in understanding the high school drop-out rate. Teaching for the development of spirituality would eliminate confessional, political and cultural boundaries in the content of RE, that often seem unimportant to the freedom-conscious adolescent. This approach may potentially unite adolescents in a common effort to emphasize harmony and unity in diversity when they experience the spiritual dimension as a common human heritage that bestows meaning and dignity to life.

It has been previously suggested that adolescents possess a natural religious sense and also have religious experiences. Given that the cultural climate is increasingly secular and many students come from areligious backgrounds, it might be feasible that the vocabulary and concepts necessary to express their innate religious sense and budding spirituality is simply absent from their language. Teaching

for the development of spirituality would enable them to articulate what they intuitively sense to be real, as well as to become more conscious of what they vaguely feel. It would also vindicate their deepest experiences. On many occasions, after teaching units on world religions, students have expressed, in personal conversations with me, how deeply they were touched by the native spirituality. On several other occasions, the appreciative remarks came years after the course. Celebrating the earth and living in harmony with the natural environment is a theme that resonates deeply within the adolescent heart. Perhaps their love of the earth is not a daily topic of conversation with friends, but it remains a powerful experience of love, connectedness and awe that expresses their spirituality.

Teaching for the development of spirituality may also be a help for students in the crucial task of making meaning in their life. If learning about the great religions of the world could resonate with their own spiritual growth, then they might be able to place themselves within the larger human community of persons looking for meaning. Students might see that their preoccupations with love, acceptance and belonging are not simply a phase to be endured by adults but rather an integral part of man's longing for home in a frighteningly huge universe, in fact, it is a longing for God. Their insistence on freedom could be understood as a healthy spiritual response to a developing autonomy and a safeguard against dehumanization. In short, teaching for the development of spirituality might become relevant to many other areas of life, not just the educational one. It may enthrill the adolescent heart to perceive a

world where mystery means simply being alive, and the goal of life is not in the accumulation of wealth and power but in loving others and living life as a mission.

### **The Future of Religious Education**

Many people await the shift from confessional to linguistic school boards with great anticipation and confidence. Others applaud the change as it reflects the secular reality of Quebec culture and will unite a diverse population rather than divide them along religious lines. I do not wish to entertain the political debate here, but would like to express a heart-felt wish that the religious component in Moral and Religious Education retain its identity and not be subsumed into Personal and Social Development or absorbed into Moral Education, as has been the case in England. The time seems ripe to revitalize the MRE program and to take seriously the complaints from teachers and students that the content does not seem relevant. What is at stake is nothing less than losing a golden opportunity to touch the adolescent heart and encourage the development of their spirituality by examining a common spiritual heritage of humanity. Effective government will surely recognize that the time has come to infuse and enthuse religious education with the power of authentic human experience.

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