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ISBN: 978-0-494-68707-9
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-68707-9

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Living on Breath and Spirit:
Spiritual Intelligence and Spiritual Journey in the Christian Faith Tradition

By

Maria Zinsstag

Master of divinity, Berne, Switzerland, 1986

THESIS

Submitted to the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

A Masters of theology in pastoral care and counseling

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Religious questions are of ultimate concern, since the meaning of one's existence is at stake. Religion asks about the final objects of a person's devotion and loyalty. Too detached an attitude may cut a person off from the very kinds of experience that are religiously most significant. But such religious commitment can be combined with critical reflection. Commitment without inquiry tends toward fanaticism or narrow dogmatism. Reflection alone without commitment tends to become trivial speculation unrelated to life. Perhaps personal involvement must alternate with reflection, since worship and critical inquiry do not occur simultaneously (Ian Barbour (2003)).

Abstract

In the last decade, one observes an increased interest in applied spirituality that takes into account the fact that spirituality has left the boundaries of religion. Psychologists and neuroscientists postulate a spiritual intelligence. As a scientific concept it adopts an etic perspective on spirituality. It is used in healthcare, management and education. It is interested in spirituality but not in religion. Christian spirituality on the other hand is rooted in a particular religion. Lytta Basset offers guidance for spiritual growth in the Christian faith tradition. Because spiritual growth is very personal, Basset adopts an emic perspective on spiritual experiences. This thesis asks how these two perspectives can enter in a fruitful dialogue and where are the limits of it.

Acknowledgments

I am very thankful to my advisor Professor Tom O'Connor at the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary who guided me through this thesis by encouraging me and helping me clarify my ideas in many dialogues. Special thanks go to the committee members Professor Colleen Lashmar who, as my CPE supervisor, shared with me her experiences and reflexions in pastoral and spiritual care, and Professor emeritus Peter VanKatwyk who helped me with his clear sight and useful suggestions. The Waterloo Lutheran Seminary is an inspiring place to study, thanks go to all the staff. This Master's thesis has been written with the financial aid of the Fondation pour l'Aide au Protestantisme Réformée in Geneva and the Service de la Formation Continue des Eglises Réformées Berne-Jura-Soleure in Switzerland. A thank you also goes to the two Parishes in Porrentruy and the Franches-Montagnes who gave me a year off for my studies.

Many others have discussed the subject with me and given me hints for literature and further thought for which I am thankful: Dr. theol. Clemens Frey from Basel sent me critical literature, Dr. theol. Gilles Bourquin from Delémont shared his thoughts about spirituality with me, Thomas Mattmüller, my late colleague and minister in the diaspora in the Swiss Jura mountains made me aware of the ongoing dialogue between neuroscience and theology at the faculty of theology in Basle. My two colleagues Karin Tschanz and Dr. phil. I Timothy Cooke have helped me to find a place to study in Canada and Elsie Millerd, MTS, with whom I studied at WLS has helped me with the printing. I am very grateful for all this. I also thank my husband Jakob Zinsstag who has encouraged me throughout the time of the arduous writing.

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Spirituality Rediscovered

I “stumbled” over the term of spiritual intelligence in one of my readings and was surprised that science would not only talk about spirituality but also define it more precisely as intelligence. The last 20 years have seen an increased interest for spirituality. Holmes (2007) writes that while “we are seeing a wholesale abandonment of the traditional Church and its historic spiritualities” (p.31), psychology, medicine and healthcare, education, anthropology, sociology, and business and the commercial world are now dealing with spirituality (Holmes, 2007, pp. 27-36). In the field of health care, not only clinicians but also epidemiologists who are looking at public health and do not deal with individuals but with systems include spiritual health and well-being as part of health outcomes in social-ecological systems (Zinsstag et al., 2010 in press). Since I started working as a parish minister twenty-five years ago, I observed an increasing interest for lived spirituality among the traditional Churches and Theological faculties.

The Rediscovery of Spirituality in Science

In the broad disciplinary context referred to by Holmes (2007), the concept of spiritual intelligence has been introduced by psychologists (e.g. Emmons, 1999; 2000 and Wolman, 2000 as quoted by Yang and Mao, 2006; King, 2008) and is used here and there in education (e.g. Tirri, 2006; Hyde, 2004; Adams and Hyde, 2008.), health care (e.g. Sagar, 2005; Yang and Mao, 2006) and management consulting (e.g. Zohar, 2001; 2004). The use of the term intelligence in connection with spirituality has also a strong base in neurosciences (d’Aquili and Newberg, 1999). However I found little quantitative or

qualitative research around the very specific term of spiritual intelligence: In 2006, Yang and Mao published a cross-sectional questionnaire survey on nurses' spiritual intelligence in a medical Center in China. Kirri et al. (2006) as quoted by Hense (2006) developed a spiritual sensitivity scale and evaluated it empirically. King (2008) evaluates the concept and refines its psychological viability by psychometric measurements. Adams and Hyde (2008) in a qualitative study using the theory of spiritual intelligence explored how children make meaning from dreams related to death. Kwilecki (2000) showed in a case study that the concept of spiritual intelligence as presented by Emmons (2000) is too general to explain personal religion. What struck me is that the discussion about spirituality and spiritual intelligence in these different fields takes place in clear distance from and sometimes even in contrast to traditional religions. Spirituality is being defined as coming from within and being personal versus religion being more social and outward oriented (King 2008). Koenig (2008) is one of the few who enter into a dialogue with theology. On the other hand, as far as I can see, academic theological research in spirituality does not necessarily seek to connect to the notion of spirituality as it is being used outside the realm of theology (Agnew, Flanagan and Heylin, 2008).

The Increasing Interest for Spirituality in the Traditional Churches

Traditional Churches and theology do not remain unaffected by the changes described by Holmes (2007). On the theological side, Sheldrake (2007) states that the definition of spirituality has left its Christian roots during the 20th century helped by inter-religious encounters on the level of meditative or worship practice. Peter VanKatwyk (2003) uses the term of spiritual care instead of pastoral care because "it embraces multiple spiritualities and bridges diverse theological worlds" (2003). In the

last twenty years, I observed a growing interest in spirituality also in the traditional Churches in Switzerland. For instance for several years already, the Swiss Reformed Churches in Switzerland offer a Master's course in applied spirituality and spiritual guidance (2010). But I found very few theologians (Hense, 2006) or researchers in religious sciences (Kwilecki, 2000) who write specifically about spiritual intelligence. Shuman and Maedor (2003) warn that spirituality is being harnessed for the sake of good health. Sheldrake (2007) in his history of spirituality, although showing how the notion of spirituality has changed in different periods, does not deal in depth with today's very wide use of spirituality and not at all with spiritual intelligence. He says that Christianity is challenged as quantum physics, genetic science, neuroscience and artificial intelligence are developing in a way that "(touches) directly on identity and human purpose and at the same time opens up different and unexpected ways of encounter with the numinous" (p. 209). I am trying to understand what people mean when they write about and use the *concept of spiritual intelligence and what is their motivation.*

In this thesis I examine whether the notion of spiritual intelligence can be linked to a theological view of spirituality and how they can enter into dialogue. Although I am critical about how science uses and almost harnesses spirituality for any kind of well-being, a dialogue between theology and science is important. As Agnew (2008) says, spirituality (quoting Schneiders, 1998) and theology (quoting Sheldrake, 2008) are transformative as well as informative. In this spirituality meets the concept of intelligence. Intelligence too processes information and tries to solve problems.

On the theological side it is with the help of the writings of Lytta Basset that I want to enter into this dialogue. After having served for many years as parish minister of the

Swiss Reformed Church in Geneva, she actually holds the chair of practical theology at the faculty of Swiss reformed theology in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. She is also involved in the training programs for spiritual and pastoral care. She is the director of the review “La Chair et le Souffle” (the flesh and the spirit/breath). The review proposes in its editorial policy “critical reflections (theological, philosophical and others) on the interface between the human condition and spiritual life” (my translation) and is interested in the interface between theology and anthropology as well as between spirituality and human sciences (Moser, 2006). In “With wisdom seeking God: The academic study of spirituality” (2008) which contains the proceedings of a conference held in Dublin in 2004 of scholars in the academic study of (Christian) spirituality, Lytta Basset’s books about psychological and spiritual healing are referred to as being bestsellers and the French newspaper “Le Monde” as quoted on the backside of her book “Holy anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus” (2007) calls her a “spiritual master”. For me, these four main aspects make her an interesting partner for the dialogue: her religious roots in a Church of the Reformation, her practical experience as a parish minister and spiritual caregiver and hospital chaplain, her academic interest in the interface between human sciences and spirituality as well as experience and spirituality, and her ability to engage a broad public in the conversation about spirituality.

Material and Method

The research is hermeneutical, which means that I am looking at texts, comparing and contrasting them. The texts I draw upon present research findings and theoretical thinking about spiritual intelligence and theological reflection about spirituality in general.

To understand the concept of spiritual intelligence, research literature was searched in existing databases: ATLA, Psycinfo, Medline, CINAHL, using the keywords “spiritual” and “intelligence”. Only peer reviewed articles were selected as were books written by scientists or such which seemed to have some influence on what scientists think about spiritual intelligence, like for instance the books by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall. I try to understand the authors’ motivations and goals.

To understand Lytta Basset, I read a selection of her books as for instance “Le pardon originel” (1995) which is based on her doctoral thesis and which lays the ground for her further thinking and “Holy anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus” which she has recently (2007) published in English.

Although this thesis is not about feminist theology itself, I cannot but use the lenses that have become foundational through the work of feminist theologians like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983, also as referred to by Kinast, 2000 and Young, 1990). These are the hermeneutics of suspicion and critique of patriarchy, the priority of experience of women and the oppressed and the hermeneutics of empowerment.

With the hermeneutics of suspicion and critique of patriarchy, Schüssler Fiorenza shows that exegetical or doctrinal givens are deeply influenced by the fact that for almost 2000 years, men held the power in the Christian Church. This power distorted for instance how we read the Bible to the point that female names were read and rendered as male names as was the case for Junia in Romans 16 (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983, p.47). Lytta Basset (1995) uses the same lense when she writes in her commentary of Genesis 2 and 3 that this text assumes that mankind is male. The text, she writes, is marked by the

patriarchal world of his author, a world “in which women are silently included (and therefore silenced altogether)” (1995, p. 210). Concerning science, Ian Barbour (2003) mentions that “feminists have analyzed the presence of gender biases in both science and religion” (p. 147) and how they affect equal access to research and job possibilities, the selection of problems for research “especially in biological and health sciences” (p. 148) and scientific theories and interpretation of data.

One example is the assumption by Darwin and his successors that competition and struggle are the main forces in natural selection....This assumption seems to have reflected the bias of male-dominated culture, which valued competition. Only much later was it recognized that cooperation and symbiosis are often crucial in evolutionary survival (p. 148).

Christina Aus der Au mentions that “(t)he fact, that the discussion about brain and mind is mainly lead by men is only recently reflected upon its implications” (2008b, p. 171)¹ and she critically notes that there are many neuroscientists who say that what we experience and how we experience it is the product of our brains’ activity (2005). Does this view reflect the same bias of male-dominated culture mentioned by Barbour (2003) insofar as it gives all the power of definition to an individual’s brain activity? Would a female-biased lense open up this view to the possibility that we are fundamentally relational beings? Aus der Au (2005) referring to Martin Buber (1922) says that it is the “Thou” that calls the “I” into being, the Thou being God. Without this call the “I” does not exist. The “Thou” exceeds what our brain can produce and, consequently, so does the “I”.

¹ Christina Aus der Au writes in German. When quoting her, I give my own translation without mentioning it each time.

The question is: Do theological doctrine or science have the power of definition about what is real over and against personal experience? Can they tell me that what I feel as for instance anger is not appropriate and should be suppressed and negated because it contradicts assumptions about what a Christian should experience (Basset, 2007a)? Can they tell me that what I experience has no relation to what exists outside of me but is only a product of my brain (Aus der Au, 2005)? If I can observe how the brain allows a person to make experiences, can I also tell how the person experiences them (Aus der Au 2005)?

Another important lense is the priority of experience of women and the oppressed in general (Kinast 2000). It leads me to take seriously the subjective experience of spirituality as it is perceived and witnessed by the individual and that cannot be falsified from an outside observer. For instance it pushes me to question assessments and measurements of spirituality in terms of mental health (Koenig, 2008) because struggle is part of the experience of spirituality (e.g. Pargament et al., 2005). How can measurements of mental wellbeing render the role and the importance of struggle for spiritual growth? Starting from her experiences as a hospital chaplain and from her own suffering, Basset is lead to challenge the doctrine of original sin as personal guilt and describes how one is *hurt before one hurts another* (Basset 1995). This lense leads me to give a lot of weight to an emic view of spirituality in critical dialogue with the etic view of it offered by neuroscientists and psychologists.

The priority of experience also leads to the hermeneutics of empowerment of those who would not be heard (Kinast, 2000) because they do not fit into a theory or a doctrine. Against the theory that the brain produces all that we feel and how we feel it, Aus der Au mentions that even people in a coma have “very basically a feeling of their experiences”

(Aus der Au, 2005 in a footnote). What they experience and feel cannot be reduced to how well their brain works. Still, the concept of spiritual intelligence can also help to empower people. In that it explicitly aims at the evaluation of spiritual experiences outside of organized religion, it helps people to be acknowledged and heard even if they do not fit into a doctrinal setting that claims to set the limits about what spirituality should be like and how it should be experienced. If, as Sagar (2005) suggests, “spiritual intelligence drives human evolution through its ability to transcend dogma and stagnant ideas” (p. 286), it clearly contributes to emancipation, freedom and progress. Koenig says that for clinical purposes a broad definition of spirituality is desirable so that “(n)o one is left out or discriminated against” (2008, p. 352).

Part of feminist hermeneutics is that a researcher should be aware of his or her location because it influences what one finds. Ian Barbour (2003) underlines that in research “we cannot separate the subject and the object” (150). Therefore I have to be aware of my location and bias. I am conducting this study as a theologian and minister who is working in one of the Swiss Reformed Churches in Switzerland: I am female, middle aged and married, middle class and rooted in reformed theology and church practice. I do not feel competent to decide whether, psychologically speaking, spiritual intelligence is an intelligence that is different from others of the multiple intelligences proposed by Gardner (2003). I observe that the concept of intelligence itself is young and contentious (Enzensberger, 2007; King, 2008)) and that the concept of spiritual intelligence does not find unanimity (King, 2008; Emmons, 2000; Mayer, 2000; Kwilecki, 2000; Gardener, 2000; Zohar, 2001, 2004, Edwards, 2003) among psychologists. I look at how people use the concept, what motivates them and what is their goal. I can state that

there has been a shift in psychology and science, especially neuroscience (D'Aquili and Newberg, 1999) during these last 20 years. Today many consider spirituality to be a part of personhood without which one would not understand a person fully (King 2008), whereas before, mainly following Sigmund Freud, spirituality and spiritual experiences have been highly neglected and have even been considered as a sign of sick personality (King 2008). I can ask how it makes sense to link spirituality to personal well-being, health and healing and where are the limits of this relationship. Looking at Lytta Basset, I will ask how a spiritual way or a way of interiority can foster a life lived fully. What are the consequences if Basset understands the original evil as something from which everybody suffers before he or she does evil him or herself (1995)? How can it be helpful to acknowledge that struggle and anger are part of everybody's journey into adulthood (2003 and 2007a)?

Spirituality is discussed more widely again in science and psychology. My bias is that for the discussion to be fruitful, traditional Churches and Religions have to share their view of spirituality and their experience of it over thousands of years, as it is theology that guards "the dimension of feeling and experience of the human existence ... in the face of science that expands continuously its power of definition" (Aus der Au, 2005, p.118). With O'Connor et al (2002) I would regard it as a big loss for all involved if the already existing separation and isolation over spirituality between the different disciplines would even become bigger. The languages and paradigms of the various academic or professional disciplines interested in spirituality are very different from each other, as Holmes (2007) observes. I wish to hear what other disciplines are finding out

about spirituality and I wish that others are ready to hear what theology has to say about it.

Hermeneutical research in theology starts with questions. In this thesis, I will address the following questions: What is the concept of spiritual intelligence and how is it applied? How does Lytta Basset as a contemporary theologian look at spirituality? Finally: What are the similarities and differences between the two approaches, and how do they confirm and challenge each other?

Review of the Literature on Spiritual Intelligence

The word “intelligence” covers a wide variety of human capacities and abilities. The concept is not even a 100 years old and still calls for discussion (King 2008). Some essayists and philosophers question it up to this day (Enzensberger, 2007). This is understandable if one considers the fact, that the IQ measurements were applied for the first time by the US army during the First World War (Enzensberger, 2007, p. 27). Psychologists too have realized that measurements of the IQ are far too restricted and cannot render the full spectrum of what makes humans capable to solve problems as Goleman (1995) suggest in the title of his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ”. Two years before Goleman, Gardner (1993) describes multiple intelligences. The concept of spiritual intelligence is a further step towards a broader view of what makes humans capable to solve problems.

Actually, the exploration of spirituality and spiritual intelligence happens in a context that is shaped by multiple faiths and by scientist’s interest in spirituality. The definition of spirituality has left its Christian roots during the 20th century (Sheldrake, 2007). Referring to the many academic disciplines, apart from theology, which show an interest in spirituality today, Holmes (2007) quoting Hay and Hunt (2000) observes that outside certain religious contexts spirituality is still inchoate, not yet having a developed language. Even where it is developing one, it is often doing so within the confines of specific academic or professional disciplines as for example nursing or business, where it tends to reflect the language and expectations of a particular discipline (p.26).

This means, that a dialogue among the different disciplines is arduous and important.

O'Connor and Meakes (2005) for instance are on the lookout for a new paradigm that can reconcile faith and research for the study of spiritual care.

The concept of spiritual intelligence arises outside the Church in neuroscience and psychology. D'Aquili and Newberg (1999) describe four association areas of the human brain which become active in producing the mind's spiritual potential which are a product of evolution. They say that problem solving is an important function of the human brain. Problem solving is also a key feature of intelligence (Gardner, 1993; Emmons, 2000; d'Aquili and Newberg, 1999). It therefore makes sense for Adam and Hyde (2008) "to conceive of spirituality as a type of intelligence" (p.59) or as d'Aquili and Newberg (1999) write: "The study of intelligence is a useful method for understanding the overall function of the mystical mind" (p. 75).

Similarities

All authors agree that spiritual intelligence is linked with distinct brain activity. D'Aquili and Newberg (1999) as quoted by Sagar locate it in the right temporal lobe and the right parietal lobe. Zohar and Marshall (2000) using the notion of spiritual quotient (SQ) mention gamma waves oscillating at forty-five Hz which "provide a means by which our experience can be bound together and placed in a frame of wider meaning (SQ)" (p. 76). They are "the neural basis of SQ" (p.87). Sagar (2005) and Hay (2005; 2007) too take into account the brain activity and the specific parts of the brain involved in spiritual experience as do Gardner (1993) as quoted by Emmons (2000) and Emmons himself (2000).

D'Aquili and Newberg (1999), Sagar (2005) and Hay (2006) mention an evolutionary survival advantage linked to spirituality and to spiritual intelligence.

All authors agree that spiritual intelligence includes problem solving. D'Aquili and Newberg (1999) underline this aspect from a neuroscience perspective. Emmons (2000) says that there is "evidence for spirituality as a set of capacities and abilities that enable people to solve problems and attain goals in their everyday lives" (p.3). For him "(a) spiritually intelligent person is able to harmonize earthly and heavenly spirituality" (p.19). Zohar and Marshall (2004) define intelligence as "the ability to solve problems and the ability to create strategies or to fashion tools that are useful for reaching goals" (p.62). They say that "(s)piritual intelligence is the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and highest motivations... and distinguish right from wrong" (p.4). For them the problem to solve is to establish a "sustainable capitalism and society" (p.4). Sagar (2005) sees problem solving as part of spiritual intelligence through "a process of holistic integration and transcendence" (p. 286). "(A)s the synthesis of dialectics... (the Hegelian Triad)" (p. 297) "it can be a path to integration of unresolved conflicts" (p. 286).

Differences

There are many differences in the details. D'Aquili and Newberg (1999) and Sagar (2005) link spiritual intelligence, and Hay (2005; 2007) spirituality, to an evolutionary advantage. Hay (2007) adopts Gordon Allports (1962) definition of extrinsic religion that is practiced for social reasons and intrinsic religion that provides personal meaning and seems to be linked with heredity. He says that in twin studies in Australia and Japan, scores on transcendence (i.e. intrinsic religion) appeared to be heavily determined by

heredity. “(I)t looks very much as if the skills of self-transcendence have been selected for in the process of evolution because they have survival value...it seems highly plausible that we are looking at a human universal” (pp. 85-86). The theologian Gilles Bourquin (2008 and oral communication, August 3rd 2010) observes in his PhD thesis that one can look at spirituality under an “evolutionist perspective”. It is based on the observation that the life of all biological beings can only subsist by recurring to internal sources (motivation, practical wisdom, will etc.) as well as external sources (food, shelter, collaboration, culture and anything that comes from the surrounding environment). By extending this biological principle to spirituality, we can regard it as a strategy for survival. In the face of uncertainty in this world it leads humans to entrust themselves into the hands of a superior source of life which gives them security.

Zohar and Marshall (2000) talk about proto-consciousness as “a fundamental property of the material universe, just as mass, charge, spin and location..., (and) that only certain structures, like brains, have what is needed to generate full-blown consciousness” (p. 88). Sagar (2005) links the evolutionary process not only to heredity (Hay 2007) but also to a “propagation and selection of memes, that is cultural concepts...” (p. 287). In addition he refers to Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious and to the morphic field mentioned by Sheldrake (1995) which can “explain coincident adaptation of a species at different locations, without any apparent direct contact” (p.287), an idea which has been accepted by modern biology. He also refers to Teilhard de Chardin’s (1975) “‘confluent synthesis’ of learning and evolution through a field that he terms the ‘noosphere’” (p. 287). The evolutionary advantage lies in that what is already there can be kindled into activity by exposure to an existential stress and is then

selected for transmission to future generations because of its survival advantage. He proposes “that spiritual intelligence drives human evolution through its ability to transcend dogma and stagnant ideas” (p. 286).

Emmons (2000) proposes to enlarge the spectrum of Gardner’s (1993) multiple intelligences by adding the notion of a separate spiritual intelligence, suggesting that it meets the criteria for intelligence and is different from the eight types of intelligences described by Gardner. In the same year, Zohar and Marshall (2000) divide human intelligence as described by Gardner (1993) in three basic intelligences out of which the various intelligences come. They are each linked to one of three basic neural systems in the brain. The three are first: the IQ, second: following Goleman’s (1995) emotional intelligence the EQ and third: the spiritual quotient, SQ.

SQ allows human beings to be creative, to change the rules and to alter situations. It allows us to play with the boundaries, to play an ‘infinite game’ (James Carse, 1987)... We use SQ to wrestle with questions of good and evil and to envision unrealized possibilities (p. 5).

They propose their own measurement tools for SQ (2000) which is different from Emmons five components. Yang and Mao (2006), exploring spiritual intelligence among nurses in a changing materialistic and former communist society in China, most of whom were non-religious, use Wolman’s (2001) statement that people have innate spiritual capacities and his definition of spiritual intelligence as “the human capacity to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life, and to simultaneously experience the seamless connection between each of us and the world in which we live” (p. 1002).

Sagar (2005) mentions that “(p)aradoxically, resolution of deep conflicts through spiritual intelligence can be associated with suffering before happiness is attained” (p.286). On the other hand, Emmons (2000) as quoted by Kwilecki (2000) proposes “that harmful spirituality is the result of imbalance, excess, or character flaws” (p. 45). He seems to have a tendency to link spiritual intelligence to well-being or even wellness and to exclude suffering from it.

King (2008) referring to differences and disagreements over spiritual intelligence says that even if further research will show that SI as a concept is not viable, it does not diminish that it points to a “universal characteristic of the human psyche” (p. 124).

How is Spiritual Intelligence different from Spirituality?

Holmes (2007) observes that although the domain is growing and maturing, defining spirituality is very difficult. On the one side, authors with a background in natural sciences, medicine and psychology, tend to use spirituality as a concept which is neutral and general, and speaks for all religions and all people who have spiritual experiences. In this sense, Koenig (2001) for instance states that spirituality and religion can either help or harm a person’s health. Based on their findings in neuroscience, d’Aquili and Newberg (1999) talk about neurotheology and propose the “reframing of theology from a neurophysiological perspective” (S. 163, see also Christina Aus der Au 2005, p. 107). Neuroscience should help to build a meta- and a megatheology which in their structure and content fit into and cover all religious traditions. On the other side, authors from a religious or theological background criticize these generalizations. They are aware that for instance spirituality is being harnessed for a “religion of individual health” (Shulman and Meador, 2003) which is different from how the Christian religion

views spirituality. They point out that the Christian religion stresses the importance of sociopolitical aspects and community as opposed to individualism, self interest and merely therapeutic aspects (p.73). Hense (2006) points to virtue as indispensable in the assessment of Christian spirituality. Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar and Ano (2005) are psychologists writing from a Judeo-Christian perspective. They underline that “spirituality is not simply a method of preserving and protecting people from psychological, social or physical harm. For many it is an ultimate value in and of itself” (p.247) and it includes struggle. Koenig (2008) acknowledges the importance of theological viewpoints such as held forth by Shulman and Meador (2003) and proposes that for scientific research, spirituality should be defined separate from mental and physical health, else the research findings are simply tautological (2001 and 2008) which means that they define and measure good spirituality in terms of good mental health. He still opts for a broad definition of spirituality for clinical purposes so that “(n)o one is left out or discriminated against” (2008, p. 352). McCarroll, O’Connor and Meakes (2005) assessing plurality in spirituality definitions, propose the criterion of “love... as that which attends to ‘otherness’ and opposes tyranny in all its forms...to discern healthy spirituality from unhealthy (or non-) spirituality” (p. 57).

The concept of spiritual intelligence is only recently emerging and therefore quite vague and as Holmes (2007) observes, the domain is growing and maturing. Emmons does not seem to have explored the concept further. Zohar and Marshall (2001 and 2004), writing for a broad public, use it in their one way but have some influence on others (Sagar 2005, King, 2008). Koenig (2001) in his comprehensive handbook about religion and health does not use the term. Sagar (2005), based on Zohar and Marshall is one of

few authors whom I found to use the term recently and to define it further including suffering and ethical choice because “(new) spiritual ideas may be utilized ... for evil as well as for good” (pp.286 and 287). He is aware that “(t)he boundary between spiritual revelation and psychopathology is subtle” (p. 289). He links spiritual intelligence to the heart-mind communication system which “generates creativity, integration of complex information, and resolution of conflicts through the process of intuition” (p.303). These processes are reflected on a chemical level. Mayer (2000) and Hyde (2004) ask whether spiritual intelligence is distinct from spirituality and spiritual consciousness. After a critical evaluation, Hyde (2004 and 2008) thinks that spiritual intelligence may be plausible, as “the human brain has evolved with structures enabling people to addressing issues of meaning and value within their live contexts” (2008, p. 60). He (2004) encourages teachers to nurture students’ spirituality in order to help them to develop their full potential and personality. King (2008) researches the concept and proposes a measurement scale to enhance empirical psychometric plausibility of the concept. He says that the acknowledgment of multiple intelligences, even if it is debatable whether they are intelligences or rather talents, is useful for teaching as it is calling for a variety of approaches to learning (p. 37). Yang (2006) does not critically examine the term but uses it with the aim to enhance and train spiritual awareness of self and others in nurses in China. Kwon (2008) writing from a theological perspective in Korean culture, compares spiritual intelligence with a “talent” as mentioned in the Greek Testament. Linking spirituality and spiritual intelligence, he says that “to possess the ultimate concern he or she must utilize spiritual intelligence” (p.583).

As Mayer (2000) points out, it is not possible to distinguish spiritual intelligence clearly from spirituality. Still one could say that spiritual intelligence is kind of a practical application of spirituality as a means of problem solving and in form of an assessment tool (Zohar and Marshall 2001). Its use points to the fact that there is a growing interest in spirituality outside organized religion in many different fields (Holmes 2007) and a growing interest in assessing its practical outcomes as either helpful or harmful (Koenig 2001). King (2008) says that even if future research demonstrates that the term spiritual intelligence is inappropriate because it might be more be a consciousness or a talent, this would say nothing of the presence of a spiritual ability set (p. 124). Furthermore he says that

spiritual intelligence... also accounts for a vast array of human behaviors, experiences, and attitudes. Spiritual intelligence validates a universal characteristic of the human psyche which has long been dismissed by science as nothing more than irrational nonsense founded of the fear of the unknown. This is by far the construct's greatest implication (p.124).

This is where I see the value of spiritual intelligence because it links the spirit / spirituality / mind to the brain and to bodily functions and adds to a more holistic picture of what humans are. D'Aquili and Newberg (1999) from a neuroscientific, Emmons (2000) from a psychological point of view, and many others show that spiritual or mystical experiences are not an expression of mental illness nor is religion an illusion, as psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud stated, but that they are grounded in the functioning of our brain and are essential for human existence and functioning.

Critique

In reaction to Emmon's (2000) article, Gardner (2000) points out that intelligence has to do with cognition and not with motivation or emotion and there are too many items falling under the rubric of spirituality. Edwards (2003) wonders whether there is a special set of problems which can be scientifically designed as spiritual and whether we can distinguish spiritual knowing (mysticism) from knowing about spirituality (theology). Kwilecki (2000) in a case study testing the concept of spiritual intelligence, states that Emmons (2000) "implicitly endorses healthy moderation over the full-blown devotion of prophets, saints, and saviors who set the standards believers are to follow" (45). She says that adaptiveness or effective problem solving must be defined discriminately because there is a "difference in spiritual and secular modes of conceiving and actualizing human potential" (p. 45). Mayer (2000) criticizes Emmons as well as Gardner commenting that "(l)abeling something an intelligence also raises its prestige" (p.48), and stressing that intelligence refers primarily to abstract reasoning and that "spiritual intelligence is not highly distinguishable from spirituality itself" (p. 49). He opts for the notion of spiritual consciousness. Hense (2006) writes that there are too many spiritualities living and dead, secular and postmodern and that one single scale cannot measure spiritual intelligence for all these various spiritual traditions. The measured items should be derived from the specific spiritual traditions and translated into scientifically measurable components. In her view, this is an arduous but possible and even most desirable task if Emmon's (2000) objective "'to use the instrument in a multicultural society and in cross-cultural studies' is to actually be achieved" (p.65). She underlines that spiritual experiences are not absolute and all traditions examine them critically as part of spiritual direction and guidance they

offer. Dryness, blocks, setbacks and even breakdowns occur along the spiritual path. Therefore the “lax querying of certain sensitivities...(which) happen to be socially en vogue at that particular time... can easily produce a halo effect...(and) may no longer have much to do with real spiritual intelligence” (p. 68). Similarly Socha (2005) thinks that assessing spirituality as higher or better is the task of the spiritual directors within a particular culture. He says that it is only possible to evaluate “whether a person’s spirituality works for her or him” (p. 599) in using criterions of mental health. He criticizes Emmons’s concept of spiritual intelligence because it restricts “the outcomes of spiritual endeavors to ‘psychological well-being’ or ‘comfort’” (pp. 599 & 600) and underlines that spiritual maturity can lead an individual to undergo martyrdom. To do Emmons justice, it is important to note that he acknowledges (2000, as quoted by Kwon, 2008) “that spirituality cannot be only functionally described as intelligence but that there is a nonfunctional quality to faith” (581). In the same time, Kwon does not question the link between spiritual intelligence and personal or spiritual well-being, when referring to Emmons.

Holmes (2007) critically mentions Zohar and Marhall’s concept of SQ as being “part of the much wider interest in personal uniqueness, the desire for connectivity, self-help and the growing spirituality of the human potential movement” (p.28). Sheldrake (2007) similarly recognizes some consumerist “live-style – spirituality” (p.2) that promotes holistic well-being.

I agree with the main points in these critiques. First, there is a tendency to merely associate spiritual intelligence with personal or spiritual wellbeing in terms of physical or mental health (Holmes, 2007 and Sheldrake (2007)). Second, there is a tendency that

spiritual intelligence is mainly a means to harness spirituality for a more sustainable capitalist society and for better health (Shulman and Maedor, 2003). Third, there is a need for measurement tools being derived from the particular religious traditions (Hense, 2006; Koenig, 2008) in order to have explanatory value. Fourth, struggle and suffering are part of spirituality (Kwilecki, 2000, Hay and Socha, 2005, Pargament et al., 2005; Sagar, 2005) and therefore spiritual intelligence has to address it (Hense 2006) and fifth, that spirituality has a nonfunctional quality (Emmons 2000) and has a quality in itself (Kwilecki, 2000, Pargament et al., 2005).

Theological questions

Hay (2006), a biologist and honorary lecturer and research fellow of the faculty of Divinity in Aberdeen, GB, states that the fact that prayer and meditation are linked with physical events in the brain, contradicts Feuerbach's (1994) statement that there is no organ for religious experience and therefore religion has no *raison d'être*. Feuerbach has been very influential in the development of secularism. Since the 1990ies, many scientists agree with Hay's observations. They propose that the assessment of spirituality is neutral with regards to traditional religions (Koenig, 2001 as quoted by Shulman and Meador, 2003) or create the new term of neurotheology (d'Aquili and Newberg, 1999). Holmes (2007) describes how his discovery that the Hebrew bible in Genesis 2 suggests a body-spirit unity has led him to a profound shift in self-understanding. "(T)his spirit-body model of human nature helps us to understand better that the contemporary search for spirituality involves all people being on a similar journey" (p.25). Whereas I am critical of an undifferentiated and all too generalized use of spirituality and of the danger of it being harnessed by notions of personal wellbeing. In the same time, I acknowledge that

the body-spirit unity of Genesis 2 as well as the fact that the Greek word “πνεῦμα” means spirit and breath point to the reality that we are all bound by the same spirit and animated by the same breath. In my ministry, this helps me to be more open to the very diverse ways in which humans are in search for God or the Divine. The field is wide and open and “the wind (spirit) blows where it chooses” (John 3,8).

I appraise neuroscience studies as performed by d’Aquili and Newberg (1999) and their conclusion that mind making is not arbitrary but grounded in the processes of the brain. I am critical of their proposal of a meta- and mega-theology that should be constructed on the ground of neuroscientific insights and fit to all different religions. An interesting point is mentioned by Christina Aus der Au (2005): the qualia. Qualia describe the phenomenon that “we feel” most of our interactions with what is surrounding us. These feelings are preverbal. Referring to Nagel (1974) she says that “(e)mpirical perception is not only accompanied by a specific pattern of neuronal activities but also by a subjective sensation of “what-it-is-like”” (110). Nagel (1974) calls it “the subjective character of experience” (437). Aus der Au says that this is the place where the human is an “I” and not an “it”. Whereas the “it” can be described by a third person (for instance how the human brain or intelligence works), the “I” can only be appropriately approached by the “Thou”. We are subjects in so far as God, the “eternal Thou” (Buber, 1923) speaks to us. This means that the experiences of the “I” can only be appraised adequately within a relational process. Basset (1995) therefore refers to the hermeneutics of testimony as an appropriate way to understand what the “I” experiences. The hermeneutics of testimony are relational as they underline that there has to be someone who testifies and another who listens. Theology therefore, by referring to the

qualia, can point to the fact, that there is a knowledge “which we cannot know in a scientifically descriptive way” (Aus der Au, p.115) and that there is the limit for what science can describe and define.

McCarroll, O’Connor and Meakes (2005) define spirituality as bound to love embracing diversity against tyranny. This is a helpful criterion to deal with the very diverse claims of spirituality and spiritual intelligence as love is not thinkable without a relationship between “I” and “Thou”. Love embracing diversity requires wisdom and meets Fowler’s (1995) description of the stage of universalizing faith which includes a “detached spending of the self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and violence” (1991 p. 25). This is confirmed biblically by the story of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11). It tells us that mega-systems contain the danger of the tyranny of sameness, and that boundaries and differences are essential for and inseparable from human existence. As a theologian I am an advocate for difference and differentiation (Basset 2003 and 2007). In the same time, I am aware that the Bible itself in the stories of creation (Genesis 1 and 2), and salvation as presented in Jesus word’s during the Last Supper (Mt 26,28) “this is my blood ...poured out for many (i.e. all)”, points to universality. There is tension between embracing diversity and keeping in mind universality. We can not escape this tension if we want to respond to what O’Connor T. et al (2002) talking about today’s interest in spirituality call a “turning point in Christianity”. They ask whether it is comparable to the turning point when Christianity renounced circumcision and thus became able to integrate other cultures. Similarly Hay (2007) writes that he sees “the current outburst of free-floating spirituality in the West, for my part as a practicing Christian, as the upsurge of the Holy Spirit” (p.90).

Bourquin (2008, p. 391) makes an interesting point in describing spirituality as an interface as it is fuelled by two sources that cannot be reduced to each other. One source is intrinsic and can be called evolutionist and the other is extrinsic and transcendent, culture and religion representing the extrinsic source. He says that for theology spirituality cannot exist outside the interaction or the encounter of the two sources.

Summary

Spirituality has become of great interest to scientific research in many disciplines as well as for many people outside the Churches (O'Connor et al., 2002). Neuroscience has showed that activities and experiences linked with spirituality can be located in the brain and are sane. Spiritual intelligence has emerged in this scientific context of body/brain-mind connection and of measurements and assessments of multiple intelligences (Gardner 2003). The field is in an early stage of development. Definitions therefore are still sought out and neither spirituality nor spiritual intelligence are clearly and consistently defined or used. In the Church too, "a substantial range of definitions has always existed" (Holmes, 2007, p. 36, see also Sheldrake 2007). It appears to me that spiritual intelligence is used rather randomly and in an unspecific way (Hyde 2004) in health sciences or education. I consider Zohar and Marshall as being on the edge of science pending strongly towards a "new-age kind of spirituality" (my words) but with a certain influence in scientific papers (Sagar, 2005, King, 2008). Since its emergence in 2000, spiritual intelligence is not further examined or assessed scientifically with the exception of Sagar (2005), Kirri (2006) and King (2008). The notion is useful because it points to the fact that spiritual experiences need to be assessed to whether they are helpful or harmful, but the assessment needs to embrace more than personal well-being and

include struggle and suffering. Aus der Au's notion of the qualia (2005) points to the eminently subjective character of spiritual experiences which cannot be fully explained by scientific observations but call, as Basset (1995) would say, for a hermeneutics of testimony. As a Christian I am challenged by this free-floating outburst of spirituality (Hay 2006) and need to dialogue appraisingly and critically with what scientists and people at the edge of science say about spiritual intelligence. It would be a big loss for all concerned, if the already existing separation and isolation over spirituality between chaplaincy and health care disciplines (O'Connor et al., 2002 quoting Vandecreek, 1999) and other disciplines like education and business (my words) would become even bigger. I wonder how it would be possible to conduct more qualitative studies which take into account a person's religion and derive their measured items from the spiritual traditions, translating them into scientifically measurable components, as suggested by Hense (2006).

Lytta Basset:

Theological Reflection at the Interface between Theology and Spirituality²

Literature Review

Lytta Basset is a philosopher and a theologian working in Switzerland. After several stays in Asia and Africa she served many years as a parish minister and hospital chaplain in Geneva. In the same time she taught at the faculty of theology in Lausanne and in 2004 became professor of practical theology at the faculty of theology in Neuchâtel. Lytta Basset is a prolific writer and her books are read by a wide readership. Several writers (Hourant, 2005; Salin, 2008) call her a spiritual leader in the contemporary world.

In the dedication of her book “Holy Anger”, she understands her writings as theological reflection (2007a). She sees a dynamic relationship between experience and reflection. Starting from experience, she challenges theological concepts and doctrinal interpretations of biblical narratives (1995, p.14). She shows how ambivalent human feelings and experiences are present within the biblical stories. In the acknowledgments of “Le pardon originel” which is her doctoral thesis, she describes her approach as pastoral and multidisciplinary (1995). In this she joins Sheldrake (2008) who writes: “The ‘vocation’ of spirituality is to remind theology not to become detached from the wisdom found in lived experience and practice” (p. 26). He states that theology always worked as an interdisciplinary enterprise and that “definitions of spirituality *explicitly* favour the notion that it encompasses all aspects of human existence, viewed through a

² With the exception of “Holy Anger” (2007) and a contribution in *Christians and sexuality in the time of AIDS* (Basset, 2007b), Lytta Basset writes in French. Therefore I will have to translate the quotes into English with my words without telling so every time.

particular lens” (p.32, italic in the original). Basset’s research and writings have a pastoral orientation aiming “at the personal journey of each member of God’s people” (1995, p. 44). She looks at the link between suffering from and committing evil, at forgiveness, meaning-making, the experiences of joy and anger, and at relationship and the need for differentiation for the sake of love. These aspects are similar to those addressed by the concept of spiritual intelligence (Emmons, 2000).

I will organize Basset’s thoughts under the features which are characteristic of her writings: First, it is a theological reflection, which means that experience is primary of theological concepts and challenges them. Second, the experience of evil, forgiveness joy and anger exclude reification but include a relational process of personal engagement. Third, God is the Other of whom we will never know the essence as the only knowledge we can aim at lays within a relational process, and forth, meaning-making and differentiation play a central role in spiritual growth.

Theological Reflection

Theological reflection starts from experience and not from concepts (Kinast, 2000). The starting point of Lytta Basset’s theological reflection is that the human experience of suffering from evil³ is primary. In her thesis “Le Pardon Originel” which she wrote as a parish minister in Geneva, she states that “(w)e choose to define evil not as what is evil (*ce qui est mal*) but as the evil which hurts (*ce qui fait mal*)” (p.93, italic in the original).

This brief statement is a summary of her reflection on evil of which I mention three points:

³ Evil is the translation of the French word mal following the use of both words in the Lord’s prayer: “Délivre-nous du mal” is in English “deliver us from evil”. In French one can play with the signification of le mal as the evil we do and the hurt we suffer from (“avoir mal” = to be hurt, to suffer, and “faire du mal à quelqu’un” = hurt someone and “le mal” = the evil). In French one can play with the word and its meanings.

First for Lytta Basset, evil is a reality as foundational and mysterious as life itself. In this respect it is original, belonging to the origin. Life and evil are contemporary (p.203). The origin of evil is not accessible to reason. There has never been any time or place without evil. “The good beginning (is a fantasy) rooted in the very individual nostalgia of what one pretends to be an ideal childhood” (p.98, referring to Alice Miller, 1981). Analyzing Genesis 2 and 3, Basset underlines that the garden Eden was not a paradise where no evil was known but a protected space already surrounded by a world full of evil (p.104). When God forbade them to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve immediately knew what was meant by having experienced evil (p.108).

As a second point Basset underlines that “(o)ne has to establish the link between the evil committed and the evil that strikes someone” (p.26). It is a terrible reduction and a dead end to understand evil merely as guilt. Because she understands evil as original and not as causal, Basset underlines that evil cannot be reduced to evil that is committed and therefore cannot be restricted to guilt. The doctrine of the original sin is only appropriate in the sense that it stresses the fact that all humans are affected by evil which makes them suffer before they do evil. It is inappropriate if it is understood as general guilt.

A third aspect of evil is that it cannot be explained by or contained in a logical concept (p.93). Suffering from evil puts into danger every reason and one cannot measure nor assimilate it (p.28). It is beyond human imagination (245). Therefore Basset asks: “Should we not approach the absolute evil from the visible point of the iceberg – from the suffering as it expresses itself....from the person who suffers from it?” (p.93). With other words, we have to approach it from experience and not from a doctrinal point of view.

The evil which is endured...forbids all conceptual generalizations...The reflection must flow into the experience (like into a vase), it must adopt the contours which the experience of evil imposes on it...On the other hand...without the reflection which gives it its value, the experience would stay hollow....awaiting desperately its signification (pp.15 and 27).

Because evil is first of all something humans endure, it is eminently subjective. This is confirmed by medical research about pain that says that physical pain is subjective and can not be objectified (p.94). This subjective feeling belongs to what Aus der Au (2005) refers to as the qualia.

For Basset, it leads into dead ends if we try to conceptualize evil. A first conceptualization is the category of guilt used in a nonspecific way, as demonstrated at the example of Job's temptation of either auto justification or self accusation (Book of Job, 10) (pp 125ff). It is easier for me to think that I am punished when I suffer than to endure my helplessness. Linked with the idea of being punished and with self accusation is the urge to justify myself and to accuse others. This is a spiral without end. Second, because evil can be beyond every imagination, one has the tendency to occult it. Elie Wiesel (1958) told of an escapee of the Nazi extermination camps who came back to his village to warn the inhabitants, but nobody believed him (referred to p. 164). Evil which has been endured without being acknowledged is also easily reproduced: a beaten child has the tendency to beat his or her children. Third, to pretend that I have the knowledge about what is good and what is evil is to eat of the forbidden tree in Genesis 3 and leads, as the story clearly shows, to see the evil in the other. "For every human, the origin of evil lies in the other ([Eve] gave me...[the serpent] tricked me); for the Judeo-Christian

descendants, it lies in Adam and Eve” (p.227). This knowledge kills human relationships: *“What one believes to know of a human is only “thorns and thistles”, i.e. it is only the adamah of which a human is made without the divine breath which precisely one can never know”* (p.230, italic in the original). On the other hand, Genesis 2 and 3 show that it is impossible for humans to resist the temptation to know what we cannot know. This is how one tries to overcome one’s suffering: by giving it an origin, an explanation, a cause or by finding the guilty one, be it oneself or another. The biggest temptation, illustrated in the sacrifice of Isaak, is to annex God by assimilating God to our own notions of what/who is good and what/who is evil.

Similarly to evil which she describes as the evil which hurts, Basset underlines that forgiveness too cannot be defined but can be described as what does not hurt anymore. *“Human forgiveness is marked by the seal of the original forgiveness that is as impossible to know as the original evil”* (p. 462). In this the original forgiveness belongs to ones deepest identity. And about joy she says: *“Joy despite everything: a difficult subject...this book gives no recipe how to be happy, but it encourages everyone to go further, step by step”* (2004, p.17). After having mentioned what hinders us to experience joy or to accept feelings of joy when they are there, like for instance the fact that others suffer or the world is bad, Basset states that *“(this book) aims to find access to sustainable joy that is attached to our earthly existence”* (2004, p.29). Joy cannot be approached by a definition, it is a process. Basset observes that Jesus in the Gospel of John talks of joy as of *“joy which will be perfect”* (p.42 et al.) which she interprets as joy being in the process towards perfection. For this she finds confirmation by observing that Luke 15 never uses a noun but always a verb when talking about joy.

Similar to her approach to evil, Basset states that it does not make sense to define the ideal and absolute joy, because it is out of human reach and belongs to God. In order to understand it, I have to start from the experience of joy. Similar to her approach to evil, she also states that the source of joy is mysterious, but that it is as foundational as suffering. Because I suffer, I also aspire for joy and this “aspiration for joy provokes joy” (p. 292).

The aspiration for joy and the feelings linked to it do not exclude but include spirituality. The aspiration for life and joy are deeply spiritual. Basset refutes the cleavage between affectivity and spirituality. “(A)n interpretation that correctly renders affectivity must sound right on the spiritual level. And on the other hand, a spiritual interpretation is not convincing if it is in disharmony with the givens of affectivity. (p. 85-86).

In her book “Holy anger” (2007a), she also gives full right to the experience of anger instead of repressing it. She explores its function, using the example of Jacob, Job and Jesus. The title is a provocation: because uncontrolled anger can lead to violence, anger is often repressed and not even acknowledged especially in Christian settings. Basset opts for a conscious acknowledgment of the emotion of anger which is a first step towards a fruitful anger management. “The rich palette of anger offers us a broad spectrum of expressions: from refusal to confrontation, through challenge, resistance, protest and more or less violent accusation, contradiction, reproach, we are dealing with one and the same family of existential attitudes” (p. 12). Basset explores “how anger can give structure to faith” (p.12) in contrast to a Christianity that, influenced by the Greek

refusal to admit and express negative emotions (p. 13), is “filled with clichés of goodness and light” (Book cover). Commenting on Job, Basset says, that his anger is holy when in detaching itself from God’s pure Providence, at once traditional and anthropomorphic, it finds itself once more in solidarity with the common run of people, prey to social injustice and divine deafness...(A)nger is holy that breaks with any philosophical or religious system that contradicts human experience or even the experience of a single human being (p.212).

What one feels and experiences is deeply personal and part of ones identity. Basset challenges theological concepts that have become rigid and contradict experience. She looks for instance critically at the notion of providence, guilt and original sin, at the repression of negative feelings like anger in a Christian context or at the idealization of absolute joy which makes us miss the actual experience of it and its signification. Feelings and experiences can be contradictory. This contradiction is part of reality and cannot be reduced by categorization. Now absolute knowledge is possible. Testimony and listening are the categories she employs. This leads us to the next main feature of her reflection.

Relationship instead of Reification of Experiences

Giving testimony of my experience which is part of my deep personal truth and identity, and listening to the testimony another gives to me is the adequate way to deal with existential experiences like suffering from evil, forgiveness and joy (1995). The appropriate way to address these existential experiences is the hermeneutics of testimony as opposed to a “philosophy of absolute knowledge” (p. 95, quoting Paul Ricoeur). “The testimony does not prove anything or offer a ‘knowledge-I-can-buy-in-a-department

store` (savoir-marchandise)...but it offers the possibility to think, it offers material for reflection” (37) and it is moved by the urge to communicate (p.39). Basset refutes the reification of evil, forgiveness, anger etc. and opts for a relational process of personal engagement.

In the introduction to “Le Pardon Originel” (1995), Basset explains what she considers to be the advantage of the language of testimony. The testimony expresses in language and reason what the witness is experiencing in a subjective and absolute way. The motor of testimony is the communication between two subjects who are as close as possible to their deep personal truth (pp. 33-41). Testimony - not only of the evil one suffers like Job, but also the testimony of the good news for instance - asks for listeners. The others will complete the testimony they hear because it affects their life.

Before the abyss of an inexpressible evil, the witness renounces to state an exhaustive truth. Its only ambition is to allow for the most subjective experience that cannot be shared, to find access with another individual. On the other hand, when confronted with someone who suffers the agony of evil, to testify seems to be the only possible way to speak: I came out of this abyss, there is a possible way. In front of the evil, bearing witness helps one reflect, have the courage to talk and maybe to live (p.41). This is also the place where Basset sees the mind/Spirit⁴ at work. “The spirit bases itself on the thought but it is not reduced to it: it comes from somewhere else, this is what the Bible expresses in calling it breath” (p.40).

The relationship to the other to whom I can testify and relate is very important. In her analysis of Genesis 2, Basset observes that God decided to give Adam a help just after having told him that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is forbidden. “... a

⁴ in French, mind and spirit are the same word: *esprit*

vis-à-vis is necessary to face the evil” (p.218). Talking about Job’s friends, Basset illustrates how the neighbour (in the biblical sense) is indispensable by being present, by listening to the testimony of the suffering, by resisting the temptation of explanation, categorization and judgment – in which Job’s friends finally failed.

Forgiveness is a process of personal engagement in the sake of relationship and of the healing of the offended. As she looks at it under these two angels, justice is not one of her main themes. When referring to Jews that suffered the holocaust like Elie Wiesel, Basset does not look at how they gained justice and reparation. She focuses on how by “letting go of the offender” (1995) they could go on in their lives. As this process involves a decision, Basset calls it a possibility on a human scale. Jesus’ solidarity and his forgiveness have no power to force the human conscience. Basset argues against the doctrine of substitution which is a reification of forgiveness. She says that Jesus asked God to forgive his torturers “because they do not know what they do” (Luke 23,34), because it is fundamentally impossible for humans to know what is good and evil not in terms of justice but in terms of the other’s personhood. It is human’s fate to be so often mistaken. Jesus pleads out of solidarity in this ignorance and in order to show us that forgiveness is a human possibility and that “the power (the ability) to forgive...is the human freedom par excellence” (p.352).

Commenting on Matthew 18, Basset underlines that forgiveness is primarily for the benefit of the offended (and not primarily of the offender), and she traces the steps to be taken by the offended: to become humble and acknowledge the humiliated child in oneself in order to avoid to continue to humiliate others; to accept to be “disabled”, i.e. to be marked by the experience of evil; to look for the lost part of myself as God looks for

one of 100 sheep so that I/the herd can become whole again; to go for the other and tell him or her what I am reproaching so that the other may hear me even if he or she would not change; to let go of the evil endured without posing any conditions, i.e. not to ask for repentance first. In a later book (2006), Basset acknowledges that forgiveness does not mean to remain in a relationship. Sometimes separation is necessary.

It happens that the evil endured is really too much and that the dept can not be measured and that the offended realizes that it is impossible to obtain reparation. It is as if for the offended, out of the abyss of evil endured and of the depth which cannot be paid back, forgiveness may grow that is as inscrutable and an infinite and unconditional renunciation of repair (p.424).

Forgiveness is not to forget the evil endured but to transform the memory of it. It is a very personal and often long travail and it cannot be done upon command, not even upon a divine command. The initiative starts with the offended. To be revolted is part of the process. What is at stake is: “Either the offended stays prisoner of his/her resentment or he/she is totally liberated from it” (p.446). Basset compares the link of human and divine forgiveness with a walk against the stream: starting in the delta of human existence, where human forgiveness is even chronologically primary, humans have to swim against the stream to resist the natural desire of retribution which would lead into a life in dryness. Jesus was the first human to swim against the stream and to reach the source of divine forgiveness. “Jesus’ practice was necessary for humans to believe that they too are capable of going up the stream of forgiveness” (p.460). Forgiveness is a new way of acting that is not conditioned by what has provoked the act. It includes also the conscience that one can never evaluate the evil one has caused to others (because only

who has suffered from evil can testify to it) and also to the Other. “The discovery of the other as a similar being implies the acceptance that every offended is also an offender and that every offender is also an offended” (p. 472). Concerning the power to forgive, humans and God are similar. “As we have let go of the evil in order to find (in the other) a being similar to us, the other/Other will let go of the evil of which we are part in order to find in us a being similar to him” (p.472). In this similarity, God as the offended is as much affected by the forgiveness he grants as are human offended. Both are affected by the discovery that the offender resembles them. This is the key to the original forgiveness and a source for joy, an experience Lytta Basset will study in depth in another book.

At last, to grant or refuse forgiveness is a question of life and death: if the offended is unable to forgive, the offended remains in a relationship with the offender which is a torture for the offended. It is also a question of keeping or cutting the relationship between humans as well as between humans and God: God and humans are totally interdependent in the process of forgiveness (p.436). The relationship with God will be discussed in the next point. Before doing this, we will also look at joy.

For joy too, Basset stresses the importance of a process in which I have to engage personally and the necessity of relationship.

If the abyss of evil pushes us, despite that suffering is beyond words, to *try to communicate against everything*, the same is even truer for joy. In fact, joy on this earth is condemned to fall into parts and to die if it does not nourish itself by whatever life brings, including and above all life in relationships (2004, p.39).

Exclusion kills joy. Commenting on Luke 15, the parable of the father and the two sons, she underlines that the relationship between the three and how it changes, is essential.

Both brothers, she says, feel excluded and in turn exclude the others in the family. There is no communication, no dialogue between them and their father in the first part of the parable. When the father recognizes the suffering of his younger son and is filled with compassion, the relationship is restored for the father. There is inclusion from person to person even when for the younger son, this may not yet be the case. This newly found relationship (the son is not dead as the father believed) is source of joy for the father. The father goes out to find also his elder son and to speak to him for the first time in the parable, and he restores the relationship even when the elder son is not yet ready for the relationship nor for the joy. The parable has an open end, asking the listener's answer. Either joy includes the other, the offended or the offender, or there is no joy.

Joy is an option for life which includes relationship. "To opt for the relationship means to renounce transparency: the other is transparent only for God" (2004, p. 433). On a spiritual level the process towards perfect joy undergoes moments of failure: there is a time when I cannot understand God anymore as was Job's case. As stated before, Job is comforted not because he understands God. "The spiritual option is here to believe, like Job, that nothing and nobody lives outside God, outside God's reach, including those who for us are evil...I will let to God the ultimate knowledge of what has happened" (p.440). God knows, and this is sufficient. Still this journey must go through my recognition that I have been reduced to dust. It also includes the recognition and expression of my suffering and revolt. Only through this process can suffering be transformed into joy. Jesus is the human being who has achieved the perfect joy in the midst of an existence of suffering and death and through Jesus we know that the perfect joy (joy in the process of perfection) is within human reach. In the same logic, it is also true that if we are yet

unable to experience joy, we can observe our neighbour's joy in order to know that it is within human reach and ask ourselves: "Why not us?" (p.537). In conclusion, Basset writes:

In my opinion, the perfect joy is in our reach as long as we valorize and accept the relative of our existence (including its misery) without investing ourselves in what it *should be* like. To let go of absolute joy and the happiness without clouds we allow for something unexpected: the fullness of the relative...Is it a coincidence that Jesus talked of perfect and not of absolute joy? Perfection presupposes a period of time; it is the accomplishment of a process that encompasses our time and that leaves nothing out and nothing in the shade...joy cannot be dissociated from the most earthly existence...Perfect joy is not truer than the negative feelings. It encompasses them (pp 531-542, italic in the original).

While she demonstrates that for joy, the relationship with the other is indispensable, Basset (2003) shows that judgment is the killer of relationships because it leads exactly to a reification of the good and evil we perceive in the other. Still the urge to judge is an experience we have to acknowledge, even if it is unpleasant and contradicts what we expect from a "Christian" attitude. It needs the engagement of our whole person to accept our urge to judge and the fear that pushes us to judge. In her discussion about the urge to judge, Basset, commenting on John 8, 1-12, describes Jesus' personal process through fear and Jesus' capacity to stay involved in a relationship even with his adversaries.

Having made the experience as a hospital chaplain of how important and of how fertile it is to keep a stance of not knowing when dealing with a patient, she observes that humans have a compulsion to judge others and to know about their good and evil. They

cut themselves off from the others through judgment. In the analysis of the urge to judge, Basset describes the relationship with the others in its contradictory aspects: relationship is essential and also ambiguous! Therefore the urge to judge is rooted in pain suffered before by the ones on which we depended upon in our childhood. It is rooted in the pain of not having been understood, not having been believed and having been judged as a child. This causes fear: having suffered from being judged in the past and having already been hurt by others, one is afraid that this is going to be the case again. Out of this fear rooted in past experiences comes the need to judge others in order to protect oneself for the future, because the others could hit again. Like this we entertain a vicious circle. It is a question of humility to not negate but to recognize our urge to judge others and to admit that it has been a means of protection for us, because the other is always unforeseeable and could annihilate us.

Only when we have acknowledged our urge to judge, can we deal with it and with the fear which lies underneath it. Fear is occulted and often we do not even know that it exists deep inside us, although it is, as Basset shows, a constitutive emotion of the human existence. It is the first emotion mentioned in the Bible. Adam tells God: "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself (Genesis 3,10)." "To love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 23,5) is to see the other as someone who, like me, is full of fear and needs to feel that he or she is not being judged.

Commenting on the adulterous woman (John 8) which has been brought to him to test him, Basset shows Jesus' own struggle with his fear in this menacing situation, how Jesus overcomes it and how he reaches a non judgmental attitude towards the woman as

well as towards those who brought her to him. No commandment can prevent us from experiencing fear and the urge to judge, and it does not make sense to struggle against them. The only way for Jesus in this situation was to be silent and let his own fear and his urge to judge the others rage within him in the face of God. There was no other way for Jesus to let the Spirit work and lead him to the point of anchorage in God whose name is “I am” (Exodus 3,14). Then Jesus could reach again his own “I am”, his undivided self, which is present in his many sayings starting with the words “I am”, especially in the Gospel of John but also in the Gospel of Luke at the moment of his arrest. Basset concludes:

In order to help us and to show us the way, (Jesus) has surrendered himself to his own fears and accepted to be seized by a terrible history of torture and death in order to defuse *in us* all hopeless fear that enslaves us and to show *us* that “I am” is stronger than the fear because for him, it was stronger than death (2003, p.237, italic in the original).

By setting Jesus as an example of how to forgive, an example that shows that on a human scale forgiveness is possible, Basset seems to me to be very close to what spiritual intelligence can offer as an aptitude to solve problems in specific domains.

This involves a discipline of the “heart”... so that we trust... the impulse that pushes us towards the Other believing that there we will find the only way out of the fear... (i)t involves a discipline of the being - “psyche” -, so that we continuously put down our agitations to the feet of the Living on whom fear has no hold. And it involves a discipline of the “intelligence”... in concentrating one’s spirit on one single thought...: God, my God, my Only one, my freed Live...God, my God...” (p.96-97).

God as the Other

Basset refutes the conceptualization of experiences because they lead to the reification of relationships. If I know as if I could “buy” the knowledge, my relationships to the others is killed. Such knowledge favours exclusion instead of inclusiveness. What is true for our relationships with others is also true for our relationship with the Other, God. We will never know God “as God is” or God’s essence. The only choice we have and which is fruitful, is to engage in a relational dynamic with God. If I admit that “God only knows” I can overcome the anxiety caused by my ignorance of good and evil (1995).

The acceptance of what is relative does not lead towards the knowledge of what is absolute, but towards the relationship with this absolute Other whom one only can approach in a face to face that is full of life and pain (1995, p.264).

It is in this face to face with the One whose name is “I am” that Jesus could let his fears and his urge to judge rage within himself and reach again his own undivided “I am” (2003).

God engages in a relationship by desiring us and being with us in suffering long before we are able to recognize it (1995, 2004). An important aspect of the relationship linked to joy is that we recognize that God never let go of the relationship with us. Although Basset does not refer to him, this reminds me of Buber’s I and Thou (1922) which is fundamental for the human existence. In the same way as humans exist by being called by God and by answering to God’s call, humans also become an I and a Thou for each other. My relationship with others and with the Other are deeply linked and cannot

be easily distinguished. Often, Basset writes of the other/Other. In the process of forgiveness, humans and God are affected in a similar way (1995, p.476).

Part of the relational dynamic with God is that God has to establish again and again God's otherness. Basset writes that even for God, anger is first, in order to establish that God is wholly other than humans. "The greatest divine resistance has to train against the worst of confusions that which makes us take the place of God" (2007a, p.260). On the other hand from the human side too, anger is important in the relationship with God as it is linked with our suffering: "Only a conscience that has fully assumed suffering could begin to reintegrate the wrath of God into the love of God" (p.13 quoting Paul Ricoeur, 1972). "Yet to assume our suffering fully ultimately leads us to stand up straight and come face to face with the Other who has knocked us down" (p.13). This leads to the rediscovery of our own power and is an important, irreplaceable step towards differentiation.

Meaning-Making and Differentiation

Even though the experience of evil is original it does not help to analyze its origins in the sense of its causes. The contrary of evil is not what is good but sense and meaning (1995, p.95).

It jumps into the eye that Job, at the end of the book, is 'comforted' *even before* he found again material goods, health and happiness in his family. He is 'Comforted' by God's only presence that is the unexpected irruption of the sense/meaning that breaks the abyss of evil (p.96).

"The search for meaning directs what is evil towards its becoming and not towards its origin" (p.105). In this Basset recognizes a constant feature of the biblical testimony. The

question we have to ask is “what for?” and not “why?”. She describes forgiveness as the transformation of the memory of the evil endured so that it does not hurt anymore. Forgiveness helps the offended not to remain prisoner of resentment (1995). Joy is linked to the courage to exist described by the existentialist philosophers, but not despite the angst but through it (2004, p. 261). Joy encompasses the whole existence, like in the parable of the man who found a treasure in his field and sold everything in order to buy the whole field and not only the treasure (Matthew 13, 44). In Basset’s interpretation the whole existence (i.e. the field) with its negative parts and its suffering is the treasure (2004). Thus meaning-making does not fantasy about a lost paradise but acknowledges hurts and deficiencies, and neither does it establish what is right and wrong. Meaning-making allows to go forward not with the help of absolute knowledge but in the face to face with the Other and in relationship with the others. Both are full of life and pain (1995, 264).

Because there is no meaning-making without relationship (1995, p.318), another aspect of relationship is important: differentiation. Spiritual growth implies differentiation which is not a given but the fruit of spiritual conquest (2007a, 188). The emotion of anger, although ambiguous because of its potential of violence, is the emotion par excellence that favours differentiation because it puts our limits against the others and the Other when we have been hurt. To acknowledge and express ones anger is part of spiritual growth. Commenting on Genesis 4, Basset says that God asks Cain to name his anger and not to stamp it out (2007a). While anger is a first step towards our freedom, it should never be the last. Not to acknowledge our anger or to act it out immediately, when it seizes us (both shown in the example of Cain) leads to uncontrollable violence. Our

brain, Basset says in reference to Goleman (1995), has the capacity to handle emotions. “We really have what it takes to observe and decipher our fits of anger” (p. 66) instead of thinking, that they are “righteous” and that they do justice to our adversary. To assume that our anger is God’s anger is a dangerous trap.

We do not know and will never know the other well enough to know whether he or she really deserves to feel the flames of our anger. That is why our emotional and spiritual intelligence lead us to judge the situation differently (p.74).

It leads us to handling our anger in a way which does not wipe out the other but sees in the other a human being who feels diminished and powerless just like us, and we can give room to the other.

Anger is irreplaceable but it needs to be transformed. “It can metamorphose into a new vital energy. It may show us that until now we have behaved only in relation to others. We should like from now on to live what we are in ourselves” (p.77 quoting A. Grün (1998) who is commenting on the Egyptian hermit Evagrius who lived in the 4th century p.c.). Anger is part of the process of differentiation with the others and the Other. As mentioned before, even for God, anger is first, in order to establish that God is wholly other than humans. The otherness of God is expressed in God’s holiness. Once it is established, God renounces anger. God offers him or herself in a real encounter built on constancy and friendship (p. 257).

With the others, we go a similar way. We accept that we will never know them fully because only the Other, God, knows fully. In the same time we put our limits, thanks to our anger, when we have been hurt. Differentiation as acceptance of the complete otherness of the other as well of the Other, is the contrary of the natural inclination in

humans. “The great social crisis that engender collective persecutions are experienced as a lack of differentiation...It is not differentiation that dominates everything, it is its elimination...” (p.188, quoting R. Girard, 1986). Therefore “(d)ifferentiation is not a natural given, but the fruit of a conquest, basically in the spiritual realm, if one is to judge by this biblical emphasis” (p.188). Anger is necessary not only towards people who are hurting me but also towards convictions, concepts and reifications of experiences which are harmful.

Anger hopes for blessing, as did Jacob in his battle at the Jabbok: “I will not let you unless you bless me” (Genesis 32,26) which Basset interprets as

unless I am sure that you will take me as I was and as I am, and unless I can go on my way without having to be on the lookout all the time, without having to hide (from myself) a big part of who I am (p. 247).

In confronting us, God touches our wounded hidden parts and brings them into the open and he seeks our confrontation with him. His touch on the wound is also the source of healing and blessing. As another ambivalent relationship with anger Basset mentions the relationship between anger and love as “the road to love, of necessity, goes through the wounding and anger of differentiation” (p.265).

Brief Appraisal of Basset's Approach

First, Lytta Basset offers an exhaustive and learned lecture of biblical narratives which is informed by exegetical, philosophical and psychological insights, mainly by psychoanalysis. Her lecture is also fuelled by the questions human experience asks. Basset does not offer mere explanations neither of life nor of the biblical text. She is aware that human experience is full of multiple senses and exceeds any interpretation of

them. So does the sense and mystery contained in a biblical text. She therefore says that “my way to translate them does not exclude the possibility that others might ‘hear them with a different ear’” (Basset 1998 p.11). She does not claim to offer the only possible understanding of the biblical narratives but one linked to pastoral needs.

A second very important aspect is that her reflection starts from experience, from her own personal suffering (Hourant, 2005; Surdez, 2005) as well as from her experiences as a hospital chaplain (Basset 1998) and parish minister. She claims that interpretations of biblical narratives have to make sense in personal experience and challenges interpretations and doctrines that contradict personal experience.

Third, Basset shows that any kind of emotion needs to be recognized and acknowledged. In this, she joins the approach of psychologists who think that for a person “it is better to know than not to know” (Bitter, 2009, p.33). Against a “Christianity filled with clichés of goodness and light” (Basset 2003, cover text) and thus suppressing negative feelings or even worse, which is suspicious of emotions and affectivity, Basset highlights the wide range of emotions of biblical persons and follows the way they deal with and handle them. She is aware of the ambivalence of biblical persons and even of God.

Fourth, she claims, that affectivity and spirituality go hand in hand. In her commentary of the Luke 15, 11-32, she says that spirituality cannot be restricted to doctrine on the cost of affectivity.

Affectivity and spirituality are linked with each other: both involve a relationship.

The parable has no title but it is placed under the sign of relationship: “There was a man who had two sons”...This opening of the parable implies immediately an

affective relationship...Consequently an interpretation that correctly renders affectivity must sound right on the spiritual level. And on the other hand, a spiritual interpretation is not convincing if it is in disharmony with the givens of affectivity. Therefore one will reject any interpretation that does not take into account the affectivity and tries to be in harmony with a spiritual doctrine on the cost of the text itself (Basset, 2004, pp 85-86).

Fifth, Basset's approach is multidisciplinary as she links insights from different disciplines, psychology, philosophy, literature and theology - mainly exegesis -, with each other. Informed by disciplines other than theology, she challenges certain Christian doctrines as for instance the doctrine of the original sin (1995) or certain assumptions like for instance that anger should be repressed (2007a).

Sixth, her books offer the possibility to go on a spiritual journey. This journey is very dense as it is in constant dialogue with the biblical narratives whose complexity Basset renders very well. They offer a background of systemic and narrative therapy for the reader. She brings the ambivalence of the reader's life into dialogue with the ambivalence of the persons in the biblical narratives and how they make meaning of their experiences. This is a dynamic process. It includes time and struggle. In her books Basset combines academic rigor with spiritual counselling and guidance.

Seventh, when looking at her exegesis, I feel that the historical and political dimensions of the biblical narratives remain rather marginal. For instance the story of Jacobs struggle at the Jabbok and his encounter with Esau could also be questioned about how this incidence could enlighten us in the mediation for peace between nations. Basset has a pastoral focus. Still the question can be asked whether more awareness of the

historical and political situation of the person whom I encounter in my pastoral visit would not also strengthen the spiritual counselling I offer.

Eight, Basset's approach of forgiveness is clearly presented as a long process which differs from one individual to another. It has many points in common with Terry Hargrave's (2001) four stages of forgiveness. Hargrave says that the process starts with the victim. The victim needs to externalize the guilt and needs to hold the person accountable for his or her actions. Similarly Basset (2006) writes of "speaking the truth" to the offender. For Hargrave the victim also needs to understand and see the injustices that the person who is the victimizer experienced and not to condemn him or her as a monster. Like Basset, Hargrave is aware that the restoration of relationship is not always possible and like Basset he says that that forgiveness leads to healing. On the other hand, Legaree, T. A., Turner, J., Lollis, S. (2007) demonstrate that especially therapists in a Christian setting tend to link forgiveness with the victim's healing. They underline, how important it is, that the therapist is highly aware of his or her bias, of gender and power issues and of the fact that forgiveness can have diverse cultural and religious meanings. They hold forth the possibility, that in certain cases a victim can be empowered by his or her decision to not forgive the offender.

Summary

Basset stresses meaning-making. Life, evil, joy, forgiveness, none of those can be explained fully and their origin remains mysterious and they cannot be obtained upon command or out of our own will. Therefore, the scope of our spiritual journey, for instance in the face of evil endured, is not the question "why?" but "what for"? Meaning-making turns us away from the fixation to the (inexplicable) past towards our future.

Forgiveness is an indispensable step for meaning-making and for personal healing. Basset quotes many testimonies of victims and survivors of the holocaust, Etty Hillesum, Elie Wiesel and Emmanuel Levinas who had to renounce impossible reparation in achieving a state of forgiveness which allowed them to experience healing for their own existence during and after the mass murder of the Nazis (1995, p.145).

Relationship to others and the Other, God, is another important feature which is already present in the hermeneutics of testimony foundational of Basset's writings. To testify for instance of my suffering or of the Good News, I need a neighbour who is able to listen. To achieve a state of forgiveness I need the insight, among others, that the fact that "I am innocent of the evil that was done to me does not make me necessarily a perfect person. I feel more and more how I belong to the common mortals" (2006, p. 149). I can recognize how the offender is also an offended who suffers from the original evil the same as me. Joy is open for relationship by necessity. Anger, if recognized and handled must not necessarily lead to violence and can become a means for differentiation and therefore for a better relationships with others or with God. The same applies to fear and the urge to judge. If recognized and overcome they do not cut me off anymore from my neighbour.

Meaning-making and relationship are deeply connected. Commenting on Isajah 52,13 Basset writes: "We see the birth of meaning in a primary foundation which is non negotiable – in the relationship. It is as if meaning can only exist with (including) the others or not at all" (1995, p.318).

**Spiritual Intelligence in Dialogue with
Spiritual Guidance as Proposed by Lytta Basset**

Two Different Perspectives

Ian Barbour (2003) describes the languages and paradigms of science and religions and their different functions and purposes. In her discussion with neurosciences, the theologian Christina Aus der Au (2008a and 2008b) explains that neurosciences and theology start from different view points and adopt different perspectives. Whereas neurosciences look at the human person as an object to be described adopting the etic perspective of an observer, theology speaks about the person as a subject who experiences the world from an internal, emic perspective. Aus der Au (2008a) mentions as an example that “I see a red tomato” can be described by neuroscience from the point of view of the observer who observes what happens in the brain while I see a red tomato. What enables me to see a red tomato can be explained satisfactory by these observations. What will never be explained from this etic perspective is how I feel when I see a red tomato. My personal experiences and perceptions of things are known as qualia (Aus der Au 2005 and 2008a). Some neuroscientists consider them to be a construct of the brain (Aus der Au, 2005, referring to Metzinger, 2003 and Rachamandran 2008), whereas Aus der Au (2008a) underlines that the qualia belong to the subject in his or her subjectivity. She states that “the perception of the world from an emic, internal perspective, the perspective of the self, and therefore experiences like freedom, seeing colours, suffering from pain and experiencing God are primary” (p.131) not only to the perspective of the 3rd person, the scientific observer-object relationship, but also primary to language. As

soon as I talk about my own experience, I already adopt somehow the stance of the 3rd person. Furthermore Aus der Au states that only this perspective of the 1st person, the self, enables me to also adopt the perspective of the 3rd person who is the observer looking at an object. Theology “considers humans and the world from the perspective of the first person...as the one who has been spoken to by God” (Aus der Au 2008, p.128). Theology therefore adds the second person to the discussion. The Thou calls the I into existence (Buber, 1922). To be human is to be in relationships.

The difference between sciences and theology therefore is that science gives causal explanations considering them to offer an exhaustive understanding of the object, the human person, whereas theology considers that the human person cannot be understood by physical processes alone, that there is more to it than its physical body: the living self experiencing the world of which nobody can get hold of. Both stances are complete and incomplete in one and the same time (Aus der Au, 2008a). The best I can do is actually not to put them together but to switch continuously between them. It is like looking at a coin. If I see the picture I cannot see the number but I know that it is on the other side and that if I turn the coin, I will get additional information about it. This switching, this dialogue is very difficult and arduous (Aus der Au, 2008a).

The Concept of Spiritual Intelligence and the Personal Spiritual Journey

What Christina Aus der Au describes as the fundamental epistemic difference between neurosciences and theology can be transferred to what makes the difference between the concept of spiritual intelligence as a description and assessment of specific mental abilities that are independent of an individual's religion and faith (King 2008), and an individual and personal spiritual journey (Basset 1996) for which Lytta Basset offers

the tools using specific texts that are foundational for the Christian religion: It is the difference between a perspective from within, i.e. religious or spiritual experience and a perspective from without, i.e. spiritual intelligence (Barbour, 2003, Ritschl and Hailer, 2006, Aus der Au, 2008a). Psychology aims at making open definitions so that they are applicable to a wide range of particular cases (Marianne Staempfli, University of Guelph, oral communication, January 2009). There is a tension between the perspectives of the 1st and 3rd person, the self (or I) of the subject and the it, the object described, and of an open general definition and each particular case or person. This tension is part of the dialogue between science and humanities or theology. Even within a discipline the tension always exists. Psychology asks how people experience life and tries to quantify its findings. To assess spiritual intelligence, self inventory questionnaires are being used taking into account the perspective from within or the emic perspective. But then researches try to quantify it in a reliable way (King 2008) and make general assumptions, using the perspective from without or the etic perspective. In theology these different perspectives can also be observed.

In her own discussion with theology, Lytta Basset explicitly starts from experience and chooses a hermeneutics of witness which is emic, and not a doctrinal, etic approach to understand the experience of evil, joy, forgiveness etc.. She states that before doing evil, one has suffered from it consciously or unconsciously and that only the person who is suffering from evil can bear witness to it from within (1995) and, quoting Paul Ricoeur, that “(we) have to choose between the philosophy of absolute knowledge and the hermeneutics of bearing witness” (p.95, quoting Ricoeur, 1972, p. 61). For instance Adam and Eve do not dare to *know* about good and evil, i.e. to adopt the stance of the 3rd

person who observe and define an object in an absolute way. All knowledge is secondary to the experience and to the person who experiences or feels something. Here, Basset joins Aus der Au. King (2008), willingly or not, points to the same when he says that “(m)uch of the disdain for a spiritual intelligence may also arise from a lack of personal context and/or experience by those offering the criticisms” (p.123).

What is the Added Value of a Dialogue?

Through the concept of spiritual intelligence, psychologists and neuroscientists acknowledge that spiritual experiences are an integral part of a human person. Basset opts for the primacy of experience versus concepts and she views the person as being in relationship with the other and God. Virtue, to which Hense (2006) points so resolutely, is an integral part of any relationship as the law of God always looks at how I behave with the other (Clemens Frey, oral communication, 2010).

How the Concept of Spiritual Intelligence Informs Theology and Spiritual Care

In order to assess spiritual intelligence, the different authors use various kinds of self report inventories which address personal experience. King (2008), to name an example, evaluates four mental capacities and abilities through these assessments: critical existential thinking, personal meaning making, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion. The person questioned answers questions out of his or her personal experience. The evaluation of the questionnaire helps to understand how well certain mental capacities and abilities related to spirituality are developed that help the person to deal with existential stress and to solve problems in every day life.

Spiritual intelligence looks at a wide range of abilities and capacities linked to spirituality that is not defined in a religious way. It points to the fact that people are very

different from one another due to their spiritual intelligence in addition to their religious and personal background. Different religious traditions and cultures favour different aspects of spirituality. For instance the Swiss reformed tradition from which I come favours cognitive abilities over and sometimes almost against capacities that are not purely intellectual. Members of the Swiss Reformed Church might have high scores in critical existential thinking and lesser scores in conscious state expansion than people from another confessional or religious background. The concept of spiritual intelligence that looks at the mental capacities and abilities from an etic point of view broadens a confessional, religious or secularized understanding of spirituality and makes one aware that religious or cultural traditions might be very selective in their choice of spiritual capacities addressed. In spiritual care therefore, the concept of spiritual intelligence helps to broaden the understanding of spiritual experiences. First it helps spiritual caregivers to be more respectful of the individual capacities of a person and of the subjective way of how a person experiences spirituality. Second, the concept of spiritual intelligence can be a helpful tool to assess whether a person has the capacities necessary to make use of his or her spiritual experiences or whether in a spiritual care relationship one has also to help the person to develop these capacities first. Koenig's (2008) observation that a broad definition of spirituality is useful for clinical purposes so that "(n)o one is left out or discriminated against" (p.352) summarizes very well this added value of the concept.

The oncologist Sagar (2005) writes about spiritual intelligence out of his experience in a medical context with clients suffering from cancer and the differences in coping he observes with them. This leads to his interest in the concept of spiritual intelligence but he is fully aware, that first, spiritual intelligence has to undergo an ethical examination, as

it can be used for good and bad. Second, he considers struggle as part of spiritual maturation. This means to me that part of the process of coping with an existential stress are moments, when we do not yet cope. Third, Sagar points to the fact that sometimes, spiritual experiences and psychological illness are very difficult to distinguish from one another. Sagar is interested in the use of spirituality in coping with illness.

Basset mentions spiritual intelligence only in passing (2007a) in a positive way. But she uses words like discipline and intelligence that are necessary for a spiritual journey. These are tools for spiritual growth and these tools can be developed further. For a spiritual caregiver or a Church minister it is almost a commonplace to assume that mental capacities and abilities are, amongst others, an important part of a person's aptitude to deal with spirituality. I am pleased to observe that today psychologists and neuroscientists acknowledge what theologians have always held forth: that spirituality belongs to the full picture of a person.

How Basset informs the Concept of Spiritual Intelligence

Three themes appear in Basset's writings which are important for a dialogue with spiritual intelligence: Meaning-making, struggle and relationship including virtue.

Meaning-making. Basset writes that the contrary of what is evil is not what is good but what makes sense (1995). Thus meaning-making is as central for her as the experience of evil and of suffering from evil that is original and foundational in human existence (1995). The experiences of evil and of meaning are primary. Concepts are never able to render fully the signification of the experience (1995). Meaning-making therefore is deeply personal and situational. Basset addresses it through the stories for

instance of Job (1995), Jesus (2003) and Jacob (2007a). The dialogue with these stories should help the readers in their own journey towards meaning-making.

Spiritual intelligence includes meaning-making in its ability set (King 2008, Zohar 2000). Emmons (2000) names it “sense of the sacred” and “problem solving” and Sagar (2005) points out that spiritual intelligence fosters the resolution of existential conflicts in a dialectical way. The concept of spiritual intelligence can help to assess whether a person has a general ability for meaning-making. But it can not tell me how a person experiences meaning-making in a particular situation at a particular time. To assess this, we have to listen to the person’s story or testimony. The story will render us the emic perspective and tell us how the person experiences meaningfulness or meaninglessness at a particular moment. Qualitative research approaches are needed to give a complete picture.

Struggle. The same is even truer for the aspect of struggle which is part of a spiritual journey as it was for Job, who at first was unable to understand his suffering (1995), for Jacob who felt attacked by God (Basset 2007a) and Jesus (Basset 2003) when he had to accept and go through his fear while dealing with the adulterous woman and the Pharisees who accused her and threatened him (John 8). Sagar (2005) and Pargament (2005) explicitly recognize that struggle is part of spirituality especially in a Judeo-Christian context (Pargament, 2005). With the help of the self report questionnaires, spiritual intelligence can assess whether a person has the ability to deal with spiritual struggles. But it cannot tell how it works at the height of the struggle when the outcome is open and a person might fear to get lost in a struggle. The question arises how spiritual intelligence deals with these moments of negative feelings and experiences that are part

of a spiritual journey (Kwilecki, 2000, Hense, 2003) – and that are part of any existential journey. Listening to a person’s story and to how she gives testimony of her experiences in a stance of not knowing in advance what is right and wrong for the person (Basset 2003) is a very important part of the assessment and calls for qualitative approaches that can render emic perspectives.

Relationship. The relationship of “I and Thou” as described by Martin Buber (Buber, 1922) is foundational for Basset although she does not refer to Buber directly. Without the relationship to the other person or the Other who is God, there is no meaning making (1995) and no joy (2004). Basset describes the relationship as foundational and ambiguous at one and the same time. For instance Jacob experiences God sometimes as threatening (2007a). She also underlines the importance of differentiation for the sake of love (2007a). The process of differentiation includes negative feelings of anger which I have to learn to handle (2007a). It is important not to react in the affect of anger as it could be judgmental but to recognize my anger and to deal with it in a way that considers that the other is as vulnerable as I am. Virtue means that one includes the other over and against all urges to exclude him or her (Basset 2004, 1998), that one can see the offended in the offender (1995) and that one recognizes that one will never know whether the other deserves to be exposed to the full strength of ones anger (2007a). Such virtue is a sign of spiritual intelligence (2007a) and part of a spiritual discipline (2004). The other is the limit of what I can know. For instance, I will never be able to evaluate the evil I have done to the other and how it feels for the other (1995). Even at its best, when my face to face with the other /Other is the only way out of my suffering from evil, it is always “full of life and pain” (1995, p.264). In this context, spiritual intelligence can assess whether I

have a general ability for example “to be aware of qualities in others which surpass the physical and the material” (King 2008). It finds its limit in the dynamics of a relationship that include moments of negative as well as moments of positive feelings. Basset describes the relationship as listening to the testimony of the suffering and giving testimony of my hope to the person who is suffering (1995). We are witnesses to each other. Basset introduces the hermeneutics of testimony over and against the absolute knowledge (1995, quoting Ricoeur). A testimony is always a deeply personal and in this an absolute truth, but it is never a general absolute truth. Testimonies are emic and can best be looked at by qualitative methods.

These three main aspects of a personal spiritual journey Basset hopes to facilitate – meaning-making, struggle, relationship - have in common that they include what Aus der Au calls the qualia (2005). Experiences are felt even in a nonverbal way before they can be reflected upon. Basset by giving primacy to experience over concepts and by using biblical stories which she brings into dialogue with people’s experience exactly addresses these qualias. They are outside the limit of what can be addressed by the concept of spiritual intelligence, unless it incorporates many more qualitative studies and enters into a dialogue with the religious or secular and cultural traditions that informed the clients spirituality.

Open Questions

Hense (2006) emphasizes that virtue belongs to Christian spirituality. Virtue has always the other in view. For instance the Ten Commandments in the Bible basically address our relationship with God and the other humans. In addition Basset underlines the otherness of the other, which means that I will never get hold of the other or the

Other/God. To respect this otherness is virtuous behaviour even if Basset does not use this expression. She writes about anger management and differentiation for the sake of love (2002 and 2007a), empathy as the recognition of the offended in the offender (1995) and the inclusiveness of joy (2004) as central aspects of the spiritual journey to which she encourages her readers. Shulman and Maedor (2003), also from a Christian point of view, criticize that spirituality is harnessed for health in an individualistic perspective and point to the fact that sickness has a social aspect because the sick person is always part of a community. The question arises whether the Christian community fulfils its call towards the sick person. How could an assessment of spiritual intelligence in a Christian context take virtue into account not as an outcome variable but as central to spirituality?

Another very important limit of the concept of spiritual intelligence is the question how to assess it with people who suffer from dementia or from a mental handicap. Can we just assume that they do not possess any spiritual intelligence because we cannot measure it? Can we then assume that these persons have no spiritual resources to deal with the challenges life? What about people suffering from depression who make the experience, that God or religion does not mean anything to them in the depth of depression or that they cannot pray anymore? Does this mean that they are spiritually dumb? Aus der Au (2005) in a footnote states that even people in a coma have “very basically a feeling of their experiences” (...weil sich auch für [komatöse Personen] Erfahrungen in einem ganz grundsätzlichen Sinn irgendwie anfühlen p. 116) and cannot be reduced to how well their brain and mental capacities work.

A third point is struggle. If spiritual intelligence is described as the capacity of meaning-making in existential stress, how does it deal with the struggle at its height, at

the moment when actually a person cannot yet make meaning for what he or she is struggling with? Basset underlines again and again, that the origin of evil we endure as well as the origin of the healing we experience is out of reach for us (Hourant, 2005) or that the original evil resists all conceptualizations (1995), thus also our mental capacities and abilities.

These questions mark the limits of a concept like the concept of spiritual intelligence which, even if it starts from people's experience, then comes to an etic stand point, assessing a person from outside. But experience is always prior to cognition (Aus der Au 2008a) and also exceeds cognition and is eminently subjective (for instance Basset 1995) and cannot be falsified from outside (Aus der Au, 2005, footnote).

Summary

The scientific etic perspective and the emic perspective of the subject that feels or experiences something are fundamentally different. Each perspective delivers information the other cannot give. In order to obtain the complementary information, one has to switch between them. Spiritual intelligence aims at measuring and assessing certain mental capacities linked to spirituality. Spirituality on the other hand only exists if a person experiences it. These experiences include positive and negative feelings: being hurt by evil, joy and anger. What a person feels resists all conceptualization and is always more than what can be expressed in words. Basset says that the only reliable way of talking about experience is the testimony to a personal absolute truth, but this truth is not absolute for everybody. Whereas quantitative assessments aim at objectivity, qualitative studies can render subjective truths. Testimony calls for the other and for personal engagement, which again are indispensable for meaning-making. The difference between

the concept of spiritual intelligence and Christian theology as presented by Basset is, that the former views human being as distinct entity whereas Basset stresses relationship.

Conclusions

Spiritual intelligence is a concept that takes into account a person's spirituality from a psychological and scientific point of view. It assesses an aspect of personhood which has long been neglected outside theology. Still the concept defines itself outside organized religion. The question arises if in a long run it makes sense to describe spiritual experiences without entering into a dialogue with the different religions. If the dialogue with organized religion is meant to be fruitful the emic perspective needs to be studied more in depth and measurement items have to be developed in collaboration with either organized religion or the spiritual movements that have grown alongside them in today's secularized world (Hense, 2006). On the other hand, the traditional Churches and theology should be ready to listen to how a concept like spiritual intelligence can broaden their understanding of personal spiritual experiences. This is especially important in today's multifaith context. They are also called to bring their old heritage in spiritual guidance into a dialogue so that it can be understood by academics and people in search of spiritual growth outside the Church. Will Churches have the courage to view today's interest in spirituality as a "turning point in Christianity" (O'Connor et al., 2002) or as "an upsurge of the Holy Spirit" (Hay, 2007)? An honest dialogue will change all involved.

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