

## INTRODUCTION: WHY SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATION?

John Grant McLoughlin

Why spirituality and education? I recall participating at the Teaching Practices Colloquium in February 2009 at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) when two things struck me. First, there were over 180 people from TRU participating in the full day event on the first day of the reading week. As an adjunct faculty there, I was struck by this institutional commitment to teaching. The second thing of note resonated most deeply with me. Any session that attended to spiritual dimensions of education and/or the inner work of the teacher was well attended.

This observation was not totally a surprise as it was part of a broader pattern noted by me in different contexts. These contexts included examining the place of silence in education, programs such as *Courage to Teach*, the relatively recently formed *Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education*, or discussions with colleagues around University of New Brunswick and other settings.

Personally I have found that biographies, those of myself and of my students, play a pivotal role in the manner that courses unfold. People and what they bring – both past and present – affect the dynamic of the learning environment. The writing of Wendell Berry has been influential upon my perspectives on spirituality, education and the relationship between the two. Here is a short poem of his that speaks to the challenge of meeting what it is that surrounds us by simply being present.

### WHAT WE NEED IS HERE

Geese appear high over us,  
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,  
as in love or sleep, holds  
them to their way, clear  
in the ancient faith: what we need  
is here. And we pray, not  
for new earth or heaven, but to be  
quiet in heart, and in eye,  
clear. What we need is here.

- Wendell Berry

Spirituality takes on different forms for people through connections with nature, place, religion, family, culture, and other aspects of existence that roots us. The accumulation of the aforementioned observations, lived experiences, and conversations led me to suggest the topic of *Spirituality and Education* as the theme of an early issue of *Antistasis*. The response to the call for papers has reinforced my conviction that the topic is relevant to many in education.

The breadth of contributions reflects the vision of the editors to loosely frame the call, thus, enabling varied interpretations of the topic amongst potential authors. The articles in this issue bring forth aspects of the topic particularly relevant to authors. For instance, some pieces are philosophical in nature concerned with the purpose of education. Others reflect upon influences of religion and religious affiliation or upon personal journeys as juxtaposed within structures such as school boards or graduate school. Readers of the journal will be invited to view familiar ideas through different lenses whether concerning alternative forms of education, areas of discipline, or pedagogy. This issue will share specific initiatives from both the graduate and undergraduate levels, in addition to that of a professional learning community. Articles extend to perspectives on topics ranging from spiritual intelligence to mathematics.

The journal *Antistasis* continues to be a work in progress, not unlike spirituality, in that it takes the form of an evolving process redefining itself through the people who write, the readers who read, the respondents who offer feedback and the editors who compose the journal. Consider this an invitation to contribute feedback through sending comments about this issue and/or the journal, in general. A call for authors for the next issue appears on the final page.

As the guest editor of this issue, I wish to acknowledge some of the people who have supported the efforts here, including those who, perhaps unknowingly, have helped to shape this effort: Peter Brouwer, John Coates, Teena MacDougall, Diane Shannon, and Vince Zelazny. Editing the issue has brought with it challenges and joys. An effort has been made to put together a quality collection of articles that will reflect the landscape and challenge us to consider perspectives other than our own as we continue our respective journeys; paradoxically, these may be both solitary and connected. The journal is freely accessible online and all of you are encouraged to share this issue with others who may enjoy reading *Antistasis*.

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