

INTEGRATING AWARENESS: A CHARACTERISTIC OF CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY IN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Abstract

As the result of the author's research into the characteristics of children's spirituality in Australian Catholic primary schools, this paper presents and describes one such characteristic that was exhibited in the children who participated in this study. The characteristic has been termed *integrating awareness*. In using hermeneutic phenomenology as the theoretical framework for this research, a reflection upon the life expressions of these children – the texts – that reveal this characteristic is guided by van Manen's (1990) notion of lifeworld existentials. The four lifeworld existentials are *lived body*, *lived time*, *lived space*, and *lived relation to the Other*. This reflection, which attempts to uncover the essence of this characteristic, suggests that *integrating awareness* occurs when a new emerging level of consciousness envelops an existing level of awareness through the fulcrum of self development (Wilber, 2000), and involves the phases of fusion, transcendence and integration. In the light of this reflection, some important implications for nurturing the spirituality of children in the primary religious education classroom are considered.

Introduction

The spirituality of young people has become a subject of developing interest in Australia, particularly among Catholic educators. Many have begun to question whether they can undertake contemporary religious education without a deeper understanding of the worldviews and meaning-making systems of their students (de Souza, 2004; Liddy, 2002). Yet in Australia there has to date been little published research into the characteristics of the spirituality of children of primary school age. As the result of the author's research into children's spirituality in Australian Catholic primary schools, this paper presents and describes one characteristic that was exhibited in the children who participated in the study. The characteristic has been termed *integrating awareness*. Hermeneutic phenomenology has been drawn upon to provide the theoretical framework for this study, and van Manen's (1990) notion of lifeworld existentials have been employed as the means by which to reflect upon the life expression of these children – the texts – that have revealed the presence of this characteristic.

Describing the Spiritual

Much of the recent scholarship suggests that spirituality is concerned with an individual's sense of connectedness and relationship with the Self, the Other in community, the Other in the world or universe, and with the Transcendent Other (e.g., Bosacki, 2001; de Souza, 2004; Elton-Chalcraft, 2002; Hart, 2003; Hay & Nye, 1998; O'Murchu, 1997; Tacey, 2000). While some have advocated dualistic notions of spirituality, particularly with reference to the sacred and the secular (e.g., Berringer, 2000; Griffin, 1998), many writers understand spirituality to be holistic. Zohar and

Marshall (2000) have maintained that spirituality is "a dynamic wholeness of self in which the self is at one with itself and with the whole of creation" (p. 124). It requires people to regard Others as whole beings, and to respond to them, each with her or his own sense of wholeness (Priestly, 2002).

Scholarly literature has also described spirituality as an inherent and fundamental quality of what it means to be human (e.g., Groome, 1998; O'Murchu, 1997; Tacey, 2000). This notion is supported by studies indicating that spirituality is an attribute that has been selected for in the evolution of the human species because it has a positive function in enabling individuals to survive in their environment (e.g., Hardy, 1966; Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause, 2001; Ramachandran & Blakeslee, 1998) and that it may enable people to address problems of meaning and value in life (e.g., Emmons, 1999, 2000; James, 1902/1977; Hyde, 2003, 2004a; Maslow, 1977; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

As a natural predisposition of humankind, spirituality is distinct from institutional religion, and therefore cannot be seen as the exclusive property of any one religious tradition (James, 1902/1997; Maslow, 1977; Ranson, 2002; Scott, 2001; Tacey, 2003).

It has been argued, however, that a person's spirituality can be given expression through a traditional system of values and beliefs such as those provided by formal religions. In terms of Catholic schooling then, it is possible to situate the activity of religious education within the larger ambit of spirituality (Griffith, 2003; Hyde, 2004b).

Consciousness

While acknowledging that there is both complexity and uncertainty in discussing the nature of consciousness, a number of writers have indicated the notion of interconnected levels of consciousness. In commentaries on the work of Eastern philosopher Sri Aurobindo, Maitra (1992), Cornelissen (1999) and Marshak and Litfin (2002) have drawn attention to Aurobindo's notion of the ascending planes of consciousness from *matter* to *satchitananda*. These planes include the material plane, the vital plane, the mental plane, the transitional spiritual planes of higher mind, illuminated mind, and Overmind, the Supramental plane, and the divine consciousness. It is through the divine consciousness, Aurobindo has argued, that a person might arrive at the highest status of her or his real, supreme Self.

Similarly, Fontana (2003) has noted that a feature among the major Eastern traditions and Western esoteric traditions is the concept of developmental levels of consciousness, most clearly outlined by the Advaita Vendanta school of Hinduism. This particular model has six major levels, each, with the exception of the last, containing several subdivisions. At the lowest level is the material, at which consciousness is identified solely with the sensory. This is followed by the vital level, at which consciousness becomes aware of itself. At the discriminatory level, consciousness begins to categorise the objects and events presented by experience. It is also at this level that consciousness distinguishes between turning inward toward the nonmaterial realm of thought, intuition, and perhaps spiritual awareness, and outward toward the material world. At the ratiocinative level consciousness acquires the capacity for analytical and rational thought. The causal level entails consciousness experiencing pure contentless awareness, or consciousness in and of itself. At the highest level – the Brahmanic level – consciousness is said to be aware of reality as a unified field of energy in which the material, the individual, and the Absolute, or Brahman, are in essence identical with each Other. The individual has become one with the Other.

Wilber (2000a, 2000b) has made a sustained attempt to link such developmental levels that have been recognised, for example, by the Advaita Vendanta model, to Western science. Rather than envisaging these levels of consciousness as hierarchical, with each level superior to the one(s) below it, Wilber has described these developmental levels as a holarchy. In such a view, each of the developmental levels are best thought of as enfolding the previous level(s), and of interacting with each of the Others, thereby forming an integral theory of consciousness. Such thinking enhances

the credibility of the existence of different levels of consciousness, and presents an alternative to the three levels that have been widely referred to in Western psychological literature: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. It is Wilber's model that has been drawn upon in this paper for exploring the characteristic of children's spirituality that has been termed *integrating awareness*.

The Research Approach

In undertaking this study, the researcher met with two groups of six children in Year 3 (approximately 8-years-old) and in Year 5 (approximately 10-years-old) in each of three Catholic primary schools – one from an inner city location, one from a suburban location and one from a rural location. One 2-hour session was spent each week for a period of five weeks in the classrooms from which the children were to be drawn, getting to know them, and assisting during the morning literacy block. This notion of prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) helped to build a sense of trust and familiarity between the researcher and the children. At the end of this period, the researcher met three times with each of the groups of children in each of the three schools.

Each of the group meetings took as its focus one the categories of spiritual sensitivity outlined by Hay and Nye (1998). The group meetings in which the characteristic of *integrating awareness* was exhibited had taken as its focus the concept of awareness sensing. Awareness sensing involves attending to the here-and-now of experience, the total engagement in a particular activity and the alertness of what might be experienced in moments of concentration or stillness. In order to evoke this sense of awareness, the children were invited to select from a variety of activities that may have involved attending to the here-and-now of experience. They included jigsaw puzzles, 'bead-creation' materials, drawing, and seed planting.

The group meetings lasted for about 45 minutes and were videotaped so that recordings could form the basis of the texts that would be reflected upon. These recordings captured not only the dialogue between students, but also their silences, body language, facial expressions, posture and gestures, all of which may have indicated something of their spirituality.

In viewing and reviewing these video recordings, the researcher reflected upon the life expressions of these children by keeping a reflective journal. It contained hermeneutic phenomenological descriptions and reflections on the life expressions of these children that had been captured by the video recordings.

The Life Expressions

The characteristic of *integrating awareness* was observed particularly during the awareness sensing meetings with the Year 5 children from the inner city school and the Year 3 children from the suburban school. Initially, the children seemed to begin concentrating upon the activity they chose to undertake. After a short time, however, the children seemed to become unified with the activity, thereby allowing another level of consciousness to be reached whereby they were able to transcend the activity, and to enter into a "free-flow" of conversation.

At one level of awareness, their concentration remained on the activity at hand. Yet at a second level of awareness, they were able to speak freely and in an uninhibited manner, oblivious to the fact that they were being videotaped. It was almost as if the activity enabled the children to transcend it, and to speak freely in conversation. Yet, as they spoke freely in conversation, the care with which they displayed in attending to their activity did not diminish. It was almost as if the conversation had integrated the activity. That is, this second level of awareness seemed to have enveloped or integrated the first level.

The following reflective journal entry on the Year 5 children from the inner city schools provides an example of integrating awareness¹:

The children moved to their chosen activity. Interestingly, all of the children chose to engage in the bead creations activity. Initially there was little conversation as their attention was focused on the activity at hand. However, this began to change. As the skills required for the completion of their chosen task became 'second nature', their concentrated attention seemed to give way to a sense of the activity taking care of itself. The conversation among them increased in a way that didn't appear to be at all self-conscious, in spite of the fact that they were being videoed by an adult who, under ordinary classroom circumstances, may not have approved of particular elements of their conversation.

"When we're noisy, you're quiet, and when you're noisy, we're quiet," began May Ling, who smiled as her comment was met with laughter.

"Like on camp," interjected Hy Sun. "Our cabin was so quiet, but Wadi couldn't stop snoring!"

"Me and Jack fell asleep straight away," added Ramsay, "but Albert kept on chanting 'Aaaaanthony...Aaaaanthony...'"

There was more laughing, followed by Fadde, who declared

"We were the noisiest cabin. Mr. Marks and Miss McKee had to shout at us..."

"Those two love each Other!" interrupted Missal, to the sound of further giggling.

"We had to get changed in our cabins" continued Fadde, "but every time Jack had to get changed he asked us to close our eyes..."

"And you should hear how he blows his nose!" added May Ling. "It is so quiet, but when he blows his nose everyone went, 'ew!'"

"Oops – the camera is listening!" cautioned Hy Sun, who, while looking around, had suddenly become aware of the video and my presence.

Similarly the following reflective journal entry on the Year 3 children from the suburban school provides some evidence of this characteristic of their spirituality:

The children excitedly moved to choose their activity. All six children selected the seed planting activity, and almost immediately there was a communal flavour about the task. The conversation, which had ceased briefly, now continued and began to develop freely.

The activity seemed to enable this to happen. The children continued to fill their seed boxes with soil and seeds carefully, yet as if without the need to concentrate explicitly on this task. This activity seemed to take care of itself, freeing the children to converse liberally and unreservedly. So free was their conversation that they had become oblivious to the presence of an adult and video camera recording the meeting.

Snippets of their conversation become quite distinct.

"Joseph gets to sleep in the lounge room," declared Stacey.

"I get to sleep in the kitchen!" announced Joseph, who seemed pleased to be the centre of attention.

"No, Joseph sleeps with Sally!" exclaimed Milly.

"No, I don't!" retorted Joseph.

"As if!" replied a defiant Sally.

"Yes you do!" teased Milly.

"You're being silly," giggled Sally.

Stacey turned towards the camera and said in a more serious tone, "Is this (the video) going to be shown to our mums and dads?"

Trying my best act impartially and not to react to the comments of their conversation, I assured them that the video would not be viewed by anyone Other than myself.

"Good," and "That's OK then," came their replies simultaneously.

Quiet descended upon the group as children's focus returned to the task at hand.

"Don't you dare tell my mum (that I said that)," cautioned Milly in a quiet voice to Emma. "She's going to kill me!"

Reflecting upon Integrating Awareness Using the Lifeworld Existentials

This characteristic, termed *integrating awareness* is now explored using the lifeworld existentials (van Manen, 1990) as guides to reflection.

Lived relation

It seemed that while the children were engaged in the activity to which each was attending, the children wished for something more in terms of their desire to relate to those around them. There seemed to be a longing to enter the interpersonal space shared by the group and to connect with the Other. This was evident in the fact that a conversation emerged in both instances. While the activity was engaging, there was a sense in which the children sought to go beyond the task at hand. Yet it seemed the very activities in which the children were engaged provided a foundation for them to move beyond – to transcend the task, and to enter into conversation with the 'Other'. In each instance in which the characteristic *integrating awareness* became evident, the children were all undertaking *the same* activity.

The commonality of the activity itself seemed to provide an impetus for conversation. This could be seen for example, in the case of the Year 5 children from the inner city school. As the necessary skills needed for their chosen activity became 'second nature' the activity itself seemed to provide a foundation for the children moving beyond it, and enter into uninhibited conversation with their peers.

So engaged were these children in their conversation that they seemed oblivious to the presence of the researcher and the video camera recording the meeting. Yet, at the same time, the activity in which they were engaged continued to be undertaken with care and skill. It was almost as if the free and uninhibited style of conversation had enveloped, or integrated the activity. It seemed as though one level of consciousness – attention to the activity – had somehow been encased and sustained by a second emerging level of consciousness – the conversation.

While acknowledging the complexity and uncertainty in discussing the nature of consciousness, the work of Wilber (2000a, 2000b) provides a useful model for exploring the phenomena exhibited by both of these groups of children in the awareness sensing meetings.

In discussing the different waves, lines and states that might comprise an integral theory of consciousness, Wilber (2000a) has maintained that there are various developmental levels of consciousness which unfold in the individual. They are termed developmental not because they are rigid, linear, or appear as rungs-in-the-ladder, but because they are fluid, and overlap as waves appear to do. Wilber has applied the term *levels* or *waves* to describe this developmental unfolding of consciousness. The higher levels of consciousness do not sit on top of the lower dimensions like rungs in a ladder, but rather they enfold them, just as, for example, cells embody molecules which embody atoms. These developmental waves appear to be like "concentric spheres of increasing embrace, inclusion, and holistic capacity" (p. 147).

Crucial to this notion of developmental waves of consciousness is Wilber's (2000a) notion of the Self or Self system, which acts as a means by which to integrate, or balance these waves of consciousness. Wilber has maintained that levels, or waves of consciousness, as well as other aspects of awareness, appear to be devoid of an intrinsic self-sense. He has argued that one of the primary characteristics of the Self is its capacity to identify with the basic levels, or waves of consciousness. This drive to integrate the various components of the psyche is then a crucial feature of the Self system. Wilber has noted that, in psychopathology for instance, the basic waves of consciousness would be considered to emerge in a generally well-functioning manner. The basic structures of consciousness do not in themselves become 'broken'. When, for example, concrete operational thinking emerges in a child, it does so more or less in tact. However, what the child does with that wave of consciousness specifically involves the child's sense of Self and the ability of the Self system to *integrate* the emerging wave of consciousness with the previous waves, or structures.

This process of integration occurs each time the Self encounters a new level, or wave of consciousness. Wilber (2000a) has maintained that the Self system must firstly identify, or be in fusion with that new level. Secondly, the Self then *disidentifies*, or transcends that level so as to move to a yet higher wave. Then, ideally, the Self integrates the previous wave of consciousness with the higher wave. Wilber (2000a; 2000b) has termed

this process as the fulcrum of self development. It occurs each time the Self system encounters a new level, or wave of consciousness. The fulcrum has three basic sub-phases – fusion, transcendence, and integration.

None of this, Wilber (2000a) has asserted, occurs in a rigid or linear type of classification. The fluidity of this highlights the fact that the Self system can be best envisaged as a centre of gravity, with the various levels, lines and states of consciousness orbiting around the integrating tendency of the Self. Indeed, the Self system itself also undergoes its own type of development through what might be considered as a series of waves. However, the distinguishing feature of the Self is its ability to coordinate all of these.

Wilber's model (2000a) serves to inform the discussion of the characteristic of *integrating awareness* exhibited by these children. In each case, an initial level of consciousness was encountered by the individual's Self system. This comprised the awareness of the activity in which they were engaged. Their focus, concentration, and absorption in this corporeal activity may have indicated that the Self had already integrated this particular level of consciousness with previous levels. Then, the Self systems of these children encountered a new level of consciousness – the particular type of conversation that was emerging among them. In both cases the children seemed to gravitate towards this new level. This was evident in the way they began to engage in the conversation, each child making her or his own contribution to the topic under discussion. The motivation for this was perhaps the desire to transcend the activity and so connect in relationship with the 'Other', that is, their peers. In response to this desire, the Self identified, or fused with this emerging level. The Self then transcended this level so as to integrate this new wave of consciousness with the previous. The result of this integration of consciousness by the Self was that the new level of consciousness – the free flowing conversation – enveloped or integrated the previous level of engagement in the activity. Evidence of this integration may have been seen in the fact that the task, which was being completed by the children, continued to be undertaken with care and skill. There was a quality to their work that seemed to suggest that their completion of the task was not a mechanical response, but that the conversation – the new level of consciousness – had enveloped the initial level. At first it may have appeared that the activity itself had enabled the children to transcend it. However, in drawing upon Wilber's model, it would seem that the second level had enveloped the previous level of engagement in the activity. Awareness of the free-flowing conversation in

which the children could relate to their peers and the corporeal activity in which the children were engaged had become one. This may explain how these children were able to maintain the care, skill and quality of the tactile activity while at the same time attend to the conversation that was developing among them. The desire to relate to the Other led the Self systems of these children to integrate their awareness of two seemingly separate activities so that in fact the two became unified.

Lived space

There was a sense in which the children collectively seemed to create a particular kind of space in which to accommodate the emerging second wave of consciousness through their initial engagement in the corporeal tactile activities to which they were attending. For example, there was, initially, very little conversation among the Year 5 children from the inner city school until the skills required for the completion of their chosen activity became 'second nature'. At this point, the conversation then seemed to develop in a way that was not at all self-conscious. The ground was prepared and the space had been created by the common activity in which the children were engaged. This was similar with the Year 3 children from the suburban school. While their conversation had ceased only momentarily, it was not until after these children had set about engaging in the seed planting activity individually that the conversation began to freely develop. Again, the space required for the new wave of consciousness to emerge had been created by the children's engagement in the activity.

The space prepared for the emerging level of consciousness could be described as a space of invitation. The children in each group seemed to enter this invitational space to contribute to and become involved in the particular type of conversation that was emerging. There was a sense in which they were welcomed into this space. At the same time, this space presented an element of risk. The children who contributed to the conversation took the risk to speak and to have their comments affirmed, added to and incorporated into the ebb and flow of the dialogue. Yet at the same time, it was a space of safety, for the particular type of conversation that emerged – itself somewhat inappropriate for the supervised classroom context – was able to develop freely and without hindrance in a space in which both the context and content of the discourse were respected. The children seemed to sense this, although in both cases, some assurance was sought to ensure that the researcher also respected the nature of the space that had been created. For example, Hy Sun's comment, "Oops – the camera is listening" was as much a reminder to the

researcher as to his peers of the safety and confidentiality of space that had been created. Similarly Stacey's question, "Is this (the video) going to be shown to our mums and dads?" could have been interpreted as a request for the researcher to honour the space that had been created. Therefore, this created space was sacred. It needed to be respected and honoured, as did the contents of that space (the conversation). It was in this space that these children were exhibiting a characteristic of their spirituality, namely the ability to integrate an emerging level of consciousness with a previous level.

This created space was one that enabled the children to become less self-conscious and to relate with Others through conversation. The space that was prepared for the emerging level of consciousness could be described as *relational*. It was in this relational space that a second level of consciousness emerged and enveloped the previous level of awareness. This accords with the understandings of spirituality that have been drawn upon in this paper. These children seemed to be conscious of their consciousness. As a result of their integrated awareness, the children appeared to be conscious of both their continued engagement in their chosen activity, and at the same time, aware of their conversation with their peers that was enabling them to relate to the 'Other'.

Lived time

The children's awareness was focused on the present moment of their experience in which the children experienced a merging of temporal horizons – immediate past, present and the immediate future. The immediate past temporal horizon consisted of their engagement in their chosen activity. It included their focus, their concentration and mastery of the skills necessary to complete their particular task. Yet, this horizon seemed to merge with the present temporal horizon, in which the activity continued to be undertaken while a particular free-flowing style of conversation developed among them. In this immediate temporal horizon the characteristic of *integrating awareness* was exhibited. The children were unified with the task they had begun in the immediate past temporal horizon, and with the conversation that was emerging in the present. It seemed also that all of this merged with the immediate future as the children anticipated the direction of the conversation and contributed to its ebb and flow. The children did not seem to control the conversation, as this took on a life of its own and dictated its own direction. As is the case with all genuine conversations, there was a sense in which the children found themselves to be less leaders of it than they were led by it (cf. Gadamer 1960/1989). Yet, each child, in risking and offering

her or his own contribution to the conversation anticipated its possible course, like players in a game attempting to predict their opponent's next move. The outcome of the conversation, like that of a game, was unknown. But the various possibilities, the potential twists and turns, the likely plays with and plays upon words were sought in advance by the children involved. In this way the immediate future merged with the present and immediate past temporal horizons. Situated in this temporal sequence, the students may have experienced the passing of time as a unified and simultaneous flowing from one moment to the next (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1996) – from the immediate past, through the present to the immediate future. Yet at any one moment in time, there was a sense in which all three temporal horizons could have been understood to coexist, that is, to have merged into a single temporal horizon. Any one particular moment in time could have been understood to contain the immediate past, present and immediate future as a single entity.

Lived body

At an initial level of awareness, the corporeal and tactile activities in which these children engaged seemed to provide a foundation for the emerging level of consciousness. The conscious perception of physical bodily awareness appeared to act in such a way as to prepare the ground for the emerging wave of consciousness to envelop and integrate the previous level. This was evident for example, among the Year 5 children from the inner city school. Initially, these children's attention was focused upon the activity to which they were attending. Their awareness was centred upon the sensory experience and the mastering of the skills needed to complete their task. Without the children's engagement in these sensorial tasks, the characteristic of *integrating awareness* may not have become evident. Physical and bodily engagement by the children seemed a necessary prerequisite in preparing the ground for the emergence of this new wave of consciousness and its integration with previous levels.

Perhaps it could be argued these two waves of consciousness were interdependent. Awareness of the physical and tactile experiences was needed in order to provide a foundation for the emerging wave of consciousness. Yet this new level of awareness was itself needed so that the Self could integrate it with the awareness of the physical and the tactile in order that the Self could then transcend that level so as to move to a yet higher wave. It seemed that consciousness was dependant upon consciousness – awareness upon awareness. Neither wave was more important or more integral than the Other. Yet both were required for the Self

to move through the phases of fusion, transcendence and integration. Both were necessary for the children's physical and outward expression of the spiritual characteristic of *integrating awareness*.

Some Implications for Religious Education in Nurturing Children's Spirituality

The reflections presented above have some important implications for religious educators seeking to nurture the spirituality of their students. Primarily they indicate children's ability to integrate an emerging wave of consciousness with an existing level of awareness, albeit at a basic level.

Throughout history, there have been individuals from various religious traditions who appear to have been able to integrate a new emerging wave of consciousness with previous levels in order to enter into relationship with the Transcendent. Examples of those who have been able to do this at sophisticated levels could include the Prophet Mohammed and Sufi master Ibn Al-' Arabi. Christian mystics such as St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross could also be included among these. In *The Interior Castle* (1577), Teresa of Avila wrote of the dignity of the human being as the dwelling place of God. In attaining a higher level of consciousness and integrating it with previous levels, she spoke of the soul as being the interior castle, the place where God dwells, and of prayer as being the means by which the soul is united to God.

This article indicates the possibility that children of primary school age are able to integrate their awareness at more basic and less sophisticated levels. The fact that children are able to integrate new waves of consciousness with their previous levels of awareness so as to connect or enter into relationship with the 'Other' suggests that *integrating awareness* is relational, and possibly a characteristic of their spirituality.

The context of religious education can provide appropriate opportunities for enabling students to express and develop this characteristic of their spirituality. For example, opportunities for prayer could draw upon *integrating awareness*. For example, at an initial level, students might be encouraged to engage in a sensorial and tactile activity, such as moulding clay, or painting in relation to a particular passage of scripture, such as "Lord, our God, how great your name throughout the earth!" (Psalm 8:1). Time could be provided for the students to become aware of the activity in which they engage. As the children continue to engage in these activities, they could be invited to name silently to God those particular talents, skills

or attributes that make them unique. These could be silently repeated. This second emerging level of consciousness – conversation with God, may envelop the initial level – engagement in the tactile activity. The teacher would not be able to determine with any degree of certainty whether or not *integrating awareness* was occurring. However, the opportunity for it to occur would have been deliberately planned and built into the curriculum, thereby allowing for it to be nurtured within the classroom context.

The reflection in this article has brought to the fore the relational understanding of spirituality. The space in which *integrating awareness* manifests itself could be described as relational. This suggests that religious educators who wish to nurture the spirituality of their students need to pay careful attention to the types of spaces that are created within their classrooms. Spaces need to be created that are invitational and relational. While the whole school community bears responsibility for the creation of such spaces, the onus at the classroom level for the creation of these spaces rests initially with the class teacher. However, the above reflection also indicates the importance of the children themselves in creating their own relational spaces in which to express and nurture their spirituality. Classroom teachers need to enable this to happen. In some instances, this may require the teacher to be absent from the space created by the students if their spirituality is to be genuinely expressed. Some elements of the conversation of the children in this research may not have emerged in the ordinary classroom context in which their classroom teachers were present and 'monitoring' the dialogue. While teachers would not necessarily wish to encourage conversation of the potentially inappropriate nature exhibited among the children in this article, the space that students create for their own nurturing of spirituality needs to be envisaged by the students as safe and confidential. It may be that in some instances, teachers would need to be willing to remove themselves from this space in order for the students to express and to nurture their own spirituality.

The importance of enabling children to engage in the present moment of their experience has also been brought to the fore. If spirituality is to be expressed, the present moment is a temporal reality that needs to be engaged. The context of religious education can nurture spirituality by allowing time for students to engage in the present moment of their experience. The temptation for teachers can be to maintain an active tempo, to keep the lesson and the activities flowing. Time needs to be planned in order to nurture the spirituality of students. This seems to occur in the here-and-now of experience. In busy classrooms, time is of the essence. Yet

without planning for adequate time for students to engage in the here-and-now of their experience, it will be difficult to genuinely nurture spirituality.

If *integrating awareness* is to emerge and be nurtured, the ground needs to be prepared in terms of providing the initial tactile and sensory experiences for the children's engagement. In primary classroom contexts such bodily and physical experiences are essential in nurturing spirituality. Not only might they enable the students to draw upon the physical wisdom of their own bodies as a legitimate and primal source of knowledge, but they also prepare the ground for *integrating awareness* to occur. Without such consciously planned experiences, students may not have the opportunity to integrate an emerging wave of consciousness with the initial physical awareness. That is, they may not have the opportunity to develop their spirituality in this particular way.

However, it needs to be noted that, for various reasons, not all teachers of religious education may be equipped professionally and/or personally for nurturing spirituality in this way. Some may not possess the necessary accreditation qualifications to teach religious education. Others may be at particular stages of their own spiritual and faith journeys that perhaps have not acknowledged the importance of the spiritual in their own lives, let alone the lives of their students. Herein lies a pertinent challenge for the leadership of Catholic primary schools in providing appropriate structures and opportunities for the personal and professional formation of teachers of religious education to enable them to address the nurturing of their students' spirituality within the religious education curriculum.

References

- Beringer, A. (2000). In search of the sacred: A conceptual analysis of spirituality. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, Winter, 157-167. Retrieved May 28, 2001, from <http://global.umi.com/pqdweb>.
- Bosacki, S. (2001). 'Theory of mind' or 'Theory of the soul'? The role of spirituality in children's understanding of minds and emotions. In J. Erricker, C. Ota & C. Erricker (Eds.), *Spiritual education. Cultural, religious and social differences: New perspectives for the 21st century* (pp. 156-169). Great Britain: Sussex Academic.
- Cornelissen, M. (1999). *Parts and planes of the being: An overview of the terminology*. Retrieved March 24, 2005 from <http://www.saccs.org.in/TEXTS/Others/Mattijs>
- de Souza, M. (2004). Teaching for effective learning in religious education: A discussion of the perceiving, thinking, feeling and intuitive elements in the learning process. *Journal of Religious Education*, 52(3), 22-30.
- Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2002). Empty wells: How well are we doing at spiritual well-being? *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 7(3), 309-328.
- Emmons, R. (1999). *The psychology of ultimate concerns: Motivation and spirituality in personality*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Emmons, R. (2000). Is spirituality an intelligence? Motivation, cognition, and the psychology of ultimate concern. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(1), 3-26.
- Fontana, D. (2003). *Psychology, religion and spirituality*. Oxford: BPS Blackwell.
- Gadamer, H. (1989). *Truth and Method* (2nd rev. English edition). (J. Weinsheimer & D. Marshall, Trans.). London: Sheed & Ward. (Original work published 1960).
- Griffin, D. (1998). Introduction: Postmodern spirituality and society. In D. Griffin (Ed.), *Spirituality and society: Postmodern versions* (pp. 1-31). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Griffith, C. (2003). Spirituality and religious education: Fostering a closer connection. In T. Groome & H. Horell (Eds.), *Horizons and hopes: The future of religious education* (pp. 51-62). New York: Paulist Press.
- Groome, T. (1998). *Educating for life: A spiritual vision for every teacher and parent*. New York: Crossroads.
- Hardy, A. (1966). *The divine flame: an essay towards a natural history of religion*. London: Collins.
- Hart, T. (2003). *The secret spiritual world of children*. Makawao, HI: Inner Ocean.
- Hay, D., & Nye, R. (1998). *The spirit of the child*. London: Fount Paperbacks.
- Hyde, B. (2003). Spiritual intelligence: A critique. *Journal of Religious Education*, 51(1), 13-20.
- Hyde, B. (2004a). The plausibility of spiritual intelligence: Spiritual experience, problem solving, and neural sites. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 9(1), 39-52.
- Hyde, B. (2004b). A pedagogy of the spirit: Situating primary religious education within the greater ambit of spirituality. *Journal of Religious Education*, 52(3), 69-76.
- James, W. (1977). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature*.

- Great Britain: Fountain Books. (Original work published 1902).
- Liddy, S. (2002). Children's spirituality. *Journal of Religious Education*, 50(1), 13-19.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.
- Maitra, S. (1968). *The meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Marshak, D., & Litfin, K. (2002). Aurobindo Ghose. In J. Miller & Y. Nakagawa (Eds.), *Nurturing our wholeness: Perspectives on spirituality in education* (pp. 81-94). Rutland, VT, USA: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Maslow, A. (1970). *Religions, values, and peak-experiences*. New York: The Viking Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1996). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1945).
- Newberg, A., d'Aquili, E. & Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won't go away: Brain science and the biology of belief*. New York: Ballantine.
- O'Murchu, D. (1997). *Reclaiming spirituality: A new spiritual framework for today's world*. Dublin: Gateway.
- Priestly, J. (2002, July). *The spiritual dimension of the curriculum: Can it be assessed?* A paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Children's Spirituality, King Alfred's College, Winchester, UK.
- Ramachandran, V., & Blakeslee, S. (1998). *Phantoms in the brain*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Ranson, D. (2002). *Across the great divide: Bridging spirituality and religion today*. Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's.
- Scott, D. (2001). Storytelling, voice and qualitative research: spirituality as a site of ambiguity and difficulty. In J. Erricker, C. Ota & C. Erricker (Eds.), *Spiritual education. Cultural, religious and social differences: New perspectives for the 21st century* (pp. 118-129). Great Britain: Sussex Academic.
- St. Teresa of Jesus. (1577). *The interior castle*. ICS Publications. Retrieved October 20, 2004, from www.carmelite.com/PDF/ic.pdf.
- Tacey, D. (2000). *ReEnchantment: The new Australian spirituality*. Australia: HarperCollins.
- Tacey, D. (2003). *The spirituality revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality*. Australia: HarperCollins.
- van Manen. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Canada: Althouse.
- Wilber, K. (2000a). Waves, streams, states and self: Further considerations for an integral theory of consciousness. In J. Andresen & R. Forman (Eds.), *Cognitive models and spiritual maps: Interdisciplinary explorations of religious experience* (pp. 145-175). Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic.
- Wilber, K. (2000b). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology*. London: Shambhala.
- Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (2000). *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence*. USA: Bloomsbury.

***Brendan Hyde** is a member of the School of Religious Education at Australian Catholic University.

¹ The names of the children in this paper are pseudonyms used in order to protect their identity.

Indoctrination, Education and God: The Struggle for the Mind

TERENCE COPLEY

- Is indoctrination occurring in our society?
- To what extent are schools helping or hindering the process?
- What forces are currently winning in the struggle for the mind?

Terence Copley is Professor of Religious Education at the University of Exeter's School of Education and Lifelong Learning. He has published 35 books with various publishers, including *The Myth of Man* (2002), *Spiritual Development in the State School* (2000).

SPCK 2005