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NEW FRONTIERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

From 1793 to 1848, education was provided solely by the Church of England, as the First Fleet chaplain, Rev. Richard Johnson, stated "If any hopes are to be formed of any reformation being affected in this Colony, I believe it must begin amongst those of the rising generation".¹ Australia's establishment as a penal colony focused attention on the need for moral education. Samuel Marsden, who succeeded Johnson as chaplain, agreed. "The future hopes of this colony depend upon the rising generation. Little can be expected from the convicts who are grown old in vice, but much may be done for their children under proper instruction".² Both men came to Australia as missionaries of the Church of England Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP). As early as 1795, the opinion was recorded in the minutes of the Society that: "The most likely means of effecting a reformation must be by paying all the attention that can be to the instruction and morals of the rising generation".³ Implicit within these polarisations is the concept of indoctrination within education. Whatever the stance one takes, Protestant, Catholic or Secularist, one will find supporting arguments from one's own epistemology that seem utterly convincing that one's epistemology must be indoctrinated into public education. And by necessity the dominant epistemology will provide direction for moral education, with undisputed antagonism between those holding other epistemologies.

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INTRODUCTION

Professor Manning Clark considers the three forces that have shaped Australian culture, Protestantism, Catholicism and Enlightenment Secularism. For Clark, the First Fleet brought with it three rival philosophies of civilisation and views about human or divine purpose the Catholic, the Protestant and the Enlightenment - which would vie for dominance under the new stars of the southern sky.⁴ The dominant theme of the early volumes of Clark's history was the interplay between the harsh environment of the Australian continent and the European values of the people who discovered, explored and settled it in the 18th and 19th centuries. He saw Catholicism, Protestantism and the Enlightenment as the three great contending influences in Australian history. He was chiefly interested in colourful, emblematic Australian individuals and the struggles they underwent to maintain their beliefs. Clark used these figures to show that in many ways, the social, moral, ethical and religious agendas of these strong personalities became formative for the Australian national consciousness; their stories came to typify the competing agendas that today effect our Australian culture. Manning Clark's fourth volume of "*A History of Australia*"⁵ shows that some of the significant popular thinkers and spokespersons from the past history of this nation were desperately lost men, men whose thinking had become dominated by the empiricism of Descartes and Kant, who sought an analgesic escape from the pain of non-belief. A brief

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¹ Johnson, R. (1794). *Correspondence, Johnson to Fricker*, 4th October, 1794 n.p. (SPG). Available <http://www.chr.org.au/fpbooks/otherarticles/otherarticles.html> accessed May 11, 2011

² *Samuel Marsden to the Bishop of London*, 11 March 1821. "The Principle of the Planting of the Seed of Local Self-government begins with the taking of responsibility for the education of the young. Education is the responsibility of parents, who are urged to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" Eph. 6: 4. See also Deut. 6:6-7. The church, not the state, is to help the parent exercise this responsibility."

³ Bonwick, J.(1898). *Australia's first preacher: The Rev. Richard Johnson, first chaplain of New South Wales* London: T. & W. Boone, p. 51.

⁴ Bridge, C.(1997). *Manning Clark and the ratbag tradition* European Australian Studies Association Conference at the University of Klagenfurt in September 1997.

⁵ Clark, M. (1962 – 1987). *A history of Australia 6 volumes* London: Penguin

understanding of the angst experienced by influential Australian writers will reflect the subversive element resistant to the prevailing Christian culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Clark noted that their sense of “the Bush” evidences this angst of non-belief, purposeless and meaninglessness.⁶ Later in Volume Five of *A History of Australia*, Manning Clark notes the polarisation of the nation between the republican secularised viewpoint represented in *The Bulletin* magazine and its readers, and the majority anglophile viewpoint represented in governmental leaders. The great social upheavals of Australian culture and history have been inspired by those that negate meaning, and take a despairing view of human nature. Volume Five of Clark’s *A History of Australia* highlights the polarising forces of communism and the labour movement in its conflict with the forces of social conservatism displayed in the fondness for the British Empire personified in the figure of Sir Henry Parkes and his protégé’s.⁷ The social polarisation of these viewpoints was and is still reflected in the Education policies of the infant colony.

The National Schools Chaplaincy Programme, as conducted in New South Wales Public Schools, has drawn both justified and unjustified criticism and controversy from the secular movement in NSW Education. Dialogue and negotiation of competing world views has been forced out of the public square in education in attempts towards peaceful coexistence through an extreme ‘hard’ secularised education. However, subjugating one or any worldview to another dominant epistemology does not enhance toleration through intolerance of other competing worldviews, but rather forces cultures into transformative subjugation, where the wholeness and humanity of the subjugated is not respected, resulting in poor psychological outcomes, resistance and acceleration of movement towards violence through the atmosphere of subjugation, rather than respect. While many would regard the curtailment of access for Special Religious Education in New South Wales Government schools as a disappointment, and even discriminatory, we suggest that both General Religious Education (taught by suitably trained Chaplains), and Special Religious Education (taught by representatives of each religious body appointed by government-recognised denominational or religious institutions in accord with parental wishes and permissions) have a part to play in the stability of moral education in Australian Public Schools.⁸ We submit that opportunities for developing a spiritually oriented and philosophically reflective exploration of underlying spirituality within the school curriculum, as General Religious Education taught by School Chaplains, may create exciting opportunities for directing children of different faiths to universal examples of ethical and moral examples enhancing opportunities for improving relationality, allowing unity without uniformity in diversity of belief. A perusal of the policy document on the guidelines that pertain to Scripture Religious Education and General Religious Education over the past 150 years issued by the NSW Department of Education should assuage anxieties in regard to the Department’s protocols.

Developing spiritual consciousnesses

The New South Wales Government’s Schools Excellence Framework⁹ is an excellent policy document for NSW Public Education. It is hoped that it will translate from a mere public document into a pedagogic practice in NSW Government Schools. Pursuing excellence in Student Wellbeing sets the parameters for Spirituality in NSW Public Education: “The school has in place a comprehensive and inclusive framework to support the cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing of students, which measurably improves individual and collective wellbeing.” Spirituality has been described as “a broad concept referring to the ways in which people seek, make, celebrate and apply meaning to their lives.”¹⁰ In a society with growing uncertainties and ample choices, people will need more time to reflect on the deep values that make life worth living, and it will be “increasingly difficult to determine precisely what spirituality means.”¹¹ Spirituality means different things to various people with the word often used in a vague and ambiguous way.¹² For some it’s an undefined word with no clear meaning or with wide and loose significance,¹³ a word that is “hardly more than a hint, a ‘hint followed by guesses.’ And the guesses proliferate exponentially.”¹⁴ Spirituality has become a “proliferation term” with a “clutter” definition.¹⁵ David Tacey admits that a definition is difficult, “but we can talk around the subject and provide some hints and descriptions.”¹⁶ Goldsworthy comments that “spirituality is some

⁶ Lawson, H. (1892). *The Drover's Wife* ‘The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple trees, no undergrowth. Nineteen miles to the nearest civilisation - a shanty on the main road ... There is nothing to see, however, and not a soul to meet. You might walk for twenty miles along this track without being able to fix a point in your mind, unless you are a bushman. This is because of the everlasting, maddening sameness of the stunted trees.’

⁷ However, critically assessing this aspect of Clark’s work, Paul Mortier reviewed the second volume of *Select Documents* in the Communist Party newspaper *Tribune*, and criticised Clark for his lack of Marxist understanding: ‘Professor Clark rejects class struggle as the key to historical development: he expressed grave doubts about whether there has been any real progress: and he has no good word for historians who pay tribute to the working people for their contributions to Australia’s traditions.’

Mortier, P. (27 July 1955). ‘The professor is baffled but the documents are clear’ *Tribune*

The *New South Wales Public Instruction Act 1880* attempted to promulgate the principle of religious neutrality. Starting with South Australia in 1851, one by one each of the states passed acts secularising education and withdrawing support from all church schools. Though secular education was still based on a “common Christianity”, the *New South Wales Public Instruction Act 1880* read: “7. In all schools under the Act, the teaching shall be strictly non-sectarian but the words ‘secular education’ shall be held to include the general religious teaching, as distinct from dogmatical or polemical theology lessons in the history of England and Australia, and shall form part of the course of secular instruction.

17. In every public school four hours during each school-day shall be devoted to secular instruction exclusively and a portion of each day not more than one hour shall be set apart when the children of any one persuasion may be instructed by the clergyman or other religious teacher of such persuasion.⁸⁵

⁹ NSW Government Education and Communities (December 2014) Public Schools NSW Schools Excellence Framework <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associated-documents/framework.pdf>

¹⁰ Hughes, P. (1997). *Believe it or not: Australian spirituality and the churches in the 90s*, Kew, Australia: Christian Research Association, p.7.

¹¹ Wuthnow, R. (1998). *After heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. 14.

¹² Kurtz, P. (1997). ‘Spirituality, Neospirituality, and the Paranormal,’ in *Modern spiritualities: An inquiry*, Brown, L.(ed.) Amhurst, New York: Prometheus Books, p.223.

¹³ Jones, C. (1986). *The study of spirituality*, London: SPCK Publishing, p. xxii.

¹⁴ Petersen, E. (1994). in Green, M. and Stevens, P. (1994). *New Testament spirituality: True discipleship and spiritual maturity*, Surrey, United Kingdom: Eagle, Inter Publishing Service [IPS], p.vii.

¹⁵ Roten, J. (1994). ‘The Marian Counterpoint of Postmodern Spirituality’ in *Divine representations: Postmodernism and spirituality*, Astell, A (ed.) New Jersey: Paulist Press, p.104.

¹⁶ Tacey, D. (2000). *Re-enchantment: The new Australian spirituality*, Sydney, Australia: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 17.

vague religious or mystical feeling. Often it seems to mean nothing more than a sense of the aesthetic, a feeling of belonging within nature, or an intensified feeling of self-worth. It is a rejection of the hard-nosed scientism of the twentieth century that cannot admit to the inexplicable.”¹⁷ Rather than defining spirituality as limiting a definition of spirituality to any single fixed definition has often produced difficulty (Eaude, 2003¹⁸; Erricker & Erricker, 1997¹⁹; Hay & Nye, 1998²⁰; Tacey, 2000²¹), it is more useful to describe spirituality. Spirituality has been described as pertaining to interior of life, religious experience, the search for meaning and purpose, expressions or relatedness, transcendence, immanence, ultimate values, integrity, identity, connection to something greater, awareness (Bosacki, 2000²²; Champagne, 2001²³; Chater, 1998²⁴; Crawford & Rossiter, 2003²⁵; Eaude, 2000²⁶; Engebretson, 2002²⁷; Fisher, 1997²⁸; Harris & Moran, 1998²⁹; Keating, 2000³⁰; O'Murchu, 1997³¹). Avoiding a tendency towards reductionism implicit in approaches that seek an exact definition, spirituality can be described (Priestly, 2002³², Eaude, 2003) as a natural human predisposition. Spirituality can be described, not as the exclusive domain of any one religious tradition, but rather as an essential human trait which can provide direction for relationship to the human and nonhuman world through Natural Law Theory. “Spirituality may be considered as an internalisation of ‘who you are’ an extension of “the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos (Palmer³³ 2003).”³⁴ Busing et al.(2010) concluded that spirituality is “an attribute of all human beings.”³⁵ Zohar and Marshall (2004) define spiritual intelligence, and thus spirituality, as “an ability to access higher meanings, values, abiding purposes, and unconscious aspects of the self and to embed these meanings, values and purposes in living a richer and more creative life.”³⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar defined spirituality as: “that basic practical or existential attitude (*Grundhaltung*) of a person which is the consequence and expression of the way in which they understand and live their religious – or more generally, their ethically committed – existence.”³⁷

The Dalai Lama proposed “Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is the acceptance of some form of heaven or nirvana. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit -such as love and compassion, patience tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony, -which brings happiness to both self and others.”³⁸ William James (1902 / 2009), attempting to explore the universality of religious experience distinguished between institutional religion and the “primordial religious experience.”³⁹ James' influential work explored “the original experiences that were the pattern-setters for the mass of suggested feeling and intimated conduct”⁴⁰ that resulted in formalised religions. “It is a commonplace of metaphysics that God’s knowledge cannot be discursive but must be intuitive, that is, must be constructed more after the pattern of what in ourselves is called immediate feeling, than after that of proposition and judgment.”⁴¹

Alexander & McLaughlin (2003) helpfully attempt to distinguish between religiously “tethered” and “untethered” conceptions of spirituality. The former is linked to or housed within the tradition of a religious faith. It “takes its shape and structure from various

¹⁷ Goldsworthy, G. (2006). ‘A Biblical Theological Perspective on Prayer’ in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 10:4 p.14. http://www.sbps.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt_104_goldsworth

¹⁸ Eaude, T. (2003). ‘Shining Lights in Unexpected Corners: New Angles on Young Children's Spiritual Development.’ *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 8(2), pp.151-162.

¹⁹ Erricker, C. and Erricker, J. Sullivan, D. Ota, C. Fletcher, M. (1997). *The education of the whole child*. London: Cassell.

²⁰ Hay, D., with Nye, R. (1998). *The spirit of the child*. London: Harper Collins.

²¹ Tacey, D. (2000). *ReEnchantment: The new Australian spirituality*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

²² Bosacki, S. (2000). ‘Theory of Mind and Self-concept in Preadolescents: Links with Gender and Language.’ *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, pp.709-717.

²³ Champagne, E. (2001). ‘Listening to...listening for...: A theological reflection on spirituality in early childhood’ in J. Erricher, C. Ota & C. Erricker, (eds.), *Spiritual education. Cultural, religious and social differences: New perspectives for the 21st century* p. 156-169. Great Britain: Sussex Academic.

²⁴ Chater, M. (1998). ‘Woundedness and The Learning Spirit-child – Ontology and Epistemology of a Therapeutic Education’ *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 3 (2).pp.147-157.

²⁵ Crawford, M. & Rossiter, G. (2003). ‘Reasons for Living: School Education and Young People’s Search For Meaning, Spirituality and Identity.’ *Journal of Religious Education* 51 (4), pp.2-12.

²⁶ Eaude, T. (2000). ‘Searching for the Spirit’ A paper presented at the First International Conference on Children’s Spirituality, University College, Chichester, UK

²⁷ Engebretson, K.(2002). Expressions of Religiosity and Spirituality Among Australian 14 Year Olds. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 7 (1) pp.57-72

²⁸ Fisher, J. (1997). ‘Some Teacher’s Views on the Place of Spiritual Health in the School Curriculum.’ A paper represented at the conference on ‘Education, spirituality and the Whole Child: getting the Message?’ Roehampton Institute London, UK.

²⁹ Harris, M. & Morgan, G. (1998). *Reshaping religious education: Conversations on contemporary practice*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

³⁰ Keating, R. (2000). ‘Towards a Holistic Approach to Spirituality’ *Journal of Religious Education* 48 (4), pp.16-21.

³¹ O'Murchu, D. (1997). *Reclaiming spirituality: A new spiritual framework for today's world*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

³² Priestley, J. (2002). ‘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, U.K.

³³ Palmer, P.J. (2003). ‘Teaching With Heart and Soul: Reflections on Spirituality and Teacher Education’ *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(5), pp 376-385, p.377

³⁴ Walton, R. (2015). ‘Precursor, indicator or mirage: What relationship exists between spirituality and type of giftedness’. University of Wollongong Thesis Collection.

³⁵ Busing, A., Foller-mancini, A., Gidley, J. and Heusser, P. (2010). ‘Aspects of Spirituality in Adolescents’ *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 15 (1), pp.25-44.

³⁶ Zohar, D. and Marshall, I. (2004). *Spiritual capital: Wealth we can live by*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. p.3.

Zohar, D. (2005). ‘Spiritually Intelligent Leadership’ *Leader to Leader*, 2005(38), p.45-51. Retrieved from Business Source Complete database.

³⁷ Von Balthasar, H.(1965). ‘The Gospel as Norm and Test of all Spirituality in the Church’ *Concilium* 9 (1965) p. 7-23, p.18.

Marmion, D. (1998). *A Spirituality of Everyday Faith: A Theological Investigation of the Notion of Spirituality in Karl Rahner*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs #23 Louvain, Belgium: Peeters Press, Eerdmans, p.116.

³⁸ Dali Lama XIV (1999). *Ethics for the new millennium*. New York: The Putnam. p.22.

³⁹ James, W. (1902). *The varieties of religious experience*, republished (2009). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion.

http://www.hudevbooks.com/library/william_james_var.pdf

⁴⁰ James. W. (1902). *The varieties of religious experience*, p.20.

⁴¹ James. W. (1902). *The varieties of religious experience*, p. 267.

aspects of religion with which it is associated and that make it possible for us to identify criteria for 'spiritual development.'⁴² Tan explains that "Religion here is defined as an organised and shared system of beliefs and practices related to a transcendent entity such as God, higher power or ultimate truth or reality and is closely linked to a particular faith institution."⁴³ "Religiously untethered spirituality, on the other hand, is concerned with beliefs and practices that are disconnected from religions. This form of spirituality is not associated with any named supernatural power-institutionalised doctrines, or religious affiliations. It is about transcendence, -where one reflects on things pertaining to one's spirit or soul. It propels the search for personal meaning, purpose and identity in life, connectedness with others (whether divine or human) and a commitment to contribute to others.... religiously untethered spirituality tends to be unstructured, less specific, more open-ended and diffused."⁴⁴

Tacey (2000⁴⁵, 2003⁴⁶) and Zohar and Marshall (2000) have also understood spirituality to be the primary religious experience of the individual. Zohar and Marshall (2000) maintained that spiritual experiences are common.⁴⁷ They have claimed that in western cultures between 30% and 40% of the population are recorded as having undergone such experiences on at least one occasion. Such experiences were described as being accompanied by feelings of great euphoria and wellbeing allowing "deep insight that brings new perspective to life." Similarly, Hart (2003⁴⁸) writes "Children's openness, vulnerability, and tolerance for mystery enable them to entertain perplexing and paradoxical questions....recent research suggests that such early formative capacities and experiences are not the province of a rare few individuals but perhaps the vast majority of us." (2007⁴⁹) Hart has proposed that "spirituality lives beyond the rational."⁵⁰ Hart (2003) acknowledges "I find it more helpful to think of ourselves as spiritual beings having human experiences...It is not that some of us are spiritual and some are not; our entire existence is a spiritual event."⁵¹ Piaget⁵² defined schema based cognitive functioning where "our assumptions shape our perceptions."⁵³ Epistemologically speaking, the Western World's preoccupation with technologisation has imported a schema upon most people's perceptions that precludes the spiritual and replaces it with the rational. If our thought processes are structured to fit into a particular worldview (scientism), we shall see all things through this schema, our perspectives will be subject to this established structure. Almost unconsciously, the spiritual will be reduced and the cognitive-rational alone will be elevated. Rolheiser (1998) perceives that spirituality is "something that issues forth from the bread and butter of ordinary life ... something viral and nonnegotiable lying at the heart of our lives."⁵⁴ Thus between the epistemologically defining forces of empiricism and rationalism, and the innate epistemological force of spirituality, lies the place where most Western lives are lived. Spirituality is such a deeply embedded, culturally necessary thing that to make such a strong separation allowing the epistemologically binding forces of empiricism complete dominance in the educational realm dehumanizes the child or adult. Spirituality has also been understood to be holistic in nature. (Fisher, 2007⁵⁵; 2010⁵⁶, Hart, 2003⁵⁷; O'Murchu, 1997⁵⁸; Tacey.2003⁵⁹) Removing spirituality from the educational curriculum is dehumanizing, counterproductive to the holistic nature of the child.

Geisenburg in her study of children's spirituality (2007)⁶⁰ notes "Spirituality for young children is a-religious but highly spiritual with the characteristics of spirituality being innate in the child, or neotenous (present during foetal life) as described by Montagu (1989⁶¹), thus indicating that the abilities are there and will be displayed by the child when the right conditions are present. The nature of young children's spirituality can be expressed. Spirituality is an innate part of a person. It is an awareness or consciousness of the surrounding world, a sense of compassion and love towards this world and anything in it shown through

⁴² Alexander, H. & McLaughlin, T. (2003). 'Education In Religion And Spirituality' in Blake, N., Smeyers, P., Smith, R. and Standish, P. (eds.) *The Blackwell guide to the philosophy of education*, Malden, MA: Blackwell p. 359.

⁴³ Tan, C. (2009). 'Reflections for Spiritual Development in Adolescents.' in de Souza, M. (2009) *International handbook of education for spirituality, care and wellbeing*. p.398.

⁴⁴ Tan, C. (2009). 'Reflections for Spiritual Development in Adolescents.' in de Souza, M. (2009) *International handbook of education for spirituality, care and wellbeing*. B.V. Springer Science and Business Media. p.398.

In my opinion Tan's position is to be preferred, for while James' presentation appeals to a possible developmental aspect of spirituality that moves from the unformed into a formed spirituality, Tan's viewpoint offers the option of not necessitating a developmental aspect to the process of moving from spiritual to religious; rather than being bound by an unproven thesis, Tan reminds us of what is.

⁴⁵ Tacey, D. (2000). *ReEnchantment: The new Australian spirituality*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

⁴⁶ Tacey, D. (2004). *The spirituality revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality*, Available from <http://www.netlibrary.com/Reader/>

⁴⁷ Zohar, D. and Marshall, I. (2000). *SQ: spiritual intelligence: the ultimate intelligence*. New York: Bloomsbury. p.99

⁴⁸ Hart, T. (2003). *The secret spiritual world of children*. Makawao, HI: Inner Ocean.

⁴⁹ Hart, T and Ailoae, C. (2007). 'Spiritual Touchstones: Childhood Spiritual Experience in the Development of Influential Historic and Contemporary Figures'. In *Imagination Cognition and Personality, Vol 26 (4)* pp.345-359. Baywood Publishing Co., Inc. p.357.

⁵⁰ Hart, T. (2003). *The secret spiritual world of children* Makawao, HI: Inner Ocean p.5.

⁵¹ Hart, T. (2003). *The secret spiritual world of children* pp.7,8.

⁵² Piaget, J. (1985). *The equilibration of cognitive structures*. Brown, T. and Thampy, K. (trans.) Chicago Illinois: University of Chicago.

Piaget, J., Rosin, A. (1977). *The development of thought: Equilibration of cognitive structures*. New York: The Viking Press.

"knowledge proceeds neither solely from the experience of objects nor from an innate programming performed in the subject but from successive constructions, the result of the constant development of new structures ...leading...to reequilibrations which improve the previous structures" p. v.

⁵³ Hart, T. (2006). 'Spiritual Experiences and Capacities of Children and Youth' in Roehlkepartain, E., King, P., Wagener, L. and Benson, P. (eds.) *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage p.174.

⁵⁴ Rolheiser, R. (1998). *Seeking spirituality: guidelines for a Christian spirituality for the twenty first century*. London: Hodder and Stoughton p.6.

⁵⁵ Fisher, J. W. (2007). 'It's Time to Wake Up and Stem the Decline in Spiritual Well-being in Victorian Schools'. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality, 12(2)*, pp.165-177.

⁵⁶ Fisher, J. W. (2010). 'Students' Views on Relating with God for Spiritual Wellbeing'. Paper presented at the International Symposium on Religious Education and Values, Session XVII, 25-30 July, 2010, Ottawa, Canada.

⁵⁷ Hart, T. (2003). *The secret spiritual world of children*. Maui: Inner Ocean.

⁵⁸ O'Murchu, D. (1997). *Reclaiming spirituality: A new spiritual framework for today's world*. Dublin: Gateway.

⁵⁹ Tacey, D. (2003). *The spirituality revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality*. Australia: HarperCollins.

⁶⁰ Geisenburg, A. (2007). 'The Phenomenology of Children's Spirituality' unpublished PhD thesis Queensland University of Technology. pp.260, 262, 266.

⁶¹ Monagu, A. (1989). *Growing young*, New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers pp.12-44, pp.62-93.

Prechtl, H. (1984). *Continuity of neural functions from prenatal to postnatal life* Spastics International Medical Publications Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. pp.1-14.

wonder and through activities and relationship with peers and significant adults in the child's life. Young children express their spirituality in everything they do, say and are. They show it in their attention to detail and in their gestures. They are sensitive, relational and existential. Champagne (2003) found that young children's spirituality is "similar to the claim made by Hegel (1807) about the existence of 'spirit.'" Spirituality has the opportunity to provide grounding for meaning in a society hungry for meaning. Geisenburg (2007⁶²) concluded her study with this helpful observation suited to chaplains in NSW Public Schools. "As Spirituality in a religious sense is holistic and involves the total being of a person. It is larger than theology and beliefs or a set of values. It is expressed in everything a person does, and it involves the person's relationship with the chosen transcendent being. It involves meditation and prayer where the person prays for self and others." Walton also found that social experiences and relational activities may strengthen spirituality. The implications for Chaplaincy are significant to promoting positive holistic outcomes for students.⁶³ Briggs and Rayle (2005) suggested that spirituality can be seen to be "an innate component of human functioning and serves to integrate other components of wellness, thus making spiritual wellness central to wellness in all other areas of life."⁶⁴ Spirituality promotes wellbeing which includes resilience and better mental and physical health outcomes. Cotton et al., (2005) noted that from their study of "134 adolescents from a suburban high school who completed a questionnaire assessing spirituality, religiosity, depressive symptoms, and health-risk behaviors.... Most of these adolescents reported some connection with religious and spiritual concepts, and those with higher levels of spiritual well-being, in particular, existential well-being, had fewer depressive symptoms and fewer risk-taking behaviors. This supports the inclusion of these concepts in our efforts to help promote resilience and healthy adolescent development, and in expanding our investigations beyond religious identification or attendance at religious services to broader concepts of spirituality."⁶⁵

The relevance of religious education for good health

More recently, Ekwonye, A.U., Cahill, T.F., De Luca, D. and Cabell, L. (2017) conducted a study of 394 adolescent youth (aged 14-17) in a Catholic High School in the United States of America. "The primary objective of this study was to examine how adolescent depression relates to combinations of social support, religiosity, and spirituality in a faith-based high school. Previous studies show that perception or reception of support from family, friends, and teachers, prayer and participation in religious events, and having the calmness and harmony of mind that spirituality offers counter adolescent depression."⁶⁶ The study found that "spirituality turned out to be the most important significant predictor of depression. The moderate negative correlation found between spirituality and depression could be due to life satisfaction, peace, hope, and comfort derived from the interconnectedness with the higher power, other people, places, and things. Spirituality may counter stress and prevent depression by weakening its impact and providing individuals with personal meaning and social and inner resources they can call on in stressful situations." Resnick, Harris, and Blum (1993) in a study of 36,000 adolescents, attempted to identify protective factors against adolescent social pathologies (emotional disturbances and acting out behaviours).⁶⁷ "Multivariate models consistently showed that youth who had a sense of spirituality, cared for others, and were connected, especially to school and family, were more protected against social pathologies. Measures of caring and connectedness surpassed demographic variables such as two-parent versus single-parent family structure as protective factors against high risk behaviors."⁶⁸ Better physical health outcomes even among those with chronic and terminal illnesses have been aided by spirituality. "Children with Cystic Fibrosis reported a variety of religious/spiritual coping strategies they nearly always associated with adaptive health outcomes."⁶⁹ Koenig, McCullough & Larson (2001) identified 16 studies of the relationship between religious involvement and blood pressure, 14 of which indicate that the more religious have lower blood pressure, especially lower diastolic blood pressure.⁷⁰ Seeman, Dubin and Seeman, (2003) concluded that "a prudent interpretation of the data might be that the evidence reported to date is generally consistent with the hypothesis that aspects of religiosity/spirituality may indeed be linked to physiological processes—including cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immune function—that are importantly related to health... aspects of religiosity/spirituality may indeed be linked to important physiological regulatory processes."⁷¹ We may recognise with Vialle, Walton and Woodcroft (2008) that:

1. Spirituality is an integrating construct that works with our cognitive, emotional and social sides (integrating heart, mind and soul) to provide meaning, purpose and fulfillment.⁷²
2. Spirituality emphasises the connectedness of all things (ideas, people, other life-forms, nature, and so on).

⁶² Geisenburg, A. (2007). 'The Phenomenology of Children's Spirituality' p.262.

⁶³ NSW Government Education and Communities (December 2014) Public Schools NSW Schools Excellence Framework <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associated-documents/framework.pdf>

Walton, R. (2015). Precursor, Indicator or Mirage: What Relationship Exists Between Spirituality and Type of Giftedness. University of Wollongong Thesis Collection.

⁶⁴ Briggs, M. and Rayle, A. (2005). 'Incorporating Spirituality into Core Counseling Courses: Ideas for Classroom Application.' *Counselling and Values*, 50 (1) p.63-75. <https://www.andrews.edu/sed/gpc/faculty-research/carbonell-research/incorporating-spirit> p.70.

⁶⁵ Cotton, S, Larkin, E. Hoopes, A. Cromer, B. Rosenthal, S. (2005). 'The Impact of Adolescent Spirituality on Depressive Symptoms and Health Risk Behaviors.' *Journal of Adolescent Health*.2005;36(6) p.529.

⁶⁶ Ekwonye, A.U., Cahill, T.F., De Luca, D. and Cabell, L. (2017). 'Exploring the Multivariate Relationships between Adolescent Depression and Social Support, Religiosity, and Spirituality in a Faith-Based High School' *Health*, 9, pp.38-56, p.50.

⁶⁷ Resnick, M. D., Harris, L. J., & Blum, R. W. (1993). 'The impact of caring and connectedness on adolescent health and well-being'. *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health*, 29(1). S3-S9. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1754.1993.tb02257.x

⁶⁸ Emmanuel, G. and Delaney, H. (2013). 'Keeping Faith: Factors Contributing to Spiritual Transformation, Identity and Maturity in Adolescents.' Retrieved from: <http://digitalcommons.kent.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=acir>

⁶⁹ Pendleton, S.M., Cavalli, K.S., Pargament, K.I., Nasr, S.Z. (2002). 'Religious/spiritual Coping in Childhood Cystic Fibrosis: A Qualitative Study.' *Pediatrics*. 2002;109(1):e8.

⁷⁰ Koenig, H.G., McCullough, M.E., Larson, D.B. (2001). *Handbook of religion and health*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁷¹ Seeman, T., Dubin, L. and Seeman, M. (2003). 'Religiosity/Spirituality and Health: A Critical review fo the Evidence for Biological Pathways.' *American Psychologist* January 2003, p.61.

⁷² Vialle, W, Walton, R and Woodcock, S, (2008). 'Children's Spirituality: Grappling with Student Ethics in Postgraduate Workbased Degrees' in Kell, P., Vialle, W., Konza, D. and Vogl, G. (eds.), *Learning and the learner: exploring learning for new times*, University of Wollongong, p.143.

3. Spirituality involves making ethical and compassionate choices, a determination to live a 'good life', strengthening the innate morality that produces Deeper Evaluations.
4. Spirituality is symbolised by a search deep within and a rising above our physical realities.⁷³
And we would add;
5. Spirituality is dependent upon relationality and tolerance, in contrast to some forms of religion.

Mystical dimensions of religious education

Some recent work on neurobiology has suggested that not only a *sensus divinitas* but also an innate morality may be wired into our very systems. Albert Einstein wrote "It is very difficult to explain this feeling to anyone who is entirely without it. The individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and the world of thought. He [the experienter] looks upon individual existence as a sort of prison and wants to experience the universe as a single, significant whole."⁷⁴ Augustine of Hippo in that much loved phrase spoke similarly, "You awaken us to delight in your praise; for you made us for yourself, and our heart is restless, until it finds rest in you."⁷⁵ Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili and Vince Rause (2001), in *Why God Won't Go Away*⁷⁶ posit that "God cannot exist as a concept or as reality anyplace else but in your mind." This is not to say that God does not exist, but rather that for each individual the place of perception of the God that exists is the mind. They have researched the connection between brain activity and spirituality, in what James Ashbrook in 1984 first labelled "neurotheology." Philosopher Paul Thagard (2010) believes that this "conceptual revolution," akin to Copernicus, has already arrived: "Mounting evidence in neuroscience and psychology requires the abandonment of many traditional ideas about the soul, free will, and immortality."⁷⁷ Alternatively, James Ashbrook and Carol Albright (2001) tell us, "people are discovering the realm of the sacred."⁷⁸ Michael Persinger, neurophysiologist at Laurentian University in Ontario, Canada, has become quite the controversial figure in the world of modern science. His "transcranial magnetic stimulator," a simple headpiece with electromagnetic field-emitting solenoids, has uncovered what he thinks is the brain's spiritual component.⁷⁹ Placed on the head of the human subject, the solenoids generate electromagnetic stimuli in certain sectors of the frontal lobe, producing feelings akin to that of an out-of-body experience, oneness with the universe, or what Persinger calls a "sensed presence" of something or someone other than the subject being tested. This "God Helmet," as it came to be called, allowed Persinger to "experience God for the first time."⁸⁰ Studies done on Buddhist and Catholic mystics by Andrew Newberg and Emilio d'Aquili using single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) have shown how relaxing the orientation association area of the brain—the region across the parietal lobe that traces boundaries (e.g., judging the parameters of objects in space)—generates a feeling of boundlessness, what they call "absolute unitary being" (AUB): "the self is endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything the mind senses."⁸¹ When one achieves AUB they experience "a state without time, space, and physical sensation; with no discrete awareness of any material reality at all."⁸² These mystical experiences are remembered "with the same degree of clarity and sense of reality that it bestows upon memories of 'real' past events...[Religious practitioners] believe this sense of realness strongly, which suggests that the accounts of mystics are not indications of minds in disarray, but are the proper, predictable neurological result of a stable, coherent mind willing itself toward a higher spiritual plane."⁸³

DISCUSSION: REFLECTIONS ON NEUROTHEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A neurotheological idea includes the ability of the brain to build worldviews apart from the human subject's immediate awareness. Caltech philosopher Steven Quartz asserts that "studies of our biological constitution," including our brains, "make it increasingly clear that we are social creatures of meaning who crave a sense of coherence and purpose," what we may call worldview process thinking.⁸⁴ Another similarity neuroscience has with religious or spiritual belief is that the worldview mechanism of the brain, after considerable reflection, is a religious activity at its core. The brain is hard-wired for spiritual experience.⁸⁵ A lack of belief in God may conflict with the worldview function of the brain, producing a sense of uneasiness within the self, akin to the feelings generated when the brain attempts to adjust to perceptual anomalies or cognitive malfunctions in lived experience; a cognitive dissonance. Our desire for coherence, harmony, or "epistemological satisfaction," fundamental to worldview thinking, may feel disordered when a worldview of unbelief is imported into the human brain. It is the uncomfortable feeling of "doubt."⁸⁶

⁷³ Vialle, W., Lysaght, P. & Verenikina, I. (2005). *Psychology for educators*. Melbourne: Thomson/Social Science Press.p.145.

⁷⁴ Quoted in McIlhenny, R. (2010). 'God is in your head, neurotheology and religious belief', in *American Theological Inquiry*, vol 3,no.2 Minneapolis 2010, pp. 29-45.

⁷⁵ Augustine (434). *The confessions of St. Augustine bishop of hippo* Book 1 chapter 1. <http://www.leaderu.com/cyber/books/augconfessions/bk1.html>

⁷⁶ Newberg, A., d'Aquili, E. and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won't go away: Brain science and the biology of belief*. NY: Ballantine Books.

⁷⁷ Thagard, P. (2010). *The brain and the meaning of life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton, xii.

⁷⁸ Albright, C, and Ashbrook, J. (2001). *Where God lives in the human brain*. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, p.15.

⁷⁹ Hitt, J. (1999). 'This is Your Brain on God' *Wired*. Vol. 7, no. 11 (Nov. 1999).

⁸⁰ Ramachandra, V.S. and Blakelee, S. (1998). *Phantoms in the brain: Probing the mysteries of the human mind*. NY: Quill, p.175.

⁸¹ Newberg, A, d'Aquili, E and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won't go away: Brain science and the biology of belief*. New York: Ballantine Books, p.6.

⁸² Newberg, A. d'Aquili, E. and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won't go away*. p.148.

⁸³ Newberg, A. d'Aquili, E and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won't go away*. p.113, pp. 145-46.

⁸⁴ Pink, D. (2006). *A whole new mind: Why right-brainers will rule the future*. New York: Penguin, p.222.

⁸⁵ McIlhenny, R. (2010). 'God is in your head, neurotheology and religious belief' in *American Theological Inquiry*, vol 3,no.2. pp.29-45.

⁸⁶ James 1:6 says "αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει, μὴδὲν διακρινόμενος, ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπυζομένῳ" The word for "doubt" "διακρινόμενος," is derived from the word for judgement and carried the idea of "divided judgements, a split mind, consequently he is like a wave of the sea blown and ripped everywhere." (My own translation).

Finally, another crucial part of the brain “integral to religious and spiritual experience,” that also relates to spirituality, lies within the limbic system (from the Latin *limbus*, meaning border),” composed of adjacent portions of the frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes that surround the corpus callosum” that house the hypothalamus, amygdala, and hippocampus, among other structures.⁸⁷ The system, identified by some as the “transmitter to God,” “interweaves emotional impulses with higher thoughts and perceptions to produce a broad, flexible repertoire of highly complex emotional states such as disgust, frustration, envy, surprise, and delight,” (all the things that make us human), organizing our involuntary (autonomic) impulses with voluntary (somatic) thoughts and actions.⁸⁸ The coordination of the amygdala, hypothalamus, and hippocampus jolts us awake when we hear that bump in the night, producing the emotion of fear, but also helps pull back our emotions from getting out of control by identifying that which caused our fear and then returning us to mental equilibrium.⁸⁹ It is where the Fight or Flight reaction originates.⁹⁰ The tasks performed by the limbic system are “integral to religious and spiritual experience.”⁹¹ Stimulation of these structures produces “out-of-body sensations, déjà vu, and illusions, all of which have been reported during spiritual states.” Likewise, the limbic system can be driven by repeated habits, especially religious liturgies, which isolate patterns of meaning and generate a deep feeling that one can move beyond bodily limits. To say it differently, ritualized behaviour is a cognitive activity in pursuit of transcendence: “When ritual is effective...it inclines the brain to adjust its cognitive and emotional perceptions of the self in a way that religiously minded persons interpret as a closing of the distance between the self and God.”⁹² Damage to this region of the brain, which occurs among those suffering from Alzheimer’s, often contributes to a decreased interest in spiritual practice. The limbic system also depends on social engagement, reinforcing the connection between memory and the emotional value of our core beliefs. Ritual behaviour (i.e., patterns of living that reinforce beliefs about meaning) activates the limbic system, generating deep emotional states that we associate as a religious experience.

From 1793 to 1848, education was provided solely by the Church of England, as the First Fleet chaplain, Rev. Richard Johnson, stated “If any hopes are to be formed of any reformation being effected in this Colony, I believe it must begin amongst those of the rising generation.”⁹³ Australia’s establishment as a penal colony focused attention on the need for moral education. Samuel Marsden, who succeeded Johnson as chaplain, agreed. “The future hopes of this colony depend upon the rising generation. Little can be expected from the convicts who are grown old in vice, but much may be done for their children under proper instruction.”⁹⁴ Both men came to Australia as missionaries of the Church of England Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP). As early as 1795, the opinion was recorded in the minutes of the Society that: “The most likely means of effecting a reformation must be by paying all the attention that can be to the instruction and morals of the rising generation.”⁹⁵

Implicit within these polarisations is the concept of indoctrination within education. Whatever the stance one takes, Protestant, Catholic or Secularist, one will find supporting arguments from one’s own epistemology that seem utterly convincing that one’s epistemology must be indoctrinated into public education. And by necessity the dominant epistemology will provide direction for moral education, with undisputed antagonism between those holding other epistemologies.

Conclusion

Vialle, Walton and Woodcock (2008) ask “Why, then, has spirituality not been overtly acknowledged as a school responsibility? We would contend that there are two reasons for this situation, both of which stem from equating spirituality with religion. First, there remains an overarching philosophy in Australian government schools of separating church and state. Second, the current climate arising from terrorist attacks in the US in 2001, in Bali in 2002 and in London in 2005, and the continuing tensions in the Middle East, are reflected in conservative attitudes toward the expression of religion.”⁹⁶ One could also conclude a third reason may be the terrible disgrace brought on the Roman Catholic Church and all of the Protestant churches in Australia through the revelation of pedophile activity among Roman Catholic Priests, teachers and workers, and pastors and workers of other Christian denominations, as revealed in the reports of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released in 2017.⁹⁷ People just don’t trust religious people. Charles Taylor has, over the course of his life, developed understandings of spirituality from phenomenological philosophical research. Phenomenologically, Taylor identifies people as: (1) embodied agents who are purposefully engaged with the world and thus experience the world as having significance for them; (2) expressive language animals whose experience and identity is constituted through linguistic self-interpretation; (3) social animals who are drawn to interpersonal communion and whose self-interpretation is dialogically constituted; (4) strong evaluators who are orientated in ‘moral space’ as they seek fullness or meaning and whose identity is constituted by a narrative understanding of their

⁸⁷ Newberg, A. d’Aquili, E. and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won’t go away*, p.42. See also Albright and Ashbrook, p.72.

⁸⁸ Newberg, A. d’Aquili, E. and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won’t go away*, p.42. See also Albright and Ashbrook, p.72.

⁸⁹ The hypothalamus acts with both the amygdala and hippocampus as the “master control for the autonomic nervous system.” See Newberg and d’Aquili, p.43.

⁹⁰ Burnette, D. *The physiology of addiction* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjJGU9q68A>

⁹¹ Newberg, A. d’Aquili, E. and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won’t go away*, p.42.

⁹² Fuller, R. (2008). *Spirituality in the flesh: Bodily sources of religious experiences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press p. 78, quoting Newberg, A, d’Aquili, E and Rause, V. (2001). *Why God won’t go away*.

⁹³ Johnson, R. (1794). *Correspondence, Johnson to Fricker*, 4th October, 1794 n.p. (SPG). Available <http://www.chr.org.au/fpbooks/otherarticles/otherarticles.html> accessed May 11, 2011.

⁹⁴ *Samuel Marsden to the Bishop of London*, 11 March 1821. “The Principle of the Planting of the Seed of Local Self-government begins with the taking of responsibility for the education of the young. Education is the responsibility of parents, who are urged to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” Eph. 6: 4. See also Deut. 6:6-7. The church, not the state, is to help the parent exercise this responsibility.”

⁹⁵ Bonwick, J. (1898). *Australia’s first preacher: The Rev. Richard Johnson, first chaplain of New South Wales*. London: T. & W. Boone, p. 51.

⁹⁶ Vialle, W., Walton, R. and Woodcock, S. (2008). ‘Children’s spirituality: An Essential Element in Thinking And Learning in New Times’, in Kell, P., Vialle, W., Konza, D. and Vogl, G. (eds). *Learning and the learner: exploring learning for new times*. University of Wollongong, p.143.

⁹⁷ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

sense of 'placement' with respect to their view of the good; and (5) religious animals who have a natural bent towards 'transcendence.'⁹⁸ The natural 'bent' towards 'transcendence' in human life fuels the quest for a meaningful life.⁹⁹

The structure of Charles Taylor's argument (as summarised by Melissa Lane¹⁰⁰), consists of a range of cumulative claims:

- (i) we must have a morality (the claim of morality);
- (ii) we must have a morality with a certain structure, such that particular values are connected to conceptions of the good, or 'sources' (the claim of structure);
- (iii) we must have a morality based on an incomparably higher good (the claim of transcendence); and
- (iv) we must understand the structure of our morality and the incomparably higher good on which our morality must be based in the terms of Christian theism (the claim of theism).

We assert with Taylor that for NSW Education to be holistic, meaningful and moral, it must include a place within General Education for education in Spirituality. In the following articles we shall demonstrate how Spirituality may be taught within the context of general student education. The National Schools Chaplaincy Programme provides an opportunity for Spirituality to be taught within the schools curriculum.

⁹⁸ Abbey, R. (2000). *Charles Taylor*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp.56-72, 212.

Smith, N. (2002). *Charles Taylor: Meaning, morals and modernity*. Malden, MA: Polity. pp. 87, 100-1, 133-5, 140, 235, 237-42.

⁹⁹ Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p.518.

¹⁰⁰ Lane, M. (1992). 'God or Orienteering? A critical study of Charles Taylors' Sources of the Self' *Ratio* 5 pp.46-56 Melissa Lane identifies three claims as central to Taylor's project: "(i) that we must have a morality; (ii) that we must have a morality with a certain structure, such that particular values are connected to conceptions of the good, or 'sources'; (iii) that we must have a morality based on an incomparably higher good" (p. 46).

Peter-Baker, D. (2003). 'Morality, structure, transcendence and theism: A response to Melissa Lane's reading of Charles Taylor's 'Sources of the Self' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 54: pp.33-48 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Baker recognises that implicit within Taylor's work is a fourth claim, the claim of transcendence.

Skinner, Q. (1991). 'Who are "We"? Ambiguities of the Modern Self', *Inquiry* 34 (1991) p.133. He concludes that the "final message" of *Sources of the Self* is that "we cannot hope to realise our fullest human potentialities in the absence of God". Although Taylor himself denies this; See Greenway, W. (2000). 'Charles Taylor on Affirmation, Mutilation and Theism: A Retrospective Reading of *Sources of the Self*', *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000). pp.23-40.