

# **SPIRITUALITY IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that traditional notions of the relationship between religion and spirituality have actually resulted in the compartmentalization of spirituality within the secondary religious education curriculum. This has, too often, provoked disinterest from students who have failed to find meaning, purpose and value in a subject geared to cognitive learning. An alternative integratral approach is offered which will reflect new ideas about consciousness and recognize inner knowing, and will be grounded in the entirety of human experience which extends beyond the positivistic, reductionistic, scientific worldview of twentieth century education.

## Introduction - Religion and Spirituality

In the past few decades much has been written about an emerging spirituality in Western social contexts which is evident in the different expressions and pathways followed by individuals in their ongoing search for meaning and purpose, and their answers to questions such as: Why am I here? or Where am I going? Since much of this is happening outside traditional frameworks of religion and/or family, it has led to a burgeoning commercial enterprise in the shape of books, courses, lifestyles and so on, all on offer and which promise some progress, understanding and even enlightenment on the 'spiritual' journey.

In particular, attention has been given to the way in which religion and spirituality have developed separate identities in the contemporary context, and while they are undoubtedly linked for many, for others, spirituality is perceived as quite a distinct entity from religion. Nonetheless, in the perceptions of many educators involved in religious education, spirituality is still closely bound with religiosity so that the expressions of each become blurred, one into the other.

The spirituality of young people has been of interest to researchers for several years now and writings and discussions have continued to revisit and redevelop explanatory theories and concepts. One feature that has been highlighted in understanding contemporary spirituality especially as it pertains to Generation Y (as some researchers have identified them), is the individualistic nature of the search for meaning and the subsequent expressions of spirituality (for instance, see the latest findings of Mason, Webber, Singleton and Hughes, 2006). Previously, theorists appear to have contradicted this view when they have discussed aspects of young people's lives in terms of both individual and communal yearnings. This could be because of the particular samples of young people used in different studies, some of which have been more or less restricted to particular groups, while others have included a large variety of young people from different religious, cultural and social backgrounds. For instance, Richard Eckersley's (1997) study of young Australian's perceptions of the future found that their dreams of their future were of a society where less emphasis was placed on the individual, on competition and material wealth and on enjoying 'the good life'. Instead they desired more focus on community and family, cooperation and the environment. Some expressed their wishes in terms of a greater recognition of the 'natural', 'human' or 'spiritual' aspects of life. Further, Hugh Mackay (2001) identified this theme when writing about young people. He suggested that their 'tribal identity' often meant more to them than their personal identity and claimed that when their experience of family life was one of fragmentation or when their traditional sources of identity were lost or blurred, this generation didn't retreat into isolation; it connected and searched for a new framework to help them make sense of life in an uncertain world:

*For some the new framework is spiritual. For others, it is based on the desire to reconnect with 'the herd', so that individuals obtain a stronger sense of identity and of emotional security from re-creating communal*

*connections that simulate the 'village life' to which so many Australians aspire (p. 5).*

As well, Maria Harris (Harris & Moran 1998) described the vital element in the spirituality of young people as:

*... its connectedness, its relational and communal character, which is in contrast to a privatized and individualistic spirituality. The impulse towards connectedness places the practice of justice in a special and privileged place, with justice understood as 'fidelity to the demands of all our relations'. Such justice includes not only our relations to other human beings; it includes our relations to the nonhuman universe as well: to the other animals, the trees, the ocean, the earth, and the ozone layer (p. 46).*

Harris's focus on connectedness was supported by British researchers Hay and Nye (1998) who discussed the relationality of children's lives in terms of a 'relational consciousness' as the essence of children's spirituality, that is, the relationship of I-Other, I-Self, I-World and I-God. Once again, themes of individuality and connectedness underlie these respective theories.

Indeed, several years ago I referred to the individual and communal expressions that appeared to be constants in the way young people saw their needs and their futures (de Souza, 2001). I drew on the reports from the youth forums that were held during Youth Week Victoria in 2000 and which included 2250 students from 162 Victorian schools. These reports identified major issues in 12 areas that affected young people (Youth Forum Report 2000) and for each they proposed a list of recommendations for action by government agencies, schools and community groups. There were two common threads that ran through these lists. The first was a focus on the value of community and cooperation and the second was a focus on valuing youth and individuality.

The contradictions inherent in these different writings would suggest that there is some confusion about the understanding of the nature of individualism. One argument that helps to illuminate these differences was offered by Moffett (1994):

The nature of individualization has also been evolving, some stages of which are selfish and narcissistic, attained by the majority now, further stages of which, attained by a leading minority, are empathic and compassionate. The latter seem to return to the original group solidarity, but there is a world of difference between the primal herd feeling, which is unconscious and incapable of personal thought or action, and the expanded consciousness of the individual who has parlayed self-cultivation into transcendence (p. 10).

Certainly, young and middling adults today were born into a lifestyle of the sixties, seventies and eighties that favoured the individual over the community since it is one that their parents, and in some cases, their grandparents have maintained. Accordingly, individuality has become such a strong and essential ingredient of their self-expressions that many may reject the tendency to have labels attributed to them, such as Generation X or Y, the Echo-boomers, and Screenagers, which have been variously applied to them by previous generations. At the same time, as Moffett

argues, they appear to be comfortable with the concept of an individuality that can exist within a communal context. If we were to accept Moffett's argument, there are implications for all educators, that is, a need to raise our awareness of the respective roles of individuality and community in the lives of young people since it is probable that both would provide frameworks for their relationality and therefore be closely connected to their expressions of religiosity and spirituality. As well, it could be expected that if a characteristic of Generation Y's spirituality was centred on relationality and connectedness, they would have a tendency to be more tolerant of diversity which would, in turn, correspond to a lesser tendency towards being judgemental.

However, these findings for the most part, relate to a generation that has already or has nearly passed through existing educational structures. Accordingly, they have less relevance for current classroom practitioners and new research is clearly needed to guide and inform decision making and planning in future educational programs and environments. Certainly, there are other factors that have crept into modern day scenarios which, potentially, could be of greater concern and which, I believe, may be contributing to the development of a less tolerant society, including less tolerance for religious and cultural diversity. This issue relates clearly to the generation that currently fills primary and secondary classrooms as well as those who are entering tertiary institutions today; and it is a significant element that needs consideration in any educational program. Today's children and young people, born around 1990, have grown up against a backdrop dominated by media coverage of continued tension between the US and the Middle East, particularly Iraq. Our eighteen year-old, first year university students were around 3 or 4 years when the Gulf War dominated our media, and they lived through the subsequent news coverage of tension in the Middle East and Afghanistan through the nineties. Thus, their formative and impressionable years were lived in the context of continuing news items about radical and extremist adherents of Islam culminating, when they were around 13 years old, in the terrorist attacks on the twin towers and the ensuing war against terrorism. Accordingly, they have grown up in a context of fear generated by media commentaries and political invective associating terrorism with Muslims without any discussion about the differences within Islamic perspectives and practices, which may be likened to the differences within Christianity. Not surprisingly, this has encouraged clear signs of divisiveness through society; a divisiveness that stems from a lack of knowledge about social, cultural, religious and racial aspects of different groups of people with the unfortunate result being the development of an attitude of 'them' and 'us'.

Both the factors that have been discussed so far, that is, the separation of spirituality and religion and the associated decline of religious influence, as well as the signs that we are becoming a less tolerant society, have provoked a reactionary stance from religious and political leaders alike so that there have been calls for a return to more conservative and traditional frameworks which, it is hoped, will take us back to a period of greater uniformity and stability, and within which a more authoritarian leadership style would

preside. Pertinent, here, is Law's (2006) discussion of education from an authoritarian stance where he suggests that the human person has a tendency towards tribalism and that we are particularly attracted to 'them and us' thinking:

*By holding up the twisted looking-glass of tribalism, in which 'they' appear dirty, smelly, amoral, and perhaps even less than fully human, while 'we' take on a noble countenance (we may even find ourselves reflected back as 'the chosen people' or 'the master race'), an Authority can foster still deeper feelings of loyalty to the group, its leadership and its beliefs, making it still more difficult for its members to question them (p. 30).*

Without doubt, one may be able to detect certain overtones that support the above contention if one conducts an analysis of some of the political diatribe that has seared our consciousness in recent years, with comments like 'we don't want people like that' from the children overboard scenario to the coining of a new word, 'un-Australian', or indeed, the more recent calls for all migrants to adopt 'Australian values', no matter that these words themselves come down heavily on the side of ambiguity rather than clarity.

Indeed, it could be argued that an attitude of 'them and us' may have become an unconscious element in the nature of Australian identity and behaviour since it was clearly evident for most of the first two hundred years of its history of white settlement in Australia, even though there was only one dominant culture, Anglo Saxon/Celtic, and one dominant religion, Christianity. Within such a mono-cultural/religious context, the Catholics with their Celtic origins were a marginalized people and, in the setting up of their own schools, they promoted their Catholic identity as distinct from other Christian denominations and, as is often the case with marginalized people, they turned inwards for strength and support. Such a tendency may often lead to the development of communities where close engagement with other tends to be restricted to those who are of like background and culture. Indeed, if one examines the patterns of leadership within contemporary Australian Catholic/Christian communities, there would appear to be lingering traces of this insularity since it is dominated by people of Anglo origins with little evidence of the multiculturalism that is apparent in the wider society.

A relevant theory linked to a lack of engagement with those who are different is offered by Wilson (2002) who argues that nonconscious processing of information or learning experiences is a significant element in the development of prejudices. In general, people unknowingly develop two attitudes to everything: one is at the conscious level but the other level is non-conscious. This is what Wilson calls the 'adaptive unconscious'. Wilson's theory does have implications for the attitudes people may develop towards minority groups because if prejudice exists at conscious and unconscious levels, it can and will affect the way they behave towards people who are different from themselves. Thus, if children grow up with constant exposure to media presentations or parents' attitudes which demonstrate particular viewpoints, it is not surprising if they absorb these at a non-conscious level. If, at a conscious level, they learn, through education or wider experience that there may be another way of perceiving things,

they may make a conscious effort to overcome their previous attitudes. However, at a non-conscious level, these original perceptions and attitudes may prevail which will, ultimately, impact on their attitudes and behaviours, and this is particularly so if the context is tense or uncomfortable. Accordingly, Wilson states:

*The adaptive unconscious might have learned to respond in prejudiced ways, on the basis of thousands of exposures to racist views in the media or exposure to role models such as one's parents. Some people learn to reject such attitudes at a conscious level, and egalitarian views become a central part of their self-stories. They will act on their conscious, non-prejudiced views when they are monitoring and controlling their behaviour, but will act on the more racist disposition of their adaptive unconscious when they are not monitoring or cannot control their actions (p.190).*

It is a contention here, that Wilson's theory about the adaptive unconscious may have a role in the negative public views that have been recently expressed towards particular religious groups by some prominent Australian Christian religious and political leaders. If we draw on the earlier discussion, which pointed to the fact that many Australians who grew up in the fifties and sixties did not experience or engage with cultures different from their own. As well, they were more inclined to expect newcomers to assimilate and learn to be 'Australian' in the sense of the mainstream culture and this was promoted by government policies for assimilation. It is more than possible, then, that many older Australians may not have developed real understanding of or empathy with people who are different. Unfortunately, the fact that most Australians perceive themselves to be a fairly tolerant people may actually make them complacent and, possibly, hinder the development of any perceptive insights about some of the overt incidents of racial intolerance which have begun to occur. Instead, these may be treated as isolated incidents and nothing more serious. Consequently, little may be done to address these elements in ways that are likely to have a significant impact on the wider community or to promote serious engagement with the other who is different, and which may be a way forward from tolerance to empathy.

The above discussion highlights various issues that need to be addressed by educators, particularly in the field of religious education. However, before that, another emerging feature of the contemporary western world, which has been identified by some writers, has relevance here and is examined next.



## **A new consciousness: social and educational considerations**

Most of us are hesitant to fancy that we might be living through one of the most fundamental shifts in the history of Western civilization (Harman, 1998, p. xviii).

Given the daunting and discouraging scenario that has been discussed in the first part of this paper, there is a distinct need to find ways to transcend it and it is, therefore, heartening to discover signs that proclaim a shift in human consciousness; a move towards a more connected way of being; indeed, a 'spiritual awakening'. Groome (1998) used these words to describe 'people's abiding desire for something more than possessions or personal success... a renewed consciousness of the hunger of the human heart that only Transcendence can satisfy (p. 323).

A particular viewpoint offered by Willis Harman (1998) is that there are various signs that the Western world is going through a paradigm shift. Harman argues that at one level of Western society there is an emerging consciousness which is tracing a move away from a positivistic, reductionistic scientific worldview to one that is grounded in the totality of human experience, that is, an integration of an objective and subjective reality. He reflects on the duality that pervades western thought generated by the compartmentalization of science and religion. It is Harman's contention that every knowledge system reflects and is shaped by the society that constructs it, and it is sustained because it satisfies the tests that are put to it, that is, it is confirmed by lived human experience in the society of its origin. In other words, western science is what it is because of the particular nature of the society in which it was developed and other knowledge systems (for instance, in the East) differ from it because they reflect the characteristics that were valued in the particular societies where they evolved. In noting the implications that arise from this contention, Harman suggests that while the West has assumed a certain confidence and superiority that its scientific view of reality is essentially correct and all other views are wrong, there is a need to consider that other views may perceive reality through different cultural windows which emphasize other aspects of the total human experience. This would make them complementary rather than wrong.

Harman bases his argument on the shift that, he believes, is taking place in the understanding of metaphysics, that is, the understanding of reality and how things have come to be. The first, M1 (Metaphysic 1), has been the dominant perspective in the past and it holds that consciousness evolved from matter and it can only be understood by a study of the physical brain. The second, M2 (Metaphysic 2), recognizes two dimensions to knowledge, one which can be studied objectively but which recognizes the value and complementarity of subjective study as well. The third, M3 (Metaphysic 3), recognizes that consciousness came first and all matter-energy is somehow generated by the mind.

Ultimately, Harman attributes the cause for the global mind change that is becoming evident in the contemporary world to the shift of the understanding of the metaphysic from M1 to M3 which does not necessarily deny the reality of the physical world; rather it offers a different vantage

point from which to view the world, that is, it appears to point to '*a reality behind the physical world that modern science, in its present form, is in no position to affirm or deny*' (p. 31). To support his contention, Harman identifies three characteristics that he believes are evidence of this paradigm change and which distinctly contrast with the positivistic, reductionist view of modern science:

- Increased emphasis on the interconnectedness of everything which includes both our inner and outer worlds, for instance, in the various social movements - ecological, feminist, holistic health and the new spirituality.
- A shift in the locus of authority from external to internal, for instance, the growing disenchantment in religious and political spheres with external authorities which has prompted more reliance on intuition and inner wisdom. Harman particularly points to the assumption of inner divinity in transpersonal psychology and other forms of contemporary spirituality.
- A shift in the perception of cause from external to internal, for instance, the concept that we create our own reality and that ultimate cause is to be sought not in the physical world but in our minds, or consciousness.

In the end, Harman asserts that it is the neglect of the subjective realm of experience in Western cultures that has created a certain confusion about values for it is, 'ultimately in this realm of the subjective, the transcendent, and the spiritual that all societies have found the basis for their deepest value-commitments and sense of meaning (p. 24). Thus, the recognition that the human world may be living through the dawning of a new era of consciousness which brings into interplay the objective and subjective realities of existence has certain implications for educational programs, which in the recent past have been determined by objective and rationalistic thinking and dominated by learning in the cognitive domain. The next section of this paper revisits an integral learning approach which incorporates the objective and subjective aspects that Harman speaks about, which in turn address the inner and outer lives of students to enhance their learning experiences.

## **Learning that addresses the inner and outer lives of students to their enhance learning in religious education.**

As discussed earlier, there are certain implications for educators, particularly in the field of religious education if they desire to enhance the learning experiences of their students by addressing the spiritual elements of meaning and connectedness, and also to raise their awareness of themselves as empathetic and compassionate people. There are two aspects to the recommendations provided here. The first (A) relates to general principles and the second (B) are specific to classroom practice and environments.

### **A. General principles:**

1. To begin with this new generation is going to be more than ever influenced by technology and multimedia. They are used to presentations that are technically brilliant with audio-visual gadgetry and sophistication. They have spent many hours in front of different sized screens which compose much of their entertainment, and in general, their concentration span equals the amount of time during which a commercial TV program may screen before it is interrupted by advertisements; in other words, about 10 or 15 minutes. Accordingly, it is necessary for educators to factor in some consideration of these elements in the delivery of their learning programs if they want to really engage their students and move them beyond the surface of their conscious minds.

2. An additional factor is the need to raise awareness amongst students of the influential factors in their external environment that affect their unconscious minds so that these influences can be identified, articulated and addressed. This is particularly important in the current climate where particular religious groups are being targeted overtly and covertly through the media and by different public figures which may lead individuals to display biased attitudes that are generated by their adaptive unconscious (Wilson, 2002). Indeed, educators themselves may need to constantly raise their own awareness of the determining influences of their own adaptive unconscious minds especially in recognizing their own levels of tolerance and empathy for groups who are different from themselves and with whom they may have had little engagement.

3. One way that this situation may be addressed is for educators and students to become better informed about the different beliefs and practices of adherents of different religions; this should include the differences of belief and practice within particular traditions that pertain to culture and geographical location, for instance, recognizing that differences exist between Muslims from different countries just as differences exist between Christians from different countries. As well, it could be beneficial to examine elements of different traditions that bear similarities to one another and which may provide a unifying component. In this respect, it may be possible to begin with the perennial philosophy contained in all the great wisdom traditions. In the mid twentieth century, an extensive study by Huxley (1954) alerted western scholars to this very feature:

*Philosophia perennis... the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being - the thing is immemorial and universal (Huxley, 1945, p. 9).*

Huxley described two thought patterns to all the main religions, the esoteric and the exoteric. The first subscribes to the metaphysic of a divine Reality at the core of being; it is the spiritual, almost secretive face of religion and is practised by only a few adherents. The second is the exoteric form which is the public form by which the religion is usually identified, that is, through its rituals, practices, architecture and so on. Arguably, it is this latter form in today's world that tends to exclusivity; it provides a boundary around its followers which promotes a sense of 'us' and 'them'. Thus, in the hands of some, the exoteric form may encourage divisiveness but we need to keep in mind that the essence of esoteric thinking is connectedness.

4. Further, it is important to recognize the role of engagement with people who are different in moving the individual from tolerance to empathy and compassion.

5. Finally, it would be useful for religious educators to encourage discussions, forums and research that will lead to public debate about the significance of inter-religious studies for all children which, potentially, could promote social and spiritual capital in pluralist contexts.

## **B. Teaching for transformation: Implications for learning programs and environments**

For several years now I have been writing about the complementarity of the cognitive, affective and spiritual dimensions in learning which are generated by notions of the rational, emotional and spiritual intelligences and which could and should lead to transformation. I have drawn on various perspectives in literature and research to describe processes in learning which address both the inner and outer life of the student which involve perceiving, thinking, feeling and intuiting. By encouraging and prompting intuitive responses, learning is enhanced and deepened (see de Souza, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). In general, this model of learning is conceivably different from many educational programs and practices in Australia, particularly ones which focus on the outer person and reflect a fragmentation and compartmentalization of subject areas as well as of elements in the learning process. In addition, there are those practices that attend more to cognitive learning and assessment procedures that measure particular standards in the achievement of knowledge and skills, all of which are reflective of the positivistic, reductionistic mindset of a twentieth-century education system.

In contrast, addressing the spiritual dimension of learning reflects aspects of the inner person and is about promoting connectedness between content and between individuals. This is especially important in the current climate which reflects certain negative overtones which relate to religious pluralism,

separateness and extremism. Certainly, there is some hope for progress to be made with such an approach to education if we are, indeed, experiencing a shifting paradigm and a changing consciousness as suggested by Harman. One sign, in Australia, is the Federal Government drive towards the incorporation of a values based education. Another corresponding change is the increased focus being given to emotional literacy and the role of the imagination and intuition in the learning process. Therefore, children should be encouraged to access and develop this area of their lives. To do this, we need to explore ways to change various aspects of learning programs and environments of contemporary classrooms so that they promote connectedness in the learning experience and promote self knowledge in students through their engagement and interaction with Other. Some factors that may be useful in the development of learning programs and environments that aim to nurture the spirituality of children and adolescents are discussed below.

### **The role of the arts and perennial philosophy/Wisdom Literature found in the esoteric forms of most mainstream religions**

I have previously examined the arts as a valuable and useful resource to promote learning across the curriculum in classrooms composed of students of mixed abilities and backgrounds, where different beliefs and values may be evident (de Souza, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Given the religious pluralism that set the context of this paper, it would seem that as well, perennial philosophy which has often been a neglected area in the teaching of world religions should also become an intended focus in teaching across the curriculum. Neither of these areas should be confined to a particular discipline but should reflect the connectedness they espouse through their links to literature, the humanities, social sciences and the sciences. With the variety of cultural, social and religious backgrounds that may be present in any one classroom, these could provide authentic and valid meeting points; as well, they may prompt a variety of responses from students which can be useful entry points for subsequent activities and discussions that allow students to listen to the stories and experiences of Other. Sometimes these could be completely outside the circle of the students' own experiences but, at the same time, may produce some resonances which help them to shape/change their worldview. In particular, the arts and perennial philosophy can be used to explore the interconnectedness of all things.

### **Accessing the universal teachings of great spiritual leaders and modelling spiritual traits.**

All people need inspiration and role models to aspire to. However, the role models provided in society for young people tend to come from the successful personalities in sports, business, film, media and politics. More often than not, the reflection is on the material values of contemporary culture, devoured by consumerism and economic rationalization. Unfortunately, and within various contexts, these often negate the universal values of truth, honesty, justice, care and compassion. Using metaphor and story to teach the life and works of great spiritual leaders can make the universality of their teachings accessible and meaningful in a pluralist

classroom. Indeed, modelling the values of human decency at all levels of the school community is one way to inculcate them amongst students and bridge difference. Thus, universally accepted values should be made explicit in school documents, in language, in classroom practice and in relationships where overt displays of listening and respect, sensitivity and empathy, care and compassion are evident.

#### **Strategies to raise self-knowledge and inner awareness**

A particular feature that can be derived from Harman is the need to address the interior world of the student. Strategies that encourage the development of imagination and intuition are one way to begin this process; as also mentoring and nurturing activities to promote self knowledge and to discover their potential. In addition, in the busyness of their world, students often lose their awareness of experiences of joy, awe and wonder in their everyday. Strategies that may help them to achieve these things are journal writing, personal goal setting, meditation and other contemplative activities including sitting or walking in complete silence. This aspect links closely with the next one.

#### **Addressing the relational aspect of students' lives and promoting opportunities for students to discover the Other within themselves:**

It is an important factor that engaging with Other is a path to self knowledge as one responds to resonances arising from interactions with Other. Concept maps are a useful strategy to show the connectedness of different subjects, themes, ideas and places and people. The relationships students develop are an essential element in their spiritual, emotional and, therefore, intellectual wellbeing therefore it is important to develop inclusive communities that are open to dialogue and that welcome and celebrate diversity in a real and meaningful way. If an atmosphere of trust, respect and partnership are built through different structures within school communities, not just in the classroom, students will be more inclined to articulate questions of concern.

#### **Prompting action for social justice and accepting responsibility to act for the common good.**

Some ways to promote awareness and different perspectives on issues of social justice and inequity are the use of hypotheticals and dramatizations which encourage problem solving using intuitive and imaginative thinking to complement analytical and logical thinking. As well a study of media, film and other texts can be used to prompt students to accept responsibility and commit to action for the common good.

#### **Sacred spaces, silence and solitude**

It is important to create sacred spaces at school which are prayerful and aesthetic and allow experiences of solitude. If such spaces reflect a particular religious tradition they may be less accessible to those who do not belong to that tradition. This is a particularly pertinent factor in contemporary classrooms where children come from a variety of religious backgrounds, some churched and others unchurched. Such diversity needs to be treated with sensitivity. Further consideration should be given to

building quiet times into daily timetables for students and teachers to experience silence and stillness. Various resources may be used to inspire contemplation during these times.

### **Transcendence**

Many of the activities that have been discussed above may help students and teachers to become aware of a transcendent dimension in their everyday and they should be encouraged to respond to this. These can be moments of revelation when the core of their being may be stirred by beauty, goodness and truth, and the interconnectedness of everything so they experience something beyond the physicality of their world, a sense of freedom that allows them to rise above the minutiae of their everyday.

To sum up, an educational approach that incorporates these factors would shift from the rational/analytical mode of thinking that dictates current educational programs to one that requires a balance between it and creative/intuitive thinking. Such an approach would require whole school action and response where structural and organizational processes, curriculum offerings, teaching and learning strategies and behavioural patterns will signify an evolving consciousness that nurtures the inner and outer lives of each child; appreciate the plurality of belief and practice that may exist within the educational community whilst also recognizing the interconnectedness that links each to Other; embraces wholeness and connectedness; and ultimately, recognizes the validity of a subjective and transcendental reality. To experience such a learning context should enhance the lives of every child, adolescent and teacher and promote their capacity for empathy and living in peace and harmony in a shrinking, divisive global world.

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**[A Good Guiding Word]**

*“Huxley described two thought patterns to all the main religions, the esoteric and the exoteric. The first subscribes to the metaphysic of a divine Reality at the core of being; it is the spiritual, almost secretive face of religion and is practised by only a few adherents. The second is the exoteric form which is the public form by which the religion is usually identified, that is, through its rituals, practices, architecture and so on”.*