

Spirituality: Providing Guidance through Uncertainty ®

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Abstract

Spirituality has all too often been neglected by both the practices and the profession of education. In these times of great uncertainty the spiritual dimension needs to be developed in order for people to more effectively navigate their way. This paper specifically examines what is understood by 'spirituality' and argues why and how it should be developed. Briefly, this dimension refers to what the meaning of life and one's self-identity are understood to be. Every person can therefore be considered to be spiritual to some extent, not just the religious.

Furthermore it considers that meaning-making, self-identity, choices, decisions and motivation, largely emerge from one's spirituality. By developing this dimension, personal well-being is enhanced and people can gain a more effective understanding of themselves and their world, elucidating what purposes are worthwhile for them to pursue.

There is an increasing interest being given to spirituality mainly from the fields of psychology, the work-place, some aspects of the New Age movement (especially self-help courses) and now also by education. It is argued that spiritual development, which is claimed to be facilitated by philosophical approaches within communities of inquiry, benefits both the learners of educational programmes and also ourselves as researchers.

Introduction

As a result of the uncertainty and doubt that are presently being experienced in Australia and indeed in many Western Societies, there is growing interest in spirituality (Mackay, 1999, p. 219). It is argued by Zohar and Marshall (2000, p. 170-171) that the reasons behind many of our current personal and mental instabilities are spiritual ones. 'Spirituality' is often regarded as mysterious and too elusive to be clearly understood. This is considered to be largely due to differing understandings since primitive times as to whether the human spirit (often referred to as 'soul') is a distinct component of one's nature, differentiating *Homo sapiens* from other species, or even whether it is a divine-like personality.

Spirituality, especially in this current era of uncertainty, is often understood to be a search for meaning (Lesser, 1999; Naylor *et al.*, 1994; Reker & Chamberlain, 2000). Through the loss of traditional mythical metanarratives, the significance of human existence and personal worth has become more uncertain. Since the death of God and the eclipse of modern authoritative traditions, there has emerged awareness for many that human life may be potentially inherently meaningless. Advancing standards of living here in Australia are increasing quantitative aspects of our lives such as material wealth and longevity, but quality of life does not follow in parallel. Often this material abundance can be seen to be "just a

waste of time" (Adams, 2000, p. 24) if it fails to promote the value of existence. The dominant Western perspective that views the Earth and its resources as separate objects to be manipulated and exploited, is argued by O'Sullivan (1999, p. 162) to lead to the destruction of "the spiritual dimension of our own lives". This era of uncertainty in the midst of apparent economic prosperity, has witnessed a state of national pessimism develop in this country for which the development of spirituality is seen as offering a potential solution (Buttrose, 2000, p. 83).

The *rationality* of Western culture has all too often been leaving the individual agent out of the picture in major economic and scientific projects. As observed by Charles Taylor (1989, p. 520), our culture tends to stifle the spirit, and this, he argues, leads to the stifling of our species. Bohm (as quoted by Pylkkänen, 1989, p. 13) adds, that it is intrinsic to humankind "to find coherent meaning because we *are* meaning". However, the meanings and purposes of life for individual persons appear to be neglected in the pursuit of system theories, which 'dehumanize' and 'engulf' individuality through global efficiency programs mainly for economic expansion. It is suggested here that it is significant to note that the societies which currently express the greatest interest in spirituality, are those which are the most scientifically and technologically advanced (Mathew, 1998).

Spirituality is becoming of increasing concern for those who are experiencing anguish in being unable to attain purposeful meanings by which to live and commit themselves. In a society where significant meanings are not readily provided, a crisis seems to be produced in which individuals must actively search for meanings in order to restore an equilibrium to their lives. Holistic wellness or well-being, is seen to depend to a large extent on this restoration with a certain stability and unity being attained (Reker and Chamberlain, 2000). Therefore spirituality is recognised as an essential dimension of individual *flourishing*. Education is also generally understood to aim towards this flourishing of humankind. It is expected that spiritual development should therefore be a major element of concern for the educational enterprise.

Why Spirituality needs to be Developed

Traditional, stable, taken-for-granted frameworks such as religions, myths and assumed national identities, are no longer able to provide unproblematic guidelines by which individuals can live their lives. Consequently individuals often find themselves 'thrown back' upon themselves in a somewhat existential crisis to confront how the very basis of their existence is to be made sense of and valued. Existential questions such as 'who am I?', 'what is the meaning of my life?' and 'how am I to live?' emerge alongside an awareness that all frameworks of meaning 'out there' in one's culture, are not absolute and therefore must be regarded as uncertain. Having uncertainty imputed to them, makes it difficult for individuals to place their trusting faith in any 'formal' framework.

Living amid uncertainty is difficult yet through a developing spirituality one is more able to guide oneself through such a risk-filled existence. Success in developing the spiritual dimension is indicative of attaining psychological wellness. Life is able to be made meaningful and purposeful through engaging with and developing one's spirituality. This offers important value for the development of 'educated persons' as well as for us as educators and researchers, to navigate our way through uncertain times.

It is argued by David Purpel that there is a crisis in education and indeed for contemporary society at large which has evolved in response to an apparent potential lack of meaning and purpose in life. He describes this era in rather Nietzschean terms, as an "age of anxiety" and "a time of spiritual and moral crisis" (Purpel, 1989, p. 23). According to Purpel, this crisis

can be alleviated through spiritual development, which currently is an all too often neglected aspect of education.

Similarly, Nel Noddings (1992, p. 81) argues that "Possibly the greatest lack in modern public schooling is spirituality". She observes that -

The more I think about the centrality of spirituality in our lives, the more concerned I become about its shameful neglect in the public undertaking we call "education." Surely our responsibility to educate includes attention to matters of the spirit. (Noddings, 1992, p. 85)

Her concern is echoed by others who argue that contemporary education is suffering "by its eclipse of the spiritual dimension of our world and universe" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 159). These scholars imply that spirituality should be regarded as an inherent aspect of education and should not be seen as something to be added on to it. Noddings argues that -

Through most of human history, questions about the existence and nature of gods, about the meaning of life, about the role of religion in societies, and about moral life with or without gods have been recognized as paramount in any examined life and, therefore, central to education. (Noddings, 1993, p. xiii)

She claims that the study of spirituality is of concern for individuals and communities, and describes it as "a center of existential care" (Noddings, 1992, p. 85). She stresses this aspect in existential terms as she presents the challenge of existential *care* as having an important spiritual understanding for education. She argues -

Finally, we must consider Heidegger's deepest sense of care. As human beings, we care what happens to us. We wonder whether there is life after death, whether there is a deity who cares about us, whether we are loved by those we love, whether we belong anywhere; we wonder what we will become, who we are, how much control we have over our own fate. For adolescents these are among the most pressing questions: Who am I? What kind of person will I be? Who will love me? How do others see me? Yet schools spend more time on the quadratic formula than on any of these existential questions. (Noddings, 1992, p. 20)

Noddings's view is based on Heidegger's notion that persons are immersed in-the-world, and therefore have a disposition to caring about their place in it. Care is also an aspect of citizenship, which is able to transcend both the private and the public spheres (Dam & Volman, 1998, p. 232), enabling a greater effectiveness in social interactions, which in turn lead to "better" selves (Schultz, 1998, p. 381). This approach reflects Heidegger's (1959, p. 53) assertion that schools should have a *spiritual atmosphere*, not a scientific one. It is an appeal that can be heard from many who claim that there is a need to focus more on the value of such things as the mind and spirit rather than material and economic gains (Young, 1992). For example, Brian Hill argues that -

there is a danger that a technological society, characterized by an increasing addiction to social engineering, will set its sights too low, focusing on the satisfaction of material needs without sufficient regard for the spiritual nature and needs of human beings. There is already evidence that this can lead to people becoming one-dimensional beings, crippled in their transcendent powers, trapped in consumerism, naive about the political forces which manipulate them, and exploitive in human relationships. (Hill, 1989, p.174)

The challenges then, if indeed this crisis exists and if spirituality is an essential dimension to enable human flourishing, are firstly to clarify what the dimension involves, to establish whether indeed it should be a concern for education, and then to determine how to provide for its development within educational settings. This is recognised by Myers who argues that

I also know many people in the secular world who sense that there is a spiritual dimension to child development in addition to the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Although they are working to put their thoughts about spirituality and the young child into words, they are struggling to do so. Until there are ways to understand and name spiritual life within the secular world, a dynamic component of development will remain ignored. This severely limits our ability to address issues related to the "whole child" - even as we claim that this is what we do. (Myers, 1997, p. xi)

What is Spirituality?

Spirituality, as mentioned earlier, is an elusive concept. Greater coherence of this dimension is facilitated by considering it as a type of faith and as an important aspect to psychological wellness. Before considering these approaches, it is useful to firstly examine the etymological roots of 'spirituality'. As a term it is derived from 'spirit' which has developed from the Greek *pnēuma* meaning 'breath' or 'breeze'. The Latin *spīritus* and the Hebrew *rūwach* also add the aspects of courage and vigour of life. The spirit, being the vital principle, is therefore interpreted to be that aspect which "gives meaning, direction and purpose to human life" (Carr, 1995, p. 87).

Spirit is not a substance of sorts, but is a *presence* that can be demonstrated via its actions such as the effects of a wind or breeze of air. 'Spirit' is sometimes able to be given a 'personality' characteristic such as through the persona of The Holy Spirit as found in Christian theology and its use in such phrases as 'that horse has spirit' or 'he has a rebellious spirit'. It is sometimes considered to be a part of an individual as when 'my spirit is down' and sometimes it is part of a community such as 'team spirit', 'Christmas Spirit' and 'the Spirit of the age'.

The difficulty in understanding the concept is compounded by some French and German words. The French *esprit* and German *Geist*, are both general terms, and when translated into English mean both 'mind' (i.e. reason *logos* and intellect *nous*) and 'spirit'. Descartes identified the human spirit (consciousness) as being separate from the physical body. His dualistic view labelled this separate 'consciousness' as the thinking 'mind'. While dualism has introduced the idea that the spirit somehow has a separate identity to the physical body, it is contended that, like "other terms, such as 'soul,' 'heart,' 'mind,' and even 'body,' 'spirit' is not a designation of some *part* of the human person but of the person viewed from particular aspects" (Simpson, 1988, p. 599).

Similarly 'spiritual' is derived from the Greek *pnēumatikos*, and is closely related to the term 'inspiration' (*thēopnēustos*). This characteristic of being inspirational can refer to the *way* one commits oneself to what one regards as the truth. It refers to that which is not only physical or literal but is also ethereal and for example, portrays the ideal of the Christian life by reference to that 'which is brought into being or altered by the presence of the Spirit of God'. In such a context it can be described as implying "interaction at a fully personal level" (Lambourn, 1996, pp. 150-151). The individual and community are understood to be *inspired* or *moved/motivated* by spirit, which is understood to be that particular aspect which refers to their life principle - their inner vitality - with emotions and motivations.

Spirituality is able to inspire "young people to live for others" because it exists "not inside people but between them" (Hull, 1995, p. 132). This view draws upon the dynamic and transcending aspects of the dimension, without attempting to reduce it to a 'thing' that is one part of each individual. Hill (1990, p. 11 & 13) states that the term 'spiritual' "spotlights the *unity* of the self" [my emphasis] and argues that it draws upon the distinctive human capacities or powers which include transcendence (and a sense of personal identity), reflection, a moral sense and a religious urge "to search for ultimate meaning, purpose and deliverance in the midst of our ambiguous environment". The very nature of humankind has been described as being inherently spiritual by Alex Rodger (1982, p. 5). He regards the questioning and searching for meaning to be indicative of spirituality, and maintains that such a dimension is impossible to relinquish because it is a universal aspect of human nature - of what it is to be a human being.

Spirituality as Faith

In addition to the etymological roots, spirituality can sometimes be understood as a faith. 'Faith' too can be seen to represent the quest for meaning that is a distinctively human trait. It is argued by Fowler (1995, p. 25) that faith is the imagination that is able to grasp "the ultimate conditions of our existence, unifying them into a comprehensive image in light of which we shape our responses and initiatives, our actions". Describing faith as an 'imagination' does not denote that it is "fantasy or make-believe". All of one's knowing begins with images (Fowler, 1995, p. 25). It is argued that people always know more than they are able to express to others (Polanyi, 1958). Such inexpressible knowing is described by Wittgenstein (1922, p. 151) as 'mystical'. Faith, then, is able to escape the reducing effect of rationalism. It requires one, as Søren Kierkegaard argued, to *leap* through to a decision of commitment from where rational thinking leaves off. It involves the whole person, not just cognitive reason, but one's very will, interest and passion. Faith provides a way of seeing life in relation to holistic images of what is termed the "*ultimate environment*" (Fowler, 1995, p. 28). This *ultimate environment* is understood to be a comprehensive frame of meaning, by which people commit themselves to the value and power that is able to order their existence and enable them to make sense of their own identities and the lives of others. Spirituality and faith are both rational and non-rational (as opposed to being irrational).

Religion tends to be the formal expression of faith and is understood to imply the sacred, the holy and the ultimate concern, and in a rather loose way in the West, is sometimes used to refer to a belief in or worship of God or gods. Religion is etymologically derived from 'to bind', and is seen more accurately to refer to the systematising of belief and worship as in a formal institutional religion and also the binding of oneself to something through reverence and devotion. Religions can provide ready-made and institutionalised world-views that offer a message for a better life (usually through some form of salvation) by which individuals may gain meaning and purpose in understanding themselves and how they should live. It is usually considered to be institutional to which devoted members are bound although it can also include personal devotions (Peck, 1990, p. 208).

As people learn to cope with uncertainty and problematic futures it would appear that religion, in a formal sense, is able to provide some stability through frameworks of doctrine and ritual especially at the more fundamentalist end of the spectrum. What provides the direction and meaning in this instance is not so much the particular religious doctrines themselves with their frameworks of 'truths', but rather direction is only possible because individuals *choose* to place their faith in them. Faith, however, even faith in religion, is not able to announce the end of uncertainty. Indeed an essential aspect of faith is argued to be a form of doubt (Lamm, 1971, p. 13).

The example of 'doubting Thomas' in the Gospel accounts may appear to oppose this suggestion. However, the phrase 'to doubt' in the New Testament refers to the dividedness of one's attitude when one is confronted with a promise from God (McKim, 1979, p. 987), indicating a 'doubleness' of thought. This certainly may be experienced prior to a *leap* of commitment made by faith. The Apostle Paul claimed that Christians are to live by faith not by sight (II Cor 5:7), indicating that the commitment to Christianity is not based upon a certainty that can be readily perceived but is something that offers significant value to an individual who must 'leap' toward it *by* faith. In this vein, Kierkegaard argued that Christianity was the most terrible of decisions because it involved a leap of passionate commitment and required one to invest one's whole existence.

Superficially the spiritual may be assumed to be synonymous with the religious but upon closer inspection it is recognised that spirituality has its own meaning quite independent from religion. Distinguishing religion from spirituality by describing the former as the "formal expression of spirituality" is not meant to provide *the* difference between these two concepts. The personal belief system of the individual which involves making-meaning and purposes in life may or may not include faith in a deity or religious order. Spirituality is understood as the *personal* responses to experiences where meanings are not always readily supplied but which need to be produced through reflection. Faith in religion then, is argued to emerge from one's spirituality. This spiritual dimension can therefore be likened to Fowler's description of faith and indeed one's spirituality may incorporate faith in a religious framework. Spirituality is a personal dimension that engages with meanings that offer important significance for the individual.

Spirituality as Psychological Wellness

Spirituality is recognised as an essential aspect - even one of the most fundamentally important ones - to psychological wellness. Psychology is commonly understood to refer to the study of the 'mind', however due to its etymological origins it can also be understood to include the 'soul', because the term 'psychology' is derived from the Greek *psuchō*, (soul) which like *pnēuma*, means 'a current of air, breath or a breeze'. Spirituality is understood to be the *central core* in various models of holistic well-being or 'wellness' (Chandler *et al.*, 1992; Witmer and Sweeny, 1992). In these models the spiritual centre interacts with and provides the inspiration, motivation and the meanings and purposes for the other dimensions - such as the intellectual, physical, occupational, emotional and social.

Spiritual well-being is often described as meaning-making as well as spiritual, and has been identified to be a strong and consistent predictor of psychological well-being (Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). The empirical research associated with psychological functioning, "strongly supports the importance of meaning in people's lives" (O'Conner and Chamberlain, 1996, p. 461). Meaning-making (spirituality) is also reported to correlate with self-esteem (Lindemann & Verkasalo, 1996) and the lack of it as correlating with depression, substance abuse and even suicide ideation (Devogler-Ebersole & Ebersole, 1985; Harlow *et al.*, 1986; May, 1991; Yalom, 1980; Yarnell, 1972), although researchers report that it is *not the* indicator, but only one of a variety of factors.

Spirituality appears to be multidimensional and is identified by Ingersoll (1994) as consisting of the seven dimensions of meaning: conception of divinity, relationship, mystery, play, experience and as an interactive dimension which relies on a systemic force to make sense of the other dimensions. It is argued here that this description of Ingersoll's really outlines only six dimensions in a horizontal fashion, with the seventh (the interactive dimension) operating as a 'deeper' function, providing the unifying relationship between the others. The models of both Witmer and Sweeny (1992), and Chandler *et al.* (1992), differ slightly to Ingersoll's (1994) in that they allow the meaning aspect of spirituality to integrate and make

sense of the other dimensions, rather like Ingersoll's described integrative dimension. Through these models, it would appear that the spiritual dimension is recognised as involving the composition of meaning(s) and purpose(s) for one's life, providing the inspiration and motivation that are essential aspects of holistic wellness.

Spirituality as the Meaning of Life

Meaningless and nihilism - the opposite of spirituality and Fowler's 'faith as imagination' - are argued here to be characteristics of the crisis of this contemporary era of uncertainty as described by Purpel. These characteristics can also be described as 'a loss of myth' (Lesser, 1999; May, 1991). It is myth (i.e. 'grand narrative') that can provide individuals with purposes but they are now becoming lost in the present fragmenting world where personal unifying narratives are being replaced by multiple personal identities (Lyotard, 1991). However, the quest to provide a response to the question 'what is the meaning of life?' is argued not only to be a matter of personal wellness but is also a matter of life and death (Yalom, 1980, pp. 419-420). This importance is reflected in the view of the existentialist Albert Camus, who stated, "I have seen many people die because life for them was not worth living. From this I conclude that the question of life's meaning is the most urgent of all" (Quoted by Yalom, 1980, p. 420).

Yalom differentiates between the questions 'what is *the* meaning of life?' and 'what is the meaning of *my* life?'. He refers to the former as the 'cosmological', noting that it can be addressed by a world-view as found in various religions. The latter he terms 'terrestrial' and includes a purpose, a reference to an intention, aim or function, and is more personal and even secular. It is from within this latter terrestrial understanding that Yalom refers to the works of the humanists and existentialists. This understanding is based upon the Western premise that there is a *telos*, a point to one's life, which contrasts with the Eastern view, where "Existence has no goal. It is pure journey" (Yalom, 1980, p. 470). It is this terrestrial view of one's meaning of life that has come to be regarded generally as the dimension of holistic wellness called spirituality. It is argued here however, that spirituality involves the integration of *both* the cosmological *and* the terrestrial questions into the *singular* issue of the meaning of self and the universe where "nothing is left out" (Britton, 1969, p. 20). These two questions should not be reduced to 'objective' and 'subjective' concerns, because together they both form a holistic understanding of the issue of being for the individual.

There is no 'objective' universal meaning of life that inherently emerges for all individuals from their relations with other entities as a result of simply having a presence-in-the-world. If there is a meaning of life 'out there', it can only become a meaning of life for the individual if she or he relates to it in such a way that it becomes personally significant and *meaningful*. This is also argued by Ellin (1995, p. 304) who claims that no new information such as possibly received from a sage or formal framework, could ever count as the meaning of life. This is because such a meaning is not able to be explained as a proposition from one person to another. He contends that such a meaning is not understood as a *knowledge* that can be explained, stated or validated. It is never able to be reduced to *what* one 'knows', much like Wittgenstein's notion of the 'mystical'.

Kierkegaard claimed that the objective *what* of knowledge can only be an approximation, and therefore must always be considered as uncertain. He argued that what was of utmost significance for the existing individual was the 'subjective' *how* of his or her knowing. He even stated that "subjectivity is truth" (Kierkegaard, 1992, vol.1, p. 203) in order to emphasize the importance for an individual in being able to penetrate inwardly, to determine the source of her or his values and actions. He argued that "An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person" (Kierkegaard, 1992, vol.1, pp. 202-203). As summarized by

Wahl (1969, p. 20), "this doctrine is related to what Kierkegaard calls the doctrine of how. The crucial thing is not what I believe in - not in the object of my belief - but the way in which I believe that object".

As no criteria are available to verify claims to 'objective truth' the focus for spirituality argued for here should be upon the notion of 'subjective truth' - that is, *how* one relates to what one believes. All truth in this sense is related to the being of the individual. But because being can be described as 'subjective', Heidegger (1996, p. 208) went to great length to explain that this is not to be understood as an arbitrariness of the individual. Rather than consider 'truth' from the traditional epistemological perspective as the correspondence between statement and 'fact', truth here is understood in terms of the Greek *aletheia*. This term refers to the uncovering of hidden things, thereby "taking them out of their concealment" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 202). One's subjectivity can be "in" truth (Heidegger, 1988, p. 18) in this regard through *how* one relates. Heidegger (1988, p. 217) argued that *truth* and *being true* both have the individual's *mode of being*. Belonging to the truth of being is described by how a meaning, a phenomenon, is *understood in relation to oneself* by the *how* through which one relates. To construe one's subjectivity as being solely composed of conceptual propositions makes it as 'abstract' and uncertain as abstract objectivity itself and fails to grasp the inwardness and certitude of will that "are indeed subjectivity" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 141).

Kierkegaard identified that 'objective knowing' is a 'risk' and that all meanings lack any absolute certainty and are therefore contingent. He argued that even within the cultural context of his Christian Denmark the only *proof* of Christianity would be the second coming of Christ himself. Until such an event each individual is understood to be responsible for deciding upon a meaning of life that is meaningful for him or herself but for which there is no guarantee that it is the correct one. Thus the spiritual dimension never 'arrives' at an ultimate meaning (except possibly when one's death brings an end to the project). It is by nature dynamic and is always subject to further scrutiny.

Spirituality as Self-Identity

It is argued here that a sense of self-identity - who one is - cannot be made through objective or abstract categories which relate to the objective 'what' of one's being (for example gender, age, rationality, career, sibling status, etc.). Categorisation can only be an attempt to answer the question '*what* am I?' which is an aspect of the metaphysical question 'what is man?'. An appeal to such categories cannot address the question '*who* am I?' which is argued to be fundamental to a sense of identity. Personal identity, as also argued by Taylor (1989, p. 34), cannot be provided "by any list of properties of other ranges, about my physical description, provenance, background, capacities, and so on". While categories may offer some reference, they cannot define what makes individuals different from others. That is, categories cannot sufficiently contain one's sense of self-identity.

The notion of establishing self-identity does not imply that this can be achieved outside the constraints of cultural frameworks which provide so much of the meaning by which one understands one's place in the world and one's social identity. According to Taylor -

My self-definition is understood as an answer to the question Who I am. And this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (Taylor, 1989, p. 35)

Taylor recognises that self-identity involves some reference to a defining community from which frameworks are gained. These provide some necessary background for moral judgements, intuitions and relations.

While these frameworks offer some useful reference for making sense of one's self-identity, Taylor argues that personal identity is also spiritually dependent. His notion of spirituality is described as a 'strong evaluation' and it is 'strong' or 'deep', because the individual "goes deeper" and "characterizes his motivation at greater depth" (Taylor, 1985, p. 25). A strong evaluation generally refers to the quality of motivations, and can be differentiated from 'weak evaluations', which focus only on outcomes (Taylor, 1985, p. 16). Strong evaluations contribute to one's spirituality because they are chosen and made valuable by the individual on the basis of what she or he considers to be worthwhile. They identify the reasons why one does (acting, judging, etc.) what one does. These reasons reveal both what is of importance and the criteria by which they are valued. However, Taylor warns that sometimes this can involve self-deluding interpretations in order to preserve current desires, so it is argued that these strong evaluations are more effectively formed when they actively engage in negotiation with the reasons that support the strong evaluations of other individuals (Hedman, 1984, pp. 358-359).

Understanding self-identity in this way can explain why, when one claims to be a different person to what one was previously, one is not referring to the metaphysical being of the continuity of the person but instead to a decision to differentiate the emphasis on certain ethical and spiritual traits used to ground one's evaluations and intentions (Morgan, 1996, pp. 242-243). Becoming a different person involves a developing spirituality which, being of a dynamic nature involving the freedom to make decisions, may change as particular meanings are understood to have different relevance for the experiences of the existing individual. This accords well with contemporary acknowledgement that the individual, within a cultural context, has an active role in crafting and unfolding personal identity. This takes place in a 'circular' type of discourse between one's personal identity and one's social identity where neither is mutually exclusive of the other (Archer, 2000, p. 288).

How Spirituality can be Developed

Spiritual development in education is observed to be a vague notion and is identified by Best (1996a) as an issue that has been rarely addressed from within education. Up until the late 1980s, the term spirituality was synonymous with cultural religions and therefore it had its place in religious and cultural education. It is contended by Moffett (1994, p. 17) that the term 'spirituality' should be dropped altogether in relation to education because of the perceived negative connotations which relate to some dubious forms of religious practice. However, spirituality is understood here as being much broader than any particular religious connotation and as having its own identity *outside of religion*.

If this dimension is to be considered seriously by mainstream education one of the first points that needs to be clearly identified is that spiritual development does not presuppose a religious frame of reference. Because spiritual education is not synonymous with Religious Education it is relevant for both the religious and the nonreligious (Beck, 1986). It is argued by Laird (1995) and Yob (1995) that it may be necessary to conceptualise spirituality as mainly *secular* in order for it to be incorporated more readily into public schools. However, it is argued here that spiritual development is able to encompass *both* the religious *and* the secular because it is an aspect of the general ideal of the 'educated person'.

The spiritual domain is 'above' or 'deeper' than the religious realm. This does not imply that it is in any way *against* the religious but rather that spirituality is the means by which the religious may be contextualised. While religion can be a product in the sense that one

becomes 'bound to' an institutionalised form of doctrine, spirituality in contrast is more of a process (Cully, 1984, p. ix). It is the *process*-like search, which may be philosophical, theological and psychological in character, that is argued here as being relevant for both secular and religiously oriented education. In spite of adopting such a position, the majority of the literature on spirituality in education continues to be written by scholars with a theological or religious background.

It is argued here that spiritual development in education must be described with reference to the holistic person being educated. This is because holistic approaches which include notions of the "whole person, whole curriculum, whole school, whole society and whole world are likely to encompass the spiritual development of the individual" (Best, 1996b, pp. 345-346). A holistic approach not only involves the person being educated but also includes the global environmental context as a whole. This theme is also shared with the New Age Movement and 'deep ecology'. Spirituality of the whole person extends to relations with others as the person is understood to be *in-the-world* where the 'world' is inescapably inclusive of these dimensions.

As this era is currently described as being uncertain, rather than attempting to avoid this condition uncertainty can actually be incorporated into the spiritual dimension. In order for this to occur it is suggested here that the spirituality of individuals needs to be developed. This dimension of spirituality has been described by Zohar and Marshall (2000) as Spiritual Intelligence, or 'SQ'. They argue that -

Using our SQ, we can live with uncertainty and find inner poise with respect to it. We can live creatively, not despite the uncertainty but because of it. Uncertainty can inspire us because it creates conditions in which we must make a choice. It gives us our freedom and sets the conditions for our responsibility. (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p. 200)

They claim that people are able to deal with the existential problems that are produced by existing in an environment of uncertainty, through their spirituality or spiritual intelligence. Experiencing existential problems is argued here to be characteristic of having presence in this era of uncertainty with its problematic futures. The creation of conditions that require our freedom of choice to be exercised allow for a personally significant framework of understanding to be constructed that is able to navigate one through this uncertain world. Through this exercise of choice, Zohar and Marshall claim that an 'inner poise' can be attained despite existing in the midst of apparent uncertainty.

An Existential Crisis

An existential crisis is considered to be a means by which one can develop spiritually. It is understood as a 'crisis' because it offers a potential turning point to *change* the meanings that one has and the way that one relates to these. It is 'existential' because it produces an *angst* characterised by feelings of doubt and uncertainty and *it individuates* in that the meanings decided upon become one's *own* for which one becomes *responsible*. An existential crisis challenges whether the meanings of society that have been accepted inauthentically as 'givens' offer real significance for one's own experiences. Through this, one recognises what is of most significance for one's life and this allows one to prioritize the things that matter in order of their importance.

To develop spiritual understanding requires an awareness of realising various possibilities of meaning. Until such an event, one remains with often unquestioned and incoherent understandings. When in this condition, Gadamer (2000, p. 299) argues that "It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only

when it is, so to speak, *provoked*" [my emphasis]. An existential crisis is argued by Kierkegaard (1987, vol.2, p. 228; 1992, vol.1, p. 622) to provide the *jolt* that is needed for the individual to engage in the "ambiguous art of thinking about existence and existing". The *changing* of a belief depends upon one *questioning* the way one *relates* to the taken-for-granted basic concepts or meanings which are disclosed to the self. Possibilities are only recognised as *one's own* through authenticity as one first discloses them and then *chooses* oneself in one's situation.

An existential crisis has been described as "the relation of positive questioning to the matter in question" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 8). Therefore, the development of an individual's spirituality depends upon *questioning* the way he or she *relates* to the taken-for-granted basic concepts or meanings which are disclosed to the self. These meanings and purposes accepted as 'given' are never identified as requiring questioning until an existential crisis makes one aware of their existence and potential inadequacy for providing a unified understanding for their existence and concept of self-identity.

Philosophical reflection

Engaging in philosophical thought in conjunction with an existential crisis of sorts is argued here to be most conducive for spiritual development. Within a world of uncertainty existential crises can emerge that provoke individuals to examine who they are and what the meaning and purpose of their existence is. One can respond variously to what it means to be a human being. Kierkegaard (1989, p. 43) argued that persons are fundamentally "spirit", describing this as a synthesis of mind and body. His holistic view of the individual incorporated a life lived in accordance with both reason and *passion*. However, he lamented that our over reliance on the former and neglect of the latter was a trend of civilization which was in turn 'de-humanising' the population.

Similarly, Heidegger argued the same trend but was able to comment on a society more contemporary to our society today. He claimed that humans are distinguished by our ability to think and that thought can be considered to be both *logos* and *mythos*. However, the former appears to be accentuated to such a degree in a technically and economically driven world that it is detrimental to the latter. He argued that "In America and elsewhere, logistics as the only proper philosophy of the future is thus beginning to seize power over the spirit" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 21). The philosophical thinking alluded to here is not only of the *logos* type that Kierkegaard and Heidegger indicated has been over emphasised, but is also the *mythos* - the meditative.

Heidegger (1966, pp. 47, 56) has argued that humankind can be characterised as a meditating being. The meaning provided for one's life makes spirituality such a personal dimension that often it can only be accessed in solitariness through meditative reflection. In addition to Zohar and Marshall's (2000, p. 61-62) reported benefit of meditation for optimal neural oscillations, spiritual meditation, understood as being fully present (Lesser, 1999, p. 92), is essential if development of spirituality is to occur, because simply living the experience of and by itself is not enough. Without meditative reflection one cannot engage effectively with the existential questions

Spirituality for educational professionals

Spirituality is here argued to be an essential dimension for us as educators if we are to 'flourish' both as persons and as researchers in this era of uncertainty. Certainty is unable to be restored to objective knowing and so we must accept the contingency of all the *whats* that we know. However, in order to flourish we need now to address and develop *how* we relate and understand. This understanding refers to our profession, our

social and personal identities and our very being. Such an engagement with 'subjective truth' should lead to the development of our spirituality and elucidate our meanings, purposes and motivations that we have for our profession and ourselves.

Our motivation for research and the theories we draw upon to drive our research questions, are inextricably linked to how we understand the purposes of education and the meaning of life in general. This link between purposes of education, beliefs about human existence and the meanings of life, has been identified by many scholars (Freire, 1972; Higginbotham, 1976; O'Hear, 1981; Peters, 1973; White, 1990). It is argued that "no teacher or school system is so innocent as to believe that educational functions are performed without reference to ideas on the nature of man's existence and his ultimate purpose in life" (Kneller, 1958, p. 42). In this sense there is understood to be *unity* of meaning and purpose in each of us. The purposes that are evident within one's variously fragmented roles, including that of researcher, have a unity with each other and with how one's purpose of life is understood, but these are often unarticulated let alone coherently understood by ourselves.

Understanding purposes in such a way may seem to portray them as being liable to the subjective arbitrariness and fanciful whim of the individual. This appears especially problematic if the notion of 'truth' is understood in terms of how one's particular purposes of education correspond to an ideal view of education. However, 'education', being an abstract concept, does not have inherent purposes or aims. It is people as beings who only have purposes. Consequently the whole notion of education should not suffer unduly in an era of uncertainty because the purposes of such an enterprise belong to individuals not to the concept of education itself. This is recognised by Dewey (1985, p. 114) who stated, "it is well to remind ourselves that education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents, and teachers, etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education". Purposes of education then, because they belong to persons, are able to retain a meaningful coherence, if the spiritual dimension of individuals is sufficiently developed to enable this.

The loss of modernistic, traditional metanarratives in a time of uncertainty may seem to deny good grounds for establishing purposes for education and for life. However, it is argued here that just as it has been demonstrated that through one's spirituality life can be made meaningful so too can education be made meaningful and purposeful. As entities who have at least some agency (Kearney, 1987, p. 55-56), we act in intentional ways. These intentions are part of our *whole* being, including our intuitions, emotions and our cognitive understandings.

Purposes of education do not exist in isolation from the other purposes and meanings of the individual, as views on education are always integrated with how an individual understands human nature and the purpose of human life. Consequently, because "understanding always concerns the whole of being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 142), each purpose must be embedded in individual understanding.

As educators, if we wish to clarify our own purposes of education we need to engage with our own understandings of who we are and what we understand to be the meaning of life. The making of meanings and purposes through an engagement with subjective truth that is *how* we relate and how we have come to value is often a meditative affair. Development of this dimension is argued to benefit through experiencing existential crises of sorts. Such events are able to allow us to exercise our freedom and develop our responsibility as we articulate, examine, and re-evaluate what we understand to be the meaning and purpose of our lives which motivate all that we do. This development of the spiritual dimension is argued to be facilitated through a community of inquiry, where negotiation of intersubjective understandings on important matters can be experienced. Friends and colleagues can often

be our "best enemies" as Nietzsche (1978, p. 56) has portrayed, able to 'wound' us in critically helpful ways.

Conclusion

Often our views regarding the meanings and purposes of life and who we believe we are as individual identities are often unclear even to ourselves. Developing a more coherent position on these spiritual issues is argued here to allow us to more effectively navigate our research efforts in uncertain times as well as enable us to experience a greater degree of wellness. This is made possible not because the uncertainty of 'objective' knowing can be nullified but because we have a greater awareness of what is of most value to us.

This understanding drives our motivation and provides a framework for how we make-meaning from all our experiences. How we relate through what we value, clarifies our personal identity, who we are and what makes us 'tick'. Our spirituality forms the basis for why we value what we do and determines even our morality. Our decisions and choices are inextricably linked to our spiritual dimension. It is argued here then, that it is in our interest to develop spirituality both in our practices and our personal and professional lives in order to enhance the quality of our existence - how we value who we are and how we live.

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