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Dichotomy to Dynamite
Developing the Craft of the Spiritual Classroom

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ABSTRACT

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Dichotomy to Dynamite Developing the Craft of the Spiritual Classroom

This paper explores the nature and role of spiritual development in secondary education outside the traditional RE context. It examines its role in Post 16 citizenship and seeks to close the gap between two pedagogical approaches: cognitive and experiential. The premise is that the gap can be closed to enhance the craft of the spiritual classroom. The paper proposes that the key to developing innovative pedagogical skills in this area is found in theological reflection.

Firstly the paper explores a working definition for spiritual development as outlined by Jacqueline Watson in the International Journal for Children's Spirituality. Secondly there is an examination of the dichotomy that exists between key proponents within the spiritual development debate; David Hay, research fellow at the University of Aberdeen and Andrew Wright, coordinator of the centre for Theology, Religion and Culture at King's College, London. The aim of the paper is to understand how theological reflection relates to spiritual development in a practical sense. Key theoretical perspectives from practical theology are related to the role of spiritual development in secondary education.

Analysis and synthesis of the theoretical perspectives suggests that there is value in bringing adversarial positions together. The paper argues that a merged approach to spiritual development can forge a way towards crafting skills in the secondary classroom in terms of innovative experiential critical pedagogy. Furthermore, there are specifically theological perspectives that overcome the cognitive/experiential dichotomy. The theoretical analysis presented in this paper is intended as the forerunner to a stage 2 dissertation proposal focused on action research.

INTRODUCTION

There is an assumption that spiritual development in secondary education is an almost untouchable area outside the conventional Religious Education (RE) classroom or collective worship assembly hall. For example, even John Wise, Chief Executive of the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE) explicitly acknowledges that it is other areas of personal development that can be supported by citizenship education:

‘There is something effective in citizenship education which can support Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural development (SMSC), especially in its social, moral and cultural aspect’ (Wise, Citizenship News, March 2010, pp.15ff)

This omission is noteworthy in that even in faith based circles the tendency is to shy away from the role of the spiritual in secondary schools. This paper argues that rather than hiding under the SMSC cross-curricular carpet, spiritual development is essential to effective secondary education in offering a means for learners to understand, experience and respond to the multi-faith society in which they live.

Spiritual development has a role in moving the learning experience in secondary education in the UK beyond a target driven model. It subverts the existing system to place the student and practitioner, rather than targets, in the centre of learning. Furthermore, practical theology is an appropriate and as yet untapped partner in promoting this concept outside the traditional RE arena. As Thatcher, Professor of Theology at the University of Exeter, states, ‘it may take theology’ to initiate the search for spiritual development (cited in Meehan, 2002, p.301). Practical theology offers tools for critical reflection so that rather than hiding behind the moral, social and cultural dimensions of the National Curriculum spiritual development can emerge to the foreground to help craft innovative pedagogy for teachers, learners and other practitioners, such as school chaplains.

Therefore subjects other than RE, such as citizenship, provide a dynamic, or as Watson puts it ‘dynamite’, space within the curriculum for young people to develop their sense of the spiritual (2003, p.22). Watson is a lecturer and researcher in education at the University of East Anglia. She focuses her work on the role of spiritual development in education. She recognises there is impetus to bring interpretive skills to the discussion about how spirituality should be ‘taught’. However, Watson’s research reveals a dichotomy between approaches to pedagogy, on one side cognitive; relating to knowledge acquired through reason, and on the other experiential; relating to knowledge acquired through experience. Unless these approaches can be synthesised there will not be the dynamite Watson hopes for. This paper argues that practical theology is the key to providing an interpretive framework as a means to bridge the gap Watson identifies.

The educational dichotomy is analogous to a long standing debate in theological circles about the compatibility of praxis, the practical application of theology, and theology as systematic theory. Key proponents of practical theology, such as Professor Terry Veling, Head of the McAuley School of Theology, Australian Catholic University,

Brisbane, argue that praxis and theology are not only compatible but dependent on each other for an ontological sense of knowing that is derived from our very being in the world. Similarly, cognitive and experiential methods are not only compatible, but dependent upon each other for an ontological knowledge in education that has value at the very heart of an approach to spiritual development. Therefore, tools derived from theological reflection bring experiential and cognitive pedagogies together thus liberating students to experience, understand and respond to the world in which they live.

Thus the line of argument outlined in this paper is as follows:

- Cognitive learning enhances religious literacy and understanding of traditions of all faiths and none
- Experiential learning develops an individual's world view particularly their relationships with others and 'the other'
- Fused together these approaches are effective in enabling spiritual development to be distinctively concerned with knowledge, understanding, experience, relationship and response to events and issues in society
- The model for fusing the two can be enabled through theological reflection in 'crafting' practice within the 'spiritual classroom'

AN ILLUSTRATIVE VIGNETTE

On November 11th 2010 a page was set up on the social network site Facebook to call for the deportation of Muslim protesters who disrupted a Remembrance Day ceremony in London. The page became the focus for people to express their anger and within nine hours it had nearly a quarter of a million members. According to Fitzsimmons, blogger for the unofficial resource All Facebook, it became an anti-Muslim page. She describes that 'there was a deluge of comments, literally hundreds of thousands of them' making derogatory comments against Muslims. She states 'I don't know what the solution is but this is not it' (Fitzsimmons, All Facebook, 2010).

The Facebook page has now been removed, yet its existence and the proliferation of its membership highlights the need for spiritual development in education to be taken more seriously, 'lest we forget' what society becomes like when it negates the importance of understanding and relating to diversity. The poppy burning incident was conducted by a very small number of people from the group Muslims Against Crusades (BBC News London, November 2010), however the unquestioning cut and paste action of those promoting the Facebook campaign, many of them young people, suggests a lack of serious reflection on how to respond to such an event. As Fitzsimmons suggests there is no easy solution, this is a complex issue and responses will conflict. Yet for young people this example is illustrative of the steep learning curve they face in trying to understand how to respond to events in society that directly affect them. This is exactly the sort of issue that may be discussed in secondary school lessons, such as citizenship. However there is space for teachers and learners to become more cognisant, for example of what it means to be Muslim and British, whilst also being reflective in how to respond to such an incident without promoting further prejudice. This paper suggests there is something effective about spiritual development that can fill this gap.

INDENTIFICATION OF GAP IN KNOWLEDGE

This paper focuses on post-16 citizenship interfaith development projects funded by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) in order to examine the suggested gap in knowledge. At the time of writing the coalition government have announced that citizenship may be scrapped from the National Curriculum (BBC News, 2010). However, the core concepts within the syllabus will still form an important, albeit non statutory, element of the wider curriculum.

My role in this investigation is as an educational practitioner and practical theological researcher. I initiated an LSN project, Peacethread, with the aim of developing new ways to 'teach' spirituality. I work under the umbrella name 'Brightfields' and am partnered in this social enterprise by a colleague Rev. David Hodson, a Baptist minister with an interest in finding new ways to express church. In a formal sense I contribute an academic, cognitive approach, whilst David's is more experiential and pastoral. Yet as work develops, our practice is grounded in a mutual collaboration where the practical and theoretical, experiential and cognitive, are interdependent. Furthermore, this collaborative approach is compatible with the aims of citizenship education.

The National Curriculum states that schools must 'promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life' (OPSI, 2010). The term 'spiritual' has been referenced since the 1944 Education Reform Act (OPSI, 2010) but 'citizenship' is a newer phenomenon. It is a statutory requirement of the National Curriculum and has been described as 'the process of helping people learn how to become active, informed and responsible citizens' (Citizenship Foundation, 2010).

Citizenship was introduced to the National Curriculum in 2002, following the recommendations of the Crick Report in 1998. The key concepts are democracy, justice, rights, responsibilities, identity and diversity. Crick hoped that citizenship would become more than a subject, that 'if taught well and tailored to local needs, its skills and values will enhance democratic life for all of us, both rights and responsibilities, beginning in school and radiating out' (Citizenship Foundation, 2010).

However, citizenship is not necessarily taught by specialists, i.e. teachers with a degree in the subject or experience of involvement with the key concepts at an institutional level such as local or national politics. Furthermore the explicit approach required of the teacher is expected to be inclusive and pervasive. Additionally there is a remit within the subject to make delivery participatory and linked to responsible action in society. It seems that the citizenship classroom is in fact not limited to the conventional four walls, but can be seen in the context of enrichment activities, conferences and whole day events, student councils, forums, campaigns and community action groups. Therefore, coupled with an expectation to provide opportunities for SMSC, effective delivery of citizenship education is a challenge to the non specialist teacher.

Lack of confidence in dealing with areas of citizenship education relating to spiritual development was identified through work on behalf of the LSN in September 2009. Invitations were sent out to teachers to create development projects within post-16 citizenship programmes that would develop the themes of, amongst other things, interfaith dialogue. My response to this invitation was a peace project in Dorset;

Peacethread. The aims of the project are to ‘thread’ together interfaith representatives, young people and global themes such as peace. The project creates opportunities for young people from a diverse range of backgrounds to enter into dialogue with each other and representatives from faith groups. It was initiated in response to a need amongst young people to deepen their understanding of how faith links to action and to develop tolerance of diversity in local communities. 30 post-16 students participated in the project from three educational establishments (see paper 1).

Evaluation of the LSN projects was based on self reflection and the writing of case study reports. These were collated and each project coordinator met with LSN consultants and managers on a single day in February 2010 to evaluate the collective outcomes of the projects. The case studies were subsequently published on the Excellence Gateway (Excellence Gateway, 2010). Peacethread stood out as addressing the remit of the LSN, by raising awareness of interfaith dialogue, developing opportunities for spiritual development and enabling teachers to be more confident at touching the untouchable ‘S’ within SMSC. However, it became clear in the evaluation process that the other seven projects, developed throughout the UK, did not relate to faith or indeed spiritual development, but to culture and ethnic diversity.

The anecdotal evaluations of the LSN projects suggested that this kind of practice is uncommon in secondary education in the UK. Furthermore, on reflection of the wider range of projects, initiated nationally, it seemed from the evidence of coordinators’ evaluations that areas of personal development to be enhanced through the projects were seen as cultural, social and moral, not spiritual. For example, a fascinating project linking hairdressers from two areas of the North of England resulted in students considering the effect of culture on hairstyles. Whilst this is an interesting connection to investigate it could also promote stereotype and prejudice amongst young people who may go on to think that all Muslims wear their hair in a particular way (Excellence Gateway, 2010).

If the explicit focus, as Wise suggested, is for citizenship to have an effect on the social, moral, and cultural dimensions of SMSC, but not the spiritual it may be that by omitting the latter dimension of such work dangerous misconceptions about what it means to be a person of faith in a multi-faith society are promoted; is faith really linked to hairstyle? Does this kind of project really improve the religious literacy or enhance the spiritual development of the young people involved?

On the other hand the spiritual may have hidden value in the context of such a project. The implicit nature of the approach used, to bring together young people from different cultural contexts, to meet with people from interfaith communities, is an opportunity to find a way forward for young people to become both religiously literate and to develop their own world view. These criteria are not mere by-products of the educational process; on the contrary, spiritual development is an implicit yet essential part of the journey the learner makes, which the teacher enables. The inclusive conversations and diverse relationships these encounters bring enhance spiritual development within the ‘classroom’. This process of discovery is itself a destination.

Peacethread provided opportunities for spiritual development that were contained in the manner of the pedagogy, not necessarily in the content of the material. For example, students and faith representatives were given an open platform to explore concepts, knowledge and opinions regarding the Israel/ Palestine conflict. This enabled all

participants to enter into conversation, to ask questions, seek clarification in a non judgmental atmosphere. The 'open-space' approach allowed for cognitive learning about the Middle East, whilst the experiential was effected in conversation and inclusivity. Therefore, the coexistence of the cognitive and the experiential formed spiritual development within this citizenship project.

However this begs the question; should these approaches be merged? Are they compatible? The literature in publications such as the *International Journal for Children's Spirituality* (Watson, 2003) suggests that a debate is raging between adversaries.

FROM DICHOTOMY TO DYNAMITE

Watson unpicks the relationship between spirituality and citizenship (2003, p.10). Her analysis discovers 'potential for a close relationship' but also 'potential for considerable friction'. Tension is not only apparent between citizenship and spirituality, but within the terms of reference for spirituality itself. Watson points out that if spirituality within citizenship is to have any potential, then a working definition needs to be found.

A. TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

Defining spirituality, in whatever context, is notoriously difficult, so a pragmatic approach is helpful. Whilst some teachers want to be clearer on what it is in order to 'teach it better', others strongly resist giving it a definition at all, knowing the restrictive power of definitions. Indeed, the academic debates surrounding the terms and phrases used in education are confusing: for example, what is the distinction between spiritual, spirituality, and spiritual development (Meehan, 2002, p.291)? Furthermore there is an ongoing debate about terms that relate to a confessional approach, opposed to adjectives describing spiritual development as an activity (Eaude, 2009, p.5).

Watson is concerned with understanding teachers' needs in order to 'promote' rather than 'teach' spirituality. She suggests that a working definition is required. For Watson, drawing on Wittgenstein, it is the usage of the terms that derive their meaning (Watson, 2003, p10). Watson surveys literature in the *International Journal for Children's Spirituality* and provides an overview of the main trends in thinking regarding spirituality in education. She points out that the work of key thinkers such as Copley and Erricker are helpful but they also reinforce the impression of multiple meanings which might confuse the educational practitioner (p.10). However, whilst being aware of the danger of falling into a reductionist trap, it is possible to identify an emergent dichotomy within the attempts to understand the nature of spirituality in education; between a cognitive and experiential approach. Closing the gap may be the pragmatic way to find Watson's 'dynamite'.

B. THE DICHOTOMY – HAY VS WRIGHT

The main proponents in the dichotomy are Hay and Wright. The former's empirical research with Nye in 1996 resulted in the core category of 'relational consciousness' which Watson describes as 'a naturalistic, biologically evolved concept of spirituality which is essential to human survival' (Watson, 2003, p.11). Hay and Nye's concept of relational consciousness concludes that spirituality is to do with 'awareness of and

reflection upon the self and a holistic awareness of all that is not the self' (1996, p.7). Whilst Hay and Nye's concept of spiritual education is experiential, Wright's is contextual and cognitive. Wright places the emphasis on 'thinking skills' that enable the student to develop their own world view, grounded in 'the nation's historical traditions' (Wright, 1997, p.16).

Hay's and Wright's positions in the debate seem incompatible. However, a critical examination of their respective positions highlights qualities that inform a holistic approach. The polarisation occurs between the belief that on one hand critical education cannot be spiritual and on the other that spiritual education cannot be critical (Filipsone, 2009, p.121). Filipsone, lecturer in practical theology at the University of Latvia, asks 'what kind of religious education could address these worries?' (p.122). The answer lies in an educational approach that is both critical and experiential. It is possible to develop pedagogy that is based on logical thinking skills, actively involving the learner in being informed, whilst enabling them to enter into conversations and relationships that evoke empathy and depth of feeling about issues.

Critical analysis of Hay's and Wright's positions helps establish the influence each has on an alternative spiritual critical pedagogy.

i. Hay – Relational Consciousness

Hay is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen. His practical research has focused on the naturalist element of spirituality. Hay and his researcher, Rebecca Nye, investigated the link in children between the biological and spiritual elements of being human.

Hay states that Western assumptions have obscured the natural spirituality in humans (2006, p.32). He is concerned that spirituality has turned from something explicitly reflected upon to something implicit and vague, 'disconnected from the mainstream of human activity'. Although for Hay implicitness is a negative in dealing with spirituality in education, it can be argued that it is an important pedagogical tool in developing the sense of spiritual awareness that Hay claims is innate. An implicit approach suggests there is meaning in the very nature of the pedagogy.

Furthermore, Hay concedes that critics of his experiential approach have a point, that the 'demands of intellectual honesty' must be balanced with 'the sustaining intuitions of the spirit' (p.35). For Hay spiritual knowing is very different to knowledge of factual information, it is more like a 'direct sensory awareness' (p.59), that there is 'no area of human experience that is not potentially open to spiritual awareness' (p.63). What Hay is referring to when he speaks of awareness is 'being attentive to one's attention' or 'being aware of one's awareness'. This is a reflective approach. In this context Hay proposes spirituality has its 'stiffest test'; can our 'raised awareness' be a source of reliable knowing? This paper suggests that as far as spiritual education is concerned knowing can be seen as ontological; an experiential yet informed type of knowing that involves one's very 'being' in the world.

As a result of their extensive research into children's spirituality Hay and Nye drew together evidence for a core category: 'relational consciousness'. This indicated an 'unusual level of consciousness or perceptiveness' amongst children participating in the research, and was 'expressed in a context of how the child related to things, other

people, him/ herself and God' (p.109). Hay and Nye's perspective is that relational consciousness is a means of 'seeing the different features and dimensions as members of the whole, held in dynamic tension with one another' (p.128).

This dynamic tension is ever present in citizenship education. Hay's approach is valuable in developing effective pedagogy that will 'enable pupils to transcend the all powerful influence of their everyday assumptions'. He also suggests young people will need assistance to 'broaden their minds, to break out of the largely unconscious indoctrination that is their cultural legacy and which binds them to a major aspect of their own awareness' (p.169). Hay acknowledges that although spiritual education has something of a 'subversive quality' (p.154) it is also about 'giving permission for spiritual awareness to flourish by pointing to it in the children themselves and relating it to its cultural expressions in the great ethical and religious traditions of humanity' (p.154).

Therefore, whilst Hay's approach is to enhance awareness through meditative or contemplative techniques he is also aware of the critique of Wright. Wright claims that by concentrating on the phenomenology of spiritual experience the truth claims of religion might be neglected. Whilst citizenship presents an ideal opportunity to develop themes such as interfaith dialogue and community cohesion, caution must be exercised not to neglect the diversity of cultural and religious traditions. Therefore Wright's perspective is of equal importance.

ii. Wright – towards a Critical Spiritual Education

Wright is co-ordinator of the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture (CTRC), which focuses on research at the interface of religion, theology, education and culture at King's College, London. Whilst Hay respectfully acknowledges Wright's critique of his approach (2006, p.169), Wright claims this experiential method avoids the concept of truth or falsity of religious belief. Although Hay claims that Wright misunderstands his intention, Wright argues it is a form of romanticism (Wright, 1997, p.16) that separates spirituality from where it belongs, in religion.

Wright claims an effective spiritual education must balance a 'hermeneutic of nurture with a hermeneutic of critical thinking' (2000, p.139). He aims to 'retain a fundamental openness to a range of different theological, philosophical and disciplinary perspectives and seek to function heuristically by drawing such perspectives into a mutually beneficial conversation' (2007, p.236). Wright concludes that a critical pedagogy should highlight the importance of 'issues of tradition, truth and critical thinking'. However, Filipson, in her search for a way forward to integrate cognitive and trans-cognitive aspects of spiritual development and education, accuses Wright of not demonstrating what a 'mutually beneficial conversation' could look like (Filipson, 2009, p.123). Similarly she notes that Hay's more experiential approach, whilst acknowledging the importance of reason, does not engage with Wright's thinking in order to create a 'deeper and more detailed theoretical dialogue which could serve as the basis for practical cooperation' (p.123).

Moreover, Filipson notes Wright's hint that children need to be taught both to feel and communicate appropriately about their ultimate values and reality if they are to 'stand a better chance of producing appropriate levels of spiritual sensitivity and literacy' (p.124). Wright also suggests that all of these activities will themselves seem remote or

incomprehensible unless an attempt is made to achieve some ‘empathetic insight into the personal perspective of the believer’ (Wright, 2000, pp.73-4).

Wright makes a valid point about the context of values and realities. In current educational settings there will be a multitude of perspectives on ‘ultimate truth’. If the practitioner and/or learner are expected to link their understanding of ultimate reality to action, as in the case of citizenship, then there is a risk of an ‘is/ought’ conundrum developing. For example, the next Peacethread project, The F. Word, focuses on the concept of forgiveness. The participants will include learners, teachers and interfaith representatives alongside speakers Camilla Carr and Jon James who were kidnapped by terrorists in Chechnya in the mid 1990s. Camilla and Jon work on behalf of the Forgiveness Project which exhibits stories of people whose lives have been affected by forgiveness (The Forgiveness Project, 2010). It will be impossible to agree to a particular understanding of forgiveness. Therefore it is not possible to go from saying ‘forgiveness is this...’ to ‘this is how you ought to act’. The aim of the project is not to promote one ultimate definition of forgiveness and then prescribe universal action, but to enable understanding of different viewpoints so that participants can discern values and actions according to their contextual interpretation.

This is a complex business and theological reflection has something to offer at this point. Rowlands and Roberts investigate the concept of interpretation in their exploration of contextualising Christian scripture and liberation theology in ordinary life. They claim that ‘liberation theology is above all a way of *doing* theology’ that ‘one does theology rather than learns about it’. This pragmatic approach sees a shift of understanding ‘from a position of detachment to one of involvement’ (Rowlands and Roberts, 2008, p.54). Liberation theology, according to Rowlands and Roberts, ‘gives us a self awareness and critical vantage point on our own interpretive practices’ (p.56). Their model for understanding the Christian scriptures is seen as ‘inseparable from what happens in this world’ and is not only about thought but about action. Furthermore, the method does not presuppose the application of a set of principles or a theological programme but more an orientation and permission to initiate our own ‘hermeneutic competency’. In other words, theological reflection, as exemplified by Boff, becomes ‘not a what, but a how, a manner, a style, a spirit’. (Boff cited in Rowlands and Roberts, 2008, p.60). This hermeneutical orientation becomes like a craft or art form, enabling people to become competent at finding meaning in their world in relation to the world of others.

Analysis in the light of theological reflection, suggests synthesis rather than entrenchment is possible when developing spiritual pedagogy for citizenship. Yet does this result in the dynamite Watson is hoping for?

C. THE DYNAMITE

Watson is interested in the wider role of spiritual development in secondary education, not limiting her study to RE. In her analysis of ‘preparing spirituality for citizenship’ Watson explores Levine’s argument that the cognitive approach should be balanced with the experiential; creating the dynamite within a ‘lived spirituality’:

‘In order to delineate the cognitive underpinnings of spirituality it is crucial to explore phenomenology of those actions, affects and ideations which are

described by practitioners as lived spiritual experience. The abstractness of philosophical concepts invites correction by lived reality.’ (Levine, 1999, p.129 cited in Watson, 2003, p.15).

This concept of ‘lived spirituality’ is at the heart of finding a way forward. Veling, as a voice from practical theology, would concur, bearing in mind his concept of ‘living theologically’ (Veling, 2005) (see paper 1). However, without a pragmatic approach to enable teachers to gain confidence to ‘live spiritually’ in the context of their teaching, progress will be tentative (Filipsone, 2009, p.125).

Watson goes on to suggest that spirituality can best be prepared for citizenship by the ‘freeing up of approaches to teaching’ (2003, p.17). With reference to Erricker she suggests that this ‘freer’ approach is to avoid the teacher’s views being imposed on the student, that teachers should ‘engage with the process of spiritual development rather than being concerned with a pre-determined outcome aligned to either moral ends or faith commitment’ (Erricker cited in Watson, 2003, p.17). This open form of pedagogy lies at the heart of citizenship education; a learner led, student centred approach that is interactive and participatory, free from assumption and preconception. There is an opportunity within citizenship to envision a ‘more holistic theoretical framework’ which would give room for ‘critical reflection and debate on the issues of ultimate truth and for having a taste of the enhanced awareness or ‘a sense of God’s presence’ and a discussion of its potential meaning’ (Filipsone, 2009, p.125).

Filipsone asks ‘would it be possible to see experiences of ‘heightened raised awareness’ as being an integral part of ‘the developing relationship of the individual, within a community and tradition, to that which is - or is perceived to be - of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth?’ She suggests combining the fostering of spiritual literacy with the possibilities to experience and critically discuss various ways of ‘enhancing awareness through meditative or contemplative techniques’ as Hay suggests. She points out Wright’s acknowledgement that this experiential aspect of spiritual literacy is in fact part of many religious and non religious traditions around the world and is part of ‘truthful living’.

Watson’s desire for dynamite seems realistic through the lens of reflection. Spiritual development is caught up in the nature, style, manner of the skill of the practitioner. This is a habit based approach, developed through reflection in practice and dependent on the competency of the practitioner. It is in fact a craft.

In his seminal work, ‘The Reflective Practitioner’ Donald Schön proposes that ‘the actions of day to day life are ‘knowing in action’’ (1983, p.49). His approach is about ‘thinking about what you are doing while you are doing it’ (Schön, 1986, p.xi). Could this be synonymous with ‘living spiritually’ or even ‘theologically’? Schön states that his reflective approach is particularly appropriate for ‘situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict’ (p.49). Such situations are not only abundant in citizenship but also in theology, as Irish philosopher Rollins suggests theology itself is grounded in ‘mystery, doubt, complexity and ambiguity’ (2006, p.xiii).

Schön emphasises the need for teachers to be ready to invent new methods within what he describes as an ‘artistry of practice’ (1986, p.xii). In order to acquire this skill or craft within the spiritual classroom practitioners and learners must learn how to reflect ‘in action’. In other words they must be able to link their knowledge and interpretation of a

situation to respond to the context they are in. Bearing in mind these situations are complex and unstable, such as suggested by the Facebook poppy incident page, Schön likens this craft to walking a tightrope, ‘the tightrope walker’s know-how, for example, lies in, and is revealed by, the way he takes his trip across the wire’ (1991, p.50).

However, Schön is also aware that his ‘reflection in action’ approach is not without criticism. He acknowledges there is often little time to reflect when acting, and that when we think too much complexities surface that can actually impede our actions. Not only that but the over reflective practitioner may go on a journey of infinite regression, constantly reflecting but never acting (Schön, 1991, p.227). However Schön deals with these criticisms by suggesting they are worse case scenarios, ‘grounded in rationality that will not necessarily paralyse the practitioner’ (p.227).

Therefore, the tightrope analogy is useful if one keeps walking. Schön’s model linked to theological reflection may be the key in making progress along the tightrope, as long as the practitioner keeps a pragmatic sense of balance.

D. THE TIGHTROPE

Copley admits that enabling reflection on spiritual development ‘is a tightrope walk for the teacher, but it is possible’ (2005, p.128). In an earlier publication he cites Priestley as saying, ‘Spirituality is often regarded as something warm and cosy, breeding security. There is little support for this in religious tradition. To ‘have spirit’ may indeed be to possess security, but only in order to face up to and, indeed, to initiate tension’ (Priestley, 1982 cited in Copley, 2000, p.1). For example, the pedagogy of Peacethread is built around a reflective approach that can initiate yet bear tension by combining experiential and cognitive learning.

The deployment of such dynamic pedagogy often leads to a tension likened to walking Copley’s and Schön’s tightropes. Ironically this is a necessary part of the student’s emerging awareness of the real life tensions of citizenship. Whereas a target driven model of education maintains control with the teacher and sterilises a learner’s ability to apply knowledge, a reflective model presumes that the teacher is not the only one in control. The consequence is that the reflective practitioner, whether the learner or the teacher, can have joint control and be interdependent. For example, our most recent project on community cohesion with 4 year 12 boys from Highcliffe School in Dorset has proved this point. The project is about investigating the uses and abuses of the local recreation ground. The students have taken responsibility for inviting in to school members of the local community including councillors, civic officers and local residents. The learners had to think on their feet as they led a ‘literally reflective conversation’ with the participants (Schön, 1991, p.295).

In this context it was not merely the cognition of the issues that was important but the experience of the relationships and conversations that were developed. The methods used in the project needed to avoid polarisation and entrenchment, to enable diversity to be held in a critical yet secure balance. However, there is a danger that in such a context disagreements between participants occur and action is not possible.

Sheldrake makes a similar point in relation to healthcare where debates about universal provision are reduced to a clinical discussion of ‘funding, state control and socialized

medicine' (2010, p.378). Sheldrake proposes that it is the Christian tradition that has something specific to offer 'both positively and critically, to current discussions about spirituality and healthcare' (2010, p.365). He points out that spirituality is essential to an understanding of healthcare and education because it 'relates to our quest for meaning, life direction and our understanding of identity and the development of personality' (p.370). Therefore when situations become unstable, uncertain and entrenched in value conflicts, such as in the citizenship project on community cohesion, or on posts on the Facebook page, spiritual development provides a balance on the tightrope.

The discussion about the local recreation ground could have led to disagreement about the rights and wrongs of local government provision as opposed to the 'Big Society' activism of the local residents' association. In fact, the learners were able to 'think on their feet', using open-space techniques, such as a 'silent conversation' and a 'sticky wall', to come to some mutual outcomes. The participants agreed that two of the learners would attend a panel meeting of the local Partners and Communities Together (PACT) panel as representatives of the younger generation, thereby continuing the conversation about the facility. This outcome was made possible through a specifically theological form of reflection in practice, focused on the inclusion, conversation and relationship imperatives of Veling (see paper 1), which held the tense balance on the journey.

THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological reflection provides useful lessons for education as it does for healthcare. The dichotomy in the spiritual development debate is reflected in the alleged incompatibility of practice and theology. A synthesis of the two concepts has led to the discipline of practical theology. Theological reflection negotiates a way round the apparent incompatibility of theory and practice through the art of hermeneutics; the interpretation of life in context, or as Schön puts it 'knowing in action' (Schön, 1991, p.49).

Yet, what does theology bring to the discussion that education does not offer? The answer lies in the mystery of living with unanswerable questions or as Schön states, 'uncertain' situations. The problem in current educational thinking is the tendency towards 'technical rationality' (Schön, 1991, p.49) to provide the answers. For example the coalition government have just announced major educational reforms and state in the recent white paper, 'Teaching is Important', that 'the National Curriculum should set out clearly the core knowledge and understanding that all children should be expected to acquire in the course of their schooling' (Department for Education, 2010). According to the paper this knowledge is based on children's 'cultural and scientific heritage'. However this rational approach is not helpful in dealing with the complex issues within citizenship or enhancing spiritual development. The government is in danger of tipping the balance towards prescriptivism and away from creativity.

Schön argues that the application of scientific theory fails to account for practical competence in 'divergent situations' (1991, p.49). Theology, on the other hand, celebrates the complexity of divergence. In other words, by identifying with the mystery or otherness of living, theological reflection can help us find meaning in complex situations. The final destination is found in the journey, the objective is to live in the

tension of the tightrope. Whitehead describe theological reflection as the ‘identification of the heart of the matter; putting the heart of the matter into conversation with the wisdom of our Christian heritage; and identifying new insights and actions to which our reflection calls us’ (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1995, p.109). Therefore theological reflection can seek to find meaning in experience, in living. Paver suggests that ‘the lived experience of one’s life is shaped by personal and community relationships, religious tradition, culture, politics, work, leisure time and all the multiplicity of feelings and thoughts that go to make the very fabric of a human being’(Paver, 2006, p.25).

Therefore, theological reflection is a useful tool in the development of an educational praxis for spiritual education, respecting religious tradition whilst delving into the very heart of what it means to be human. The art of this kind of reflection can bring new insight to educational practice; rather than imposing preconceived ideas about the nature of spirituality, practitioners can use theology as a critical tool for reflection that will ‘confirm, challenge, clarify and expand how we understand our own experience’ (Nash, p.36). Consequently new truth and meaning is established through the wisdom of our ordinary lives.

Veling describes this kind of reflection as ‘relatedness’; ‘along with learning the ‘tools’ and methods of practical theology, we must also develop an essential ‘relatedness’ whereby theological practice becomes a way of life, where it enters our dwelling in the world’ (Veling, 2005 , p.16). This form of relatedness is derived from Heidegger and Gadamer who stress the importance of rooting understanding in application. Likewise Green grounds reflection in experience ‘in any action – reflection ‘praxis’ there will be a need to stand back a little from the situation in order to carefully analyze hard facts of the issue, while at the same time it will be important to keep well rooted in the experience of it all’(Green, 2009, p.60). This reflexive approach is central to the development of spiritual education.

However, critics taking the position of Wright will be concerned that objective truth, according to him revealed through tradition and scripture of the Christian faith, is under threat if practical theologians think they can weave a ‘theology creating’ rather than ‘theology revealing’ fabric. Turning aside to an evangelical practical theologian, Ray S. Anderson, addresses this criticism. Anderson acknowledges that ministry is positioned in relation to action. Praxis is the process of revelation that creates theological understanding. Anderson suggests that every act of ministry which includes action is to be viewed as the process of creating theology. He counteracts criticism of his position as being too relative by balancing truth and abstract knowledge ‘I have explored the difference between a concept of truth as abstract knowledge and truth as disclosure of experience’ (Anderson, 1997, p.16). Anderson suggests that antecedents within scripture can be discerned to discover clues for us to work with, through our use of inner rather than formal logic. This process of discernment focuses on praxis rather than practice. Anderson draws on Aristotle’s term ‘poiesis’ as a comparison. Whereas poiesis describes action that produces an end result, praxis is action that is informed by a telos or ultimate purpose. For Anderson authentic theology has praxis at its heart. Praxis is not an abstract concept, but a tool to address the issues faced in everyday ministry. Praxis reaches back into the action to inform the future, respecting the antecedents of the scriptural tradition at the same time as dynamically creating new theological insight.

Anderson's reference to inner logic and discernment relates to the concept of intuition, which is also an important part of theological reflection. The point at which reflection fuses with application, intuition becomes part of the process. For Veling intuition is about a person knowing and comprehending the subject that is being considered, in other words, someone who knows their craft. Likewise, the craft of the spiritual classroom lies in the educational practitioner 'indwelling the practice' in order to train heart and mind. Veling states that 'a disposition of the mind and heart is from which our actions flow' (Veling, 2005, p.4).

Experts in the field of practical theological research, Swinton and Mowat, provide a way forward for this 'flow'. They recognise that theological understanding is 'seen to be emergent and dialectic rather than simply revealed and applied' (2006, p.82). They help to establish how practical theology and qualitative research can be brought together in a way that is both 'mutually enhancing and faithful'. Similarly, the purpose of this paper is to help establish how experiential and cognitive learning can pragmatically be brought together, in mutual enhancement, through theological reflection.

Veling uses Heidegger's analogy of the apprentice woodworker to demonstrate that practical theology is more like a craft than a method. The apprentice has to learn how to use the tools of the trade but if he is to be a true cabinetmaker he makes himself answer and respond to all types of wood 'as it enters into man's dwelling with all the hidden riches of its nature' (Heidegger cited in Veling, 2005, p.16). Similarly, teaching and learning is more about craft than method. If teachers, learners and educational practitioners, such as school chaplains, are to develop the role of the spiritual in secondary education they need to craft new pedagogy that enters our dwelling in the world.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual development lies at the very heart of being human. It is concerned with relationship and our very being in the world. Rather than being untouchable, spirituality within education takes the practitioner and learner on a journey from dichotomy to dynamite. The dynamite does not lie in merely teaching spiritual development but in the way young people and educational practitioners are enabled to reflect on situations they are faced with.

This type of reflection allows the educational practitioner and learner to develop the craft of the spiritual classroom. Through the merger of cognitive and experiential approaches, grounded in theological reflection, an art form can be nurtured to hold in balance the tension that is implicit in spiritual development. At the same time a methodology emerges enabling active participation in spiritual literacy whilst enhancing awareness of the self, others and the other.

The spiritual can be held in the craft of the 'classroom'. Through reflection in practice 'hermeneutical competency' develops. Educational apprentices, i.e. practitioners and learners, can bring spiritual development to life as they become skilled in understanding and responding to the complexity of situations. Hence, the poppy burning incident, as illustrated by the Facebook vignette, may be responded to very differently whilst holding in balance conflicting values.

In conclusion there is an opportunity to ‘craft’ pedagogy by addressing the dichotomy between cognitive and experiential approaches to spirituality in secondary education. A pragmatic way forward suggests theological reflection is a useful tool in closing the gap. However, the dynamite will depend on how effectively the craft of the spiritual classroom enables practitioners and learners to answer and respond to the complex, uncertain and ambiguous world in which we all live.

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