

## ***Spiritual Directions, Religious Ways and Education,*** **by Joseph McCann**

### **Introduction**

Robert Wuthnow, Professor of Sociology at Princeton and the Director of the Center for the Study of Religion, has been observing and analyzing American approaches to religion for some decades now. His distinction of “dwelling” and “seeking” is probably the most helpful way of thinking about attitudes to religion and spirituality today.

Wuthnow explains by saying that there are two mentalities, one interested in stability and security and the other which moves towards exploration and transition. Many individuals now are looking for the sacred and the meaningful elsewhere than in traditional churches or religious institutions, and finding it in places not usually regarded as sacred. As Wuthnow comments: “Rather than being in a place that is by definition spiritual, the sacred is found momentarily in experiences as different as mowing the lawn or viewing a full moon.” (1998, 3-5) The purpose of this article is to build on Wuthnow’s idea and map the movement of spiritual seekers as they travel from their familiar locale in different directions by unknown paths to spiritual “fresh woods and pastures new.”

This article employs an extended metaphor of journey or passage, that is, someone goes from one place to another, chooses a route, makes discoveries on the way and arrives at a destination. The journey is the inner journey of a person seeking, looking and finding a new spiritual home. The paper provides a framework or map, to enable one to observe where the journey may be headed. After all, when travellers have a general sense of the countryside, then they are less likely to feel lost.

### **The Framework**

The framework comprises four phases: Spiritual Seeking, Spiritual Directions, Religious Ways and Religious Dwelling. The impulse for the journey starts from an urge to begin a quest: this can be described as Spiritual Seeking. Seekers follow a pointer or indicator which arises from their spiritual experience: these are Spiritual Directions. “Spiritual Direction” means an orientation rather than a particular action or process. That leads to a choice of paths or common practices usually shared with others: Religious Ways. A “Religious Way” suggests a more specific route or path, maybe with twists and turns, for which one might need a guide or map, and where one might encounter fellow travelers on a particularly well-trodden road. Finally, the journey on a path in a particular direction leads a seeker to a destination, a spiritual place of peace and stability: this is a Religious Dwelling.

As well as these four phases, this article suggests a fifth: Educational Curricula. If ways are paths shared with others, and dwellings are places of personal peace and stability, then curricula are organized exercises, drills or practices that serve as educational courses. The root of “curriculum” is “path or track” (as in running track), that is to say, a lane, running oval or circle around which teachers hurry their students to reach their learning goals. This enables the formation of students who have neither experienced the urge to spiritually seek, nor the attraction of religious stability, to give them some sense of spiritual discovery and religious appreciation.

Therefore, we have broad directions, then firm and safe and crowded ways, leading to particular destinations, and, lastly, curricula, confined training runs for novices. The title conveniently summarizes the argument of this paper: that we can conceive of spiritualities as identifiable directions originating with the human person. Each Spiritual Direction can be related to a different Religious Way. These, in turn, may be useful for educators mapping out manageable Educational Curricula for students. The Spiritual Directions and Religious Ways and useful Educational Curricula are captured in the Framework to organize thinking and fill the conceptual space between Spiritual Seekers and Religious Dwellers.

The argument is that the Religious Traditions embody the Spiritual Seeking of the generations and they should be valued for that by educators. The opposite line of thinking is to circumscribe the Spiritual within the preoccupations of the individual human being, and that is unfortunate. Neither Religion nor Spirituality should be “confined to the privacy of one’s own ecstasy.” (Ammerman, 2003, 216)

This article will take the reader through that Framework. The outline of the Framework is provided in the Appendix and it may help one to navigate the way, visually, from the left hand column headed Spiritual Seeking through the second column or Spiritual Directions, followed by Religious Ways, Religious Dwelling and Educational Curricula in the right hand column.

### **Spirituality and Religion**

First of all, we need to comment briefly on the key terms in our quest: “Spirituality” and “Religion”. Nowadays, people commonly say: “I am not religious -- but I am spiritual.” These are not new ideas. The distinction between “Spirituality” and “Religion” has been around for a long time, though the meanings have changed.

“Spirituality” begins as a distinction between the spiritual moral realm and the moral realm of fleshly desires, for example, when Paul the Apostle advises the early Christians to go into training, to subdue their lower desires in favor of heavenly things. But Paul was a Jew and that was a Jewish distinction. Confusion soon arose with the Greek distinction between soul and body, which was not the same thing at all. Then a political perspective arose in the Middle Ages between the responsibility of the Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal. Some of the Reformers pointed to a contrast between the experience of religious oppression in the established churches and the spiritual and personal faith of the children of God. (Carrette and King, 2005, 33) Our contemporary notions of the spiritual reflect undertones from this conceptual history

“Religion” too is a western European idea, rooted in the notion of “binding people together” with their family, their country and their gods. It came to refer especially to the opening of the human to the transcendent, that is, to that which goes beyond the individual, including whatever is “the other,” “the certain,” “the sacred,” and “the holy,” (Otto, 1968).

These are rough and ready descriptions of complicated concepts. They are also confined to the western history of ideas. There is no guarantee that these ideas are shared to any extent with other cultures. This is an exercise in labeling, a tactic that risks doing injustice to the spiritual experiences and the religious understandings of non-western traditions. Of all the concepts to which this applies, of course, none are more

problematic than “Spirituality” and “Religion.”

These considerations set up another contrast, of course, disturbing to many, between the claim of the transcendent (as reflected in “Religion”) and the concerns of the autonomous self, as reflected in personal needs, interests, desires, perceptions and ambitions (expressed in the term “Spiritual”). Today this approach is popular for a variety of reasons: sometimes because the existence of the transcendent is denied or because it is absorbed into the natural world and combined with human experience, or because it is completely ignored as irrelevant to what one wants anyway. These may represent many who say they are spiritual but not religious.

As we move through the Framework that describes categories of spiritual perspectives and religious activities and educational curricula, further hazards arise. Ascribing particular spiritual directions, for instance, to religions is over-simplification. A simplification is intended to reduce confusion, and focus attention on key elements, but that risks dropping out details that may also be highly relevant. At best, we are dealing with under-tuned categories.

This approach, though, has the merit of being easily understood by religious educators. Different kinds of religious teaching have been identified as involving the study of sacred scriptures, or theological issues, or progressing from “lower” to “higher” sciences, or experience, or myth and ritual, (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001, 640). These are readily paralleled with the Spiritual Directions and Religious Ways described in this paper.

### **Spiritual Seeking**

The starting point for this article is the idea of Spiritual Seeking and so we begin in the left hand column of the Framework. Scholars from various disciplines have attempted to identify aspects common to all personal spiritual activity. A common example is the threefold categorization of belief, experience and community. (McGuire 2002, 15-17) However, as we are starting from a position theoretically prior to joining or adhering to any organized religion, my preference is to derive the Spiritual Seeking column for the Framework from the concepts of the Holy, the Sacred and the People, and by extension, the residual category of the Profane.

The **Holy** is that which is awesomely complete, perfect, whole and entire, more than anything else we can imagine. It designates the Wholly Other, the Quite Beyond, the Supreme Supernatural, the Ultimate Goal, the Absolute End of the human quest for meaning. Whether or not a Supreme Being exists, there is no denying that faith, hope and reliance upon such a reality lies, where it exists, somewhere near the heart of spirituality.

The **Sacred**, however, is nearer at hand, being found in the special, set apart, cut off, the ecstatically heightened, existentially deepened, mystically comprehended person, place, time or object that contrasts sharply with the mundane, routine, quotidian, boring “same-old-same-old” everyday round of event, life and toil, known generally as the Profane. The Sacred therefore can be an experience of, a celebration for, and a dwelling in, the realm of special experience amid the fleeting moments and spaces of everyday humdrum existence. Whether or not it is associated directly with the Holy, the Sacred is cherished, valued, esteemed and maybe even revered in a different way than the rest of

reality.

The third area central to religion is the **People**. Spirituality can “bind us together with bonds that cannot be broken.” At this point, it is verging on becoming a religion. Loyalty to other people renders both spirituality and religion highly attractive or profoundly threatening to “the earthly powers that be” as they strive to co-opt spiritual or religious motivations, or else radically reduce such influences on the body politic. This is because people can be quite aroused and highly motivated as they recognize who they really are, remember whence they have come, and try to discern where they are going. This is a very powerful situation, and governments often feel impelled either to enlist this motivational power for their own purposes, or alternatively, to reduce its influence completely.

Finally, the **Profane** is the remainder, the left-over, anything that is not spiritual or religious in any shape or form. It is defined, or rather, recognized by what it is not. The Profane is not worthy of special attention, in no way wonderful or awesome, barely deserving a second glance. It is around all the time, available everywhere, the common-or-garden stuff of everything that happens. Sometimes, a fleeting light may illuminate a piece of it but the spark soon fades back to the dull everyday.

### Spiritual Directions

Writers locate the origin of spiritual sensibility in the experience of the Holy or the transcendent, described as “the quest for the Absolute, as a finality for which religious authority is exercised, in the face of the relativity of everyday existence” (Piette, A. quoted in Hervieu-Leger, 2000, 46). Whether this occurs through revelation (assuming the actual existence of an Absolute Other) or through enlightenment (relying on an insight of seer or prophet), some such recognition seems to be essential for spiritual activity. It is also possible that the recognition is directed only at the Sacred, which may, or may not, be a clue of the transcendent or an embodiment of the absolute.

The next step is the emotion and feeling which the insight or disclosure brings about, both for the visionary and the community that gathers in the wake of the experience. We can speculate then that a spiritual sense begins with the **Perception** of the Holy (or the Sacred) and progresses to emotional sharing of that Perception with Society. This leads to the formation of a group of adherents or the **People**. This scenario so closely parallels the stories of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the Buddha, and Mohammed as to make it plausible. It may be said, therefore, that a spiritual insight begins to become a religion when it is shared with others successfully.

Then Society gathers in a communal activity. The activity may involve preaching, teaching and spreading the unique insight or world view, or worshipping the Holy, celebrating the presence of the Sacred, or collaborating with shared norms and goals in pursuit of a new communal vision in the light of the ethical awareness that the sense of spirituality has bestowed on them (**Profession, Prayer and Practice**).

The People begin to identify (that is, recognize) or signify (that is, choose to express) the Holy and Eternal and Absolute and Sacred in the realities of their everyday lives. These clues and signs are named, distinguished from everything else, acknowledged to be special and requiring to be treated as special. Any or all of the core elements of belief, rule or ritual (Profession, Practice and Prayer) can be in play, though

normally, one or other is in the foreground.

Finally, the Profane or the non-sacred world too is affected by the new perspective. **Participation** in commerce, politics, art and music, architecture and language, are all shaped by the spiritual experience and religious emotion of the original insight. The landscape of city and country, daily conversation, habits of civic exchange, the gait and appearance of walking in the street, clothes and styles, music and song, literature and learning, everything that makes up civilization, can all be transformed by the new religious impulse. And of course, subsequent interaction between the profane and the sacred is two-way: the religious vision is reflected even in the secular world, while the secular or profane world looks to the religious inspiration for foundation and support.

### Religious Ways

Spiritual Directions are pointers for the seeker. They spring from the individual and collective spirits of the People. We may now align these six Spiritual Directions with the principal Ways in which Religions manifest themselves.

Scholars of Religion have variously listed the principal religious activities as follows: How people experience life; How people express their identity; What people believe; How people live; How people worship; How people associate with each other. (Yinger, 1970) As a short-hand, we can sum these up in three “C” words: Code (meaning norms, commandments, rules, and ethics), Creed (meaning beliefs, convictions, stories and teaching) and Cult (meaning worship, liturgy, prayer and celebration). These three terms are commonly used as categories for religious analysis. Often, a fourth C-word is added: Community (meaning the group of fellow religious adherents, with whom one worships, believes and practices a way of life). I should like to add two more terms, Consciousness (to cover the individual disposition and psychological experience of the person) and Culture (or Civilization -- to refer to the consequences of a religion on the secular life of society.). Three of these terms are more closely associated with the Religious (that is, Code, Creed and Cult); the other three terms, Consciousness, Community and Culture, are more diffuse and, we may say, Spiritual. There should be no surprise that the two categories, Spiritual Directions and Religious Ways, are so easily melded. The major world religions became so because their customs and practices were responding on the one hand to the deep spiritual craving of many of the world’s population, and on the other, to the particular historical and cultural circumstances of individual religions.

It is the case, after all, that Seekers are looking for something. So the question may be asked: How does a Seeker know when an appropriate destination has been reached? One plausible explanation is that the Seeker is looking for a better or ideal version of the Spiritual home they have left, perhaps like the groom who turns out to be marrying a younger version of his own mother. It remains to be seen what today’s Religious Seekers are in fact doing: Are they settling for a version of their old familiar homestead? Or are they ending up in a completely different kind of religious dwelling? There seem to be mixed signals in the research.

Ireland has undergone a distinct decline in traditional Catholic practice during the last decade or so. The shift in adherence of young Irish Catholics was investigated by Anderson in a survey reported recently in *Social Compass*. Anderson’s account suggests

that Irish youth are not generally embracing new spiritual expressions: they are instead moving to a very new kind of Irish Catholic home (2010, 35). This pattern, however, may not be true of other European young people (Barker, 2010, 194).

Recent research by Flory and Miller in the USA suggests a somewhat different route and outcome. Flory and Miller say that the post- [Baby] Boomer generations are looking for “spiritual experience and fulfillment in embodied form through community and through various expressive forms of their spirituality, both private and public.” They are finding a home with “expressive communalism,” at times “reclaiming” the liturgical tradition of one of the mainline Christian churches. (Flory and Miller, 2009, 201-203) In a word, these Religious Seekers are moving down the street from home, to a form of worship or cult that both answers their spiritual longing, and is sufficiently familiar to their traditional beliefs.

### Religious Dwellings

Each of the major world faiths (the Religious Dwellings) features a different Religious Way, almost to distinguish it from other Religions. It is true, of course, that any one world religion incorporates several of the Religious Ways. Christianity and Hinduism and Buddhism, for example, each has a profession of belief (Creed) and distinctive prayers (Cult) and explicit commandments (Code). But there is evidence that each Religion has an affinity with a particular Religious Way, whether by accident of history, or cultural disposition, or religious evolution. This becomes especially evident if the education of the young is examined in detail. Often, the religion will reveal its “bottom line,” so to speak, in the classroom. (McCann, 2007)

The Buddhist religion, for example, in its schools, concentrates on individual teaching, with great attention to individual differences, but involving withdrawal from ordinary life, even if only for a period of months, to a Buddhist monastery. The purpose is to devote ones full attention to meditation with the hope of reaching enlightenment. The individual must stand on his or her own feet. Detachment, mindfulness, focused attention, and grounded realism is all that matters. Anything else is mere opinion. Buddhist education is about **consciousness**.

The Jewish faith is very aware of being the people who received the promise of God, believed it, and tried to live by it ever since. The promise was made to the people of Israel. Accordingly, Jews are concerned about being a member of the Jewish race. One is a Jew if one’s grandmother is Jewish. The question of “Who is a Jew?” is a contested issue today, and the answer is in terms of blood connection. Hence Judaism emphasizes the religious value of the people, or the **community**.

Christianity, by contrast, does not have any condition of birth or blood relationship to be a member of the religious congregation. The only criterion is the personal response of faith to the saving grace of God, and this is signified in the sacrament of Baptism. No other criterion – such as family – is required. Hence, Christianity stresses the importance of individual conviction and conversion, and Christian education and formation and “bottom line” is professed belief or the **creed**.

Islam follows Christianity in looking for conversions from other religions, and none, as its typical process for admitting new members, but it does not highlight the complexity of the Muslim profession of faith: the Islamic creed is simply that there is

only one God and Mohammed is his prophet. More important for Muslim adherence and practice is the keeping of the Quranic law, the Sharia. The faithful Muslim follows out the rules and regulations laid down since Mohammed's time. Thus Islam is a religion of the commandment, the God-given rule, or a **code**.

The Hindu religion values personal ritual, family prayer and community ceremony as a springboard for personal formation. Rite and ceremony reveal the divine in every person, place and moment. Close study of hymns, reflection on the texts and questioning by the teacher, rational thought and meditation, obedience to simple chores and tasks, self-discipline and silence prepare the youth for life. Hinduism is about devotion and worship, the **cult**.

Chinese religion and culture differs completely from Buddhism, in that little or no attention is paid to interiority or spiritual insight or personal devotion. Chinese religion values the public virtues of stability, toleration, prudent government, humane arts and letters, and personal restraint. The will of heaven and the memory of the ancestors are the certainties that underpin Confucian civic values for thousands of years. So Chinese religion is centered on civilization or **culture**.

### **Educational Curricula**

Deriving from the Religious Ways and Religious Dwelling on our framework, are the Educational Curricula, and we now look at this part of our map to explore if there are any leads for the educator to be found. This paper proposes that an attention to the Religious Ways of the different World Religions provides pointers to the development of Educational Curricula that may validly relate to the Spiritual Directions of Spiritual Seekers.

Let us begin with the Religious Way of **Culture**. It is so far from the usual religious concerns that it sometimes is not perceived as religious at all. Chinese religious values have permeated an entire civilization for centuries. Confucian ideals and principles spread throughout Asia. The resulting culture privileges age and seniority instead of the young, values stability rather than innovation, and sets great store by duty and obligation in place of ambition and individualism. The five Confucian principles of *JEN* or humanity, *CHUN TZU* or integrity of the person, *LI* or traditional propriety, *TE* or moral example and *WE* or the cultivation of the arts, give a flavor of the "habits of the heart" that did not just characterize an elite, but were the foundation for a civilization.

Elie Weisel, the Jewish writer, once said that if he were to envy Christianity one thing, it would be its music. Indeed, Christianity has produced great composers, whose melodies can touch the deepest parts of the human soul and artists, painters and sculptors who depicted humanity at its most divine moments. By contrast, Islam forbids pictorial representations of the human body, and music that stirs the softer emotions, but yet glories in a civilization that pre-dated medieval Europe with its Renaissance, invented mathematics, preserved Greek classics for the west and produced architecture that still astonishes the visitor. Each of the religions has in its culture and civilization the throb of its religious heart embodied in word or diagram or stone, or pigment, or cloth, or movement, or in the rhythm of musical notes. These can each provide, in the hands of a skilled educator, a "way in" to a distinct kind of spiritual striving.

Some religious educators in Europe are considering concentrating more on the

heritage of Christianity, in its buildings, sculptures, pictures and musical pieces, for curricular material. This is partly motivated by secular concerns that appreciation for the art left by Western Europe's Christian centuries will be lost from the consciousness of the young. This is a worthy concern indeed; but consideration of the place of the Icon in Christian practice in Eastern Europe will demonstrate that works of art, like painting, music, sculpture and dance, can in their own right be "windows on the sacred."

**Cult**, that is, Ritual, Liturgy, Ceremonial and Worship is specifically directed at evoking sacred space and sacred time among the concerns of everyday life. To be present at the Japanese Tea Ceremony is to experience the importance of every moment and the significance of every gesture of hand and body. The ceremony picks out even the folding of a cloth or the stirring of a cup or the whisking of tea leaves as special and sacred in the context of the tea house and hospitality.

Leon Kass, who was the Chairman of the US President's Commission on Bioethics, published a book of readings on the human body *Being Human*. The cover had a picture of a ballerina soaring in a graceful leap, light and airy, looking upward, straining to escape the bonds of gravity and the limitations of humanity. This was, for Kass, a symbol of the human being seeking self-transcendence. But another picture that also means a great deal to him is the image of Moses before his Creator on Sinai, slumped face down, flat on the earth, afraid to look on the face of God. Few of us can achieve the beauty of the ballerina in her dance. All of us can fall prostrate in humble insignificance. Both are postures or movements of body that say more than words about the state of our soul. (Cohen, 2010)

Movement and posture are important for education and formation of the young, clearly embodied in ceremony and ritual. One of the attractions of *hatha yoga* is the discipline of standing and sitting in a way that helps contemplation. Kneeling, walking, gestures of the hands, demeanor of body, all of these can be taught, and are able to instill inner lessons as well. The military, after all, drills recruits in marching, to teach obedience, teamwork and precision. A nineteenth century Native American chief said that the tribe told its young people "to sit still and like it, to listen when there was not obviously anything to hear, and to look where it seemed there was not anything to see. They wanted young people to be silent, so that perhaps with age, they could speak a word of value to their people." Our Western educational systems have moved somewhat away from that. With new attention to spiritual directions and religious ways, we may find a route back.

Teaching obedience and deference to elders is not popular in educational theory, to be sure, so it may be instructive to consider the Spiritual Direction of Practice, and the Religious Way of **Code** or Commandment. Islam faced a crisis in the twelfth century, concerning whether it should incline to theology and philosophy, or to take the side of ethics and law. Law won out and that determined the spirit of Islam from then until now. Muslims teach children the *Quran* in Arabic whether or not they understand it. They learn it off by heart, not unlike Catholic children who, in the not-too-distant past, learned the *Catechism* answers by heart or altar servers who could rhyme off the Latin of the Mass responses. Muslim children today learn things before they know what they mean. Islam stands by the dictum that human beings should obey God's law, not try to understand God's word. Certainly, one should not presume to judge God's thoughts by using our puny reason.



There is a human insight here that curriculum educators might recognize. Islam presents both an attractive simplicity combined with a high standard of personal conduct. Scholars struggle to explain why Islam is the fastest growing global religion. They parallel Islam's success with the phenomenal growth of the stricter Protestant and fundamentalist churches around the world while liberal churches and easygoing religious groups are losing membership.

There is something in the human psyche that needs a challenge. Rules have an attraction, and standards present a goal. People like the sense of achievement of accomplishing something difficult. Consider for example the contemporary interest in the pilgrimage to Compostella by many who would not be Catholic, or even conventionally religious. Sacrifice and effort, even beyond the call of duty, are an earnest of sincerity, a sign of support, and a pledge of loyalty. It may be the case that true spirituality requires a practical symbol of commitment, and some assurance that it is not a mere passing fancy or momentary fascination. This is for the sake of the community as well as for oneself. The British writer of the 1950s, Douglas Hyde, recalls that the first thing the Communist Party demanded of its young adult recruits was that they go out and sell the Communist newspaper *The Daily Worker* on freezing winter London street corners all day. Often they would return to the office in the evening having sold no papers at all, but the point was not about selling the paper. It was about the commitment of the seller. (Hyde, 1951)

Christians take it for granted that the first obligation of a church member is to believe and that the “bottom line” for a religion is its doctrine, teaching or **Creed**. The Gospel is the Good News, and a convert or member realizes that it is “Good” and that it is “New.” As Michael Caine said, “Not many people know that.” Hence the Gospel must be preached so that others may hear and be convinced that it is both true and good. The world will be saved one person at a time, because each must be personally convinced of this truth and relevance to him or her as an individual.

Christians believe that, despite appearances, the universe is filled with God's love and grace. To know that and to act upon that knowledge is to find happiness, and to achieve human fulfillment. The word “Creed” comes from the Latin *cor dare* meaning “to give one's heart,” just as “Belief” is linguistically related to the Germanic word for “Beloved.” We give our heart to a person – not to a proposition. Teaching in spirituality should introduce us to people, whose stories inspire us, comfort us, challenge us and instruct us. We ought to teach, in the words of Sydney Carter “The good news in the present tense.”

The Religious Way of Creed, of course, does not just apply to Christians. Christianity has its Twelve Articles of the Creed; Islam has its Five Pillars; Buddhism its Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Way. These are different doctrinal “bottom lines,” but spirituality demands that the doctrine touches the heart. Stories, parables, myths, legends, anything that comes alive between the tale, the teller and the listener, just like so much of the sacred literature and stories of the saints from each of the world religions, can move us to set out from home or continue on the path or change direction on our journey, because we see that there is someone ahead of us showing the way, or beside us urging us on.

Every Jew is deeply aware of being part of the Jewish **Community**. They are the People of the Promise, the *Qahal*. God made an eternal promise to Abraham and his

descendants and Jews claims direct descent from Abraham. Orthodox Jews hold that membership of the Jewish people is recognized if a person is born to a Jewish mother or is converted according to Rabbinic law. A recent English case about school admission turned on this question. Did that criterion of Jewish membership involve religious or racial discrimination? A majority of Law Lords decided that the orthodox Jewish criterion used as a school admission policy was direct or indirect racial discrimination. (Goldman, 2010, 15-16)

“All politics is local,” Tip O’Neill famously remarked. We could equally claim that all religion is family. An ancient and deep current in the human being is blood, physically and spiritually. Blood is thicker than water. Blood brothers, shoulder to shoulder, sisters under the skin, the family of man, “the near in blood, the nearer bloody,” all testify to the deep emotions and murky depths stirred by the mention of blood and breeding. Religion may about the answer to the question “Who is my neighbor?” -- but even more basically, it is about “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The close ties of kith and kin, the claims of seed, breed and generation, the Biblical interest in who “begat” whom, are evidence of this primitive and fundamental call on our loyalty that lies deep in our human makeup. No matter how sophisticated our social arrangements, we cannot for long ignore the claims of family.

This is shown, of course, most of all, in relation to the dead. Chinese civilization celebrates different generations in their respect for ancestors. Africans will include the ancestors in deliberations and have no difficulty with the notion that the dead can contact the living. Rene Tabard tells the story of a Congolese catechist in 1973 who was told by a young African girl that her mother had just spoken at length to her deceased older brother (the girl’s uncle). Given that Jesus’ resurrection was a proof of his divinity, she enquired, why was her uncle not divine too? (Tabard, 2010) There are other examples of honoring the dead from Christian settings, for instance, the family altars in Latino Catholic homes in Texas and the attention to the dead and funerals in traditional Irish Catholicism.

The last Religious Way is **Consciousness** and this is the typical theme of Buddhism. Buddhism is recognized as posing the sharpest contrast in spirituality and religion to the Religions of the Book, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is because the western religions suppose a difference between creation and the creator, and thereby, take for granted the revelation of a Transcendent Being. Buddhism, however, is based on the personal insight and awareness -- bought by contemplation and mindful attention -- that each of us is on his or her own in a sorrowful existence , but that liberation from suffering is possible for us by calm acceptance and compassion, and a regulated life in the eight paths of the Buddha’s teaching.

I recall hearing a Tibetan guru responding to a question about western young people trying out Buddhism in a monastery as the Beatles had done in the 1980s. He answered with a story, the burden of which was that one cannot understand anything of the way of the Buddha by a short stay or retreat; one must commit to the life properly because only then can the teaching and consciousness be appreciated. Awareness and consciousness are not cheap grace. It does not come easily. We must live so that we may see properly. He who seeks, finds.

Michael Barnes suggests that the dialogue between spirituality and world religions has recently moved from the purely theological level to the experiential plane.

He notes that this spirituality-religion exchange, over the last number of decades, has revealed four layers.

The first is the current interest in meditation in eastern religious traditions that led to the recovery of forgotten Christian practices. The second is the witness of missionaries – notably to India and to Japan – who have espoused a contemplative monastic way of life compatible with eastern spirituality. The third is the contemporary organization of inter-religious prayer events, big and small, such as the one in Assisi hosted by Pope John Paul II in 1986. The fourth and last is the inter-religious commitment to communal social action in the battle against poverty and injustice.

These four – “personal discovery,” “missionary inculturation,” “public celebration,” and “the common good” – point to the places where we should be searching for paths from seeking to dwelling. Certainly, personal prayer, common life, public ritual and social action strikes one as the kinds of engagement a true seeker should espouse to make progress as a human being on the spiritual quest. (Barnes, 2005, 32-33)

### **Spirituality and the Life Cycle**

Many years ago I came across the Hindu approach to religious education in its teaching about the four Yogas. Hindus say that there are four paths or Yogas that one may set out on. The first is *Karma Yoga*, the yoga of duty and action and practice. The second is *Jnana Yoga*, the yoga of knowledge and cognition and learning. The third is *Bhakti Yoga* or the yoga of love and affection and relationship. The fourth is *Raja Yoga* or the yoga of mysticism, meditation and contemplation.

It occurred to me that this analysis of the different perspectives explained a lot about the popular religious change in the 1960s, when people moved from a religion of duty to one of love and affection. (If you want to get a popular presentation of that transition, study the song “Do you love me?” in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof!*)

Our grandparents’ generation followed the discipline of duty: they discharged the obligations that religion and human life laid upon them, making nothing of their difficulties, disregarding the sacrifice and hardship, but attaching eternal significance to the effort. More recent generations wish to experience an emotional and personal connection with what they are doing. They seek fulfillment, are impatient if not deriving meaning and achievement, and require almost that their lives yield for them a sense of being significant. Were we collectively not living through a movement from the Yoga of Duty to the Yoga of Love?

This alerted me to the idea that there is no universal way, that each human being has his or her own spirituality, and path of discovery to the truth. Some of us are reflective, some emotional, some active and some experimental, and our way of the spirit will parallel our disposition. (Smith, 1991, 26-50)

Furthermore, Hindus have another understanding to offer the educator. It is that human beings move through different stages in life, not just in growing up, in child development, but also in adulthood. First comes the Student from ages 8 to 20 years old, where attention should be given to learning. Second is the stage of the Householder, in young adult life, where the task is that of having a family and earning a living. Thirdly there is the stage of Retirement, when one withdraws from the fray, having achieved

sufficiently. Finally, the retired person “enters the forest” as a Hermit, needing nothing and wanting less, except wisdom. It is an obvious corollary that each stage in life brings its own specific spirituality or yoga. (Smith, 1991, 50-55)

### Conclusion

Researching this paper allowed me to discover a convergence between what I am attempting to say, and themes found in a number of scholars. This convergence can be summed up by saying that some writers are suggesting the importance of “practices” in the lives of people seeking spiritual sustenance.

Robert Wuthnow’s 1998 book *After Heaven* is an example. Wuthnow describes practice as “intentional engagement in activities that deepen [one’s] relationship to the sacred” and he considers it as a serious third option to dwelling and seeking spiritualities. Where Seeking is too transitory and, sometimes, too dilettante and superficial for serious searching, and Dwelling seems too rooted and sterile, too embedded and unchanging for today’s volatile spiritual climate, a spirituality of practice may provide both “roots and wings,” communal support and individual performance, personal energy and ancient wisdom for us.

For a spirituality of practice, the conceptual Framework of the ancient wisdom of world religions may help.

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Appendix

**Spiritual Directions, Religious Ways and Education: The Framework**

<b>SPIRITUAL SEEKING</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL DIRECTIONS</b>	<b>RELIGIOUS WAYS</b>	<b>EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA</b>	<b>RELIGIOUS DWELLING</b>
The Profane	Participation supports.	Culture civilization, tradition, politics, art	Confucian principles, European heritage	Chinese Religion
	Prayer addresses....	Cult, celebration, ceremony, rites, liturgy	Actions and movement, Japanese tea ceremony	Hinduism
The Sacred	Practice does.....	Code, commandments, rules, ethics, laws	Challenging demands, Social concern	Islam
	Profession states...	Creed, teaching, myths, story, scripture	Teaching and story, Persons, parables, saints,	Christianity
The Society	People share...	Community, institution, persons, groups	Jewish mother, Ancestors, family altar, Funerals, graveyards	Judaism
The Holy	Perception sees....	Consciousness, insight, loyalty, feelings	Insight with effort, Contrast with the west	Buddhism