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Lydia Hyland

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION? TELL ME WHY!

### AN ESSAY ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Lydia Hyland

#### Introduction

To grasp the need for religious education, we must first define religious knowledge in its correspondence with the nature of the human person. Further, in acknowledging religious education as essential, and deserving of a place in every person's learning, we consider the goal of all education. Finally, we contemplate educators' core aims and practise as effective religious instructors.

#### The Human Quest: True Knowledge and Belief

According to Jānis Ozoliņš, religious knowledge centres on “our beliefs about transcendent reality or God.”<sup>1</sup> More broadly, ‘religious knowledge’ describes a contemplation of truth, a deepening comprehension of one's participation in the knowledge and life of God, the creator of the universe.<sup>2</sup> The process whereby such knowledge develops in a person as a whole – heart, mind, body, and soul – is nurtured through education, beginning in the family unit, and refined and expanded through formal education and life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jānis T. Ozoliņš, “On the possibility of Religious Knowledge,” in *Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia* (Brisbane: PESA Inc., 2009), 2.

<sup>2</sup> This is in following Aquinas' epistemology, “[Adam] advanced ... in the manner of knowing; because what he knew speculatively, he would subsequently have known by experience. But as regards supernatural knowledge, he would also have advanced as regards the number of things known, by further revelation; as the angels advance by further enlightenment ... one man cannot be a principle of merit to another, although he can be to another a principle of knowledge” (Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae,” in *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (electronic edition, vol. 2, IntelLex Corp, 1993; print edition, Charlottesville: Burns, Oates, and Washburne. London, 1912-36, Part I, Q 94 A.3 Rp.3).

<sup>3</sup> As Mary McClure notes, “schools cannot develop faith which is not already present [in the child's family or home life] – what they can do is facilitate the child's journey towards faith” (Mary McClure, “How Children's Faith Develops,” *The Way. Supplement* 86 (1996): 5–13, 10).

Ozoliņš further distinguishes general ‘belief’ from religious knowledge by evidencing the latter’s concern for the transmission of revealed truth or knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Ozoliņš contends,

[i]f there is no religious knowledge, but only belief, then religious education will not be concerned with the transmission of knowledge and hence, will not be concerned with *truth*, but only with the initiation and formation of persons in *a particular cultural belief system*.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, knowledge of religious truth impacts the human person’s life in fundamental, unique, and undeniable ways.<sup>6</sup> Still, there is debate as to whether all should receive such a religious education.<sup>7</sup>

### The Goal of Education and of the Human Person: Religious by Nature?

One argument which favours religious education for all considers that man is not merely a material being.<sup>8</sup> On this argument, religious education embraces the nature of human persons (in a classical/Thomistic anthropology of man as body-soul fusion)<sup>9</sup> and offers knowledge that corresponds with that nature (e.g., man learns *how* to live, his origin, purpose, moral life, life beyond death, etc.). Thomistic anthropology likewise conceives of man as a rational animal who possesses a *soul*, which finds its fulfilment in God.<sup>10</sup> In learning about what is eternal and pursuing this goal, man can become more human.

While Ozoliņš believes that *true knowledge* can be transmitted through education, he holds that the *kinds* of knowledge sought by man capture his *full nature*, both physical and spiritual. If religious knowledge is necessary for a flourishing human life, it must – contrary to a materialist worldview – be accessible to the human person as an experienced, lived reality. If, as Ozoliņš conveys, education is a transmission of knowledge which involves instruction of the mind (joined with the heart), as well as an openness in the learner, religious education

<sup>4</sup> Ozoliņš, “On the Possibility of Religious Knowledge,” 1. This reference is to revealed truth in the sense of faith confirmed within Catholic tradition, or by divine action in human history. Here Ozoliņš seems to affirm the idea that there is a religious knowledge which expresses the truth of the cosmos and of human history.

<sup>5</sup> Ozoliņš, “On the Possibility of Religious Knowledge,” 1 (italics mine).

<sup>6</sup> While ‘religious knowledge’ is revealed ‘communally’ (to the people of God, then to mankind through Christian revelation), it is always deeply personal and impactful as a relationship and a commitment to God. This personal element must be emphasised. Although it can take years to awaken as persons develop and mature, such personal knowledge of God seems to be fostered through communal education.

<sup>7</sup> For evaluative purposes, my observations are grounded in the classical view of education with a focus on religious education specifically within the Catholic faith.

<sup>8</sup> This anthropology is reflected both in Aristotle (*De Anima*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2017, III, Ch. 5)) and expanded in Saint Thomas Aquinas (see Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologiae*, First Part, Treatise on Man – Q 75-76).

<sup>9</sup> As found in the anthropology of Aristotle (*De Anima*, III Ch.5) and Aquinas (*ST*, Part 1, Treatise on Man - Q 75-76).

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1, Treatise on Man – Q 75-76.

becomes a critical way of transmitting knowledge which allows persons to become *fully human*.<sup>11</sup> Thus, all men need religious knowledge to cultivate a true awareness of God and ‘complete’ their nature.

Ozoliņš cites the following passage from Alfred North Whitehead:

[a] religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence. ... [T]he present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity.<sup>12</sup>

This implies a development of religious conviction, a moral courage, or an openness to truth through an awareness of both the eternal and one’s finitude. Ozoliņš perceives Whitehead’s view of all education as inherently religious. Whitehead’s dual aims of education can be summarised as: to generate individuals “who possess culture” (culture as an “activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and human feeling”) and “expert knowledge in some field.”<sup>13</sup> Modern education seemingly fails to reach both aims, as cultural factors suggest.

### The Role of Culture in Education

Elisabetta Rombi sketches Simone Weil’s diagnosis of the contemporary crisis,

[m]odern culture [education included] was born in an environment oriented towards technology and fragmented into specializations ... devoid of any contact with the real and the supernatural worlds. Such a culture, deprived of its treasure, has been used to educate the masses! They try to teach what’s left of this culture to the unlucky [and those] most anxious to learn. ... Amongst all the forms of uprootedness, being uprooted from culture is the worst, the most alarming.<sup>14</sup>

Disengagement from culture<sup>15</sup> relates strongly with a disconnect from spiritual heritage – a heritage transmitted through religious education in faith contexts – subsequently, education leaves learners bereft of their naturally spiritual yearning. As other educational theorists confirm, “[b]eyond cultural norms, the Western paradigm of empirical, positivistic, objective, ‘value-free’ knowledge so cherished in traditional [modern] academia had no room for issues

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<sup>11</sup> Ozoliņš, “On the Possibility of Religious Knowledge.” Ozoliņš implies that there is reason to uphold religious education as the basis of knowing fundamental truths which define man’s relationship to God and humanity, which are essential for his functioning and final fulfilment.

<sup>12</sup> In Ozoliņš, “On the Possibility of Religious Knowledge,” 1, quoting Alfred N. Whitehead *The Organization of Thought: Educational and Scientific* (London: William and Norgate, 1917).

<sup>13</sup> Ozoliņš, “On the Possibility of Religious Knowledge,” 2.

<sup>14</sup> Elisabetta Rombi, “A Conversation with Simone Weil,” *Philosophy Now*, 118 (2016): 54-58.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, the link between the concepts and words ‘culture’ and ‘spirituality’ is generally seen as close.

of faith, hope, and love ....”<sup>16</sup> Yet, education on such spiritual matters forms “an important and integral aspect of students’ development.”<sup>17</sup> This echoes Whitehead’s concern with producing persons of culture. William. B Yeats stated, “[c]ulture is the sanctity of the intellect.”<sup>18</sup> Without learning true culture, his spiritual heritage and destiny, man seems adrift; he must return to the root of his deepest identity.

### **Educating for Eternity: How to Focus on What is Useful?**

Evidently, man’s finitude confirms a need for the eternal, for which he requires religious education. This education is not a means to an “end” among many – as scientific or mathematical knowledge can be acquired for human practical resource – but because it directs one to the source of life, one’s final end, which lies in God. If education is to succeed, it must be truly human and personal, embracing true culture and religion and, in this sense, fitting man’s nature as a spiritual being.<sup>19</sup> Following from this, religious education is important because man has a need for *contact* with God. Religious knowledge as transcendent – or “transcending” finite human experience – is the only cure for man’s innate hunger. Pondering the relation between the Divine mind and the human mind reveals that all temporal (human) being is grounded in, transformed by, and fulfilled in eternal (divine) being. This, or Catholics, is the life of the Blessed Trinity.<sup>20</sup>

According to Claudia Wulf, “[k]nowledge of God and self-knowledge meet in love,”<sup>21</sup> which is pivotal to religious experience/fulfilment. Wulf explains,

Christian truth reveals itself as a person, and ... become accessible [not] to the will, but to love. The grace of this love that enables us to know God is gifted to human beings;

<sup>16</sup> P. Love and D. Talbot, “Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs,” *NASPA Journal*, 37 no. 1 (2000): 361-375, 362.

<sup>17</sup> P. Love and D. Talbot, “Defining Spiritual Development,” 364.

<sup>18</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats: Autobiographies*, ed. W. H. O’Donnell & D. N. Archibald (London: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 361.

<sup>19</sup> It would seem there exists no authentic education without the religious education necessary for human flourishing – wherein knowledge of the Creator allows the creature to come fully alive in his whole being.

<sup>20</sup> Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhart (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Claudia Mariéle Wulf, “‘I look at him and he looks at me:’ Stein’s phenomenological analysis of love,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 78, no. 1-2 (2017): 139-154, 146. As Wulf expands, “In God, love, benevolence and knowledge are one, and mirrored in every spiritual-intellectual action. In faith ... an unconditional encounter takes place, an intuitive experience of God’s closeness. Like love, so faith is an act of freedom: God, as the absolute reality [allows] for [man’s] free acceptance of revealed truth. [This] awakens the desire in people to return that love, so that knowledge, love and action fuse to become one in faith” (146).

memory, intellect and will unite in the loving knowledge of God and his love for humankind.<sup>22</sup>

Alternatively, religious education is viewed as damaging or as a waste of time for educators and pupils to engage in because its content is deemed of little value. This reasoning often emphasises a directionless, cultural/religious plurality and aims to divorce learners from being taught what perceivably leads to “false hope.” Some have suggested alternative programmes of ethics, in the belief that this is sufficient for the development of the moral individual.<sup>23</sup>

Often arguments grounded in a modern philosophical approach – where education is deemed “purely rational” or morally “relative” – reflect aspects of a modern secular worldview which denies man’s inherent spirituality replacing it with a reductionist/materialist model.

To reject classical human anthropology declares persons “autonomous” of any “creator,” and thus renders man the centre or “creator” of the world. This counteracts a truly “liberating” education, for religious instruction intends to free the learner and lead him to greater freedom through exposure to, and expression of, the truth of religious revelation. Pope John Paul II exhorted the United Nations General Assembly with these words:

*... freedom is ordered to the truth, and is fulfilled in man's quest for truth and in man's living in the truth. Detached from the truth about the human person, freedom deteriorates into license in the lives of individuals, and, in political life, it becomes the caprice of the most powerful and the arrogance of power. Far from [inhibiting or threatening] freedom ... reference to the truth about the human person — a truth universally knowable through the moral law written on the hearts of all — is, in fact, the guarantor of freedom's future.*<sup>24</sup>

He concluded that, “the ‘soul’ of the civilization of love” – which defeats every fear that threatens, darkens, or oppresses human existence – “is the culture of freedom: the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations, lived in self-giving solidarity and responsibility.”<sup>25</sup> A culture established on the moral nature of freedom arises through a contemplation and embrace of universal truth transmitted via religious education.

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<sup>22</sup> Wulf, “I look at him and he looks at me,” 146.

<sup>23</sup> John Tillson, “In Favour of Ethics Education, Against Religious Education,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 4 (2011): 675-688.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, “The Fiftieth General Assembly of The United Nations Organization – Address of His Holiness John Paul II,” *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, n. 41 (Thursday, 5 October 1995): 8-10.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, “The Fiftieth General Assembly.”

### Contemplation: Transcending the Rational Model

Since religious yearning and an inescapable need for truth are intimately bound with man's spiritual nature, the rationalist argument seems to espouse an overly reductionist view of persons that curtails their education. Simone Weil considers,

[w]e live in a world of unreality and dreams. To give up our imaginary position as the centre ... not only intellectually but in the imaginative part of our soul ... means to awaken to what is real and eternal .... A transformation then takes place ... in our immediate reception [of mental/sense impressions]. To empty ourselves of our false divinity ... to give up being the centre of the world ... to discern that ... the true centre is outside the world, this is to [accept] the rule of mechanical necessity in matter and of free choice at the centre of each soul. *Such consent is love. The face of this love, which is turned toward thinking persons, is the love of our neighbour; the face turned toward matter is love of the order of the world, or love of the beauty of the world – which is the same thing.*<sup>26</sup>

Weil is describing a process akin to contemplation whereby the mind is illumined by or directed toward something new, transcendent, outside of itself (as the solitary self), and which either represents or is *the other* – just as love is always directed towards the good of another.<sup>27</sup> This apprehension holds a spiritual quality in the way the mind is presented with *that which is greater than itself*, and thus grasps (to varying depths or in differing degrees) the fullness of the presented “object” of knowledge, or *other*, ultimately God. This encounter is a person-affirming and life-giving reality.

Contemplation befits the educational process and is seen to foster the kind of receptivity to the things of God which are vital to being drawn into the love and service of God. To contemplate, in its simplest sense, is to acknowledge, reflect on, or perceive that which is transcendent (truth, goodness, unity, etc.) and at the same time to choose (will) that truth for its own sake. As discussed, this truth entails man's finitude, his impotence and smallness, created in the image of an infinite, omniscient, and omnipotent Creator.

In the context of education (as with prayer) contemplation appears to be an active, attuned, and relational process, whereby the recipient – in this case the learner – openly receives the essence or ‘truth’ of what is being taught, while they can remain in dialogue, asking questions and so forth, with the person who is imparting truth. This affirms the reciprocal, relational essence of education, instead of an arbitrary imposition of facts and rules.

<sup>26</sup> Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), 160.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 26, art. 6, 1265 – 1274.

Echoing the theme of ‘contemplation,’ Weil emphasises the core aim of all education as a call to ‘attention’ which is suggestive of Whitehead’s idea of ‘reverence:’ increasing one’s capacity to focus on what is important, in life or any given task. Weil contends, “school studies [are a] good road to sanctity” since they “[effectively] increase the power of attention [which can be directed to God as prayer].”<sup>28</sup> Thus attentiveness, Weil believes, is an underlying precursor to religious knowledge and personal faith which, according to her and other thinkers,<sup>29</sup> directs and meets man’s deepest, innate desire.

### **Intimacy and Happiness: Can Religious Education Aid Our Journey?**

Since humans are relational creatures, it may help to ponder momentarily the dynamics in psychological intimacy – or relationships of authentic love in general<sup>30</sup> – which spiritual intimacy complete and perfect. Paul Vitz describes how, through connection to others, intimacy:

... becomes a major characteristic of a person. This intimacy – set up by closeness and openness – is not cognitive knowledge based on abstraction, but intuitive knowledge based on experience, on union with the other. The memory of these experiences is part of how we know our true or real self and of how we know the selves of others.<sup>31</sup>

Analogously, this could inform our conception of religious knowledge, alongside the learner-teacher interaction. Parents (a child’s primary educators), although naturally entrusted to impart this intimate personal love to their child (critical to his personal development and capacity for healthy attachments, particularly in the early years) *are imperfect*. As humans with free-will, they often fail.

Hence, even viewed from a human developmental plane, we can register the need for a perfect, all-loving and all-powerful Father-Creator who brings *more* than sufficient (infinite)

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<sup>28</sup> Weil, *Waiting for God*, 105-106, as quoted in: Ann W. Astell, "From Ugly Duckling to Swan: Education as Spiritual Transformation in the Thought of Edith Stein," *Spiritus* 13, no. 1 (Spring, 2013): 1-16, 1.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, McClure, “How Children’s Faith Develops.”

<sup>30</sup> Paul C. Vitz, “Embodied Self – Cognitive Psychology and Neuropsychology,” in *The Self – Beyond the Postmodern Crisis*, eds. Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 113-127, 123.

<sup>31</sup> Vitz, “Embodied Self,” 123-124.



strength to love and redeem his child.<sup>32</sup> Educators seeking to form persons cannot neglect this reality if they truly place their pupil's best interests at heart.

The knowledge and love transmitted in that personal relationship with the Divine compensates for, and overcomes all, the deficiencies faced in human relationships, nourishing simultaneously the human heart, mind, and soul.<sup>33</sup> Religious education supports, immerses, and helps form the individual's awareness of and/or participation in this profoundly intimate gift and mystery through the sacraments, teachings, and life of the Church.

Above and beyond the material world, we *can experience* intimacy with God therein. Knowledge of such intimacy propels man toward a 'spiritual elevation' that encompasses and transforms all his nature, yet which is only fully realised beyond this world, in heaven. This notion of knowledge aligns with Aquinas' view of all knowledge as being spiritual,<sup>34</sup> a light which enters the soul, for humans are not capable of living as pure matter as they are spiritual beings.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Catholic faith holds to the reality of One God (existing as three persons in the Trinity), eternally existing, and the Creator of all life, of the entire universe. Further, it is rooted upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Following mankind's fall into separation or sin/disconnection from God (through the rebellion of our first parents, which caused the effects of original sin to be passed down through the generations), Christ came to fulfil God's promise made at the beginning of time (and expanded throughout the history of the Jewish people). As the Church teaches, this eternal, loving Triune God 'humbled' himself to enter human history by becoming flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (the second person of the Trinity) being born of a virgin named Mary. This action was intended to save all mankind from the corruption/sin and death which caused that original separation; a salvation accomplished through Christ's life, suffering, death (taking the place of humankind whose natural punishment is death), and resurrection – a reality that continues to be made manifest in the lives of men and women across all of history through the Church, thereby restoring that loving relationship and in so doing opening to them the hope of eternal life with God.

Finally, the Church believes Christ's promise that he will return at the end of time, like a Bridegroom comes to meet his Bride, (the Church), and fulfil his reign – his kingdom of love. In that moment he will judge the world, effecting the resurrection of the dead. Aware of and anticipating this full reality, as Christ promised, Christians may receive the full reality of him *in the present*, by first repenting (turning away from sin and returning to God in the person of Jesus) and embracing the sacramental and apostolic life of the Church he has given us, we can be sanctified (made fully human, and perfected in Christ and love of one another). This union of love between God and man heals us from the effects of sin, saves us from eternal death (hell) and is consolidated so that our souls may be transformed and made capable of loving God for eternity – brought to perfect happiness in God, in our true, heavenly home, with the entire community of saints (known as the Beatific Vision) at the close of our earthly life. This summarises the basic proclamation of the Church since early in her history, as consolidated at the Council of Nicaea, which communicates the grand scheme of God's eternal, loving plan to save mankind. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993) – [Latin text copyright] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City.

<sup>33</sup> In addition, it is worth noting how educators may serve as a powerful aid (being used by God) – a 'corrective' educator – in helping restore some of this sense of connection and relational vigour through personal affirmation (in a professional/institutional and educational context) combined with the truth of their instruction, which is profoundly nurturing for the pupil who could be missing this at home.

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas believes that all knowledge taking part in God's knowledge, cognition, etc., as evident throughout his writings, for example: in *The Disputed Questions on Truth*. Vols 1-3. Volume 2, Question 18: "The Knowledge of the First Man in the State of Innocence."

<sup>35</sup> That is, considering a classical or Christian anthropology as found in Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Logically, man cannot serve and pursue what he does not *know* or *love* in some degree, however small. In Wulf's sense, religious knowledge – where 'memory, intellect and will' unite – is ultimately about loving God and dwelling in this divine-human relationship, which opens and restores the possibility for true human intimacy.

Weil and Wulf's insights affirm that religious education essentially elucidates the true object of our love. Hence, the more seriously religious education – in its truest sense – is appreciated and taught, it would seem the more moral (loving) persons make up society. As Edith Stein, in a Thomistic vein reminds us, the very substance of education is religious.<sup>36</sup> Moral education is, in her view, intimately bound with revealed truth, by elucidating invisible realities, without which persons are deprived of a satisfactory moral compass.<sup>37</sup> Again, religious education aligns explicitly with the aim of education holistically to guide persons towards their fulfilment.

Once more, recognition of the human spiritual and relational dimension seems to confirm the redundancy of an education devoid of religious truth. The finite creature can never understand that it is incommensurable with the infinite unless it understands its own origin and destiny. In Catholic thought and teaching, this is central. The Catholic impetus is God's love for humanity, grace working in and through the sacraments and through nature to fulfil and perfect it so that the human soul may return to its creator. This view places God at the centre of all being, and necessarily human minds and wills are directed toward this ultimate good – the mind is a gift and instrument of man's life on earth as he journeys to God.<sup>38</sup>

Hence for any Catholic education model, spiritual formation is primary in the curriculum. In the various spheres of teaching or study – whether mathematical, scientific, linguistic, or cultural fields – the formation of the *personal 'self'* and of the mind is essential, especially acknowledgment of the mind's capacity for critical, independent thought and reflective inquiry (dependent on God and the support of others) whereby it continually

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<sup>36</sup> This is a core theme expressed in Stein's writings (see Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman*, trans. Freda Mary Oben, eds. Dr. Lucy Gelber and Romaeus Leuven (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996)).

<sup>37</sup> Stein, *Essays on Woman*.

<sup>38</sup> It seems apparent that during this human journey, one cannot fully understand or begin to explore his or her personal vocation in this life without a certain degree of religious education, fundamental truths for human living are embedded in Christianity's core doctrines, and increased knowledge of these frees the person to choose his path in life, with the awareness of a greater mission, deeper calling or purpose guided by God. Without religious education, the individual is denied an awareness of the deep meaning and eternal/wider significance of their life. This theme is reiterated throughout Stein's writings (see, for example, Stein, *Essays on Woman*).

seeks wisdom. All the realities we have just discussed place a deep moral responsibility on teachers who are forming young minds, which leads to our final consideration.

### **Catholic Educators: Who is Responsible?**

Given the need for pupils to learn from someone's whole way of being,<sup>39</sup> teachers who are in contact with God themselves provide the ideal religious education. Educators cannot transmit a love of wisdom and of God without being the kind of person/teacher who embodies this. Christian educators must accept God as the source of all wisdom. Their teaching thus becomes a relational and dynamic process for learners, aimed at wisdom.<sup>40</sup>

To be able to teach religious education and successfully impart religious knowledge, educators must demonstrate a living faith.<sup>41</sup> Stein promotes an educational process which could be described as that of *radiation*. As she observes, faith-filled educators “exert a mysterious magnetic appeal on thirsty souls” which draws learners “closer to the kingdom of God.”<sup>42</sup> As education involves an encounter or meeting of intellects, it entails encounter between *souls*.

The teacher must be this type of person – living their faith – to transmit the faith, for students learn not merely from a teacher's words but their whole being, the being that is being *formed* through personal action. Stein observes that the whole person of the educator is involved in teaching, so their own faith engagement meaningfully facilitates religious education. To quote Stein: “[our students] do not need merely what we have but what we are.”<sup>43</sup> Religious education is important because it is a relationship of radiation – not merely material activities, facts, and theoretical work. Through every encounter with truth, we thus can experience contact with the unseen God.

Catholic spirituality subsequently permeates any subject or discipline, for the teacher is the model; teachers living a faith-filled life with a love of wisdom naturally offer richer and

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<sup>39</sup> A core principle in Stein's educational philosophy, as observed by Astell (see “From Ugly Duckling to Swan,” 1).

<sup>40</sup> Jānis T. Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education Revisited* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 96-112.

<sup>41</sup> Stein holds that active spiritual life is essential to the educator's own flourishing (see Astell, “From Ugly Duckling to Swan,” 1-16).

<sup>42</sup> Stein, *Essays on Woman*, 126.

<sup>43</sup> Quoting Stein in Lisa M. Dolling, “Edith Stein's Philosophy of ‘Liberal’ Education,” in *Contemplating Edith Stein*, ed. by Joyce Avrech Berkman (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2006) 212-225, 229.

more integrated learning, because they seek to educate the whole person. At the same time, the teacher's (and subsequently learners') faith will naturally imprint upon the various specialisations, along with the wider society grown from such an education.

### **Education In the Grandest Scheme ...**

Seen to correspond with man's nature, religious education is manifestly essential. Such an education prepares the person for a greater receptivity or capacity to seek truth (a love of wisdom) – the deeper meaning to his existence that motivates and inspires his actions – and eventually respond to that truth through personal faith. Other facets of education are important to nurture man's intellectual, communal, artistic, and practical development. However, mere scientific or empirical knowledge is insufficient for the integral life of man. This stems from the fact that man's desire for knowledge always surpasses that of his intellect and material environment – these are key areas of human learning but can never satisfy him.

The desire for true intimacy and inner life is a desire for the transcendent, or the Creator, affirmed in personal faith which cannot be cultivated without sufficient religious instruction, especially through educators who are themselves living the faith they preach. Religious education essentially encapsulates what it means to be trained in the pursuit of the very life which embodies man's flourishing – his true happiness.

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