

Thomas Berry Manchester
Spring 2023

“All of Our Heartbeats are Connected
Through Exploding Stars”
by Kelvin Ravenscroft ©



Photograph by Ricardo Orteiz

www.pexels.com

PROLOGUE:

The title of this Spring 2023 Thomas Berry Manchester (TBM) Newsletter, "All of Our Heartbeats are Connected Through Exploding Stars", is taken from the 2022 film of the same name directed by Jennifer Rainsford. This TBM Newsletter consists of eight in-depth 'Explorations' complemented by three 'Reflections':

REFLECTION 1: First Breath

REFLECTION 2: All Our Heartbeats Are Connected Through Exploding Stars

REFLECTION 3: Children of the Universe

EXPLORATION 1: The Eternal and Mighty Breath of the Universe

EXPLORATION 2: 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' Revisited

EXPLORATION 3: Saint Francis Explored

EXPLORATION 4: The Passionate Self

EXPLORATION 5: The Meaning of Life

EXPLORATION 6: Is an Alternative Future Possible?

EXPLORATION 7: Lost in Wonder-The Child's Experience of Nature

Some elements of this newsletter have been incorporated into previous TBM mailings.

This document adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the exploration of concepts, themes and ideas which relate to, and connect with, the ways of seeing and being, the perspectives on life, of the Cultural historian Thomas Berry (1914-2009).

In this book length document, I aim to present a range of perspectives, points of view, which affirm and celebrate the importance of experiences of, for example, joy, wonder, awe, and enchantment which can provide us with a deep sense of being grounded, being rooted, in the dynamic and glorious diversity of the web of life and its place in the Cosmos.

I share this document as the season of Spring, in the northern hemisphere, begins. It is my hope that as you explore this document, you will connect with the experience of renewal, rebirth, and resurrection that Spring can elicit and evoke.

REFLECTION 1: First Breath



Luke Jerram's 'First Breath'
Manchester, Castlefield Friday 20 January 2023

Photograph by Malgorzata Kmita © 2023

From 1st to 29th January 2023 Luke Jerram's 'First Breath', commissioned by Factory International, Manchester's arts venue opening in summer 2023, projected beams of light into the night sky in Castlefield, Manchester, UK, to celebrate the phenomenon of new life.

The visitors to this installation were able to walk around, and step into, the beams of light, so it was a deeply immersive experience. It was possible to experience the artwork from different vantage points, each giving a different perspective, new ways of seeing.

'First Breath' slowly and gently pulsed until it projected powerful beams of light into the sky. The title of the work, 'First Breath' represented new life, in particular the first breaths of the babies born in Greater Manchester. On his website, Luke Jerram has commented:

"I want to reveal, celebrate, and connect the hidden community of people giving birth each day in Greater Manchester. Disconnected and yet going through the life-changing experience at the same time, there are on average in January 78 babies born each day in the city. This new artwork is designed to celebrate the moment a child is born – the extraordinary moment when they take their first breath, and a new life arrives in the world."



'First Light' by Luke Jerram

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W78tiRkOImI>

In 'The Great Community of Earth' Thomas Berry declared:

"In the early evening we see the stars begin to appear as the sun disappears over the horizon. The light of day gives way to the darkness of night. A stillness, a healing quiet comes over the landscape. It's a moment when some other world makes itself known, a numinous presence beyond human understanding. We experience the vast realms of space overwhelming the limitations of our human minds. As the sky turns golden and the clouds reflect the blazing colours of evening, we participate for a moment in the forgiveness, the peace, the intimacy of things with each other."

My experience of viewing Luke Jerram's 'First Breath' brought to my mind Thomas Berry's reflections in the quotation above in which he declares that:

"The light of day gives way to the darkness of night. A stillness, a healing quiet comes over the landscape. It's a moment when some other world makes itself known, a numinous presence beyond human understanding."

Experiencing the 'First Breath' installation on a cold and dark January Manchester evening, did, indeed, evoke, a sense of stillness, of deep quiet, a peace which is all too often difficult to experience in a major metropolitan environment.

Entering the lights of 'First Breath' was like, for a time, entering a different space, a context, a place, in which the usual sights, sounds, and fast-paced movements of urban life were temporarily suspended and a quiet hush descended upon the space from which the beams of light were projected into the night sky. I found that there was a significant sense and experience of liminality in the experience of exploring and immersing myself in the 'First Breath' artwork.

As Thomas Berry has indicated, as Malgorzata and I explored 'First Breath' together "...we participate{ed} for a moment in the forgiveness, the peace, the intimacy of things with each other."



Luke Jerram's 'First Breath'
Manchester, Castlefield Friday 20 January 2023

Photograph by Malgorzata Kmita © 2023

Thomas Berry declared:

“Tell the [future generations] that something new is happening, a new vision, a new energy, a new sacred story is coming into being in the transition from one era to another.

Tell them in the darkness of this time, a vast transformation is occurring in the depths of human consciousness, which is leading to the recovery of the soul, the earth, the universe and a sense of the sacred ...”

Luke Jerram’s ‘First Breath’ I found to be a beacon of hope at the beginning of a new year. The project’s affirmation and celebration of new life was, I feel, a balm for the soul; it drew our attention to the presence of hope in which, all too often, strife, conflict, and violence shatters the beauty of the Earth.

In ‘The Enchantment of Nature and the Nature of Enchantment’, Patrick Curry has explored the concept, indeed, the experience, of what he terms ‘Enchantment’. For Curry, ‘Enchantment’ is “... a *fundamental human experience: the experience of wonder. So it is necessarily participatory, and therefore personal.*”

I found that the experience of being immersed in the ‘First Breath’ installation was, indeed, an experience of Enchantment, a phenomenon of wonder.

Curry elaborates this definition of 'Enchantment' by affirming that: "*... it might arise from finding yourself in a song that you are hearing or singing, or in a picture you are looking at, or a story you are reading or hearing—in fact, any kind of narrative, in the broadest sense. And the broadest sense extends well beyond human art to, say, the story of life on Earth.*"

I find that Curry's perspective that Enchantment, in "*... the broadest sense extends well beyond human art to, say, the story of life on Earth*", an articulation of a perspective which affirms that Enchantment, Wonder, can be rooted in a broader narrative, including the narrative of the story of the Earth, is, I suggest, pointing to the potential for exploration of a deep connection between Curry's way of seeing and that of Thomas Berry who declared:

"If this fascination, this entrancement with life isn't evoked, then our children won't have the energies needed to sustain the sorrows inherent in our condition. They might never discover their true place in the vast world of time and space."

In 'Exploration 6', 'The Meaning of Life', presented below', I consider the nature of what Berry terms "*... the sorrows inherent in our condition*". For Berry, energy is required to come to terms with the nature of the human condition.

I Luke Jerram's 'First Breath' there is, I suggest, a positive, life-affirming energy, which is, indeed, enchanting and wonderful.

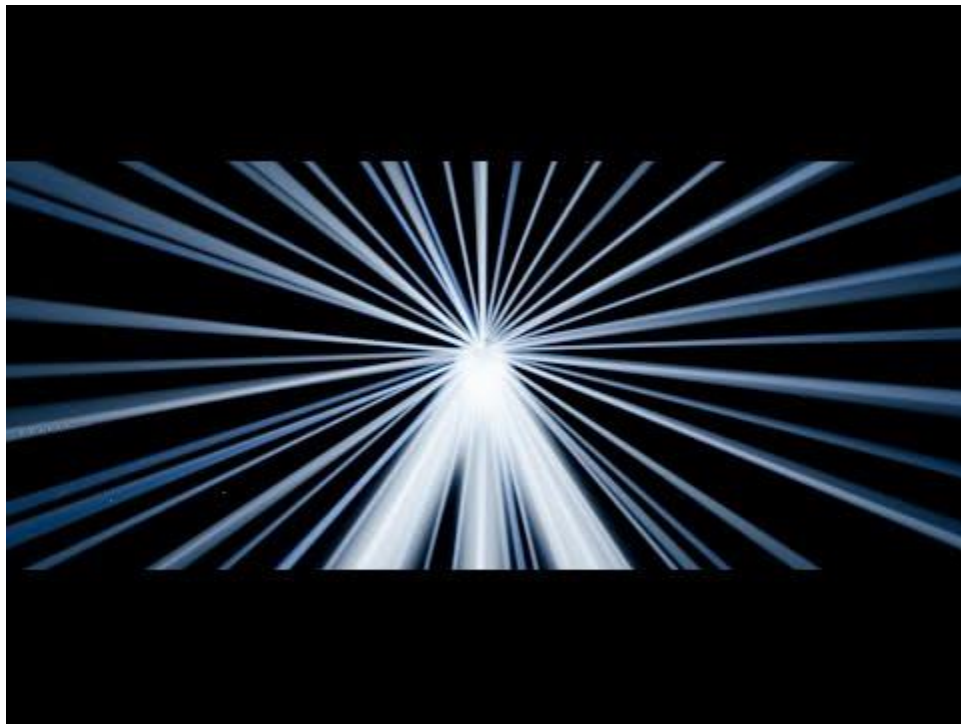


Luke Jerram's 'First Breath'
Manchester, Castlefield Friday 20 January 2023

Photograph by Malgorzata Kmita © 2023

Rich Heffern has commented that:

“Spirituality, for Berry, was about enchantment. Awe and wonder are the primary spiritual qualities, the cure for our spiritual autism. Seeing the universe and the earth that gave us birth as sacred mysteries is key to turning the world around.”



‘A Column of Light for First Breath’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f4HVVU-f0Ts>

REFLECTION 2:

'All of our Heartbeats are Connected through Exploding Stars'



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJpO_u0B6LQ

This reflection considers Jennifer Rainsford's 2022 film 'All of Our Heartbeats are Connected through Exploding Stars'.

The very title of the film can be regarded as expressing and encapsulating profound existential, philosophical, and existential perspectives. The starting point of the film is the 2011 tragedy of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami which devastated the North-Eastern area of Japan.

“Every single time we breathe out the ocean takes that in and breathes it back to us. And through this is how we are constantly becoming our planet.”

- From the film 'All Our Heartbeats
Are Connected through Exploding Stars'



Photograph by Herbie Goller

www.pexels.com

In her film 'All of our Heartbeats are Connected through Exploding Stars', Jennifer Rainsford presents an epic narrative of the ways in which humans and nature can rebuild and be restored and healed following immense tragedy and trauma.

The EPK for the film states:

"Jennifer Rainsford's debut feature takes the viewer to an epic journey, from the life on Earth as seen from outer space, to the smallest microcosmic perspectives, to find out how humans, animals and nature heal after a trauma. Told in the form of a film essay, backed up with scientific research and the staggering score of Teho Teardo, All of Our Heartbeats are Connected Through Exploding Stars tells a tale of interconnectedness of all living organisms on planet Earth."



Photograph by Felix Mittermeier

www.pexels.com



Photograph by Chris F

www.pexels.com

Jennifer Rainsford has commented:

“There is a mid-part of the film where I am telling what cosmologist Carl Sagan called” The greatest story ever told”, the story of the creation of life since the big bang: how life on Earth was created and how all of our breaths and heartbeats have been connected since then. For me the film had become about that, the universality of those stories, the connection we share by living on the same planet, regardless of nationalities and geopolitics.”

Although the film explores the aftermath and the effects of tragedy and trauma, it, ultimately, locates the profound suffering of the Japanese people affected by the earthquake and tsunami, in a larger context, a broader narrative, namely, a cosmic framework.

The film clearly reminds us that nature is not always benevolent. As I write this Reflection, the news reports that the town of Rolling Fork in Mississippi has been devastated by an extreme tornado resulting in twenty-six lives lost. The scale of the devastation is overwhelming.

In August 2022 Pakistan declared a state of emergency as a result of floods which killed hundreds of people and 2.1 million people are left homeless.

On 6th February 2023 a powerful earthquake struck central and southern Turkey and western and northern Syria. By 20th March more than 57,300 deaths were confirmed.

These three examples of the devastating power of nature, clearly illustrate that all too often the human experience of nature is characterised by violence and destruction. Indeed, in 'The Dream of the Earth' Thomas Berry commented that:

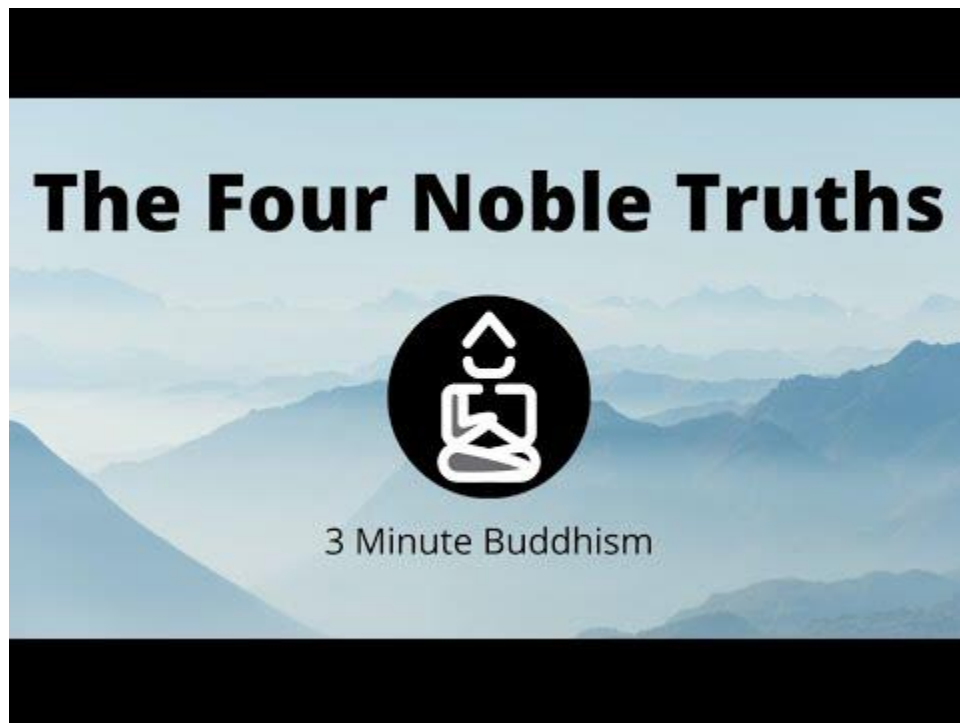
"The universe, earth, life, and consciousness are all violent processes. The basic terms in cosmology, geology, biology, and anthropology all carry a heavy charge of tension and violence. Neither the universe as a whole nor any part of the universe is especially peaceful. As Heraclitus noted, Conflict is the father of all things. The elements are born in supernovas. The sun is lit by gravitational pressures. The air we breathe and the water we drink come from the volcanic eruptions of gases from within the earth. The mountains are formed by the clash of the great continental and oceanic segments of the earth's crust. Life emerges and advances by the struggle of species for more complete life expression. Humans have made their way amid the harshness of the natural world and have imposed their violence on the natural world. Among themselves humans have experienced unending conflict. An enormous psychic effort has been

required to articulate the human mode of being in its full imaginative, emotional, and intellectual qualities, a psychic effort that emerges from and gives expression to that dramatic confrontation of forces that shape the universe. This confrontation may give rise to "the tears of things," as described by Virgil, but its creative function would be difficult to ignore. Thus while we reflect on the turmoil of the universe in its emergent process, we must also understand the splendour that finds expression amid this sequence of catastrophic events, a splendour that set the context for the emerging human age."

Berry, therefore, reminds us that there is a creative tension between the existence of violence within all that exists, from the macroscopic level of the birth and death of stars and supernovas and the microscopic level of the existence of for example, viruses, bacteria and cancers which threaten life, both human and other than human.

Thomas Berry's way of seeing the world, therefore, recognises what can be termed the 'shadow side' of life. The Psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung explored the concept of what he termed 'the shadow self' which he understood to be the uncivilised dimension of our nature which consists of all those aspects of the self, such as, for example, anger, rage, cruelty and violence. Berry's recognition of the violence latent and inherent in all phenomena can be

configured to suggest that the Cosmos, the Universe, and all that exists within it, has a 'shadow', a dimension to phenomena, which includes pain and suffering. Indeed, the First of the Four Noble truths of Buddhism which declares that "All existence is suffering" can be regarded as a way of seeing and being in the world which is cognisant of, and sensitive to, the universal experience of sickness, old age and death.



'The Four Noble Truths' of Buddhism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O32RxSt14U8>

In her film “All of Our Heartbeats are Connected by Exploding Stars”, Jennifer Rainsford notes that:

“As I was searching in disasters bigger than my own, I found stories of love: of people holding on to acts of kindness and compassion in order to survive their own traumas. I found comfort in these stories, and I want to pass that on to an audience that is living, loving, and grieving in a world that is a lot more uncertain now and when I first started the film.”



Photograph by Engin Akyurt

www.pexels.com

EXPLORATION 1:

'The Eternal and Mighty Breath of the Universe'



4pm: The Eternal and Mighty Breath of the Universe-The Ecological Vision of Thomas Berry.

Kelvin Ravenscroft will present, in a pre-recorded film, an insight into the ecological vision of Thomas Berry



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B--36h5Nb4>

'EXPLORATION 1' presents a video recording of a lecture I presented at St Edmund's Church in Whalley Range, Manchester in September 2020 as part of the Church's Eco-Fest, together with a transcript of the lecture.

The lecture is entitled: "The Eternal and Mighty Breath of the Universe-The Ecological Vision of Thomas Berry".

The lecture introduces the ecological vision of Thomas Berry through exploration of a range of perspectives including, for example, how Berry's ways of seeing connect with, and relate to, the contemporary experience of Atsuko Watanabe, a Japanese environmentalist.

The lecture begins with a quotation from Atsuko in which she reflects upon her experience as a child engaging with the natural world. In effect, this consideration of Watanabe's experience can be regarded as presenting a point of entry, a point of convergence, into the world of Thomas Berry.

The lecture affirms the primacy of Thomas' childhood experience of, and encounter with, the meadow of lilies, an experience which was foundational in the development of his ways of seeing and being in the world.

The lecture also considers Berry's understanding of the concept of alienation which can be regarded as being of vital importance in any meaningful understanding of humankind's response to, and relationship with, the Earth and its glorious and beautiful diversity of life-forms.

Berry declared: *"We need to move: from a spirituality of alienation from the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with the natural world from a spirituality of the divine as revealed in words to a spirituality of the divine as revealed in the visible world about us ..."*

St Edmund's, Whalley Range and St James', Moss Side
Eco-Fest Saturday 12 September 2020

*"The Eternal and Mighty Breath of the Universe-
The Ecological Vision of Thomas Berry"*

By Kelvin Ravenscroft © 2020-2023

"When I was a child I played in the rivers and fields near rural relatives. I would lie in the fields and sketch weeds for hours at a time.

My mother would tell me all about different kinds of grasses and plants, and explain the medicinal uses of certain leaves, or sometimes tell me folk tales about a particular flower....

I also loved to spend hours looking at the moon, musing about philosophical questions. Even when I was a child, I felt that I would have to have a life with enough time to contemplate, to let my mind range freely. And I also knew then that I wanted to live in the midst of nature."

In this quotation from Atsuko Watanabe, a Japanese environmentalist, she affirms her positive experience as a child of enjoying and appreciating the opportunity to explore the natural environment around her, including the rivers and fields.

In her drawings of the weeds that she closely observed, she also affirms the importance of paying attention, being able to focus upon that which she encounters. Being engaged in the act of drawing she would learn about the shapes, structures, textures, forms, colours, and shades of the weeds before her. In this creative act she was learning about the ecologies of the natural environments in which

she lived. In effect, the process of creating images on the page was engagement in a dialogue with that which she encountered, a dialogue of perception.

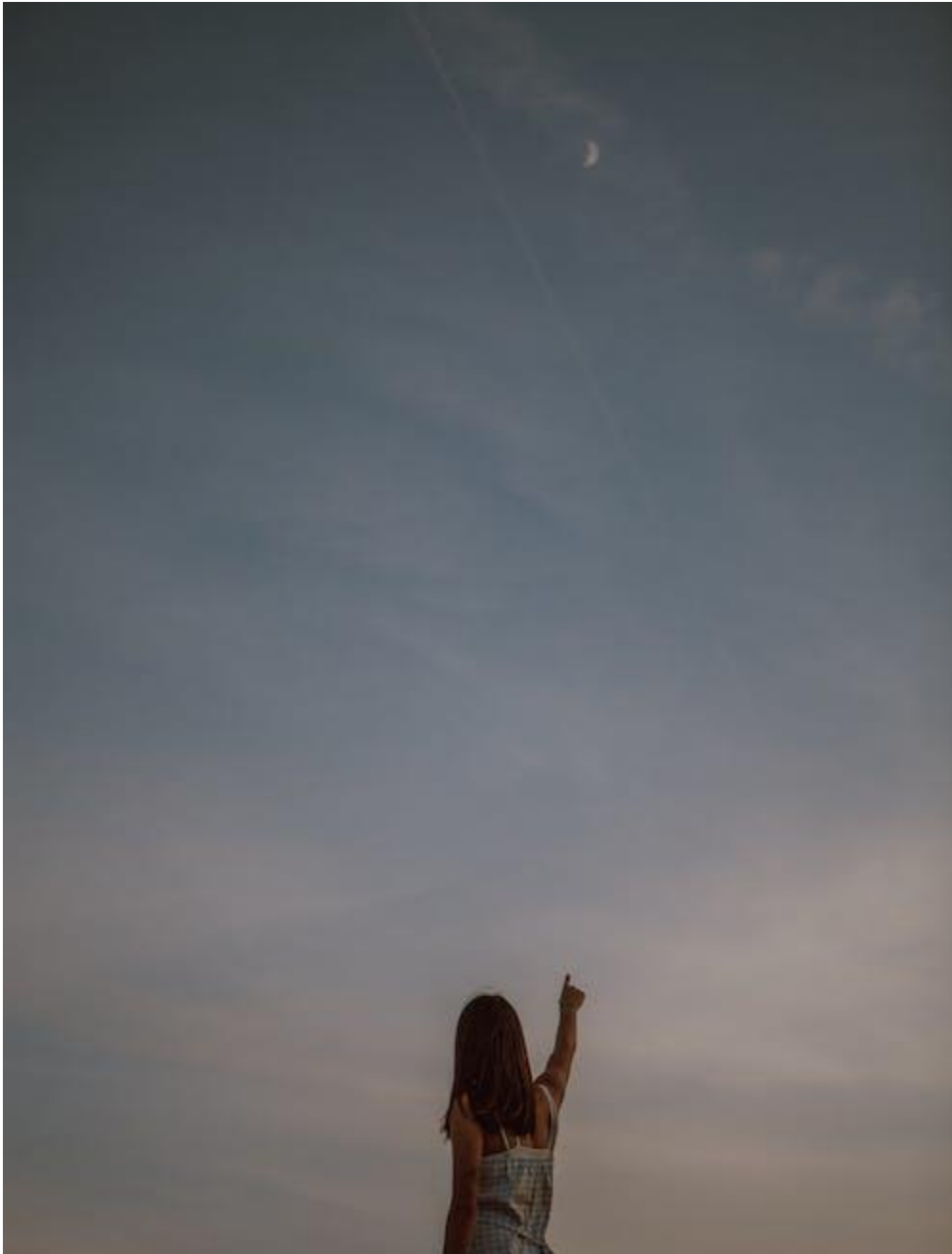
To 'perceive' can be defined as the capacity to become aware of, to know, to identify something or someone by means of the senses. In addition, it can also connote the experience of interpreting, viewing, or regarding phenomena in a particular way.

In effect, therefore, the act of perception incorporates the development and cultivation of a perspective, a point of view, a way of seeing. The many and varied ways in which we experience our environments, therefore, can be synthesised to form a potentially coherent 'weltanschauung', a world view, a philosophy of life, a way of seeing and being in the world.

The act of Atsuko's mother drawing her attention to the many and varied forms and kinds of plants and grasses is a vivid example of the relationship between parent and child in which teaching and learning, being integrated into an ethos and culture of enquiry. Atsuko's mother was sharing her knowledge and understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the natural world and this clearly played a role in Atsuko's active curiosity, her desire to experience and immerse herself in the environments she encountered. In her declaration that she "... also loved to spend hours looking at the moon, musing about philosophical questions", Atsuko is demonstrating her capacity to engage with what can be termed 'Ultimate Questions', questions of meaning, purpose, and value.

In contemplating the moon in the night sky, Atsuko was very likely considering questions of, for example, the very nature of the cosmos and the ways in which the Earth is

part of this vast canvas of space which can appear to have no end.



Photograph by Jasmin Chew
www.pexels.com

Whilst gazing at the night sky, Atsuko may have been considering aetiological questions, questions relating to the origins, the beginnings, of phenomena. Atsuko

confirms that such a contemplative stance has stayed with her throughout her life and that this complements her desire '....to live in the midst of nature'.



Photograph by Manna Lix
www.pexels.com

In effect, therefore, it is possible to suggest that Atsuko's identity, her sense of self, her capacity for flourishing, is

rooted in, and inextricably bound up with, her experience of living a life which is lived in relationship with the natural world.

I find that Atsuko's response to the rivers and fields of her childhood echoes the experience of Thomas Berry, aged twelve, who encountered a meadow. In 'The Great Work' he recalled that: 'The field was covered with lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something, I know not what, that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember'.

For Berry, his encounter with the field of lilies when he was young had a profound impact upon the overall orientation of his life. His experience of the flowers, insects, clouds, and woodlands was very significant for him. It was as if his senses were heightened, and he had a finely tuned awareness of the world around him so much so that it affected the overall direction and viewpoint of his life. He acknowledges that the experience impacted upon his "feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life." Berry's experience illustrates how an encounter with, and a receptivity to, the natural world can have far-reaching consequences. Such experiences can provide the inspiration and motivation to develop an outlook on life which affirms what is "real and worthwhile".

It is likely that each one of us has experienced the sense of awe and wonder that is evoked by the beauty of the natural world. A wonderful sunrise or sunset, a starry night, a rainbow, or the radiance of a field of sunflowers, for example, can move, inspire, and even overwhelm us. Such experiences capture our attention and elicit positive feelings and emotions. They can be described as 'wonderful' because they are beautiful, amazing, and

even breath-taking.

Such experiences can be uplifting, life-affirming and change our perspectives on things. They can inspire and encourage us to see our individual and social selves in a larger context; they can, as it were, help us to see and experience something of what can be called 'the bigger picture'. Experiences of nature can, therefore, enlarge our sense of self. It is possible to begin to discern that we are part of a greater whole, that everything on Earth, indeed, the whole of the Universe, is, in some mysterious, yet intuitive and perceivable, sense, interconnected and interrelated. We are all, as Frijtof Capra affirms, part of the glorious and diverse web of life.

In his book 'The Web of Life' Capra declares that "The new paradigm can be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts. It may also be called an ecological view if the term 'ecological' is used in a much broader and deeper sense than usual. Deep ecological awareness recognises the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent upon) the cyclical processes of nature."

Capra articulates the experience of reverential awe when he talks of:

"... the core spirituality that comes from deep ecology. When I see people cutting down forests, I feel real pain. I have a real emotional connection to the earth.



Photograph by Cottonbro Studio

www.pexels.com

The other side is that I feel very much at peace by the sea or by mountains.

Those are moments when I feel most alive - this rush of feeling alive - most spiritual in the sense of the "spirit" as the breath of life..."

Thomas Berry's encounter with the field of lilies can be regarded as providing him with an orientation to life in which relationship with the natural world is central. He held the view that we will not care for that which we do not love. Berry was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1914. In 1933 he entered a Passionist monastery and in 1942 he was ordained as a Priest. His epiphany in the field of lilies ultimately led him on a path to formulate the view that:

'The Universe, the Solar System, and planet Earth in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being.'



Photograph by Pixabay

www.pexels.com

Berry described himself as a Cultural Historian and his studies of world religions, particularly those of China and India, informed his development as a historian of the Earth and its formation by the processes of evolution. His thought was significantly influenced by the French Jesuit Palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Together with the Cosmologist Brian Swimme, in 1992 Berry published 'The Universe Story' which, in due course, inspired the multimedia project 'Journey of the Universe'.

Capra's perspective can be regarded as complementing the cosmic vision articulated in Berry and Swimme's

'Universe Story' which illustrates how an understanding of the origins, evolution and development of the universe can facilitate the experience of awe and wonder as human beings reverentially contemplate their place in the cosmos. Each person can begin to develop a sense that their existence is part of a much bigger picture, they are not separate from nature, they are part of the universe. Ultimately, therefore, each person belongs; they are at home in the cosmos. Indeed, this evolutionary cosmic perspective celebrates that the development of human consciousness is the phenomenon of the Universe becoming aware of itself.

The Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess has also affirmed such a way of seeing humankind's relationship to the earth. He has articulated an approach termed Deep Ecology which is characterised by its affirmation of the intrinsic value and worth of all living creatures irrespective of their relationship to human needs. In such a perspective the earth and its resources and the myriad of life forms which coexist are not perceived in terms of their utilitarian function, their instrumental value for human beings. Deep Ecology argues that the natural world is a subtle balance of complex, dynamic inter-relationships which are in a constant state of flux in which the existence of organisms are dependent on the existence of others within ecosystems. Human activities which plunder and deplete the earth's resources which lead to devastation of the natural world present a threat not only to humankind but to all life forms which make up the natural order. Indeed, Naess has declared that "The challenge of today is to save the planet from further devastation which violates both the enlightened self-interest of humans and non-humans and decreases the potential of joyful existence for all."

Berry, in his book 'The Sacred Universe' explores the concept and experience of alienation. It can be suggested that at the very heart of the contemporary ecological crisis is humankind's alienation from themselves, from others and from the natural world. There is, therefore, in many and varied ways, a profound sense of disconnection which permeates deeply into all dimensions of life: politics, economics, business, science and technology, ecology, the arts and spirituality. Although there are, indeed, significant positive developments, ideas, and innovations to be found in all of these areas of human activity it can be suggested that the truly creative, inspiring and empowering initiatives are, in a sense, ultimately responses to the experience of 'dislocation' or 'alienation'.

Berry has commented:

"Alienation is, in some sense, the oldest and most universal human experience. It is our human condition: the difficulty of discovering our personal identity and our proper place in the universe. Particularly in Western civilisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, humans have experienced the challenge of authentic existence while moving through a series of rapid historical transformations.... In the opening years of the twenty-first century, we are experiencing a new alienation in our inability to relate effectively to the integral functioning of the Earth. This alienation, which results from an extreme anthropocentrism and dedication to consumerism, is causing the exploitation and degradation of the planet. Until recently, few people have realised the extent to which human fulfilment depends on the integral functioning of the Earth in all the grandeur of its natural landscapes – the forests, mountains, woodlands. Rivers and lakes – and in the wonder of its wildlife: animals, insects, fish, and songbirds."

I suggest that at the heart of what Berry is saying is that humankind is losing (or has already lost) a sense of the *grandeur* and *wonder* of the Earth. We have related to the Earth in a utilitarian, instrumental way so that everything, and anyone, is viewed as being a resource to utilise as we please, to satisfy our own ends. This is what Martin Buber terms an 'I-It' way of relating to the world around us.

Berry's articulation of the condition of alienation can, in a sense, connect with, and relate to, the Sociologist Max Weber's concept of Disenchantment whereby, particularly since the Enlightenment, Western society has become increasingly characterised by a bureaucratic, technocratic, technological, modernised and secularised world-view in which the sacred, the magical and the mysterious appear to be absent from human experience, social discourse and encounter. The disenchantment thesis suggests that there is a loss of spiritual value and meaning as the biological and physical sciences and their associated rational methodologies have become the predominant ways of understanding how we experience, encounter, and configure the world.

Thomas Moore, in his work 'The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life', observed that:

"An enchanted life has many moments when the heart is overwhelmed by beauty and the imagination is electrified by some haunting quality in the world or by a spirit or a voice speaking from deep within a thing, a place, or a person. Enchantment may be a state of rapture and ecstasy in which the soul comes to the foreground, and the literal concerns of survival and daily preoccupation at least momentarily fade into the background."

I suggest that Moore, like Thomas Berry, is, in effect, calling humankind to is the project of a rediscovery of a deep sense of the sacred; he is encouraging us to see the world anew and to be transformed. He invites us to develop new ways of seeing and being and to live in right relationship with our self, each other and with the Earth. Berry affirms the importance of what he terms 'The Great Work, which he defines as being:

"... the task of moving modern industrial society from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence Our own special role, which we will hand to our children, is that of managing the arduous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic era, the period when humans will be present to the planet as participating members of the comprehensive Earth community."

Berry, therefore, holds the view that in these early years of the 21st century, humankind is faced with significant choices about the future direction of the entire Earth community. He calls us to a radical reconsideration of the ways in which we relate to the web of life and his philosophy invites us to be agents of change in bringing about a renewed and transformed world. However, poetic and philosophical such a call to radical change may sound, he is, in fact, calling humankind to a radical new vision of what is possible.

I suggest that without acknowledgement of the existential fact of alienation, which Berry has clearly and unambiguously drawn our attention to, it will not be possible to transcend our myopic ways of doing things. 'Business as usual' is not an option. A new vision, a new worldview, a cosmic perspective is required. I suggest that Thomas Berry's 'Universe Story' and his concept of the

Great Work, complemented by ways of seeing and being such as those of Arne Naess and Atsuko Watanabe, can be transformative sources of inspiration inviting us to respond to, and engage with, the challenges and opportunities which face us in the early years of the 21st century.

The Polish composer Mieczyslaw Karlowicz expressed his feelings about his beloved Tatra mountains when he commented:

“When I stand on the top of a steep mountain, having only the blue hemisphere of the sky above and the sea of the plateau with waves of other summits beneath, I feel as if I were blending with the surrounding space.

I cease to perceive myself as a unique entity; instead, I sense the eternal and mighty breath of the universe. Hours spent in such a mood of semi-consciousness are felt as a temporary return to the state of non-existence. This experience rewards me with peaceful thoughts on life and death; it tells me about an eternal joy of melting in the universe.”

I conclude with three open questions. Firstly, where, in our lives, do we discern, discover, and locate, Karlowicz's experience of ‘eternal joy’? Secondly, how can we inspire and empower our political, economic, business, educational, scientific, and technological systems to be transformed so that they can become advocates for, and agents of, such joy? Thirdly, what is the role that the spiritual traditions of the world can play in bringing about the Ecozoic era?

Thomas Berry's philosophy of the Great Work presents us with a call to personal, social, and global transformation.

The presentations and conversations of today's Eco-Fest, I suggest, are all examples of the creation of oases of hope and inspiration each of which, in their own ways, contribute creatively to the task of the Great Work.



Photograph by Gantas Vaiciulenas

www.pexels.com

“This gust penetrates all fibres of my soul, filling it with gentle light, and reaching into its depths, where the memories of hardship and pain lie. And it heals, straightens and smooths. The hours spent in such half-consciousness seem to be a momentary return to the state of nonexistence when hearing about an eternal serenity of becoming one with the universe, we no more fear for life and death.”

- Mieczyslaw Karlowicz
- Reflecting upon his experience of the mountains.

Kelvin Ravenscroft © 2020-2023

EXPLORATION 2: 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' Revisited

"Poets and artists can help restore a sense of rapport with the natural world. It is this renewed sense of reciprocity with nature, in all of its complexity and remarkable beauty, that can help provide the psychic and spiritual energies necessary for the work ahead."

- Thomas Berry



Photograph by Michael Fiukowski
www.pexels.com

This '*EXPLORATION 2*' takes the form of a document which explores the relationship between art and the spiritual with particular reference to examples of the work of the Japanese Architect Tadao Ando, the American Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko and the Welsh painter Mildred Elsie Eldridge.

It takes as its starting point consideration of the Abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky's 1911 treatise '*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*' which can be regarded as a pioneering work in its multifaceted exploration of how the artistic enterprise can be viewed as being, ultimately, spiritual in nature.

An overview of Kandinsky's text leads into an exploration of the nature of the 'spiritual' with particular reference to three artists, each one of whom can be considered as being a pioneer in their creative field.

In '*Exploration 1*' above, I have briefly made reference to the Max Weber's concept of 'Disenchantment'. '*Exploration 2*' considers the relationship between art and spirituality and suggests that it is in their dialogue and encounter that 'Re-enchantment' can be perceived, discerned, and experienced.

'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' Revisited

“Reality is haunted by the otherness which lurks behind the fragile structures of everyday life.... From time to time we catch glimpses of transcendent reality as the business of living is interrupted or put into question for one reason or other. And, occasionally, rarely, the other breaks into our world in manifestations of dazzling, overwhelming brilliance.”

This reflection by Berger (1992, 145) upon the nature of reality presents a perspective in which it is possible to identify eleven significant dimensions of experience. Firstly, he is suggesting that human beings, in their ways of seeing and being in the world, are aware of, intuit or experience a sense of something ‘Other’, that which is distinct, different, and apart from themselves. Secondly, he affirms that it is possible to ‘catch glimpses’ of this ‘Other’. To ‘catch glimpses’ suggests that the ‘Other’ is seen or perceived partially or briefly, that it is momentary, fleeting.

The writer and broadcaster Clive James (2015), has written poignantly about his experience of watching his Japanese maple tree come into bloom in Spring. He comments that:

“Each glimpse of the tree reminds me of a beautiful Italian word my future wife taught me 50 years ago in Florence. The word was *scorcio* It means a

glimpse. From one of our coffee bars we could look down a narrow street and see the spire of the abbey-church of the Badia outlined against the sky. The spire was a revelation of elegance, as my tree is now. Looking back, you realise that glimpses are all you ever get. There is so little time.”

James incorporates into his reflections, his memories, the concept of ‘revelation’ which connotes the act of making something known that was secret. Although Berger does not explicitly refer to the experience of ‘revelation’ I suggest that his acknowledgement that, the third dimension of his statement, that what is glimpsed is ‘Transcendent’, can be viewed as recognising that humankind experiences something or someone beyond themselves which impacts upon them and transforms their ways of seeing and being in the world.

The ‘Transcendent’ can be regarded as being that which is beyond the range of normal human experience. The Transcendent, therefore, can be regarded as being that which is experienced as being outside, and independent of, normal or everyday existence. The ‘Transcendent’ therefore, is perceived and experienced as being distinct and independent of the self; it has its own independent ontological existence and status. It has, to utilise philosophical terminology, its own ‘being’. Fourthly, Berger affirms that the ‘Transcendent’ interrupts daily human existence. To ‘interrupt’ is to break the

continuity or flow of an action, activity, or process. This interruption breaks into our lives. This suggests an experience of unexpectedness, something from outside, from beyond oneself, enters into our normal sensory experience. This can also connote that what interrupts our lives is not necessarily called for; it enters our lives without us necessarily wanting, requesting, anticipating, or being prepared for it. Fifthly, Berger's declaration recognises that this Transcendent Other 'put(s) into question' our lives. To be aware of, to experience, to discern this 'Other' is to find that, to borrow a phrase from Tillich (2012), there can be a 'shaking of the foundations' of our existence. This 'Transcendent Other', therefore, can interrupt, disrupt, and challenge the very core of our being. To 'put into question' can suggest doubting, challenging, and querying. The 'Transcendent Other', in some sense, therefore, interrogates us; this Other asks something of us. Closely related to this calling into question is Berger's recognition, an eighth dimension, that the 'structures of everyday life' are 'fragile'. He is, therefore, identifying a feature of the human condition namely that it is not always strong, sturdy, or resilient, that existence can be weak and is, therefore, easily threatened or destroyed. Throughout this quotation, therefore, Berger, in his elucidation of the nature of the 'Transcendent Other' closely relates this to characteristics of the human condition. His perspective has, therefore, an existential dimension.

Berger's quotation incorporates a ninth dimension when he declares that '... the other breaks into our world in manifestations of dazzling, overwhelming brilliance.' He is affirming that the experience and awareness of the 'Transcendent Other' entering into our lives can be powerful, significant, extremely bright, illuminating, and giving clarity of perception. Berger's exploration of this 'Transcendent Other' includes a tenth dimension which is that human beings are 'haunted' by this other and that it 'lurks'. To 'haunt' and to 'lurk' suggest that the 'Other' manifests itself in such a way that, for most of the time it remains hidden from view.

Berger's statement also includes an eleventh dimension in his acknowledgement that the experience and awareness of the 'Transcendent Other' is 'rare' and 'occasional'; it is his view that the Other is not commonplace and everyday but is infrequent, exceptional, and sporadic.

I am of the view that the eleven dimensions articulated in Berger's quotation can, taken together, form a framework from which to explore the nature of existence including what can be termed the 'spiritual' dimension of life. Indeed, what I find striking about the dimensions articulated by Berger is that they can be regarded as having affinities with the language of religious experience such as the Sacred, the Divine, the Holy and the Ineffable, what Otto (1958) termed the 'numinous', that which Hepburn (2005, 398) defines as being

“the distinctive experience of God, as once ineffably transcendent remote, yet stirring a recognition that here is the primary source of beauty and love.”

This acknowledgement that the experience of the numinous evokes a sense of the primary source, the origin, of beauty and love can be regarded as connecting significantly with the ways in which art, in its many and varied forms, is able to speak profoundly to humankind's search for meaning.

AIM

In this ‘*Exploration 2*’ I aim to consider the nature of ‘the spiritual’ and how art in its broadest sense, can be regarded as a vehicle for the ‘spiritual’ including religious understandings of the spiritual’ and how art can affirm meaning, purpose, and value at the very centre of human existence.

This enterprise will be undertaken with exploration of three diverse artists: the Abstract Expressionist painter Mark Rothko, the Architect Tadao Ando and the landscape painter Mildred Elsie Eldridge. It is clearly not possible within the limitations of space of this ‘*Exploration 2*’ to present a comprehensive and authoritative exploration of the work of these artists. I will, therefore, for each artist, focus on a small selection of their works. The lenses through which I will explore these artists will include the eleven dimensions of experience presented in Berger's

quotation presented above together with other perspectives on the nature of the spiritual complemented by analysis and reflections which relate to my contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology I adopt in the reflections upon these three artists are two-fold. Firstly, my study incorporates a Theology by Heart approach which, as Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005, 18) have noted “This method of theological reflection looks to the self and the inner life as the primary space in which theological awareness is generated and nurtured”.

My adoption of the methodology of Theology by Heart incorporates aspects of my personal spiritual biography and considers the ways in which the arts have significantly impacted upon my understanding and experience of the Christian life. The ‘*Exploration 2*’ will conclude with reflections upon the ways in which I perceive the relationship between Spirituality and the Arts. These reflections will suggest that the arts can have contemplative, meditative, reflective, prayerful, and active dimensions.

RATIONALE

The methodology which I have briefly outlined above is adopted because I feel that it is the

approach which can integrate the, for example, many and varied cultural, aesthetic, theological, Biblical, theological, spiritual, and ethical perspectives which have significantly influenced and impacted upon my life journey so far. I see these different influences and inspirations as being like the different colours which are gradually added to a blank canvas by the artist as she paints the subject she has chosen to focus upon. Each brushstroke contributes to the building of the artwork until, eventually, the form of that which is being painted begins to take shape and the subject gradually emerges. The adding of the colours, therefore, is a process which takes time and, even when it is complete and the artist feels that she has done all she can, there is always the possibility for her to return to it and undertake further work on it if necessary.

The influences and inspirations which I have had the privilege to encounter in my life, therefore, are the 'colours' which make up my life's narrative; my life, therefore, can be seen, like a painting, as being an ongoing project, a work in progress, in which, at times, dark colours prevail and, in contrast, there have very many points in my life in which the bright colours illuminate and radiate my very being. There is a sense, therefore, in which my methodology incorporates elements of what can be called a 'Narrative Self' approach. In Philosophy and Psychology, for example, the approach of *narrative self* postulates that each person develops, forms,

and shapes an identity by integrating their many and varied life experiences into an integrated, holistic, and internalized, continually evolving, narrative or *story* of the self that provides the individual with a sense of meaning, purpose, and value in life.

CONTEXT

In this '*Exploration 2*' I aim to relate the concepts, themes, and ideas explored to my personal contexts. My contexts include, for example, my experience of active participation in the worshipping and spiritual life of two Anglican Christian Churches in Manchester together with my former professional role as a Teacher of Religious Studies and Philosophy. My context also incorporates, for example, the movements, ideas, and spiritual traditions which have significantly impacted upon my ways of seeing and being in the world including insights particularly from Theology, Philosophy, Religious Studies, the Arts and the Social Sciences.



Wassily Kandinsky 'Composition IV'

CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL IN ART

In this 'Exploration 2' I aim to explore, and critically reflect upon, ways of seeing the nature of, and relationship between, spirituality and the arts. It can be regarded as being broadly existential in its approach as it refers to the human condition and the ways in which human beings create, discern or discover, meaning, value and purpose in their individual and collective lives and how spirituality, faith and art can relate to this. The catalyst for this exploration arises from how Wassily Kandinsky's

seminal text 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (1911), in particular how his pioneering of Abstract art, has been an inspiration to me over a period of many years. Due to limitations of space, it is not possible to explore the full range of the concepts, themes, and ideas of Kandinsky's text. Rather, I use Kandinsky's work as a springboard from which to embark on a journey of exploration of how his exploration of the nature of the 'spiritual' continues, in the early years of the 21st century, to have relevance and resonance.

In his art Kandinsky explored the expressive and evocative connection between form and colour which had the power to facilitate a profound aesthetic experience in which, as the viewer gazed upon a painting, sight, sound, and emotions were inextricably interconnected. The dimension of sound can be regarded as being present in Kandinsky's work as he held the view that music was the highest form of artistic expression. Kandinsky was a synesthete and this gift inspired him to evoke sound through the medium of visual art. He drew connections between the process of painting and the composition and orchestration of music. For Kandinsky, therefore, the act of creating a painting, and also the act of gazing upon it, could be an audio-visual experience.



Wassily Kandinsky: 'The Blue Rider' (1903)

I can relate to this way of seeing art as throughout my life, when I read books, whether fiction or non-fiction, I 'see' the text 'cinematically'; that is, the words I read on the page are visualised in my mind's eye as if they are images projected onto a screen; I experience an unfolding narrative in my perception of the text. I have always been aware of this form of perception, and I have experienced it since childhood. The clarity and intensity of the images I perceive have been significantly intensified as the years have passed and this has been enhanced, particularly in my mature years, through my experience of intimations of snippets of music which accompany the images I 'see'. It is as if I am

perceiving, discerning, an emerging 'soundtrack' to accompany the images that I visualise. Although I do not know if what I experience can be formally classified as synaesthesia, my life has always been characterised by a profound aesthetic sense which is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted in my experience of it. In addition, I regard personality theory as throwing some light on why I perceive things the way that I do. In terms of Jung's (1959) personality types I am an introvert. Cain (2013, 5) in her study of introversion, has commented that "Some of our greatest ideas, art and inventions-from the theory of evolution to van Gogh's sunflowers to the personal computer-came from quiet and cerebral people who knew how to tune in to their inner worlds and the treasure to be found there." In addition to the concept of introversion, recent years have particularly seen the concept of the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) as being a personality type (often introvert, but not always) who, among her characteristics has a strong sense of aesthetic awareness in which there is a heightened appreciation of, for example, music, art, poetry, and nature. For many Highly Sensitive Persons the existence and experience of beauty and creativity is crucial to their sense of self and wellbeing. Smolewska, McCabe and Woody (2006) have identified three forms of sensitivity measured by the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (developed by Aron and Aron (1997) of which one is what she terms Aesthetic Sensitivity, which is characterised by, for example, a rich and complex inner life and being

deeply moved by music and the arts. I find that when I gaze upon Kandinsky's art I am, in a sense, deeply 'drawn in' to the emotions that I perceive him to be expressing in his creative activity. I find his abstract works in particular to be deeply calm, tranquil, serene, sensitive, benevolent, vibrant, and luminous which inspire a state of equanimity. It is not possible within the parameters of this *'Exploration 2'* to explore further potential relationships between personality, aesthetics, and spirituality but I have made some reference to it at this point because, in terms of the context of the narrative of my life, I have found that I sensitively and introspectively connect with what I regard as being the spiritual dimension of life which I find to be particularly located in the arts in their many and varied forms. Indeed, I find that James' experience of 'a revelation of elegance' is, for me, a profoundly meaningful articulation of what 'the spiritual' can mean. In this regard, therefore, I feel that Kandinsky's exploration of the spiritual in art speaks to my experience and inspires me deeply as it, I suggest, points to those elements of art which can be elegantly revealing.

Kandinsky held the view that total abstraction presented the potential for deep transcendental expression and that copying from nature, what can be termed representational or realist forms of art, only stood in the way of this process. Although culturally Kandinsky was located in the doctrines, rituals, and spirituality of the Russian Orthodox Church he was inspired to create art which

transcended a specific religious understanding of the spiritual dimension of life and instead aimed through his abstract painting to express a broader, more universal, understanding of the spiritual. He, therefore, pioneered a form of pictorial language that did not directly relate to, or aim to represent, the physical, material, outer world, but, instead, aimed to express the intensity of his inner experience.



Wassily Kandinsky: 'The Comet' (1900)

In his exploration of the symbolism of Kandinsky's art, Aronov (2006, 67) has noted that the imagery of the Christian legend of the Holy Grail has been a significant inspiration for artists in Western culture. He suggests that "Although Kandinsky's night image of a knight by a castle in the 1900 {painting} *Comet*

.... does not mention the Grail, this legend illuminates the artist's quest for truth." Even in his early representational paintings, therefore, it can be suggested that Kandinsky is affirming the spiritual value of the quest for truth, honour, and authenticity. However, it can be suggested that it is in his later non-representational, abstract, works that he refines an artistic language which aims to capture something of the very essence of the spiritual dimension of life.

THREE ARTISTS

The exploration of perspectives on the nature of the spiritual presented above is now developed further through consideration of paintings by the Abstract Expressionist painter Mark Rothko and the English landscape painter Mildred Elsie Eldridge together with works designed by the Japanese Architect Tadao Ando.

Although my primary focus is upon these three artists my exploration, at times, includes connections with the work of other artists.

ARTIST One: Mark Rothko

Abstract Expressionism is a post-1945 movement in painting, particularly in the United States and centred upon New York. Abstract Expressionist paintings do not explicitly represent anything in the visible world. However, they can elicit a range of feelings and emotional responses. Abstract Expressionist painters such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning and Mark Rothko were often characterised by a free-flowing spontaneity often termed 'gestural abstraction'.

In my response to Rothko's works in particular, I find that the colours and large scale evoke a sense of the 'Sublime'. The concept of 'the Sublime' was developed particularly by Edmund Burke in his 1757 publication "*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*". He put forward the idea that 'the Sublime' can be an effect of art which is capable of eliciting strong emotion.

Taylor (1994, 89) quotes from Barnett Newman's 1945 essay 'The Sublime is Now' in which he declared that "Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man, or 'life', we are making it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings." Newman, therefore, saw abstract art as serving a function that religious, in particular Christian, art had fulfilled in previous centuries. In aesthetics, 'the Sublime' refers to the quality of greatness, whether spiritual, moral,

intellectual, metaphysical, or artistic and it is regarded as having the capacity to inspire awe, wonder and reverence. For Newman, 'the Sublime', however, was no longer seen as originating from a Divine source but was, instead, being expressed, and made present, in the work of the pioneering Abstract Expressionist movement. The overall tenor of this *'Exploration 2'*, however, presents an alternative view from that of Newman as I affirm the encounter with the Transcendent in my engagement with Abstract art.

When I was a child and a teenager. I very much appreciated what one might call 'realistic' art, art that, as far as possible, approximated to 'reality'. 'Good' or 'great' art, was, therefore, regarded as that which replicated, as far as possible, people, places, and objects that exist or existed in everyday life which allowed the viewer to recognise or know what the subject of such artworks were. In this way of seeing things an artist would be regarded as a great artist if her work closely resembled the images captured by photography. At this stage in my life, therefore, my response to art was quite concrete and literal. However, as the years have passed, I have arrived at the point where I am no longer 'realistic' in my response to art. I can appreciate, respond to, and be moved by, art of a variety of kinds including works which are clearly abstract and non-representational.

In my spiritual journey of just over fifty years of being

an active worshipper within the Church of England I feel that my response to art, including affirmation of the abstract, has developed alongside the ways in which I understand Christian belief and practice. Although I regard myself as being what one might call 'Orthodox' in my Christian faith, affirming its central doctrines and tenets, I feel that I am able to relate to these in a much more 'loose', 'free' and 'open' kind of way. Ultimately, using the analogy of the finger pointing at the moon, I now regard Christian belief, practice, and doctrine as the 'finger' which points to a Transcendent reality, above and beyond oneself, that to which one can give the name God. In effect, therefore, just as in my response to art has moved from being 'realistic' to now also appreciating the 'abstract', my experience of the Christian faith has evolved from requiring some degree of certainty to now being comfortable with 'not-knowing', being open to the potential and possibility of different ways of perceiving things. In this ongoing evolutionary faith journey, I have been nurtured by the Abstract Expressionism of Mark Rothko. Rothko (1903–1970) was born in Dvinsk, Russia (now Daugavpils, Latvia). He emigrated to the United States of America in 1913, and, from 1925, he lived and worked in New York.

Within the parameters of this document, it is not possible to undertake a detailed exploration and analysis of Rothko's oeuvre. I, therefore, focus upon two celebrated spaces in which Rothko's works are

displayed: the Tate Modern Gallery in London and the Rothko Chapel in Houston.

The Seagram Murals at Tate Modern



Mark Rothko: 'Black on Maroon' (1959) Tate Modern

During the late 1950's Rothko was commissioned to paint a series of murals for the Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building on Park Avenue in New York. The Four Seasons Restaurant was a fashionable place which the movers and shakers of New York society frequented.

Rothko began working on the murals but, in comparison to his earlier paintings, the Seagram murals were much darker in mood. The vibrant and luminous yellows, reds, and blues of his earlier works were superseded by canvases of black, dark red,

and maroon. Rothko became increasingly uncomfortable with the possibility of these works becoming part of the décor of the Four Seasons Restaurant and, in due course, he declined the commission. Ultimately, Rothko gifted nine of the murals to the Tate Gallery and they are currently on display in the Tate Modern in a compact enclosed space with reduced light, just as Rothko originally intended them to be.



Mark Rothko: Red on Maroon (1959) Tate Modern

During 2008-2009 Tate Britain presented a major Rothko exhibition which, in addition to the Seagram Murals also displayed, for example, works of Rothko from Japan which have rarely been seen in the United Kingdom. To complement the paintings, the composer Jim Aitchison created a series of compositions entitled 'Shadows of Light II' which were performed during the exhibition. A section of Aitchison's (2008) composition is entitled 'Closing' and incorporates words adapted from Dante:

"A way through me,
To go, to be lost.
Through me, a route to loss, endlessly elaborated,
A way fashioned, not to return.
My maker is love.
Darkened lids lifted; those that lie inside
Shine iron-red, unguarded, on your ascent from
this sight.
From black air out to sapphire:
Four stars radiate to no one (but the first of us).
Voids receive and flicker."

I have, on more than one occasion, been to Tate Modern to view the Seagram Murals and I also was able to view the 2008-2009 Tate's Rothko exhibition. I find that the words from Aitchison's 'Closing' provide me with some form of vocabulary to articulate my response to the ineffable nature and quality of Rothko's paintings.

I find that the words 'stars radiate' and 'flicker' in

particular capture what I perceive to be the essence of Rothko's Seagram murals. Although the paintings are dark in colour. I find that as I pay attention and focus upon them, I find that in the midst of the darkness of the canvases there gradually emerges, as one continues to gaze carefully, a sense of what I term 'lightness' appearing. This lightness has two dimensions: firstly, the dark blacks and maroons, as one looks at them contemplatively, begin to appear less dark. Upon first viewing, the canvases can seem to be rather oppressive and, indeed, somewhat depressive in nature. However, as I continued to gaze attentively at the works, I found that not only did the paintings appear to become lighter, but the experience of viewing them brought about a 'lightness' in me. By this I mean that the more I looked directly at the paintings it was as if I was, in some sense, 'entering' the works. It is as if the paintings invite one to, in some difficult to explain sense, go beyond the paint on the canvas and to become immersed in it. Although such a description of my experience can appear to be somewhat poetic in nature I do feel and believe that Rothko's paintings have the capacity to engage with the concept of 'the Void', also known as 'Emptiness', which is particularly rooted in Buddhist philosophy and spirituality. Indeed, Aitchison's 'Shadows of Light II: Closing' concludes with the phrase 'Voids receive and flicker'. Buddhism claims that nothing possesses an essential, enduring, and ongoing essence or identity because all phenomena form part of a co-dependent,

interconnected chain of being and becoming; all that exists is in a constant state of flux; all things change, nothing stays the same. Although the terms 'the Void' and 'Emptiness' may be regarded as being somewhat negative in tone, in Buddhism, its connotations suggest a much more positive view which is that the recognition that the emptiness of all phenomena is a form of liberation. From a Western philosophical perspective, Cupitt (2001, 25) notes that:

“Everything is contingent, everything is transient, everything is 'Empty' (in the Buddhist sense: it lacks a stable permanent essence of its own. It consists merely in its own shifting relations with everything else). Everything is a product of time and chance. We should see the world – that is, we should see all reality – as a fountain, a silent ceaseless outpouring of purely contingent Being, which all the time is getting coded into signs in our seeing of it and then passes away....”

Christopher Rothko (2015) Mark Rothko's son, has commented:

“If you look squarely into the Rothko void, however, its fullness becomes much more evident. There is nothing nihilistic about these paintings, not even the most austere late works. The human hand and the human spirit infuse these works, and in the simple act of painting, Rothko affirmed that spirit. If we feel that, it becomes easier to see that the

paintings suggest depth, not emptiness. And if we see that, it becomes easier to say, “There is something there,” knowing that the painting will respond, “Yes, there is.”



Mark Rothko: 'Red on Maroon' (1959) Tate Modern

It is from such a perspective that I ‘read’ Rothko’s paintings. Cupitt’s reference to “.... a silent ceaseless outpouring of purely contingent Being” I find to be a profoundly meaningful articulation of the way I which I ‘see’, respond to, and am moved and transformed by, Rothko’s artworks. On the surface, Rothko’s murals can appear to be somewhat ‘empty’ in terms of imagery, objects, signs, and symbols, yet paradoxically, they can be viewed as bringing forth a “... silent ceaseless outpouring”. My experience of viewing Rothko’s

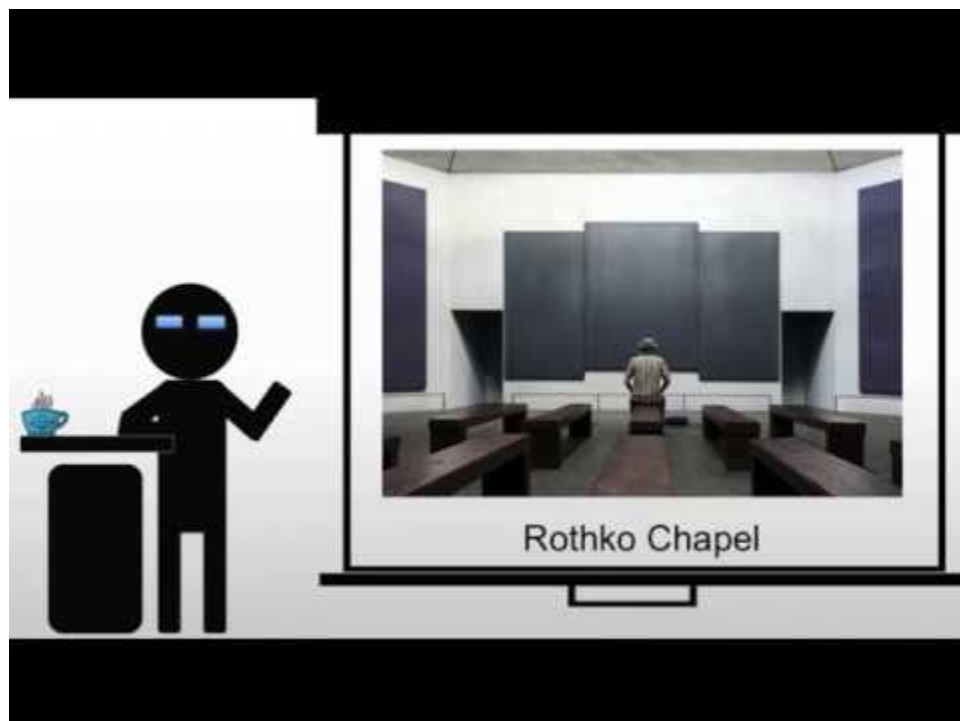
Seagram Murals is that of being face to face with that which continues to 'give out', to 'bring forth', to 'give birth to' a multiplicity of feelings, sensations, concepts, meanings, and values. Indeed, I regard their effect as reflecting Berger's (1992, 145) declaration that "Reality is haunted by the otherness which lurks behind the fragile structures of everyday life....". I find that it is as if Rothko's murals have the capacity to draw one into that which is found beyond the canvas.

From a specifically theological perspective, I perceive there to be deep connections between the ways in which Rothko's paintings can be viewed, the Buddhist concepts of the Void and Emptiness, and the Pauline doctrine of *kenosis*, Christ's self-emptying, presented in Philippians 2:1-11. One way of reading the *kenosis* doctrine is to suggest that as God is self-emptying and, in the act of creation, He poured out Himself to create the cosmos and all that exists within it, it is, therefore, our spiritual obligation to also 'empty ourselves', to pour out ourselves in creative transformative activity. I have found over many years that Rothko's paintings have the capacity to 'speak to' me at a very deep level; the apparent near emptiness of his works inspire in me a personal 'letting go', an emptying and decentering of the self. In this way, I find that they are profound vehicles for contemplation, reflection, meditation, and prayer and I find it to be no surprise that there is a non-denominational Chapel, located in Houston, which includes a series

of Rothko's murals.

The Rothko Chapel

The Rothko Chapel is a non-denominational Chapel in Houston, Texas, founded by John and Dominique de Menil. The interior serves not only as a Chapel, but also as a major work of modern art. On its walls are fourteen black but colour-hued paintings by Mark Rothko. Three of the walls display triptychs whilst the remaining five walls display single paintings. The octagonal shape of the building and the design of the Chapel was significantly influenced by Rothko.



The Rothko Chapel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E69cM3xnOA>

In relation to the paintings in the Rothko Chapel, Umari (2011) has commented "They're sort of a window to beyond {Rothko} said the bright colours sort of stop your vision at the canvas, where dark colours go beyond. And definitely you're looking at the beyond. You're looking at the infinite". Complementing such a view, Barnes (2011), for whom the Chapel has become a sacred space, has declared that "You walk into this chapel and you know, now, that it has been sanctified by the prayers of the people. There is something you feel in the chapel that tells you it is a holy space." Mark Rothko's son, Christopher (2011), has observed that: "It took me a while to realize it, but that's really my father's gift, in a sense, to somebody who comes to the chapel. It's a place that will really not just invite, but also demand a kind of journey."



The Rothko Chapel, Houston

To date I have not yet visited the Rothko Chapel, but the comments by Umari, Barnes, and Christopher Rothko, chime deeply with my experience of, and response to, the Seagram Murals at Tate Modern. Common to all their observations is that Rothko's paintings in the Chapel invite, inspire, and facilitate contemplation, reflection, prayer, and meditation. The Chapel is, as Christopher Rothko suggests, a space and place which requires the viewer, as she gazes upon the artworks, to go on "... a kind of journey". Indeed, the journey I have undertaken over the years with encounters with Rothko's paintings in different locations has taken place alongside a gradual shift in my ways of understanding God. Although, at times, this change in my perception has been gradual, and sometimes, almost imperceptible; however, as time has passed I have been able to recognise a significant movement in my concept of God which has been profoundly affected by Abstract art and by what is termed the *Via Negativa*, the Negative Way, which is a way of speaking about God and His attributes which recognises that, as God is ultimately Transcendent, it is difficult to talk specifically about His nature, qualities, characteristics, and attributes. The *Via Negativa*, also known as the Apophatic way, recognising that God's essence is unknowable and ineffable, speaks in terms of what God is not rather than what God is. The *Via Negativa*, therefore, recognises the limits of human language in talking of the Divine. I regard the Apophatic

approach, therefore, as being like a theological equivalent of Abstract art; it does not aim to strictly represent in formal terms an understanding of the Divine. Rather, it expresses one's response to that ineffable Transcendent, that which is beyond all categories of which one can experience glimpses. I find that this view echoes Berger's (1992) perspective presented in the Prologue above: "From time to time we catch glimpses of transcendent reality as the business of living is interrupted or put into question for one reason or other." I find that Rothko's enigmatic, ambiguous, tantalising, evocative, contemplative, and luminous artworks do, indeed, provide us with these transformative and, at times, life changing, glimpses.



Artist 2: Tadao Ando

Tadao Ando, born in 1941, is a Japanese self-taught architect. I explore the spiritual dimensions of Ando's designs with particular reference to two of his works: the Hill of the Buddha in Japan and the Meditation Chapel at the UNESCO building in Paris. As with the exploration of the spirituality of Mark Rothko's Abstract Expressionism presented above, I consider Ando's work with reference to those elements of his work which point to a sense of the Transcendent and which facilitate a contemplative response.

Although Ando has designed Churches, such as The Church of the Light (pictured below) my focus is on two of his non-Christian projects.



The Hill of the Buddha



I was first introduced to Buddhism as an undergraduate studying Religious Studies of which exploration of the key beliefs, practices, and world views of several religions formed a significant element of the course. It became clear to me that, as a nontheistic faith, Buddhism significantly differs from the monotheism of, for example, the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At that point in my life, as a member of the Christian Union, which affirmed a Conservative Evangelical perspective on faith, I found that Buddhism articulated and expressed what I regarded as being a philosophy of life and an ethical path as a result of its non-theistic perspective. I did not really regard it as being a religion. However, several years later, when I trained to become a Teacher of Religious Studies, I began

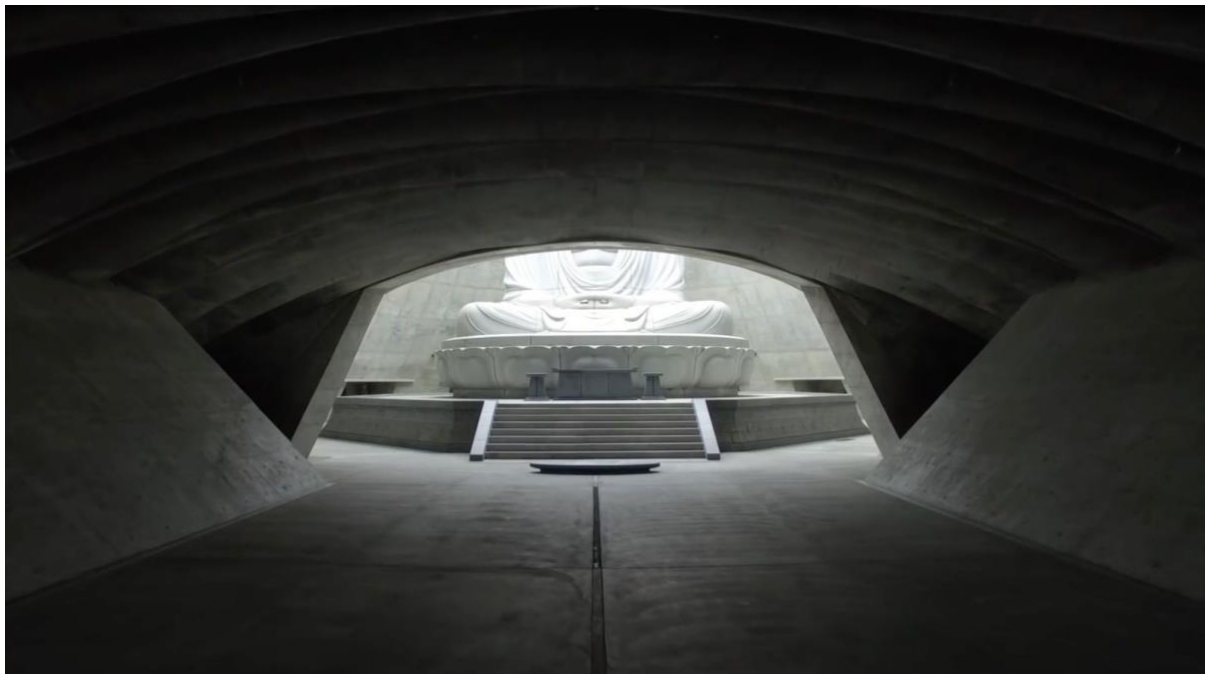
to engage with Buddhism differently. In the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha, the Enlightened One, I gradually began to perceive a spiritual path, a way of life, which engaged directly with the human condition and, in particular, the experience of suffering in the forms of sickness, old age and death. As I began to teach Buddhism to Secondary School pupils, I found myself, as a Christian, making deep connections between, for example, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the Three Jewels of Buddhism. Over a period of several years, I began to see Jesus and the Buddha as being teachers of wisdom who both encourage us to be transformed, to see things differently, to develop a radical, liberating, and enlightened perspective on existence. This has been particularly affirmed during the past fifteen years when I have had the privilege to listen to His Holiness the Dalai Lama speak on a range of topics of contemporary significance and relevance at several locations in the United Kingdom and I have been encouraged by his consistent sense of peace and equanimity. At this point in my journey of faith I now find myself being what I term 'Orthodox' in my Christian belief and practice, but I am simultaneously able to affirm, and I try to live out, what I regard as the profound and significant spiritual depth and truth of the teachings of the Buddha. I am now at the point where I am able to say that as a Christian, I am also able to affirm and follow the way of the Buddha which, I feel, has expanded the vision and the horizons of my spiritual

life. I am encouraged by the perspective of Robinson (1979) who has affirmed that 'Truth is two eyed'.

My encounter with Buddhism has been enhanced by my appreciation of Buddhist art, in particular, representations of the Buddha. I find that the sense of peace, calm, gentleness, balance, and equanimity that is presented in Buddha images evokes what St Paul has termed the fruits of the spirit, the nine attributes of a person or community who live according to the following: '... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.' (Galatians 5: 22-23) I suggest that Tadao Ando's majestic work the Hill of the Buddha embodies such virtues.

In his work the Hill of the Buddha, Ando has integrated within a hill covered with lavender plants a Temple which incorporates a monumental stone statue of the Buddha at the Makomanai Takino Cemetery in Sapporo, northern Japan. Prior to the Temple being created the Buddha statue, which is forty-four-foot tall, had been located in an open field in the cemetery but it appeared that visitors experienced a sense that the large scale of the statue was somewhat incongruent; it evoked somewhat of a jarring sensation; the statue did not have any sense of being located or grounded in some form of meaningful context. Ando, therefore, was invited to design the Temple space in order to envelop the Buddha statue in a rotunda. Rather

than the statue being, in some sense, 'dislocated', those who visit the cemetery now approach it via a 130-foot-long passageway which leads them into the circular space which surrounds it. It is only the head of the Buddha which can be seen from outside the Temple and its environs. As visitors enter the Temple and look up at the statue, they are able to see the Buddha's head surrounded by the blue sky.



The hill which envelops the Buddha statue is planted with 150, 000 lavenders whose colours change as the seasons change. This project, therefore, can be regarded as combining the disciplines of architectural design and landscape design displaying a profound connection with nature.

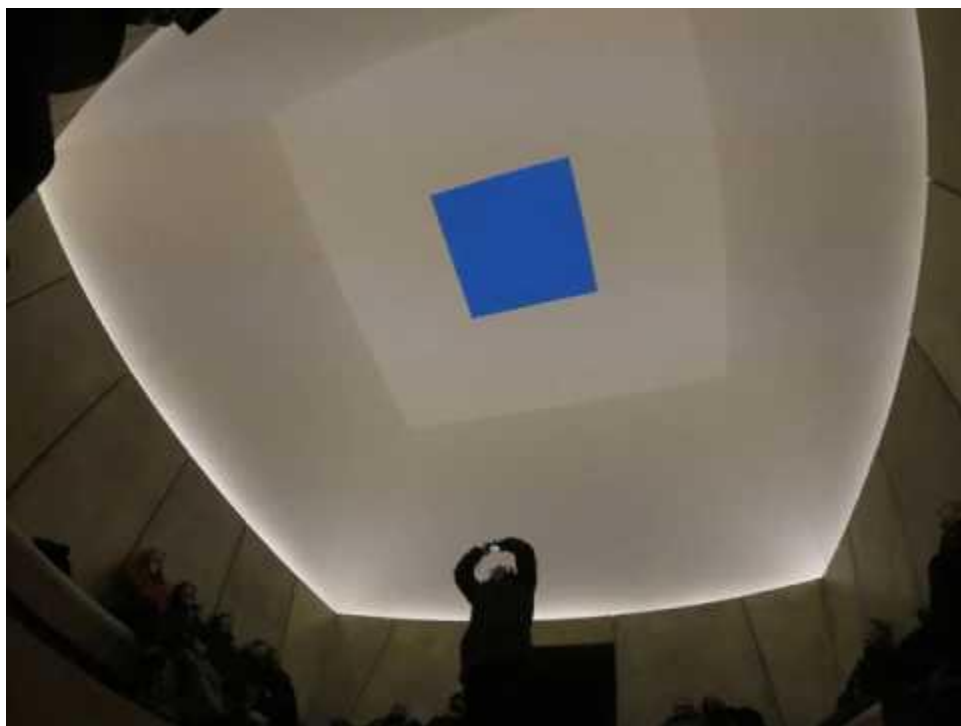
In my exploration in the introduction to this dissertation of Berger's perspectives on the nature of experience and its relationship to the 'spiritual' I

indicated that one of the eleven dimensions of experience is that the 'Transcendent' interrupts daily human existence. As people visit the Cemetery, perhaps to pay their respects to the loved ones who they have lost, they find that rather than a giant Buddha confronting them standing alone in a field they are, in contrast, introduced to the experience of the Buddha slowly and gently as they pass through the passageway which leads to the statue; in effect, therefore, they slowly encounter the Buddha rather than being confronted by him directly. The fact that the head of the Buddha is enveloped by the sky above locates the values that the Buddha embodies in a larger context; it is located in the context of nature. The sky above and the lavender flowers surrounding it can enable us to see that human experience is always part of an ever changing, evolving, ebbing, and flowing, cycle of life. All phenomena come into being and, as time passes, they eventually fade away. Although such a view may appear to be somewhat fatalistic, it is a central element of Buddhist belief and practice. As a Christian I find such a perspective to be candid and a testimony to the reality of the human condition and illustrates what befalls all forms of life. I find such a perspective to be congruent with the ancient writer(s) of the Book of Ecclesiastes (3:19) in the declaration that 'Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies so does the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal.'

I have indicated above that Ando's Hill of the Buddha combines landscape design with architectural design. In a sense, therefore, at the heart of this project is the combination of Buddhist imagery, and the spirituality to which this testifies, with a deep aesthetic and ecological dimension. I find, for example, that when one looks up at the head of the Buddha statue it is surrounded by the sky above. I find that this experience connects with that of the American Quaker James Turrell in his Skyspaces which he has created in locations throughout the world including at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park located between Barnsley and Wakefield. At the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the former Deer Shelter has been converted into a Skyspace in which a large square chamber incorporates an aperture cut into the roof. Through this aperture those who visit are able to see and experience an intensified and heightened view of the sky. It is as if the aperture through which one views the sky forms a frame which creates the sensation of contemplating a painting. Indeed, it can create the sensation of viewing what can be termed a 'trompe-l'oeil' work which is an artwork which deceives the eye by creating the experience of viewing a hyper-real object or scene. Turrell's Skyspace projects can be regarded as being vehicles for contemplation. Indeed, as a Quaker he has incorporated into the Live Oak Friend's Meeting House in Houston, Texas a Skyspace facility.

When asked the question 'How does the meaning

of light relate to the Quaker tradition?' Turrell (2001) has declared 'Well, George Fox talked about the light, in both a literal and figurative sense, or allegorical sense. A lot of it is the revelation-which is a light, as in a bright idea can light-but it always says this image of light. And so I was very interested in this literal look at it-actually greeting the light that you find in meditation and following that.'



James Turrell Skyspace Yorkshire Sculpture Park

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLNtXMjNYA8>

I find that the words that increasingly come to mind when I reflect upon the meanings and connotations of the words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' are 'luminous' and 'luminosity'. The word 'luminous' connotes giving off light; bright or shining and

emitting or reflecting usually steady, suffused, or glowing light and 'luminosity' can be regarded as the quality or state of being luminous. In Ando's Hill of the Buddha the viewer looks up from the base of the Buddha and sees the head of the Buddha bathed in the natural light of the sky. This can create a halo type effect which bathes the Buddha in natural light and illuminates him. In effect, the perception and experience of the Buddha statue can be regarded as evoking a sense of luminosity, a radiant, glowing, shining and very beautiful experience of encountering the Buddha as if he is a present, living reality. In the Enlightenment of the Buddha, his experience of becoming awake to the truths of existence, is not perceived as being solely about the experience of one man at a particular moment in history, but it can also be interpreted as being an experience rooted in the present moment in which one can see things with a heightened sense of clarity, focus and attention. However, I suggest that such 'seeing' refers not only to what is visible to the eye but also connotes the experience of 'seeing' as an inner state of balance, harmony, equilibrium, peace, and equanimity. I fondly remember the words of my late Father who advised me as a child that the greatest gift in life is to have peace of mind and, many years after he shared this with me, I hold these words to be words of simple, yet profound, wisdom. Without him being aware of it he was sharing with me an insight which is deeply Buddhist in its nature. At the heart of Buddhist spirituality is the recognition that *dukkha*, suffering in

all its many and varied forms, is caused by craving and desire. The path to the cessation of *dukkha* is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path which includes, for example, Right View, Right Speech, Right Livelihood and Right Action. This path is believed to be a way of liberation on the journey to Enlightenment. In Buddhism's understanding of Enlightenment, I see a connection with Berger's declaration that 'the other', 'the Transcendent' "breaks into our world in manifestations of dazzling, overwhelming brilliance." I view Ando's Hilltop of the Buddha, therefore, as being a vehicle for such an 'dazzling, overwhelming brilliance'. Even though I have not, so far, had the opportunity to visit and view this majestic Buddha statue and its associated Temple in person, from what I have researched and read about it, together with the photographs of it (some of which are included in this document) I discern that it has, overall, the capacity to inspire positive emotions, to elicit and encourage equanimity and a sense of peace of mind, body, and spirit. Ultimately, I feel that Ando's Buddha statue and Temple project can bring about an experience of deep contemplation. Indeed, Thomas Merton described a visit that he made towards the end of his life to Gal Vihar, a Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka. Merton (1973, 233) wrote: "Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious.... I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual

validity running together in one aesthetic illumination.” It can be suggested that the experience of Merton is congruent with the view that Ando’s Hill of the Buddha can also be a channel for such ‘aesthetic illumination’. Indeed, I find the Hill of the Buddha to be a most ‘luminous’ work which has the capacity to inspire a transformed way of seeing and being in the world. My response to it affirms that it can lead us to reflect upon the very nature of existence, to consider who we are, to meditate upon whom we can become and to inspire creative positive action to make the world a better place.



The Reclining Buddha at Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka

I view the arts, including Tadao Ando’s architectural and landscape design in his Hill of the Buddha project, as having the capacity to inspire

transformation, to develop new perspectives, to open up new horizons. However, I regard this capacity for transformation as being not only a change of view, a transformation of the mind, but is also an ethical transformation which results in a change in the way we relate to ourselves, others, and the environments in which we are located. In this sense, therefore, the arts are able to be agents of change, inspiring and initiating transformation in the personal, social and ecological dimensions of existence.

I find that this perspective connects deeply with Jourard and Landsman's (1980) concept of the Beautiful and Noble person which they developed as a model of healthy personality. In Landsman's view an integrated personality has three dimensions: Passionate, Compassionate, and Environment Loving. I regard Ando's Hill of the Buddha as particularly affirming and embodying the ecological aspect: Environment Loving.





I have indicated previously that the rotunda and temple complex in which the Buddha statue is enclosed is surrounded by, and immersed in, a landscape in which are planted 150, 000 lavender plants. The Buddha statue and the Temple, therefore, are located in nature. As the seasons change the lavender plants change colours from green in spring, to purple in the summer and white in winter when the landscape is covered in snow. The very ecology of the landscaped mound which surrounds the Buddha statue, therefore, can be regarded as facilitating an awareness of the 'spiritual'.

Ying Yin (2018), who has photographed Ando's Hill of the Buddha in winter, of which one of her images is presented below, in response to the question 'What do you like about photographing desolate

scenes?’ has commented that ‘Desolate scenes prove something’s existence. In a crowd, I feel lost myself. But in desolate scenes, I can find the meaning of living.’ She is affirming, therefore, that, for her, art (both Ando’s design and in her photographic response to it) is suffused with meaning. She acknowledges that in crowds (which are usually associated with urban, man-made environments) she is lost, perhaps in some sense cast adrift, not able to discern and locate meaning. However, in her ventures into nature she encounters Ando’s Hill of the Buddha which, in her engagement with, and response to it, she finds meaning.



The Hill of the Buddha in Snow

Photograph by Ying Yan

Frankl (1997) has acknowledged through his philosophy and therapeutic approach of Logotherapy that meaning is central to human

experience. Human beings are meaning seekers and meaning makers. Art, therefore, can create order out of chaos; it can provide a sense of peace, purpose, and value particularly when the challenges and vicissitudes of life threaten to confound and overwhelm us. Art that is able to do this can be regarded as 'spiritual' because it lifts our spirits; it can inspire, encourage, and embolden us. Art, therefore, can be deeply therapeutic; it can, I believe, be a healing force and, in addition to being transformative and healing, it can be a catalyst for action. During recent years I have been profoundly moved and significantly inspired by the many and varied compassionate responses to the significant trauma and losses inflicted by the earthquake, tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear disaster which devastated part of Japan in 2011. In *'Reflection 2'* of this document I have introduced Jennifer Rainsford's 2022 documentary film 'All of Our Heartbeats are Connected through Exploding Stars' which reflects upon the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. Alongside this, I have been particularly inspired by the experience of the Zen Buddhist Joenji Temple community in Japan in their profound and inspiring response to the nuclear fallout.

Reflecting upon the experience of the Fukushima nuclear disaster Koyu Abbe (2011), the Chief Monk of the Joenji Temple community has declared: "To put Buddhist belief in one word: life doesn't go as you wish. Everyone runs into obstacles; therefore, in order to overcome this disaster, we should accept

that this disaster had happened and need to face the reality squarely.” He is recognising the reality that existence is characterised by contingency, finitude, and impermanence. As the experience of the Buddha in his encounter with old age, sickness, and death confirms, life presents challenges, which are all too often unexpected, which can shake the very foundations of our being. Suffering in its many and varied forms can have the effect of destabilising and subverting what we consider to be the reassuring predictable reliability of the positive routines and experiences of daily living. When suffering breaks into our lives it is understandable why individuals and communities ask “Why has this happened?”, “What does this all mean?”, “Why do people suffer?” “Is there any purpose to what has happened?”, “What can we do?” and “How should we respond?”. The irruption of *dukkha*, suffering, into our lives can present a profound existential challenge because it powerfully and painfully illustrates that our understandable and laudable aim to construct individual and social lives characterised by order, routine, predictability, and some degree of certainty can, often violently, be sabotaged by forces beyond our control.



The Joenji monks, together with the Make a Wish Upon Flowers project, planted thousands of sunflowers to transform the radiated soil and this initiative can be regarded as saying a joyous Yes! to life and are presenting a simple, yet profound, illustration of the capacity of spiritual traditions to engage with the challenges and opportunities of life. Their transformative action affirms and embodies Frankl's (1973,83) declaration that man's struggle for self-identity is rooted and located in "... dedication and devotion to something beyond his self, to something above his self."

Koyu Abbe (2011) has declared: "My hope is, as we wish upon flowers, the seeds of sunflowers and many other flowers we have distributed will bloom in Fukushima and become everyone's flower of hope and happiness for the future. I wish this from the

bottom of my heart.” In this perspective the act of growing sunflowers is a practical meaningful act of transformation.



Large Sunflowers by Emil Nolde

As the sunflower plants absorb the radiation from the surrounding area they act as a profound symbol of transformation in the personal, social, and ecological dimensions of existence.

What can be regarded as a simple act of planting and nurturing seeds illustrates that simple actions have the potential to have significant, even far-reaching, consequences. Confirming the understanding of the Buddhist law of *karma*, actions do have consequences. How we live, what we do and say, how we relate to, and connect with, others and with our wider ecologies, all have significance. It is like the pebble tossed into the lake. Once the pebble is thrown into the water, we are no longer in

control of what happens. We are actively involved in the casting of the stone into the water, but we are not in control of, and we cannot ultimately predict, the extent and the force of the ripples on the lake which arise from the act of casting the stone. There is a profound sense, therefore, in which in a world in which we can easily become overwhelmed by the sheer scale of "*dukkha*" in its many and varied forms, the inspiring and ennobling example of the monks of the Joenji Temple present us with a contemporary role model illustrating how small acts can have very significant consequences. Indeed, from a small seed a mighty oak can grow. It can be suggested that in his declaration that "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed" (Luke 13:19) Jesus, in harmony with the Buddha, draws our attention to the importance of "planting seeds", preparing the ground for, and nurturing actions, activities, initiatives and projects which can transform lives and transform, in the process, darkness into light, hopelessness into hope and despair into meaning and purpose. The Kingdom of God, therefore, is present wherever and whenever positive transformation is manifested. The Monks of the Joenji Temple gently, humbly, yet powerfully, illustrate that significant transformation can arise from relatively small acts of "*metta*", loving kindness, in which individually and collectively persons can create and leave a legacy. Each human being, responding to the precious gift of life in all of its fragile glory, can create the ripples on the pond confirming that, ultimately, all things exist in a dynamic, creative, and

interconnected web of life. Each person begins where they are, in their own context and situation. From this context they exercise their freedom to choose and act and, in this process, they can actualise transformation. Inspired by the teaching and way of the Buddha, the “*Dharma*”, the Joenji monks affirm the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path and mindfully, creatively and with compassion for all beings bring about, at times almost imperceptibly, profound personal, social, and ecological change. The Joenji monks and the Make a Wish Upon Flowers project articulates clearly and unambiguously Sartre’s (1978,28) perspective that “Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.” To be a person is to be embodied and engaged; we do not exist as disembodied minds engaging purely in rational thought. Thinking and reflection is translated into engagement with the world. We are what we do. Who we are is how we act. I regard the majestic artistic creation of Ando’s Hill of the Buddha project as being a symbolic expression and embodiment of the transformative philosophy, spirituality and ethic articulated by the Joenji monks. Art, therefore, can testify to action.



Inspired by the positive example of the Joenji monks, in my role as an Authorised Lay Minister, I led a service at the Anglican Church in Manchester of which I was then a member which encouraged the worshipping community to respond to the transformative action of the monks and to reflect upon the ways that in their lives, individually and collectively, they 'sowed seeds' of transformation. At the conclusion of the worship, I gave each member of the congregation a box of sunflower seeds which they were encouraged to take home and nurture; they were invited to tenderly nurture them and facilitate their growth.

To complement this practical action, I prepared a booklet for each member of the Church which summarised the transformative work that the Joenji monks had taken, and which made links between their sunflower project and the positive actions that each one of us can take in our daily lives. This booklet was illustrated by artworks representing

sunflowers by different artists including that by Emil Nolde presented above. Reflecting upon the preparation for this service, the act of worship itself and the feedback I received about it I now feel that the process combined art, ecology, spirituality, and activism and I regard the experience of this as being an example of what Baker (2010), Pierson (2012) and Myers (2018) call 'Curating Worship'.

They articulate views that acts of worship can be seen as participating in a process in which a range of elements such as, for example, music, song, hymns, film, dance, discussion, poetry, prose, prayers, Bible readings and the elements of bread and wine can be constituent parts of a performance, literally an 'acting out' or re-enactment of the Gospel. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost are relived; they are brought to life in the act of worship in which many forms of creative and artistic expression are included.



Tadao Ando: 'The Hill of the Buddha' Design Sketch

In 'Exploration 1' earlier in this document I have made reference to Thomas Moore's concept of 'Re-enchantment'. I suggest that Tadao Ando's Hill of the Buddha is an artwork which, through the interplay of simplicity, gracefulness, harmony, and ecology, elicits and evokes a 'Re-enchantment' of the world.

The UNESCO Meditation Chapel



The second example of Tadao Ando's architectural projects which I explore is the Meditation Space in Paris, France, situated adjacent to the headquarters of UNESCO and completed in 1995. It is constructed in the form of a cylinder made of reinforced concrete. The Meditation Space is designed to be an environment which expresses a sense of peace, stillness, and tranquillity. Like the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas, Ando's Meditation Space is an environment in which those entering it are able to detach themselves from the hustle and bustle of their lives and enter a space of calm.

A significant element of the Meditation Space's

construction materials are granite slabs which had been exposed to the radiation of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 4 August 1945. The slabs have been reclaimed and have been used for the flooring of the Meditation Space and as the base for the pool which is incorporated into the Space. At the heart of the design and construction of the Meditation Space, therefore, was that it should be a symbol of peace and non-violence and a place in which those visiting it are able to experience for themselves a sense of this peace. Ando (2015) has indicated that "...it is a refuge for the spirit, a place where you can think about your existence" and he has also commented that "The people who go there live in the 21st century. The architecture was developed to interact with their perceptions. Those who have experienced this should somehow retain a feeling of it in some corner of their heart". Ando, is indicating, therefore, that experiencing the Meditation Centre should have an effect and an impact which lasts beyond the duration of the visit. As indicated in my earlier exploration of Ando's the Hill of the Buddha, it can be suggested that art, including Ando's architecture, has the capacity and potential for eliciting transformation, a change of heart, a renewed vision, and sense of purpose.

Ando's Meditation Space is small and simple in its design. The concrete cylinder is six metres in both diameter and height and light enters the structure via a circular slab which forms the roof of the Meditation Space. Where this circular slab meets the

wall of the cylinder shape there is a gap through which light enters the Space, an image of which is presented below.

Within the Meditation Space are high backed iron chairs on which visitors can sit. Because the chairs are high backed and made of metal, they are solid and encourage a posture in which one sits up straight. This encourages what I term a 'grounded presence'; the form of the chairs, the material from which they are made and the bodily posture which they encourage can provide an environment for focus, being able to pay attention, to be able to gaze at the interior walls of the Meditation Space. Indeed, the light gently beaming through the circular roof can encourage the visitor to not only look around the Space but to look up to, and, borrowing an idea from the art of James Turrell, to 'Greet the light.' Ando (2015) affirms that "The light falling from above, the surrounding water, impart the feeling that you are alive".



Tadao Ando: UNESCO Meditation Space (Interior)

Ando's architecture, therefore, can be life-affirming; it can encourage and inspire us to be aware of and appreciate those things in life which facilitate well-being and harmony. This is, I believe, one of art's most significant and valuable features: it can promote the noblest values and virtues, the highest good, it can uplift, refresh, and renew the soul.

As those who visit Ando's Meditation Space look up at the circular roof through which the light enters, I

find that I am able to make a connection between this and the Christian festival of Ascension Day which remembers the experience of the disciples as they saw Jesus depart from them: "... He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going... (Acts 1: 9b-10a, NIV) Whatever view one takes of Jesus' Ascension, and however one interprets and understands it, at the heart of the experience of the disciples is their experience of looking, seeing, gazing. It is as if they are aware that Jesus' Ascension is not the end of His ministry; rather it connotes a new chapter, a turning point, a transformation, a transfiguration, in their understanding of Jesus and a recognition that, as the Gospel of Luke (24: 52) indicates: "Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy". In this scenario the disciples are not downhearted and dismayed by Jesus leaving them but are, instead, full of praise. Art, therefore, in its depiction of a range of human experiences and emotions, can encourage Christians to make connections between the ways of seeing expressed in diverse creative forms and the stories and narratives of Scripture. Art can be a vehicle of Transcendence; it can illuminate life and encourage us to see, to look carefully, to pay attention, to be aware of life in depth. Art can inspire us to develop new perspectives, to recognise, affirm and celebrate the beauty in our midst which can provide an anchor in life, particularly during those times when we feel challenged and, perhaps,

overwhelmed by what our experience can bring. There is the potential for our subjectivity, our perspectives, our points of view, our ways of seeing, to be changed, to be enlarged, to be inspired and to be encouraged. However, I take the view that to create works of art and to gaze upon them requires some degree of focus and attention particularly when the artworks explore concepts, themes, ideas, experiences, and themes which respond to those dimensions of life which challenge, disturb, or upset us.

I have suggested in my exploration of Ando's Hill of the Buddha, that the philosophy and spirituality of Buddhism presents a response to the experience of suffering in life. I also suggest that the arts can be vehicles for exploring, and responding to, suffering and those dimensions of experience which shake us, and they can also inspire us to engage creatively and imaginatively with the Biblical narratives. For example, on Ash Wednesday 2019 I preached at my current Church in which I explored the experience of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. In preparation for this, as well as reading carefully the Biblical texts, I researched artistic representations of Jesus' experience. These included, for example, paintings by Stanley Spencer, Briton Riviere, Nicholas Roerich, and Gloria Ssali. Gazing and reflecting upon these very different representations of Jesus' Temptation, inspired me to approach my sermon from the perspective of the experience of Jesus' 'gaze', as He spent forty days and nights in the

desert environment which is remembered during the season of Lent.



Stanley Spencer: 'Christ in the Wilderness'

Whilst in the desert Jesus would have been able to see the night sky in all of its wonder, splendour, and glory. The Gospels indicate that Jesus was led into the wilderness following His baptism in the River Jordan by His cousin John. It may well be that Jesus understood that His baptism was a significant turning

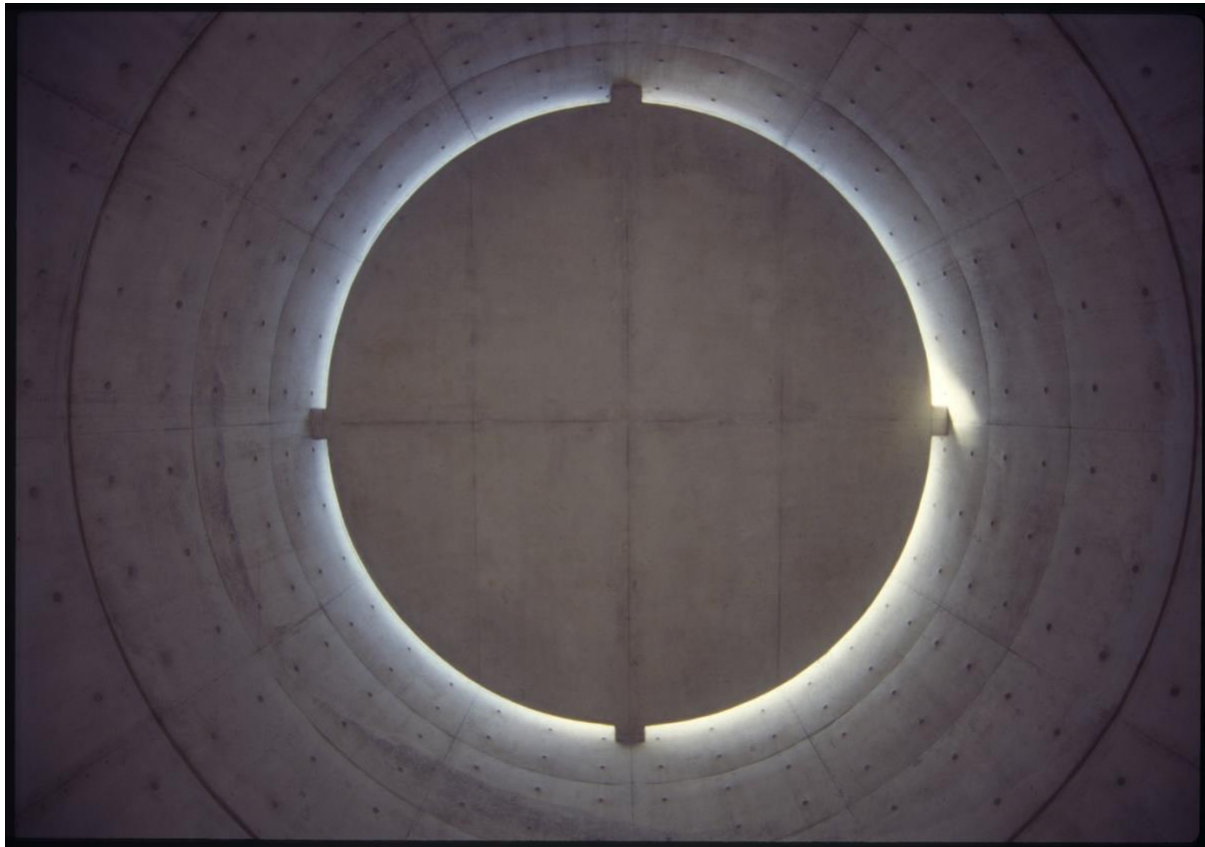
point in His life. Whilst in the wilderness it is likely that He reflected and pondered upon what was to come next; what would this next stage in His life bring? During the Lenten season I found myself considering what Jesus thought as he gazed into the night sky.



Briton Riviere: 'The Temptation of Jesus'

It is possible that He reflected upon His mission, the tasks He would have to undertake in order to share the good news of the coming of the Kingdom. As He stared into the night sky it is possible that He was wrestling with His destiny, coming to terms with the implications of what His calling would require Him to do. It could well be that, as He looked deep into the night sky, He began to understand that His mission, His, to coin a phrase from Thomas Berry (1999),

'Great Work' was rooted in a cosmic dimension, that what He was about to embark upon would have a universal significance.



The circular roof of Ando's Meditation Space pictured above can evoke the sun and moon that Jesus would have gazed upon during His time in the wilderness. I find this image of the roof of the Meditation Space to be both positive and inspiring because it also connects with the symbol of the Enso, a circle, which is hand drawn and usually created with one or two fluid brush strokes. It represents Enlightenment, the Universe, Reality, the true nature of existence, elegance, single mindedness and can also represent the state of the

mind of the artist as she creates it. It is also regarded as a symbol of wholeness and completion. For me, the light shining through the circular roof of the Meditation Space does, indeed suggest, in some sense, the experience of wholeness. As visitors to the Meditation Space gaze upon the beaming light, they, like Jesus gazing upon the sun, moon, and stars during His wilderness experience, are able to reflect, to contemplate, to meditate, to pray, and to consider existential questions of meaning purpose and value. Ando's art, therefore, is, in my view, work which provides spaces in which people can experience a sense of openness and gain glimpses of wholeness. Even though, to date, I have not had the opportunity to visit and experience Ando's Meditation Space, I do hold the view that it is likely to be the kind of place which can be described as a 'Holy' or 'Sacred' space because it has the potential to facilitate its visitors being open and receptive to a larger vision, a greater sense of self and even, using a term from Buber (2013) to be able to experience the Eternal Thou.



An Enso Drawing

I have indicated above that Ando's Meditation Space incorporates materials from Hiroshima which were exposed to the nuclear bombing of 1945. I have, for a long time, been intrigued by the fact that the bombing of Hiroshima took place on 6 August which is the day in the Christian calendar which is celebrated as the Feast of the Transfiguration. The nuclear devastation of Hiroshima (and of Nagasaki which followed) was clearly a most violent act which brought death and destruction on an epic scale.

I suggest, therefore, that examples of art, including the Meditation Space of Tadao Ando, can act as stimuli with which to explore Biblical texts and their relationship to historical events. There is, therefore, the creative potential for an art, faith, and history dialectic.



Tadao Ando: UNESCO Meditation Space (Exterior)



Artist 3: Mildred Elsie Eldridge

In the first two stanzas of his poem 'The Untamed' RS Thomas, (2017, 26) the husband of Mildred Elsie Eldridge, writes:

"My garden is the wild
Sea of the grass. Her garden
Shelters between walls.
The tide could break in;
I should be sorry for this.

There is peace there of a kind,
Though not the deep peace
Of wild places. Her care
For green life has enabled
The weak things to grow."

Mildred Elsie Eldridge (1909-1991) in 1953, received a commission from the Robert Jones Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen, Wales to paint a large mural which would be displayed on the walls of the nurses' dining room at the hospital. The mural is entitled *The Dance of Life* and it is thought of as being one of the most evocative, majestic, and inspiring masterpieces of the 20th Century. However, this mural was sadly neglected for many years, and it was largely forgotten. However, following a process of careful and loving restoration it is currently displayed at Glyndwr University's Centre for the Creative Industries in Wrexham, Wales.

Eldridge's artistic education was undertaken at the Wimbledon College of Art and the Royal College of Art and, in the early 1930's she won the prestigious RCA travelling scholarship to Italy which provided her with the opportunity to meet other artists and develop her own style and very successful profile as an artist of significant talent. Eldridge was a very prolific artist; indeed, during her lifetime she created over one thousand paintings. She had a passion and highly developed talent for natural history illustration. She was inspired, in particular, by her large collection of animal and bird specimens. Eldridge utilised her skill in natural history illustration to illustrate the dust jacket of her husband RS Thomas' first volume of poems, *Stones of the Field*, in 1947.

I suggest that Eldridge can be regarded as a deeply spiritual painter, and I aim to illustrate this with reference to images from her *The Dance of Life* mural.



Mildred Elsie Eldridge from 'The Dance of Life'

I propose that RS Thomas' observation in the extract from his poem presented above that "Her care For green life has enabled The weak things to grow" can be regarded as being the experience which is at the very core, the heart, of Eldridge's way of seeing the world. The way in which I interpret her The Dance of Life mural is through an ecological lens which suggests that her work which expresses the desire and hope to rediscover a lost wisdom, a harmonious relationship with nature which is portrayed through images of, for example, animals and birds, children playing and adults making music together. It is possible to respond to her The Dance of Life mural from the perspective of the Book of Genesis' (1-3) accounts of Creation and Fall in that her work portrays a return to an Eden-like way of being in which there is harmony between people, other creatures and their wider environment. In one section of her mural Eldridge presents a pastoral, perhaps Romantic, scene in which sheep gather together to feed in an environment where there appears to be no immediate sense of any human presence. The sheep graze in an environment of trees, plants, and hills in the distance. Although no human figures are represented in this section of the mural the existence of the tunnel-like structures from which the sheep feed suggests the work of human hands. It can be suggested, therefore, that although the existence of human activity is implied, the mural evokes a sense of animals and their environment in harmony largely untouched by human hands. There is a sense, therefore, in which the mural harks back

to the agrarian age, to a pre-industrial era largely untouched by mechanisation and mass production.

2019 was the bicentenary of the birth of the Victorian writer, artist, critic, philanthropist, and visionary John Ruskin. Events were held internationally to celebrate, respond to, engage with, and reappraise his ways of seeing the world. Russell (2018), in reflecting upon Ruskin's views, has commented: "the core of his claims remains relevant and important. That is to say: our aesthetic experience, our experience of beauty in ordinary life, must be central to thinking about any good life and society. It's not just decoration or luxury for the few. If you are taught how to see the world properly through an understanding of aesthetics, then you'll see society properly."

There is a deep sense, therefore, in which, like Ruskin, Eldridge's *The Dance of Life* murals present a profound counter-cultural and radical ecological and spiritual vision which, I suggest, can speak directly to the world of the early years of the 21st century. They can be regarded as calling humankind to reconsider the values by which they live and the vision of society which they aspire to work towards creating. It can be interpreted as being a parable, presenting in picture form, a vision of a better, transformed world. Eldridge's *The Dance of Life* mural, although it can appear to be presenting a vision of a romanticised past can, instead, be thought of as articulating a vision of a transformed future, an ecologically sustainable and

harmonious alternative way of being in which humankind and the natural world and its diverse creatures live together. I regard Eldridge's mural, therefore, as being ultimately spiritual because it has the capacity to inspire. To inspire is to breathe into, to give life, energy, and vitality and to animate the spirit. Her art, therefore, can act as a resource which presents a vision of what can be which can encourage and inspire us to consider ways of seeing and being which are transformative and life enhancing.



Mildred Elsie Eldridge from *The Dance of Life*

In my exploration of Eldridge's 'The Dance of Life' mural I have begun to discern connections between her ways of seeing the world and that articulated in the poetry of Christina Rossetti. I find myself in agreement with Mason (2018) who affirms

that in Rossetti's theology there is a profound spiritual materialism which inspires ecological transformation. Mason takes the view that Rossetti's life, work, vision, and legacy crystallises the experience of faith as being characterised by a profound love for, and intimacy with, creation in all its glorious diversity and detail. In Rossetti's view, therefore, creation is, in a sense, a divine body in which all that exists, from the microscopic to the macroscopic, forms an intimate interconnected web of life. For me, therefore, Eldridge's art, and her affinities with Christina Rossetti, bring a significant ecological dimension to the exploration of art and the spiritual. As a Companion of the Society of Saint Francis I find that the ecological holism of both Eldridge and Rossetti echoes Francis of Assisi's concept of the unity of the whole of creation. I consider the ecological dimension further in point 6. of the conclusion below.



Mildred Elsie Eldridge 'Bare Apple Tree'

A significant development arising from my recognition of the deep connections between the spiritual visions of Eldridge and Rossetti has been my journey to explore further women artists who have, all too often, been airbrushed from the history and canon, particularly of Western art. I hold the view, therefore, that an area for possible future research in the relationship between spirituality and the arts is the contribution the work of women artists has made to our ways of seeing the world and of feminist theological perspectives in reflection upon this. This

'*Exploration 2*' does not provide space in which to consider this further, but I regard it as being an area of study in which there is much fruitful potential for developing broader insights and perspectives.



Mildred Elsie Eldridge: 'Welsh Black-Lleyn (1948)

CONCLUSION

I suggest that in my exploration of the ways of seeing and being in the world of Mark Rothko, Tadao Ando and Mildred Elsie Eldridge I have illustrated that art can speak to our modern condition through its capacity to envision alternative futures, ways of seeing and being which point the way to holistic, sustainable, and nurturing possibilities.

To conclude this *Exploration 2*', I briefly consider

ways in which art can be seen as being a vehicle for experience and understanding of what Tillich (2015) has called 'The Ground of Our Being', that sense of the Other, the Beyond, the Sublime, the Divine, the Transcendent, God; that which we discern, perceive, glimpse, experience, and encounter in the depths of life. I identify five dimensions which, I suggest, for which art can be a channel for the flowing of the spiritual into our lives:

1. Art and Meaning, Purpose and Value

I have referred earlier in this document to the perspective of Frankl who has affirmed the primacy of meaning in peoples' lives. He recognises that without a sense of meaning in their life a person can develop what he has termed 'noogenic neurosis' which are "... psychological illnesses.... Rooted in collisions between different values, or in the unwanted longing and groping of man for that hierarchically highest value – an ultimate meaning to life...To put it simply, we are dealing with the frustration to man's struggle for a meaning to existence." (Frankl; 1973, 50f)

The religious traditions of the world can be regarded as addressing humankind's search for meaning through what can be termed 'Ultimate Questions', questions of meaning, purpose, and value. Faith traditions present responses to questions such as, for example, 'What is the meaning of life?', 'Is there a God?', 'How can God be known?', 'Why is there evil

and suffering in the world?', 'Is there life after death?' and 'How should one live?'.

In my life to date I have found that art, in its diverse forms, also addresses such Ultimate Questions and I have found painting, sculpture, music, poetry, film and architecture, for example, to be profoundly uplifting, nurturing, sustaining, transformative and a balm for the soul particularly during those times in my life when I have had to face significant challenges. Indeed, my reading of, and reflection upon, Scripture has increasingly been complemented by making connections between the profound existential questions, concepts, themes, and ideas presented in the diverse Biblical narratives and the ways in which artists respond to, and address, these. In my work as a Teacher of Religious Studies and Philosophy I often found that a way to approach complex and, at times, challenging Ultimate Questions and the responses to these presented in the Sacred Scriptures of the world's faiths was to initiate an exploration of these questions and responses to them somewhat tangentially or what I term 'elliptically' by considering, for example, a painting, a poem or a piece of music. These stimuli provided an entry point into exploration of Ultimate Questions.

2. Art and Contemplation, Meditation, Reflection and Prayer

In relation to Rothko's paintings, Davis (2017, 67) has

commented that:

“The effects that Rothko’s paintings seem to aim for – quietness, authority, humility, tragedy, spirituality – are also the qualities treasured in religion, and in particular, Judaeo-Christianity. These are the emotional qualities one associates with being in a church or monastery: spacious interiors, lit with a soft, diffuse light, smooth stone floors, whitewashed walls, a dim sense of the outside world, and a feeling of sanctity. These are the spaces – in the cathedral, the chapel, the monk’s cell – that are intended to induce contemplation, interiority, self-enclosure, holiness.”

Davis is recognising, therefore, that art can create, and be located in, spaces and places which are conducive to, and can facilitate, contemplation, meditation, reflection, and prayer. Artists can create works which bring about a response of mindful attention. Weil (2004, 117) has noted that: “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.” Although it can be acknowledged that developments in information and communications technologies, particularly during the past twenty or so years, have enabled humankind to access at the touch of a button a wealth of information and social media has facilitated rapid, almost instantaneous, global communication, I suggest that a consequence of this is that many people find it difficult to pay attention, to be still and to give one's

heart and mind to any task requiring sustained time, effort, energy and focus. Echoing the Genesis (11:1-9) story of the Tower of Babel, it can seem, at times, that there is a constant flow of 'babble', an ever present torrent of information, images and ideas, to which only very limited attention is given and from which it is often difficult to disconnect and from which it becomes a challenge to separate the 'wheat from the chaff' (Matthew 3:12) The spiritual traditions of the world, however, point to other ways of seeing and being in which slowing down, taking time, being still and reflecting calmly upon our lives, the lives of others, our environments and that which is termed, for example the Holy, Sublime or Divine can find a space and place in our consciousness to reside. The Hill of the Buddha and the UNESCO Meditation Space of Tadao Ando are, I suggest, artistic creations which powerfully, profoundly, and poignantly testify to the capacity of creativity to facilitate spaces and places which encourage us to experience life in some depth. The Rothko Chapel in Houston and the Rothko Room at Tate Britain are, I also suggest, examples of spaces and places, of which art is at their very centre, which invite us to enter, encounter and experience environments which encourage us to slow down, to breathe deeply, to be still and to really pay attention; to really see and listen to what is going on both within and outside ourselves.

3. Art and the Transcendent

In October 2007 my wife Malgorzata and I were attending a performance at Durham Cathedral by the late composer Jon Lord (who was most well known as being the keyboard player in the rock band Deep Purple) of his acclaimed Durham Concerto of which one of the sections of the concerto is entitled 'The Road to Lindisfarne'. This music began with the Northumbrian pipes played by Kathryn Tickell. As the pipes began to play and then, in time, were accompanied by the orchestra, whilst sat in my seat I began to shake uncontrollably; I lost all control of my body, and I experienced emotion so intense that I began to cry. It was a totally overwhelming experience which to this day, and as I write about it, arouses strong feelings. It took several minutes before I was able to compose myself, but this very powerful event has stayed with me as being one of the most intense and happiest experiences of my life. In a paradoxical sense, this experience has led me to the view that there are some dimensions of life so beautiful that they 'hurt'. After such experiences one can never be the same; things are seen differently, and new perspectives come into being. It is possible to ask whether such an experience can be termed, for example, 'aesthetic', 'spiritual' or 'religious'? In retrospect, I can say that, for me, it may be simultaneously all and none of these categories. The reason I say this is that, echoing Cupitt (2011, 27) I can appreciate that this powerful musical experience was an example of

what he terms 'ecstatic immanence'; it was, in a sense, immanent because I temporarily lost control and I could feel it within, in the very fibre of my being. However, I can also describe it as an experience of the Transcendent because it was as if my response to the music was, literally, an experience of that which is outside and beyond me. I hold to this day that in this experience, I glimpsed what one can call, the Real, the Ultimate, the Divine, the Sacred, the Holy, the Numinous, God, that which, ultimately is beyond names.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, Icons, representations of Jesus, Mary, and the Saints, are regarded as being vehicles of Transcendence, windows into eternity, gateways to the Divine. Although they are painted works, they are not primarily regarded as being 'artworks'; they are, instead, viewed as being images ('icon' means 'image') which arise through a process of prayerful discipline. The icons are believed to point beyond themselves to the eternal world; the icon is a material artefact which draws us into the spiritual dimension and, ultimately, to an encounter with God. The word 'iconic' is, I believe a much over-used and abused word in contemporary society. It has, sadly, become a cliché and it is, all too often, used as a descriptor of that which is fashionable, contemporary, and desirable, yet ephemeral. I regard this as being a misuse and misappropriation of its specific religious meaning.

The exploration of Rothko, Ando, and Eldridge, however, which I have undertaken above can illustrate the capacity of art to take us beyond ourselves, to open up new horizons and to enable us to perceive transformative visions of the self, others, and the world. Such artists can, I suggest, inspire, encourage, and enable us to truly see the world anew at the heart of which is the experience of encounter. Indeed, I regard their work as being deeply iconic.

4. Art and Spiritual Community

Each of the spiritual traditions of the world has their own glorious and diverse forms of artistic expression which encompass, for example, painting, music, poetry, prose, calligraphy, sculpture, architecture, and design. The history of art illustrates that at different times artists have formed creative communities which aim to work together, inspiring creative excellence, and offering mutual support and encouragement. Communities such as, for example, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Samuel Palmer and the Ancients, Evelyn Gibbs and the Midland Group and the *Die Brucke* (the Bridge) together with Kandinsky and *Der Bleue Reiter* (the Blue Rider) each, in their own ways, articulated an approach to the artistic enterprise in which a sense of community was affirmed and celebrated. The *Die Brucke*, for example, believed in the efficacy of art

as an agent of change; they developed painting as a vehicle for bringing about spiritual transformation in society. They found their inspiration in the life of Vincent van Gogh whom they believed represented the ideals they stood for. Despite the loss of the Christian faith of his youth, Van Gogh articulated deep spiritual feelings in his art. With Vincent as their inspiration, a group of young artists adopted the name *Die Brucke*, a name which was to symbolise the building of a bridge between the past and the present, the old and the new. I suggest that there is real potential for new bridge building artistic communities within Churches, perhaps modelled on Monastic orders, who are able to prophetically challenge, for example, the established political, economic, social, religious, and ethical 'orthodoxies' of the modern age.

5. Art and Ecology

In her 'The Dance of Life' mural, Mildred Elsie Eldridge has vibrantly and evocatively presented a vision of a transformed world, a world in which humankind and the natural world co-exist in a state of harmony and mutual flourishing. As I contemplate her paintings, I find myself thinking that the vision of the world she articulates anticipates what Berry (1999,8) has termed the 'Ecozoic Era' which is an emerging point in history characterised by humans living in a mutually enhancing relationship, "a

communion of subjects not a collection of objects” (2006, 17) with Earth and the Earth community.

I have earlier referred to Landsman's concept of the Beautiful and Noble Person of which he indicates that the third dimension of his model of healthy personality is the Environment Loving Person. He (1973, 11f) declares that:

“The environment-loving person describes the passionate person in relation to the physical world--to flowers, to music, to paintings, to visual images, to water, trees, buildings, streets, homes and rooms. In his passive state, he listens to music and it fills him, he watches passively as beauty moves by, running water, people, ideas in books and stories. In his active or expressive state, he manifests a hunger for the physical world. He builds, he plants, he produces physical objects, he makes things in his work, he repairs, decorates, creates beauty and a healthy environment about him. He protects his environment and enhances it, he paints, he writes music, he creates”.

For Landsman, therefore, to be an Environment Loving Person is to not only to be a person who responds to the world around her with a positive appreciation and openness to the beauty she perceives and encounters, but is also a person who creates, who makes things which enhance and protect the environment. There is, therefore, a creative dialogue and encounter between the

person and the world she inhabits, experiences and encounters.

The history of art testifies to the capacity of painters to capture the colour, energy, vibrancy, luminosity, awe, and wonder of the natural world. Van Gogh's starry night panoramas, Monet's water lilies, and Turner's seascapes, for example, capture the sheer luminosity of the world.

EPILOGUE



Makoto Fujimura: 'Letters to the Exiles'

Fujimura (2014, 30) has commented that “A healthy and thriving culture is impossible without the participation of artists and other leaders who are educated intellectually, trained experientially, formed spiritually, and growing morally. Beauty is both a goal and a catalyst for each of these elements.” In my exploration of the art of Mark Rothko, Tadao Ando, and Mildred Elsie Eldridge I have attempted to illustrate how art and creativity can be regarded as reflecting the Transcendent dimension of experience and how an encounter

with this enables us to be fully human. Nerburn (2018, 239) has declared; “To affirm, to articulate, to console, to inspire – these are the great gifts of the arts. They let the light shine through the confusion of life and remind us that there is something more – a mystery that can only be touched but never understood. But above all, they provide the greatest gift that any experience can offer. They tell us that we are part of the human family”.

CODA: “There's a crack in everything; That's how the light gets in”. (Cohen; 1992)

Bibliography

Abe, K. (2011) Quoted in *Invisible Snow* Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://buddhismnow.com/2011/08/20/invisible-snow/>

Ando, Tadao (2015) Quoted in Tadao Ando Architects and Associates Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuMRsKgIYGY>

Aitchison, Jim (2008) *Shadows of Light II (Music from the Seagram Murals)* Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/audio/shadows-light-ii-music-seagram-murals>

Aron, E.N. and Aron, A. (1997) Sensory-processing sensitivity and its relation to introversion and emotionality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 345-368.

Aronov, I (2006) *Kandinsky's Quest: A Study in the Artist's Personal Symbolism, 1866-1907* Bern: Peter Lang Publishing

Baker, J. (2010) *Curating Worship* London: SPCK Publishing

Barnes (2011) *Meditation and Modern Art Meet in Rothko Chapel* Keeley: KNUC Radio Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://www.kunc.org/post/meditation-and-modern-art-meet-rothko-chapel#stream/0>

Berger, P.L. *A Far Glory The Quest for Faith in an Age of*

Credulity New York: The Free Press

Berry, T. (1998) *The Great Work Our Way Into the Future* New York: Bell Tower

Berry, T. (2006) *Evening Thoughts Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books

Buber, M. (2008) *I and Thou* New York: Touchstone Books

Burke, E. (2018) *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* Newton Stewart: Anodos Books

Cain, S. (2013) *Quiet The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* London: Penguin

Clearwater, B. (2006) *The Rothko Book* London: Tate Publishing

Cohen, L (1992) From the song *Anthem* from the cd *The Future* New York: Sony Music

Cupitt, D. (2001) *Emptiness and Brightness* Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press

Cupitt, D. (2011) *Turns of Phrase Radical Theology from A to Z* London: SCM Press

Davis, J. (2017) *Mark Rothko The Art of Transcendence* Maidstone: Crescent Moon Publishing

Drew, P (1996) *Church on the Water Church of the Light*

London: Phaidon press

Frankl, V.E. (1973) *Psychotherapy and Existentialism Selected Papers on Logotherapy* London: Penguin

Frankl, V.E. (1997) *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* New York: Plenum Press

Fujimura, M. (2014) *Culture Care Reconnecting with Beauty for Our Common Life* New York: Fujimura Institute

Furuyama, M. (2016) *Tadao Ando The Geometry of Human Space* Koln: Taschen

Golding, J. (2000) *Paths to the Absolute* London: Thames and Hudson

Graham, E. Walton H. and Ward, F (2005) *Theological Reflection: Methods* London: SCM Press

Hepburn, R.W. (2005) Holy, Numinous, and Sacred. In T. Honderich (Ed), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy New Edition* p.398 Oxford: Oxford University Press

James, C. (2015) *Glimpses are all you ever get There is so little time* Retrieved August 10, 2019 London: The Guardian

Website

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/oct/24/clive-james-spring-poetry-methinks> London: The Guardian

Jourard, S. M. and Landsman, T. (1980) *Healthy Personality*

An Approach from the Viewpoint of Humanistic Psychology 4th Edition New York: Macmillan Publishing

Jung, C.G. (1959) *Psychological Types* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Kandinsky, Wassily (1977) *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* New York: Dover Publications

Kandinsky, Wassily (1994) *Kandinsky Complete Writings on Art* New York: Da Capo Press

Landsman, T (1973) *The Humanizer* Presented at the Annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association (50th, New York, New York, June 1, 1973) Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED091634.pdf>

L'Engle, M. *Walking on Water Reflections on Faith and Art* New York: Convergent Books

Mason, E. (2018) *Christina Rossetti Poetry, Ecology, Faith* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Merton, T. (1973) *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton Edited by Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart, and James McLaughlin* New York: New Directions Publishing

Myers, J.D. (2018) *Curating Church* Nashville: Abingdon Press

Nerburn. K. (2018) *Dancing with the Gods Reflections on Life*

and Art Edinburgh: Canongate Books

Otto, R. (1958) *The Idea of the Holy* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Pieper, J. (2012) *Only the Lover Sings Art and Contemplation* San Francisco: Ignatius Press

Pierson, M (2012) *The Art of Curating Worship: Reshaping the Role of the Worship Leader* Norwich: Canterbury Press

Robinson, J.A.T. (1979) *Truth Is Two Eyed* London: SCM Press

Rothko, C. (2011) *Meditation and Modern Art Meet in Rothko Chapel* Keeley: KUNC Radio Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://www.kunc.org/post/meditation-and-modern-art-meet-rothko-chapel#stream/0>

Russell, D (2018) Quoted in Ryan, L *Ruskin the Radical: Why the Victorian Thinker is back with a vengeance* The Guardian 30 August 2018

Website

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/aug/30/john-ruskin-artists-victorian-social-critic> London: The Guardian

Ryken, P.G. *Art for God's Sake A Call to Recover the Arts* Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing

Sartre, J.P. (1978) *Existentialism and Humanism* London: Eyre

Methuen Ltd

Smolewska, K.A., McCabe, S.B. and Woody, E.Z. (2006) A psychometric evaluation of the Highly Sensitive Person Scale: The components of sensory-processing sensitivity and their relation to the BIS/BAS and “Big Five” [Personality and Individual Differences](#) 40, 6, 1269-1279

Stoker, W. (2012) *Where Heaven and Earth Meet The Spiritual in the Art of Kandinsky, Rothko, Warhol and Kiefer* Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi

Taylor. M.C. (1994) *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Thomas, R. S. (2017) *Poems to Elsi* Bridgend: Seren Books

Tillich, P. (2012) *The Shaking of the Foundations* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers

Tillich, P. (1973) *Systematic Theology Volume* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Turrell, J. (2001) *Live Oak Friends Meeting House* Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://art21.org/read/james-turrell-live-oak-friends-meeting-house/>

Umari (2011) *Meditation and Modern Art Meet in Rothko Chapel* Keely: KUNC Radio Retrieved August 11, 2019

Website <https://www.kunc.org/post/meditation-and-modern-art-meet-rothko-chapel#stream/0>

Weil, S (2004) *Gravity and Grace* London: Routledge

Weisburger, E. (Ed) *The Spiritual in Art Abstract Painting 1890-1985* Los Angeles: County Museum of Modern Art & New York: Abbeville Press

Yin, Y. (2018) The Hill of the Buddha in the Snow

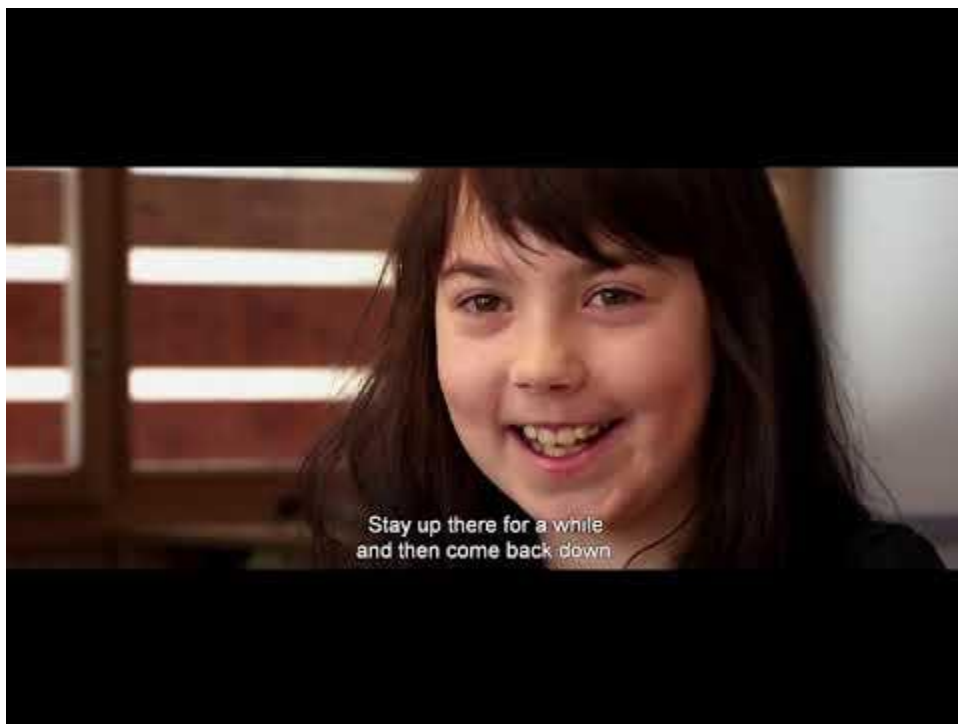
Retrieved from website

<http://www.thepluspaper.com/2018/07/12/the-hill-of-the-buddha-in-the-snow/>

Yoon, J. (2010) *Spirituality in Contemporary Art The Idea of the Numinous* London: Zidane Press

Reflection 3: 'Children of the Universe'

This reflection is inspired by Camille Budin's 2018 film 'Children of the Universe' ('Grand and Petit').



Budin's film considers the experience of a class of primary school children in France who, through experiential learning, explore their understandings of the Universe and how they perceive their relationship with it.

Children of the Universe

Directed by Camille Budin

This section of '*Reflection 3*' presents a transcript of the opening section of 'Children of the Universe'.

It presents encounters between children and their teachers, both within a school setting and in nature.

As I transcribed the film, it was not always clear or easy to discern which of the children were speaking. I have, therefore, given each of the children's spoken contributions a number. Different numbers do not necessarily indicate that each number denotes an individual child speaking.

The transcript of a section of the film presented below illustrates the pedagogical approaches, the teaching and learning strategies, adopted by the teachers, particularly in relation to cosmological and ecological concepts, themes, and ideas.

CHILDREN OF THE UNIVERSE TRANSCRIPT:

Children are being fitted with headband lights by a teacher:

Teacher: Okay There we go. It's not turned off

Dr Stephanie Juneau (Astrophysicist): Is that better?

Child: Yes

Children move freely and spontaneously around the school hall with their headlamps switched on. The children's movements are like a dance.

Dr Juneau observes the children as they move around the hall. She smiles appreciatively.

Children conversing: Lucas, I think that they spin; they spin on their own axis, but slowly.

They spin by themselves. Not so fast!

The stars don't move.

Yes, they do.

Well, no. The planets move.

The sun spins and the Earth rotates around it.

No, the Earth orbits around the sun.

Dr Juneau moves with the children, with her arms outstretched. It is as if the children orbit around her. The lights in the hall dim. This intensifies the star-like light from the children's hand-band torches.

Dr Juneau: A collision of stars.

Some of the children lie on the floor.

Dr Juneau: Deep in the Universe there are dreams to catch and dreams to let go.

Dr Juneau sits on a chair and the children sit on the floor and gather around her.

Dr Juneau: I would like to know, how do you imagine the beginning? The very beginning of everything, okay?

Child 1: I think in the beginning, everything was dark, there was nothing.

Dr Juneau: Everything was dark, there was nothing. And then?

Child 1: There was something. And then there were planets.

Child 2: I think it was more like meteorites that circled through all the galaxies. And at one point some meteorites collided and created nuclei. And they became like magnets that attracted the other small meteorites to create a beautiful, round planet.

Dr Juneau: You're saying that there were meteorites in the galaxies, but where did those galaxies come from?

Child 2: From a black hole that...I don't know.

Dr Juneau: Everything started with a tiny bubble which was very, very hot and very, very dense, ok? So, it's denser than rock. In fact, it's so dense and hot that light and matter haven't even separated yet. And this very small, very hot bubble...like a tiny dot...was what caused the Big Bang explosion.

It's now 300 million years after the Big Bang. Everything is dark. The universe is getting colder and colder. Gas clouds that are scattered across space, condense and begin to form the first stars.

Dr Juneau's description of the origin of stars is accompanied by visuals of stars appearing amongst cloud-like space imagery.

Child 3: At the very beginning there was no life at all.

Child 4: Everything is dark. As if it were the middle of the night.

Child 5: It didn't exist at all.

Images of snow on trees. The children walk into the forest.

Voice: We have to find the perfect spot.

Teacher: We'll keep going a bit further.

Camera eye view looking up at tall trees covered in snow.



Image by Alexander Popovkin www.pexels.com

Dr Juneau (with eyes closed): Now we imagine, we are somewhere in the universe.

Children have eyes closed.

Dr Juneau: Let's open our eyes. Look around. Who imagined that the trees were stars?

Several children raise their hands.

Dr Juneau: Several of you...What could we say about that?

Child 6: There are many of them.

Child 7: That there are a lot around us.

Child 8: That when a tree dies it's like when a star goes out.

Dr Juneau: So, are the trees...Are they all identical? Are they all the same?

Several children speak together: No.

Child 9: They all have different heights and ages, because trees are living beings. Some of them are very old, others are much younger.

Dr Juneau: And if I told you that stars all have different ages too. Would you believe me?

Several children speak together: Yes.

Dr Juneau: Of course, you'd believe me. I'm an astrophysicist. But it's true that trees have different ages. And you said it's because they are alive. That's how they are different from stars. If every tree is a star that means we're surrounded by stars and we're in the middle of a galaxy.

The children move around the forest. They explore the trees.

The film continues with the children now in the classroom.

Dr Juneau: At night when you look at the sky, you can see that there are many stars. And the distance between these stars. Do you think it resembles the distance between the trees? Do you think stars are further away from each other or closer?

Child 10: Closer, because if you look at them in the sky, you can see that they're really close to each other.

Dr Juneau: Okay, that's interesting.

Child 11: I think they're further apart, because looking at the sky they appear close to each other...But they are so far away that if you're on a star, you're really, really, far away from the next one.

Dr Juneau: It is an illusion that they appear close to each other. Because we are so far away that we see them as if they are close together, but in fact there's a huge distance between each star. The closest star to the sun is four light years away. That means that the light takes four years to arrive. And our spaceships travel much slower than that.

There's a space probe called Voyager that was launched 40 years ago. It travels at 17 km/sec. It would take 73, 600 years for Voyager to reach the star closest to the sun.

The children express surprise and astonishment at what they have just heard.

Dr Juneau: So, you're right that with our technology at the moment we can't really visit the closest stars.

The film returns to the children in the snowy forest. The children gather in a circle and hold hands. A drone is sent to the sky above them. The children gaze into the sky above.

Child 12: Sometimes I look up at the stars and I wonder how far away they are.

Child 13: I would like to go there once, to see. Stay up there for a while and come back down.

The film shows a drone's-eye view of the children in a clearing in the forest gathered together in a circle.

This image segues into a scene in which children are gathered in the dark in the school hall. They are

Child 14: It's really beautiful. I can't wait to see what will happen. In the beginning there was nothing. Wait, what surrounded it? Just look at that amazing universe! It's beautiful! It's immense! How did it become bigger? I don't actually know where we are. I think we're over there. We'll see.

Dr Juneau: What happened? What did you see?

Child 15: I saw that the universe got bigger and bigger.

Dr Juneau: Ok and what happened to the galaxies?

Child 16: Before they were all huddled together in the middle and now it seems like they have moved, when in fact they haven't.

Dr Juneau: What you are saying is interesting.

So the galaxies seemed to be moving further apart from each other but it's not the galaxies that have moved but instead the sheet, the universe...expanded and stretched out.

The film returns to the winter forest.

Child 17: The universe opens up. And at one point, it comes to a halt, before it overextends. I don't know

if it's infinity or not.

Dr Juneau: What would we see if we could see deep into the universe?

An image of space is presented.

Dr Juneau: Almost all the dots you see in this image are galaxies.

The children express surprise and amazement.

Child 18: Okay, there's a ton of galaxies! We're tiny!

Dr Juneau: There are around 10,000 galaxies in this image. And this is only a tiny part of the sky. That means that if we look at another part of the sky there's 10,000 more and another 10,000. But in total there are billions of galaxies.

The children continue to be surprised and amazed. The film features the children's faces as they comprehend what they have just learned.

The film returns to the forest featuring images taken from high above the trees.

Child 19: I wonder what's beyond the universe...what it's hiding from us?

The film returns to the children being in the forest. It records a conversation between Dr Juneau and two

children, Miguel and Alexis.

Child 20: They said on the radio that they saw a star being sucked away. It means that it got sucked into a hole.

Dr Juneau: Do you think it was a real hole?

Child 20: I think so, because they said they saw stars disappear.

Child 21: Is it true that...How are black holes made? What are they made of? I understand that stars have disappeared, but how...How did they get sucked away?

Child 22: Maybe there's something behind it. It's a bit of a mystery. It would rotate at the speed of light.

Dr Juneau: That's really fast! Do you think there are several black holes?

Child 21: No, I think there's only one.

Dr Juneau: How about you, Miguel? And you Alexis?

Child 22: I think there are two or three. Not an endless amount, but two or three...I think these black holes are really powerful out there in space.

Dr Juneau: And if I told you that there are different types of black holes and maybe there's one type of which there are millions in our galaxy.

Child 21: Ah, yes maybe...We don't know...

Dr Juneau: Alexis, do you think there could be millions of black holes in our galaxy?

Child 22: Yes.

Dr Juneau: And what exactly is a black hole?

Child 21: It's a hole that's black on the inside! Maybe it's empty. Completely black, like in the beginning.

Dr Juneau: Black, like the very beginning?

"Why do you want children to walk in the woods? Why do you want them to experience the rain and the wind and the dawn and the sunset and the whole amazing flurry of existence. The reason is to awake in the child {a sense} of who they are. And the context in which their life unfolds. So life needs to unfold by all these powers of the Universe, particularly within community relationships. The integral relatedness of the Universe will be preserved.... The wonder of the universe is so vast and overwhelming, beyond human thought."

From 'A Conversation with Thomas Berry'
By Nicolas Tuff



Photograph by Connor Danylenko

www.pexels.com

The film 'Children of the Universe' illustrates that the pedagogy, the philosophy of teaching and learning, explored in the scenes in classroom environments and within the natural world, is an approach characterised by dialogue, philosophical and scientific reasoning, paying attention to phenomena at both the macroscopic and microscopic levels, and the cultivation of awe and wonder.

It is an educational approach which encourages the nurturing of a deep sense of curiosity and imaginative thinking in which creativity is at the very centre of the encounter between children and their teachers. The children are invited to make connections between different phenomena.

The film 'Children of the Universe', therefore, can be regarded as illustrating an educational approach which articulates Ecozoic perspectives and values and is, I suggest, congruent with the ways of seeing and being, indeed, the spiritual vision of Thomas Berry and the cosmological narrative of Brian Swimme. Kamran Mofid has declared:

“Happy children, happy youth and young adults: our future leaders, our hope for a better future, a better world. We must nurture in them the joy of life, the mystery and the wonders of life’s journey, the universe, the environment, ecology, the nature and Mother Earth. We owe it to them, to provide them with the best possible education, the wisest teachers and instil in them the best values to sustain them in their lives, making them leaders to fight for, and to take action, in the interest of the common good, building a world of peace, justice, harmony, sustainability, and prosperity for all, and not the few, as it is currently the case.”

EXPLORATION 3:

'Saint Francis Explored'

Within the cycle of the Christian year, the period from 1 September to 4 October is known as the Season of Creation (also known as Creation Time).

This season concludes on 4 October, the Feast of Saint Francis, regarded by many as being the Patron Saint of Ecology.

'Exploration 3' presents the text of a lecture entitled *'Saint Francis Explored'* which I presented on 4 October 2010 at Bradford Cathedral in West Yorkshire, England. The text of the lecture is complemented by music which was played at intervals during the lecture. In addition, I have added additional material which expands upon the concepts, themes and ideas explored in the original lecture.

The ways of seeing and being in the world of Francis of Assisi have been particularly celebrated and affirmed in Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical *'Laudato Si'* (*'Praise Be'*).

'Saint Francis Explored'

by Kelvin Ravenscroft ©

Bradford Cathedral 4 October 2010

Janusz Korczak wrote:

“An educator who does not enforce but sets free, does not drag but uplifts, does not crush but shapes, does not dictate but instructs, does not demand but requests, will experience inspired moments with the child.”

In this declaration from his work “How to Love a Child”, Korczak acknowledges that at the heart of the process of teaching and learning is the capacity for students and teachers to be inspired. Inspiration can be defined as “being stimulated to creative thought or action”. To be inspired means to be motivated, energised, and animated to engage positively and creatively with something which has meaning and significance. We are inspired by that which has the capacity to connect with us deeply. We can be inspired by, for example, a work of art, a piece of music, a film, by the beauty and wonder of the natural world, by someone or something we love or by the example of great effort, achievement, and acts of compassion. Korczak is affirming that education, the art of teaching and learning, pedagogy, is ultimately about relationship,

encounter and engagement with others and the world in which we live.

The experience of Janusz Korczak and his orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto of Nazi-occupied Poland was located in the context of an apocalyptic vision of a world which appeared to have gone mad. The old order had been subverted and a chilling ideology was systematically and clinically defining millions of people as undesirable, as being less than human, for whom the only fate was certain death.

In his 'Ghetto Diary' Korczak declared:

"Thank you, Merciful Lord, for the meadow and the bright sunsets, for the refreshing evening breeze after a hot day of toil and struggle.

Thank you, Merciful Lord, for having arranged so wisely to provide flowers with fragrance, glow worms with the glow, and make the stars in the sky sparkle."

Korczak is offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the beauties of the earth. His cosmic gratitude is rooted in an appreciation of the natural world which, despite the sufferings of life, presents to him a hopeful vision of beauty and joy. Korczak's contemplation, reflection and meditation were undertaken in the midst of the challenging life of the orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto at a time when the lives of he and his children hung in the balance. The future was most uncertain. Despite this Korczak

took the time to mindfully and attentively focus not solely on the challenges, stresses, and strains of running the orphanage but, instead, he took the time to be grateful for each positive aspect of the children's existence. He said a glorious Yes! to life when it would have been understandable for him to have been ground down by the daily challenges he and his children faced.

Grigory Pomerants, the Russian dissident, essayist and philosopher has affirmed what he calls 'the still small voice from the great silence' and he has declared that the 'Old Adam turns away from the kind of contemplation and silence in which the deeper interior whisper can be heard'. Like Korczak, Pomerants affirms the power of being attentive, mindful and fully aware in the present moment even (perhaps especially) when all around you the world appears to be falling apart. Indeed, Pomerants has indicated that what kept him going, what gave him hope, a reason for living, during his time spent in the labour camps of the Gulag was the midnight sun in the far-North of the Soviet Union and of the beauties of nature. Despite the Gulag's challenges Pomerant's life affirms that a contemplative vision can enable people to 'discern the footprint of God, the essential thread in all things.'

Central to Korczak's vision, and at the heart of his legacy is the recognition that in a world of unpredictability, uncertainty, and even chaos, it is imperative to attempt to create inspirational oases

of calm, order and structure which provide a foundation for the possibility of facilitating meaning and hope for the future. Even in the darkest situation there is the possibility of discerning meaning and hope, however imperceptible this might appear to be. In the world of the 21st century, with its significant challenges and opportunities, Korczak's recognition of the requirement to create order out of chaos, meaning out of meaninglessness, to create a sanctuary, is to be taken seriously.

Amidst the trials and tribulations of the Ghetto experience with the possibility of death an ever-present reality, Korczak recognised and affirmed the requirement to create and maintain an atmosphere and an ethos of structure, order, discipline, calm and beauty, and he recognised that a response to, and relationship with, the natural world can act as an inspiration and as a catalyst for hope. Although Korczak could easily have become overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges he faced he was resolutely determined to give the children in his care a meaningful experience of life rooted in a wider connection with the natural world, however limited this may understandably have been.

The 'Ghetto Diary' presents Janusz Korczak's powerful and poignant observations, meditations and reflections upon the experience of life with his orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto. It contains wide ranging reflections upon the joy and pain, the challenges and opportunities, presented by

existence. In his 'Ghetto Diary' Korczak poignantly looks back upon his life and he reflects upon significant experiences, including those of his childhood, which have impacted upon his development, and he is mindful of the detail of the joys and pains, the challenges and opportunities, the despair and the hopes, which the children in his care experience.

In a profound sense the 'Ghetto Diary' is a book of memory in which Korczak attempts to make sense of his life in relation to his vocation as a children's advocate. In Polish, a diary, a book of memory, is known as a *pamiętnik*. There is a very real sense in which a *pamiętnik*, however, is not simply a factual timeline recording of events but is also a reflection and commentary upon event, upon memory. As a literary genre, therefore, it is a creative synthesis of historical and existential reflection. The past and the present are inextricably interwoven and interrelated. In addition, through their capacity to challenge, illuminate and inspire, *pamiętniki* are not only the reflections of a specific individual or community, they can assume a universal aspect. The memories, dreams, and reflections of one person can become the story of every woman and man. There is a profound sense, therefore, in which the experience of Janusz Korczak and his orphans can be regarded as a powerful illustration of the contradictions and paradoxes of the human condition and the capacity of human beings to embrace political, economic, and religious

extremism. The fate of Korczak and his orphans reminds us, in the early years of the 21st century, of the imperative to take steps to avoid entering a new Dark Ages in which prejudice and discrimination, stereotyping and scapegoating, injustice, extremism and conflict reassert themselves.

Throughout history humankind has engaged with questions of meaning, purpose and value, particularly with reference to the dark nights of the soul which can arise in response to the existence of evil and suffering. Indeed, in the ancient Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes the writer declares: "I have seen everything that is under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind" (1:14)

The spiritual traditions of the world can be regarded as living, dynamic, organic networks of relationships in which the past, present and future are understood with reference to an Ultimate concern, a Transcendent framework, a Divine reality, which, in some sense, provides a reconciliation of the tensions which exist between the real and the ideal, between life as it is and life as it could be, between the life shattering experience of evil and suffering and the life-affirming experience of joy, love, beauty, truth, justice and peace. Spiritual traditions are, therefore, in a very real sense, living *pamietniki*; they engage the individual and the communities to which they belong in a process of relating their traditions to contemporary experience. Spiritual traditions have, ultimately, to be living traditions;

they have to engage the real lives and experiences of real people in the real world with the insights and wisdoms of the past. In this way, the past, present, and future are inextricably linked; the “modern”, therefore, does not exist in isolation because it is rooted in what has gone before it. Indeed, both the “modern” and the “post-modern” can only exist on the foundations of what has preceded them. Modern spiritualities, therefore, have to take seriously the roots of their traditions. To be a radical means to be a person of roots, who is able to creatively engage with the challenges of contemporary society through being immersed in a tradition which has preceded them. To be a radical provides the freedom to embrace both tradition and the modern and hold them in a creative tension. The twentieth century provided us with many examples of spiritual radicals such as, for example, Martin Luther King, Thich Nhat Hahn, the Dalai Lama, Daisetz Suzuki, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Buber, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Simone Weil, Dorothy Day and Dag Hammarskjold who all illustrated that dark periods in human history elicit in us the capacity to actualise an alternative way characterised by peace, justice and ecological responsibility.

The insights of spiritual traditions are also powerfully complemented by the creative insights into existence elucidated by, for example, poets, novelists, painters, sculptors, musicians and filmmakers and it can be suggested that the power

of great art resides, ultimately, in its capacity to empower and inspire us to begin to make sense of our place in the world and to locate us in a meaningful network of relationships and in an authentic connection with the physical space, the environment, in which we live. Spiritual traditions and the creative impulse, complemented by the powerful and majestic insights of scientific and technological discovery, can provide the resources to engage with the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre's view that existence is characterised by anxiety, despair, abandonment and forlornness.

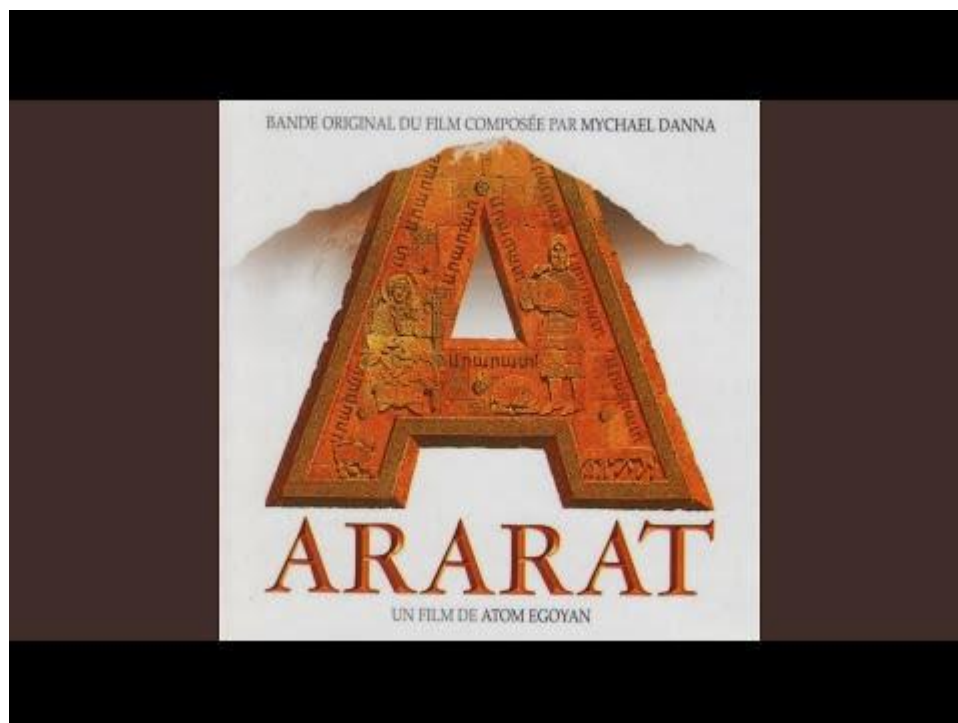
A poignant and moving example of the capacity of the creative impulse to engage with human experience and particularly in its attempt to illuminate suffering is presented in the composer Mychael Danna's soundtrack to the film "Ararat". Track 2 of the soundtrack is based upon an ancient melody which symbolises the words of Jesus upon the cross to his mother Mary: 'Dear woman, here is your Son'.

In the Armenian Orthodox Church, the night from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday is kept as a vigil and a profound and solemn period of devotional prayer, contemplation, meditation, and reflection. This is known as the night of the Tenebrae, during which sin, evil and death predominate. At this point the world, which appears to prefer darkness to light, has its way. Choosing to remain in darkness, men choose to destroy the light. At midnight, the lights of

the Church are extinguished one by one until the congregation kneels in total darkness. Echoing Sartre's analysis of the human condition and Janusz Korczak's death with his orphans at the hands of the Nazis at the concentration camp of Treblinka in August 1942, this is a time of sorrow, destitution, forlornness, anguish and abandonment.

MUSIC: 'Ararat by Mychael Danna' Soundtrack cd
Track 2: Oor Es Mayr Eem

(4 minutes & 15 seconds)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCClo9J_Y0

In a world in which joy and pain, disappointment and hope, co-exist in what can seem, at times, to be a powerful yet paradoxical, irrational and

meaningless combination, it is understandable why people ask what can possibly be an authentic response to the political economic, ecological and spiritual challenges which face the human race and the planet on which we are, ultimately, travellers, pilgrims and stewards. This evening I wish to suggest that within the Christian faith there exists a radical spiritual tradition which can be (re)discovered and reflected upon which has the potential to provide the inspiration for us to be empowered to live meaningful lives in an increasingly unpredictable and uncertain world. It is the Franciscan tradition which will be the focus of tonight's exploration and this tradition will be considered with particular reference to its meaning as a catalyst for ecological transformation together with its implications for justice and peace.

I have referred earlier to the concept of *pamietnik* as a creative literary genre. In effect, this evening's exploration of the spiritual vision of Francis of Assisi is a contemporary form of *pamietnik* in the sense that it interweaves historical exploration with existential and spiritual reflection; it attempts to relate the past to the present with a view to contributing to a process of considering ways in which the life, spirituality and legacy of Saint Francis can impact upon our lives in the early years of the 21st century and inspire and motivate us to live authentic, engaged and transformed lives.

This evening aims to stimulate further exploration

and discussion of the Franciscan tradition. It cannot attempt to present a detailed, comprehensive and definitive analysis of the origins and development of Franciscanism nor can it illustrate Francis' radical spiritual vision with an in depth reference to his spiritual biography. However, what it can try to do is illustrate key themes of Franciscan spirituality in order to facilitate reflection upon what they can mean for today's world.

Francis was born in Assisi in 1181 or 1182 the son of a prosperous cloth merchant, Pietro Bernadone. Pietro was travelling in France when his son was born. Although Pietro's wife, the Lady Pica (who herself was born in France, in Provence) named her new son Giovanni (John), when Pietro returned to Assisi with the profits of his trading, he decided to name his son Francesco, Francis, in response to his successful French commercial ventures. Indeed, French language and culture were to influence Francis deeply, in particular the traditions of the wandering troubadours. Until his early twenties Francis lived a privileged life. As a young man he became part of a group of wealthy young men known as the Tripudianti who displayed an epicurean approach to life enjoying food, wine, singing and dancing and flirting with beautiful young women. Francis became known as the King of Feasts as he and his peers processed through the streets of Assisi singing and dancing. Francis aspired to honour and fame, but he did not really have a clear view about the manner in which he would

achieve this. He attempted to realise his ambitions by participating in the war with Perugia but he was taken prisoner and imprisoned for over a year. Upon his release he returned to Assisi, but he suffered from significant ill-health. A long period of recuperation and soul-searching combined to provide a space in which a new sense of meaning and purpose could begin to emerge. Despite the failure of his involvement in the Perugian conflict Francis still wished to pursue military ambitions so he enlisted as a soldier in the war between the Papal armies and the Emperor Frederick II's armies at Apulia. Whilst travelling to battle he heard a voice calling him to follow and serve God and to return to his homeland. This experience marked the end of his career as a soldier and the beginning of the process of his spiritual awakening.

Francis struggled with his spiritual identity; at this stage he did not have a clear sense of what his vocation should be. He spent much time in prayer at the Etruscan tombs outside Assisi reflecting, often in tears, about the direction of his life. Outside Assisi was the Church of San Damiano, which was in a state of serious disrepair. Francis prayed at the Church, and he heard a voice saying "Francis, rebuild my Church." This revelation provided him with a mission and a role, and he entered enthusiastically into the renovation of San Damiano. Francis returned to his parents' house, and he loaded a horse, belonging to his father, with a collection of fine cloth which he sold at market. He

wished to donate the money he raised to the rebuilding of San Damiano. Pietro Bernadone was incensed that his son had taken the horse and cloth without permission, and he made the decision to present Francis to the magistrate at Assisi. However, Francis refused to submit to the summons as he believed that as he was a man dedicated to God he should only be subject to the Bishop. A hearing took place at the Cathedral in Assisi at which Bishop Guido encouraged Francis to repay the money to his father. In response to this Francis took off all the clothes he was wearing and, completely naked, he placed the clothes in front of the Bishop. Although this act could be seen as being simultaneously provocative and courageous, it can be regarded as being a statement that Francis' developing spiritual vision, his way of seeing the world, was in stark contrast to the power and wealth of the Church. Through this act Francis was proclaiming that, just as Jesus had been vulnerable and had, as Saint Paul declared in his letter to the Church at Philippi, "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant", to be a follower of Christ requires setting aside, letting go, of everything which inhibits our capacity to live and love a life which embodies the spirituality of the Kingdom of God, the ethics of the Beatitudes which affirm that blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Francis' emerging spiritual vision had at its heart the

recognition that to be a Christian, a follower and disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, is a counter-cultural, dare one even say, revolutionary, act because it inspires and empowers the development of new ways of seeing the world in which the established conventions are challenged and subverted and replaced with a spirituality and ethics of love, compassion, peace, justice and ecological transformation.

Embarking enthusiastically on his new vocation and mission, within two years Francis had restored three churches, including the Portiuncula, the Chapel of St Mary of the Angels, and gained twelve followers, the first disciple being Bernard of Quintavalle. The Franciscan brotherhood grew rapidly and within eleven years there were over five thousand all of whom took a vow of poverty. This brotherhood became known as the First Order of Saint Francis. Francis also founded the Order of Poor Clares in honour of their first abbess. The Order of Poor Clares became known as the Second Order of Saint Francis. Clare was a beautiful young woman from a noble Assisi family who relinquished her inheritance in order to follow the way of Francis and to live a life of poverty. She cut her hair and wore simple clothes symbolising her new way of life in which she became a spiritual companion, a soul friend, to Francis. It can be suggested that Clare's deep devotional spirituality and her bond with Francis profoundly impacted upon the development of Franciscanism; indeed, her contribution to

Franciscan spirituality has all too often been overlooked and underappreciated and there is a need for her significance to be reassessed. That task, however, is for another day ...

In due course a Third Order was established. The Third Order admitted both sexes and provided those who wished to continue living their secular lives the opportunity to follow the Franciscan way through adoption of a Rule of Life inspired by Franciscan principles. The first lay brother was Lord Orlando of Chiusi in Castantino who donated to the Franciscan community Mount La Verna, which was the location upon which, in due course, Francis would receive the stigmata. All of the three Franciscan Orders spread widely and rapidly and they all continue to this day.

On Easter Sunday 1980 Pope John Paul II declared Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of ecology and the philosopher Henryk Skolimowski has declared that "We need a new light to brighten up our present sombre horizons. The light of ecological spirituality, guided and inspired by the visions and simplicity of Saint Francis offers us a promising new perspective as we enter the twenty-first century and indeed the Third Millennium."

It is likely that each one of us has experienced the sense of awe and wonder that is evoked by the beauty of the natural world. A wonderful sunrise or sunset, a starry night, a rainbow or the radiance of a

field of sunflowers, for example, can move, inspire, and even overwhelm us. Such experiences capture our attention and elicit positive feelings and emotions. They can be described as 'wonderful' because they are beautiful, amazing, and even breath-taking. In his celebrated Canticum of the Sun, his song of praise to God as Creator, Francis appears to be overwhelmed by the vibrancy, energy and dynamism of the whole of nature: the sun, moon, stars, wind, air, water and fire. He responds to the whole of creation with spontaneity, joy, and celebration. Francis perceives the whole of life as being a medium through which the Divine is revealed. For Francis, the creation, the web of life, forms an interactive, relational cosmic dance, it is iconic. Creation is revelatory; it is a vehicle of Transcendence. In his Canticum Francis approaches the Divine with reverence, respect, devotion, submission, and humility, as being the source, the ground of being, of all life. Francis praises God for "... sister moon and every star that You have formed to shine ..." and he acknowledges that wind, air, breezes, and clouds "... To everyone that breathes You give a share."



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIXcaD-Zz7M>

‘Lovely Day’ by Donovan
From the film ‘Brother Sun and Sister Moon’

Francis felt inspired to create a musical melody to complement the words of his Canticle which Franciscan Friars would sing as they ventured into the towns and villages like travelling minstrels, troubadours, teaching and preaching. After singing the Canticle one of the Brothers would declare to the people: “We are the wandering minstrels of God, and the only reward we ask is that you live a life of true penitence!”

Brother Ramon SSF has suggested that in the Canticle of the Sun “Praise of the cosmos is also the symbolic, unconsciously spoken language that

expresses the interior journeys of the depths of the soul.” In this perspective the Canticle has more than one level of meaning. On one level it presents a celebratory affirmation of nature but on another level it reflects Francis’ deep contemplative reverential encounter with God. The Canticle, therefore, has internal and external dimensions; its terms of reference simultaneously relates the inner experience of the human spirit to the world in which we live and to the sense of something Other, the Beyond in our midst. Francis’ understanding of creation as an expression of the Divine affirms Christianity’s incarnational and sacramental tradition in which matter, physicality, embodiment, is the medium through which God is revealed. This perspective confirms the book of Genesis’ recognition of creation as a positive event: “And God saw that it was good.”

Ultimately, Francis’ song of praise celebrating the whole of creation and its origins in God should not be seen simply as a poetic, pastoral, romantic celebration of life. It is all of these things, but it also articulates deep theological, philosophical, spiritual and ethical perspectives about the way things are, about the very nature of human existence and about the place of humankind in relation to other living creatures and to the wider cosmos. In the modern world it is imperative that we explore anew Francis’ relational way of seeing the world as it can be suggested that it is able to provide an inspiring framework from which to begin a process of

identifying the practical action which can follow from the belief that we have a moral responsibility for the fragile planet in which we live which is, according to many commentators, on the point of ecological and economic collapse. All of the world's faiths, including Christianity, have to engage proactively with this task. Indeed, there is a view that ecological transformation, in its widest sense, can be regarded as the most urgent priority of the Church's mission; it is not an optional ethical extra but is central to what it means to be a community of faith in the modern world.

In their song 'Book of Golden Stories' the Celtic group Runrig declare:

"You took me through the pages
Good happiness is shared
Lost in a web of changes
This could be the last dance
Waiting in the wind
Until the minstrel comes to save us."

In his reverential and revolutionary understanding of the cosmos Francis of Assisi, God's minstrel, inspires us to keep still believing, to be able to see the miraculous in our midst, the extraordinary in the ordinary, the sacred in the profane.



Runrig from the cd 'The Stomping Ground'
Track 1: 'Book of Golden Stories' (3 minutes & 45 seconds)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je1Ca0ZY0OI>

Francis' devotion to God and his recognition that life is, ultimately, miraculous resulted in a profound change in perception, a radically new way of looking at the world, which led to a transformed sense of self involving a heightened awareness of the responsibility for making authentic moral choices. Francis' decision to embrace a life of poverty was the beginning of a lifetime of living according to the radical demands of Jesus' life-affirming ethic of the Kingdom. In Francis' life moral responsibility is reflected in compassionate concern which is translated into action on behalf of those who are in physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual need.

Francis' celebration of the presence of God permeating the whole of the cosmos and its profound ecological significance and implications is complemented by a deep sense of justice. His understanding of justice is rooted in his decision to renounce his life of privilege in order to live in radical simplicity unencumbered by personal possessions. Francis recognised that the age in which he lived was a time of deep social divisions. Great wealth, concentrated in the hands of the privileged few, existed alongside deep poverty. There were many who were marginalised and excluded from mainstream society. Director Roberto Rossellini's 1950 neo-realist film "Francis, God's Jester", which presents a series of episodes from the life of Francis and his disciples, illustrating the harshness and brutality of the times in which they lived, includes a most powerful and moving scene in which Francis encounters a leper. Lepers were the outcasts of society, not only because people feared the spread of disease but also because there were those who regarded the lepers' plight as being evidence of sin and God's displeasure. The existence of disease and disability was seen by the comfortable, including many in the Church, as being evidence of moral weakness. However, Francis subverted such a perspective. Rossellini's film presents Francis moved to tears by the leper's plight and he is inspired to pass him some food. However, Francis recognises that this is not enough; he realises that he should not simply treat the leper as a person in need of charity

but should relate to him in terms of his unique personhood. The film, therefore, presents Francis embracing the leper. There is no conversation between them, but Francis' non-verbal affirmation empathically and compassionately illustrates that there is a genuine encounter, a real meeting, between them.

The stone carver and painter Greg Tricker's marvellous 2005 book "Francis of Assisi- Paintings for Our Time" includes an episode from the life of Francis entitled "The Shared Bowl". The story reads as follows: "A leper who was ill and suffering was being cared for by Brother James, a simple-hearted childlike person. He thought it would be a nice change for the leper to leave the hospital and to walk through the woods out to the Portiuncula. They set out, meeting St Francis on the way who was horrified and said: 'You must not lead these Brother Christians abroad in this fashion; it is not decent for you or them.' But as soon as he had spoken, he regretted it realising how much his words could hurt the leper. To show his penance, St Francis said, 'I will eat out of the same bowl as my Brother Christian.' So a bowl of food was placed between them. His fingers touched the leper's fingers as they ate together from the same bowl. Francis was ready to lose his life rather than to be unkind."

This retelling of an important episode in Francis' life clearly illustrates that he is no idealised saint because he demonstrates the capacity to unfairly

judge others and act in a hurtful manner. However, what is powerful about the story is that Francis is ashamed about the way in which he has behaved, and he decides to make amends for his actions by being alongside the leper and sharing food. Francis, therefore, makes himself vulnerable and he is truly sorry for his actions.

Henryk Skolimowski has declared: “Unless we conceive of a human being as a sacred particle in a sacred universe, the grounds of human dignity and ultimately of social justice will be thin and wanting. We need to create a reverential economics in order to avoid violent revolutions in the future.” In his actions Francis clearly demonstrates that each human being is sacred, that they have intrinsic dignity and that, as a result, all our relationships should be characterised by social justice. In today’s world, in which even the richest countries of the world are engaged in a process of re-evaluating and reconfiguring their economic and political structures, Francis’ life and vision presents a timely reminder that the human impact of all decisions should be at the heart of all policy making. If the Franciscan spiritual vision is to be taken seriously it can be suggested that statements such as “Let the market decide”, “What we need is growth” and “There is no alternative” are perhaps not the most meaningful and appropriate responses to the challenges and opportunities with which we are faced. Indeed, part of the process of formulating authentic, creative, and innovative

responses could involve the Christian Church in developing a systematic critique, informed by the Beatitudes of Jesus and Francis' radical simplicity, of much of what is regarded as economic, political and ecological orthodoxy with its focus on unlimited growth, rampant consumerism, militarism and ecological devastation and degradation.

One of the most well-known and well-loved stories about Francis' life is that of the wolf of Gubbio. While he was staying in the mountain town of Gubbio, Francis was told that a large fierce wolf was on the prowl, killing and eating animals and even attacking people. The citizens of Gubbio were living in fear of the wolf as a result of which they became increasingly reluctant to venture out of the city gate. However, Francis, putting his trust in Christ, went out of the city with a friend to meet the wolf. Crowds watched as the wolf came running towards him. Francis made the sign of the cross and said: "Come to me, brother wolf, and in Christ's name I command you not to harm me or anybody." At this the wolf ceased his advance and he lowered his head and lay at Francis' feet. Francis asked the wolf to make a promise not to terrorise the people of Gubbio ever again in return for which the people would care for him by providing him with the food he needed. Francis said to him: "... brother wolf, I want you and them to make peace so that they may be no more harmed by you, nor the hounds further pursue you, the wolf demonstrated his agreement to this proposal by the submissive and conciliatory

movements of his body, tail and ears and the bowing of his head placing his paw into Francis' hand. The people of Gubbio were amazed at what they believed to be a miracle.

This story, with its presentation of an example of harmony between Francis and the natural world, including those aspects of creation which challenge and frighten us, can, upon first reading, appear to present a child-like, naive, view of the Franciscan way. It can appear to suggest an idealised view of the world in which, ultimately, life's tensions and challenges are resolved, and the world is restored to order. However, there is another way of looking at the story. The story of Francis and the wolf is presented in "The Little Flowers of Saint Francis", a medieval Italian manuscript, which includes stories, teachings and aphorisms illustrating the life of Francis and his followers. What can be regarded as being the key to understanding the profound insights and truth of the story can be located in Francis' request that the wolf should make peace with the people of Gubbio. I suggest that "making peace" is what this story is, at its heart, about. Francis is recognising that the citizens of Gubbio and the wolf were polarised; they regarded each other as enemies. The people were afraid of the wolf's capacity to hurt them, and the wolf was afraid that he would be hounded down, captured, and killed. The wolf and the people, therefore, lived in mutual suspicion and mistrust and there appeared to be no hope of breaking this cycle of negativity and

violence. However, things only began to change when Francis made the courageous proactive decision, inspired by his faith, to address the situation and try to bring about reconciliation. Central to his approach to resolution and reconciliation was a non-violent approach in which he took the risk of being attacked by the wolf. However, the wolf appears to recognise that Francis does not fear him and is a man of peace; this is not what the wolf would have expected. The story also makes it clear that Francis presents the people of Gubbio with a challenge; he requires them to promise that they will provide the wolf with his daily necessities. This accord between the people and the wolf is sealed by making the “welkin ring acclaiming the peace of wolf and people” as a result of which the people were able to live in safety and the wolf lived like a ward of the state. When he grew old and died the citizens mourned him. The phrase to “make the welkin ring” derives from the Old English word “wolcen” which refers to the sky, the firmament, the heavens. To “make the welkin ring”, therefore, is to make a sound so loud that it permeates the entire universe. The celebratory declaration of peace between the wolf and the people of Gubbio is not simply an ending of hostilities, the absence of conflict; rather, it is the joyous anthemic affirmation, a song of praise and thanksgiving, reflecting the outcome of a positive process of active peace-making which involves negotiation, the letting go of assumed identities and claims to power followed by a declaration of mutual support and a shared way

forward. Making the welkin ring, therefore, illustrates that, from a Franciscan perspective, non-violence, peace-making, has a cosmic dimension. The story of Francis and the wolf presents the powerful idea that reconciliation has cosmic implications; there is a relationship between the ways in which human beings relate to themselves, to each other and to other creatures and this fundamentally impacts upon the nature of reality, the very structure of the universe. In this perspective, therefore, all things that exist are interrelated and interdependent. The very fabric of the cosmos and the web of life are adversely affected by conflict and violence in all its many and varied forms and, conversely, creation flourishes when peace, justice, harmony, ecological responsibility and well-being prevail. Actions have consequences; what is sown is reaped. Francis, therefore, recalls us to a (re)discovery of Jesus' non-violent ethics of the Kingdom of God; the challenge of the Franciscan spiritual vision is located in its power to call us to the actualisation of this way of being in all areas of life: personal and social, in the family and the community, in our country and internationally so that economics, politics, education, spirituality, the arts, science, and technology can begin to transcend their increasingly narrow and shallow definitions of what constitutes well-being, happiness and personal fulfilment. Francis, echoing Jesus, reminds us that it is by letting go of our false selves, by refusing to hide behind our titles and status, abandoning what is ephemeral and inauthentic, that we can discover

who we truly are. When the almost overwhelming significance of the Biblical idea that each human being is made in the image of God, that in each person we are presented with the face of Christ, is truly understood it will be possible to begin to create a just, peaceful and ecologically transformed future.

In their song “My Hope Is Safe with Thee”, Eden’s Bridge proclaim that:

“Though storms may rage
And I may fail
My strength will come from Thee
Through wind and hail
You shield my sail
My hope is safe with Thee.”

The song affirms that in the midst of the vicissitudes of life, at the heart of the Christian faith is the belief in, and the experience of, God’s presence alongside us. Francis lived a life in which he was deeply aware of God being present to, and with, him. However, the affirmation that “My hope is safe with thee” does not mean that faith means that all of life’s problems are solved or that life necessarily becomes easier or simpler. Indeed, Francis’s decision to follow Jesus radically changed his life; in a real sense his decision to follow Christ at a deep level resulted in his life, in many ways, becoming significantly harder, both materially and physically. His profound living out of the implications of the

Gospel and the ethic of the Kingdom of God was costly; it demanded a transformation of all aspects of his life. However, in the integration of his recognition of God's presence permeating the whole of creation with his affirmation of the face of Christ being present in each and every human being he illustrates how it is possible to begin to facilitate peace and reconciliation.



Eden's Bridge: Isle of Tides cd
Track 12: My Hope Is Safe With Thee
(4 minutes & 35 seconds)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGowFUyPMIo>

Tonight's lecture began with reference to the experience of the educator Janusz Korczak. I wish to continue this exploration of Saint Francis' radical spiritual vision through consideration of a story, a modern legend, by a writer who was a contemporary of Korczak,

Joseph Roth's short story *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* was written a few months before his death, at the age of forty-four, in May 1939. In 1988 the film of the book was released to critical acclaim. The film, directed by Ermanno Olmi, won a Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in that year and four Italian Oscars during 1988-89. It stars Rutger Hauer as Andreas, an ex-miner jailed for an accidental murder, now released from prison and living homeless in Paris. He is as poor as Saint Francis.

A mysterious old man offers Andreas two hundred francs on the condition that he repay it the following Sunday to the church of Sainte Marie des Batignolles. The film chronicles Andreas' encounters with faces from the past and present and presents a scenario in which each time he spends the money he wakes up, usually from a drunken stupor, to find that the bank notes have miraculously reappeared in his wallet.

There is a sense in which Joseph Roth's own life echoed that of Andreas. Alcoholism had destroyed his health and in 1938 he suffered a heart attack which left him severely incapacitated. In

what can be regarded as being perhaps the most powerful and painful scene in the film, Andreas escapes from the torrential rain by spending the night drinking alone in a bar. Throughout the night his solitary drinking contrasts with the experience of deep respect, caring and love displayed in the interaction of others in the bar. Andreas, in his isolation, reflects upon his life and appears to experience despair, meaninglessness and a sense of loss. Through his promise to repay the money to the Church Andreas has the possibility of finding a purpose, goal, or mission to his life. When Andreas' money runs out it is always unexpectedly replaced. Is this chance, coincidence or providence? He encounters friends and loved ones from the past who have a significant effect on his present life; how is this to be explained? The task of returning the money to the Church allows him to transform his apparently aimless life into a life lived from a transcendent perspective.

In his experiences, both joyful and despairing, Andreas appears to be searching for meaning to his life. The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl has suggested that "man is characterised by his "search for meaning" rather than his "search for himself". Indeed, Andreas appears to be engaged in a profound existential quest, attempting to make sense of his situation. Ultimately, the film poses the question "Is death the premature and tragic end to Andreas' life or is it the fulfilment of his mission?"

Through such themes and concepts the film can be recognised as being an inspiring, and deeply contemplative, exploration of the nature of existence, including the joy and the pain of life, together with examination of the relationship between meaning and well-being. However, it can be suggested that *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* is actually a parable about the human condition. Perhaps what it powerfully illustrates is that human beings have available to them all the resources they need to live well. Indeed, even though Andreas appears to squander the money which he receives from others, it is regularly replenished. The gifts which Andreas receives can be viewed as being a metaphor for the gifts, the resources, the natural world provides to us in abundance which are, all too often, shared inequitably or are wasted on a vast scale leading to the creation of a world which is ravaged by greed and the quest for power and dominance. In succumbing to his personal addictions, Andreas all too often finds himself to be alone, alienated from others, cut off from those around him, even those who try to reach out and help him. Whatever the messages of the film may be, it does appear to suggest that, echoing Francis of Assisi, meaning is found in encounter with others, through a reverential, loving engagement with our fellow human beings and through a response to, and relationship with, the Divine. In such a perspective, the world in which we live, therefore, has personal, social, ecological, and cosmic

dimensions and meaning and well-being is to be found in a holistic interaction of these dimensions.

In her recent work, "Absence of Mind" the author Marilynne Robinson has commented that "Our religious traditions give us as the name of God two deeply mysterious words – I AM." In her 2005 novel "Gilead", which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, Robinson explores the experience of the Rev John Ames, who, in 1956, towards the end of his life, writes a letter to his young son. The idea is that the son will open the letter after John's death and as he grows up he will be able to revisit the letter and begin to learn and reflect upon the life of John and his ancestors. In an evocative scene John recalls how, when he was a child, he visited with his father the grave of his grandfather. He describes his father kneeling deep in prayer at his grandfather's grave:

"Every prayer seemed long to me at that age, and I was truly bone tired. I tried to keep my eyes closed, but after a while I had to look around a little. And this is something I remember very well. At first I thought I saw the sun setting in the east; I knew where east was, because the sun was just over the horizon when we got there that morning. Then I realised that what I saw was a full moon rising just as the sun was going down. Each of them was standing on its edge, with the most wonderful light between them. It seemed as if you could touch it, as if there were palpable currents of light passing back and forth, or as if there were great taught skeins of light suspended

between them. I wanted my father to see it, but I knew I'd have to startle him out of his prayer, and I wanted to do it the best way, so I took his hand and kissed it. And then I said, 'Look at the moon.' And he did. We just stood there until the sun was down and the moon was up. They seemed to float on the horizon for quite a long time, I suppose because they were both so bright you couldn't get a clear look at them. And that grave, and my father and I, were exactly between them, which seemed amazing to me at the time, since I hadn't given much thought to the nature of the horizon. My father said, 'I would never have thought that this place could be beautiful. I'm glad to know that.'

It can be suggested that this extract from Gilead encapsulates four key elements of Francis of Assisi's spiritual vision. Firstly, the experience of John and his father takes place in a context of prayer and thanksgiving. The experience has a profoundly prayerful, contemplative and meditative quality to it. Secondly, at the heart of their experience is a deep response to, and appreciation of, the beauty of creation and their place within it. Ultimately, their lives are located in a cosmic context. Thirdly, this awe and wonder in response to the world as it its centre the image of the sun and moon. We have explored earlier the concept of "Brother Sun and Sister Moon" in Francis' way of seeing the world and Gilead's lunar and solar motifs, evoking Vincent van Gogh's "Starry Night" panoramas, can be thought of as reminding us of our connection to the web of

life, to the Divine source and to our place within the cycle and rhythms of creation. Fourthly, John Ames' loving non-verbal interaction with his prayerful father is a reminder that at the heart of the spiritual traditions of the world is the imperative to relate to others, to our world and to the Divine, authentically and compassionately, in what Martin Buber has termed "I-Thou" encounters. It is my view that the imagery and experiences presented in the Gilead extract are deeply Franciscan and confirm Marilynne Robinson's affirmation that at the heart of the spiritual life is that sense, awareness, and presence of the I-AM.

Through exploration of, and dialogue with, the life of Francis of Assisi it is possible, therefore, to embark on a process of the development of an appreciation of Francis' transformative way of seeing and experiencing the world. The development of our sensitivity to Francis' recognition of a Transcendent reality permeating the universe can facilitate the capacity to acknowledge the primacy of existential questions, questions of ultimate concern, of meaning, purpose, and value. Francis' life can act as a model, an illustration, of a life lived in the light of eternity, a life which is authentic and empowered because it undertakes to relate all aspects of existence to a reality which is both experienced within the human soul and is also understood as being a Presence, a 'Thou' beyond the self. In such a relational dialogical approach each one of us is an 'I' who encounters the 'Thou' of Francis of Assisi

as a result of which we can be challenged, inspired and empowered to live authentically and to develop spiritually as an Iconic Self.

Earlier, in the extract from the Ararat soundtrack, we explored the experience of darkness, of the sense of betrayal and abandonment at the heart of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I conclude this lecture with a further song from Eden's Bridge entitled "The Earth Waits." The song's theme can be regarded as being the experience of watching and waiting, the sense of expectancy and anticipation related to the actualisation of the Kingdom of God. The song includes the words:

"When I listen to the words of long ago
It is clear that we've forgotten all we've known
Let us set aside the night
And put on the arms of light
And wait for the dawn to come
For day will soon be here!"



Eden's Bridge: Isle of Tides cd Track 5:
The Earth Waits (5 minutes & 54 seconds)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W0lwKHye-c>

The song's imagery evokes the idea of new beginnings, the movement from darkness to light, the transition from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. The life, legacy, and spiritual vision of Francis of Assisi, in its radical rediscovery and affirmation of Jesus' message, person and work, can be regarded as presenting a reminder to our world of the requirement for personal, social, and global transformation in which ecology, justice and peace are at the heart of engaged faith.

Through development of a transformed awareness, appreciation, and compassionate response to the world, in solidarity with Saint Francis, it is possible to

affirm the perspective of the theologian Don Cupitt that "... through religious and moral action the world can be made so seriously beautiful that one is glad to pass away into union with it."

I dedicate this evening to the memory and continuing legacy of Saint Francis.

Copyright Kelvin Ravenscroft © 2010-2023



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAAoayeSoPw>

EXPLORATION 4: *'The Passionate Self'*

In *'Exploration 2'* presented above, I explored the relationship between the arts and the spiritual.

This *'Exploration 4'* complements this through consideration of the nature of, and relationship between, Religious Education and Spiritual Education with reference to the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Janusz Korczak.

This *'Exploration 4'*, in effect, through exploration of a programme of study of the Holocaust, articulates a philosophy of Spiritual and Religious Education.

The Passionate Self:

An Exploration of the nature of, and relationship between, Religious Education and Spiritual Education with reference to the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Janusz Korczak.

By Kelvin Ravenscroft © 2023

Exploring Spiritual Education

“I have not the language nor the conceptual philosophy to designate the elements of the spirit and spirituality. But my experience suggests that an encounter with the spiritual is, first, a celebration of the joy and fullness of life and then an overwhelming sense of contentment. But the road is difficult.” (1)

This reflection by Brian Keenan following his liberation from captivity in the Lebanon upon the meaning and nature of “the spiritual” presents a life-affirming perspective in which it is possible to identify three significant elements of the spiritual life. Because Keenan undoubtedly endured great suffering during his years in captivity which he has poignantly documented (2) it may at first appear somewhat surprising to see that he identifies celebration as an element of the spiritual dimension of life. Celebration suggests a way of looking at the world in which glory, honour, rejoicing, and praise are at the core of one’s being. For Keenan celebration relates to joy and the fullness of life. Joy connotes bliss, delight, ecstasy, elation, exaltation, gladness, pleasure, satisfaction, and rapture. A joyful perspective on life, therefore, is a perspective which affirms aliveness; it is in tune with the rhythms of life. It says a resounding Yes! to life. What is striking about the idioms of the language of celebration and joy is that they have an affinity with the language of religious worship. Indeed, Keenan talks of “an encounter with the spiritual”. The word

“encounter” does not suggest superficiality, triviality, or lack of substance. Rather it suggests that the spiritual dimension of life is that to which one relates in depth. It leads one to relate to oneself, others and the world authentically with an attitude of trust and affirmation.

When consideration is given to the nature of Keenan’s experience of captivity it may appear at first to be somewhat incongruous that his perspective on the spiritual is characterised by hope and optimism. The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (3) has described what he terms creative fidelity which affirms Being in the face of despair and denial. Creative fidelity would appear to be suggested by Keenan’s perspective and involves an attitude of faithfulness which “... is the spontaneous and unimposed presence of an I to a Thou.... it is a call to which I answer “present”. In saying “here” I create my own self in the presence of a thou.... fidelity is the active perpetuation of presence.”

Gould (4) acknowledges that in French the term presence has dimensions that are absent in the English perception, understanding and usage of the word. He suggests that “Marcel’s term presence involves a bond of feeling between one person and another. He points out that when two people become aware that they have shared an experience - they have visited the same place, they have shared the same risks, they have read and enjoyed the same book, or they share a friendship

with the same person - a unity is established in which the I and the Thou become the we. These beginnings of being present to the other can develop into being for the other."

Although it may well be that Keenan is using the term encounter in a non-religious sense it is possible to recognise this concept of presence, an awareness of the Other, as being a significant feature of religious experience, particularly worship. In worship the believer enters the sacred space where encounter with the Divine or the Transcendent takes place. Indeed, it can be suggested that the essence of prayer as an expression of worship is encounter. A strength of Keenan's perspective is that it can justifiably be interpreted from both religious and non-religious perspectives. Encounter in Keenan's perspective, therefore, can contribute to an understanding of the spiritual dimension of life because it affirms the primacy of relationship and moral personalism which is central to both religious and humanistic traditions.

Keenan is aware, however, that "the road is difficult". This can suggest that life is like a journey in which challenges, hardships and hurdles are encountered. If interpreted from a religious perspective this is the language of pilgrimage which, echoing Bunyan's Pilgrim on his journey to the Celestial City (5), recognises that the joys and tribulations of life are ultimately the vehicles through

which we are able to attain full humanity via a return to the Divine Source. Such a perspective reflects T S Eliot's perspective in his Four Quartets (6) in which he declares that

“We shall not cease from our exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

Keenan's experience of captivity followed by liberation powerfully illustrates how the catalyst for personal growth and development in self-understanding can often be found in one's world being unexpectedly turned upside down as a result of which all the so-called certainties of everyday life disappear. This perspective recognises that a significant element of the spiritual dimension of life is what can be called the shadow side of life. The shadow side of life is often expressed in terms of a contrast between positives and negatives such as, for example, darkness and light, good and evil, love and hate, peace and violence and beauty and ugliness. It has been suggested earlier that the tenor of Keenan's view of the spiritual dimension of life is ultimately optimistic, but it is possible to interpret it as a powerful example of what Mounier (7) termed tragic optimism. Such an optimism is predicated on Mounier's Christian faith in which hope and progress is defined in terms of the paradox of the Crucifixion; Resurrection through the Cross, life through death. Keenan's personal experience of the shadow side

of life can poignantly illustrate that an awareness of the reality of the darker side of human nature is an integral component of an understanding of the spiritual dimension of life.

This analysis of Keenan's perspective, therefore, suggests that there are three dimensions to an understanding of the spiritual. Firstly, there is the affirmation that the foundation of the spiritual is the concept of encounter in which life is experienced in terms of depth and relationship. Secondly, life is valued, affirmed and celebrated. Such a perspective has been particularly explored by Cupitt (8) who, from the perspective of a non-realist approach to Christian faith, has commented that recent years have seen a major religious change in which the word "God" has virtually disappeared from everyday speech and the language, beliefs, attitudes and feelings together with ceremonies and observances that traditionally focussed around a supernatural, divine Being have increasingly begun to be reexpressed and centred around life. In such a perspective "The new Life-theology is evidently a secularisation of traditional Christian belief - and in particular, belief in God and the everyday 'practice of the presence of God'. It revolves the presence of God down into the feeling of being alive...."

This 'feeling of being alive' can be regarded as an apposite phrase to encapsulate Keenan's view of the celebratory dimension of the spiritual.

Celebration is related to the third dimension of Keenan's perspective which is his recognition, arising from his own personal experience, that an understanding of the spiritual should acknowledge the realities of the darkness, the shadow side of life.

This discussion of Keenan's understanding of the spiritual dimension of life has been undertaken in order to initiate, albeit obliquely, analysis of the contemporary educational debate about the aims of education, particularly in terms of the impact of the 1988 Education Reform Act (9) which locates the educational enterprise in a frame of reference in which the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils is at the heart of the curriculum and the ethos of the school. Indeed, the primacy of these five dimensions of teaching and learning is underlined by their position in the 1995 Guidance On the Inspection of Secondary Schools (10) which requires inspectors to evaluate and report upon "... the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, through the curriculum and the life of the school, the example set by adults in the school; and the quality of collective worship."

Although undoubtedly many schools have always affirmed the importance of the spiritual and moral dimensions of the curriculum the 1988 Act has provided the catalyst for a stimulating and vigorous debate about the purpose and nature of education

and has particularly focussed dialogue about the meaning of the spiritual dimension of life and the nature of spiritual development together with creative exploration of the strategies by which schools can actively promote the spiritual development of their students.

Exploration of the nature of what has become known as Spiritual Education has been a particularly stimulating enterprise because although the 1988 Act suggests that spiritual development is a whole school issue the parameters and focus of Spiritual Education have been delineated with particular reference to its relationship to Religious Education. Indeed, the Guidance on the Inspection of Secondary Schools (11) comments that “Although Religious Education and Spiritual Education are not synonymous, Religious Education can make a significant contribution to spiritual development. Inspectors might consider, for example, whether pupils are encouraged to: consider life’s fundamental questions and how religious teaching can relate to them; respond to such questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions as well as from their own experience and viewpoint; and reflect on their own beliefs or values in the light of what they are studying in religious education.”

In such a perspective Religious Education is regarded as offering a fertile environment in which the seeds of students’ spiritual development may be sown. However, the National Curriculum Council in

its 1993 discussion paper on Spiritual and Moral Development (12) recognises that “The potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith.”

In this perspective opportunities for spiritual development are regarded as being the entitlement of every student irrespective of their religious affiliation. From the National Curriculum Council’s identification of beliefs, a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; experiencing feelings of transcendence; search for meaning and purpose; self-knowledge; relationships; creativity, and feelings and emotions as dimensions of spiritual development, it is clearly possible to recognise areas with which Spiritual Education can engage in a healthy and blossoming cross-fertilisation with Religious Education.

John Bradford has suggested that “Spirituality needs to be considered as a tripartite concept, the three parts of which - human, devotional and practical - fit closely together and complement the whole. It is a concept which is totally multicultural and multifaith in its applicability. (13)

In this perspective “Spirituality ... describes a healthy attitude towards and a positive engagement (i) with ourselves and our family; (ii) with our God and our faith community; and (iii) with our day-to-day

activities and our involvement with others in the wider world." (14)

The three elements of this model of spirituality, therefore, can be called human spirituality; devotional spirituality, and practical spirituality. Human spirituality relates to the holistic interrelatedness of the emotional, cognitive, and intuitive self which develops as a result of affirmation, receiving love and affection together with praise and recognition which facilitates growth in confidence and self-esteem as a result of which openness to new experiences and opportunities is fostered. This dimension of spirituality, therefore, is concerned with the basic human needs and rights of love and affection; security and serenity; new experiences and wonder; encouragement and support and responsibility and participation. (15) These needs relate to the humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (16) which recognises that the demands of lower needs have to be met before those of the higher levels, including self-actualisation, can emerge. Indeed, developmental psychology has long recognised that in order for the child to fulfil his or her potential, particularly in terms of emotional development, a secure, caring, loving, and stimulating environment is highly desirable.

In tune with Bradford's understanding of the human dimension of spirituality is the perspective articulated by McCarthy who, in his exploration of

the role of emotional education in raising school achievement, comments that “If education is concerned with the development of the whole person, it must now involve the historically neglected area of the emotional education of young people, by which we mean education which engages the emotions and education about the emotions.” (17)

The importance of education for the emotions has been cogently presented by Goleman (18) who suggests that our understanding of human intelligence is far too restrictive. He believes that emotions have a significant role in thought, decision making and individual achievement and he articulates a theory of Emotional Intelligence and emotional literacy. His thesis advocates the further development of a Self-Science curriculum the main components of which include teaching and learning strategies which facilitate development of self-awareness, personal decision-making, managing feelings, handling stress, empathy, authentic communications, self-disclosure, insight, self-acceptance, personal responsibility, assertiveness, group dynamics and conflict resolution. The recognition of the value of emotional intelligence can also be considered in relation to Baines’ testimony to the importance of what he terms Spiritual Intelligence (18). If these perspectives are related back to Bradford’s affirmation of the nurturing of children’s emotional, cognitive and intuitive selves it can be recognised that such an

affirmation is wide-ranging and can creatively and profitably incorporate development of what Gardner (19) and Postle (20) have identified as multiple intelligences.

Bradford's delineation of the human dimension of spirituality can be regarded as presenting insights which can be usefully incorporated into plurality of ways of seeing the world, including both religious and non-religious perspectives. However, it is in his discussion of the second dimension of spirituality that Bradford would appear to be moving into an area which closely relates to the language of religious belief, faith and practice. This second dimension of spirituality is termed Devotional Spirituality and relates to the formation of a personal and corporate religious life in which the child is enabled to develop her identity as a member of a community and is therefore nurtured in the beliefs, values and norms of their community's traditions which provide a framework for worship and a focal point for contemplation. This empowers the child to affirm others and to create, share and celebrate peace.

Miller has suggested that "In worship the filter through which one views the world is regularly challenged, amended and revitalised. The "real" and the "ideal" are brought face to face with each other, and the occasion for symbolic reordering is provided. Old images are discarded and give way to new images: past ideals are replaced with new models." (21)

It can be suggested, therefore, that a devotional spirituality is ultimately a spirituality of worship, both personal and communal, in which, the child is provided with the opportunity to engage their everyday experience of the world with the transcendent ideals presented in the rituals and observances of their faith community. This encounter of the real and the ideal provides opportunities for growth and the reordering of life, in terms of the creative definition and expression of one's beliefs, values and ideals. Indeed, in addition to the devotional spirituality of the child in relation to her own faith community all schools are required by law to provide a daily act of collective worship which "..... should offer pupils opportunities to explore and share beliefs; consider the importance of prayer, meditation and silence; consider the relevance of ideas and beliefs to their own lives; think about the needs of others and develop a sense of community; and appreciate the importance of religious beliefs to those who hold them." (22)

Collective Worship, therefore, has the potential to encourage students to explore and reflect upon what aspects of their experience can create the possibilities of a new moral vision in which the actual and the possible become closer. Indeed, it ".... allows quiet reflection and stimulating input of a type not necessarily encountered elsewhere in the school day" (23) The opportunities for

contemplation and reflection provided by worship have the potential to facilitate changes in perception which may lead to increased acceptance of self together with an awareness of the responsibility for making authentic moral and ethical choices.

This responsibility can be regarded as relating to the third dimension of Bradford's model of spirituality which he terms Practical Spirituality. This refers to a spirituality which is actively engaged in personal and public everyday living. This is Human and Devotional spirituality translated into action on behalf of all those who are in need of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual support. Empathy, the potential for understanding and imaginatively entering into another person's feelings is encouraged together with the capacity for friendship, affection, authentic communication and interaction characterised by an increasing confidence in one's openness to growth and personal development as well as advancement of the wellbeing of others.

Religious Education can be seen to be a dimension of the curriculum which provides pupils with the opportunity to explore examples of how ways of seeing the world, life-stances and world-views affect how one relates to oneself, others and the world. Exploration of the great religions and philosophies of the world provides a wealth of examples of individuals and groups for whom their way of seeing

the world directly affects how they act in the world. Lives which have consistently proved to be popular choices for study in schools include, for example, the Christian pacifism of Martin Luther King, the dedication and altruism of Mother Theresa of Calcutta and the social philosophy presented in the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi in addition to the insights derived from exploration of key figures in the history of religion such as Moses, the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and Guru Nanak. Religious Education can also offer creative exploration of the life, work, impact and influence of a range of less-celebrated and, at times marginalised, individuals who have profoundly articulated and embodied religious, spiritual and philosophical perspectives which can act as a stimulating and challenging catalyst for reflection by students on their own life questions and perspectives. Indeed, I present in chapter two of this document a detailed analysis of a Scheme of Work developed for the Religious Education of Post-16 students which explores significant figures primarily, though not exclusively, from the twentieth century who are not usually found in Agreed Syllabuses and examination courses yet who can be regarded as presenting ways of seeing the world which clearly relate to the areas of the self, relationships, society and the environment outlined in the summary of the consultation on values (24) organised by the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community.

Many perspectives on spirituality affirm that living is a creative act. Each individual is an artist who out of the raw materials of their existence strives to fashion something which has meaning. Life presents opportunities for the affirmation of self and others as a result of which each individual has the potential to become what the Humanistic Psychologist Ted Landsman (25) has described as the Beautiful and Noble Person. In Landsman's perspective there are three stages in the development of the Beautiful and Noble Person. The first stage is described as the Passionate Self which is characterised by self-respect and self-acceptance. Such an individual perceives themselves as being a worthwhile person. This acceptance of self facilitates development of the second stage in the growth of nobility and beauty which is characterised by the Environment Loving Person. In this stage there is a passionate concern for the physical environment. The world is perceived and experienced from a perspective of joy and celebration. This encounter between the person and the world promotes the development of the third, social, dimension of the Beautiful and Noble Person which is described as the Compassionate Self. This person deeply cares about and loves others, including those who are in need. This empathy, however, is translated into action on behalf of those who suffer.

Although not developed as a model for understanding the nature of spirituality and the spiritual development of students Landsman's

model of healthy personality presented in his concept of the Beautiful and Noble Person does appear to anticipate many of the themes articulated in Bradford's tri-partite understanding of spirituality and the four value areas outlined by the National Forum for Values. For example, the Passionate Self characterised by self-acceptance and self-respect would appear to be closely related to Bradford's Human Spirituality. Development of self-acceptance and self-respect provides the foundation for a healthy personality as a result of which the individual is able to explore life with increasing self-confidence and can actively participate in life's tasks and challenges from a position of a willingness to accept responsibility. Landsman's Passionate Self also relates to the Forum for Values' dimension of the Self which has as its basis the affirmation of the "... value (of) each person as a unique being of intrinsic worth, with potential for spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical development and change." (26).

Elements of Landsman's view of the Compassionate Self can be discerned in Bradford's Practical Spirituality. The individual translates her beliefs and values into active participation in the world. Just as the Compassionate Self is deeply concerned about the well-being of others Practical Spirituality is ultimately a transformative spirituality; it aims to initiate change in the world. This Practical Spirituality can be regarded as relating primarily to two dimensions of value outlined by the Forum for

Values, Society and Relationships. The Society dimension celebrates the “... value (of) truth, human rights, the law, justice and collective endeavour for the common good. In particular (the) value (of) families as a source of love and support for all their members and as the basis of a society in which people care for others.” (27)

This affirmation of values which are rooted in a recognition of responsibilities towards others links closely to the Relationships dimension of values which confirms the obligation to “... value others for themselves, not for what they have or what they can do for us, and (the) value (of) these relationships as fundamental to our development and the good of the community.” (28)

Landsman's Environment Loving Person who displays a passionate concern for the physical environment is echoed in the Forum for Values' Environment dimension which testifies to the “... value (of) the natural world as a source of wonder and inspiration and accept(s) our duty to maintain a sustainable environment for the future.” (29)

Although Bradford's model of spirituality does not explicitly refer to an Environmental Spirituality his discussion of Practical Spirituality does clearly indicate that he regards a capacity for reverence and reflection as being an integral aspect of one's engagement in everyday living. The Forum for Values' recognition that nature can be a source of

value and wonder can, therefore, clearly be linked to Bradford's affirmation of reverence and reflection because, as poets, artists and musicians, for example, have testified throughout the ages, the natural world can be a powerful medium of Transcendence. Indeed, the Polish philosopher Henryk Skolimowski (30) has cogently articulated an Eco-philosophy in which humankind's relationship with nature is explored in terms of its spiritual significance.

In addition to Landsman's model of the Beautiful and Noble Person it can be suggested that there are other significant perspectives which can be incorporated into a framework for understanding the spiritual dimension of life, whether Humanistic or Religious. For example, in his acclaimed work To Have or to Be? the Humanistic psychologist Erich Fromm presents an analysis of human values in terms of the distinction between the modes of Having and Being. He suggests that "In the having mode of existence my relationship to the world is one of possessing and owning, one in which I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property." (31)

In the Being mode of existence, however, "...we must identify two forms of being. One is in contrast to having, ... and means aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world.

The other form of being is in contrast to appearing and refers to the true nature, the true reality of a person or thing in contrast to deceptive appearances..." (32)

Fromm outlined a blueprint for a New Society based on the Being mode. He suggested that: "If the City of God and the Earthly City were thesis and antithesis, a new synthesis is the only alternative to chaos: the synthesis between the spiritual core of the Late Medieval world and the development of rational thought and science since the Renaissance. This synthesis is The City of Being." (33)

Martin Buber (1878-1965) in his seminal work I and Thou outlined the two significant perspectives from which humankind can relate to the world. These perspectives, or ways of relating, are described as I-Thou and I-It. Clements summarises the nature of, and relationship between, the I-Thou and I-It perspectives in his observation that "In I-Thou, man addresses his world and neighbour as Thou, and allows himself to be addressed as Thou in turn. This is the relation of mutual personal encounter, dialogue, communion. In I-It, he regards his world as an It - the attitude of observation, description, usage, seen at its most detached in scientific analysis. Both attitudes are necessary, but it is in I-Thou that man is genuinely human. "All real living is meeting." (34)

Buber articulated the I-Thou/I-It distinction/polarity in the context of a theological framework in which the

deepest and most profound I-Thou relation is with God, the eternal Thou who can never become an It. It can be suggested that a synthesis of Fromm's concept of Being and Buber's I-Thou relationship can be creatively incorporated into an exploration of models of human spirituality. Indeed, what Fromm and Buber appear to articulate is what can be termed a philosophy and/or spirituality of Moral Personalism in which the primacy of authentic modes or ways of relating is affirmed.

Existential psychology represents a creative synthesis of philosophy and psychology. The philosophical framework derives from the ontological perspectives of, for example, Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger and has been adapted by psychologists such as Ludwig Binswanger, Medard Boss, Viktor Frankl and Rollo May in order to explore and understand human personality. According to Binswanger (35) Being-in-the-World has three existential dimensions: Umwelt ("world around") which is the relationship of the person to the biological, natural, physical world; Mitwelt ("with-world") the social, interactive, interpersonal dimensions of existence and Eigenwelt ("own world") the subjective, phenomenological world of the self. It would appear, therefore, that Binswanger's existential perspective and Landsman's model of the Beautiful and Noble Person outlined above share an approach to understanding human existence and personality which affirms the interaction between the self,

others and the world. It can be suggested, therefore, that the contribution existentialist thought can make to understanding spirituality, spiritual development and spiritual education is to be primarily found in its recognition that self-awareness, self-understanding, self-actualisation, and self-transcendence is rooted in interaction with others and one's environment. The existential framework echoes Buber in its affirmation of the primacy of relationship and encounter. The existentialist enterprise, therefore, can be regarded as offering a personalist perspective from which it is possible to explore models of spiritual education.

The Prince of Wales has articulated a Vision for the Millennium in which he declares that "... there is, I believe, a resurgence of spirituality across the world, and small beacons of civilising values in the face of the all-pervading materialism of recent times, which represents a yearning to improve the deeper quality of our lives and to restore those enduring cultural priorities which represent a moral foundation in a world dominated by consumerism." (36)

His affirmation of values which recognise the primacy of depth and quality in life rooted in a moral framework can be regarded as a recognition that the spiritual dimension to experience should be a priority for the future. Indeed, following the death of the acclaimed film director Krzysztof Kieslowski in March 1996 Danusia Stok commented that "... his films indicate an intuitive quality. They reveal a

spiritual side of a man reputedly grounded in the treadmill of reality. (37) Similarly, Krzysztof Zanussi has suggested that “Apart from being a distinguished artist, from a Polish perspective Kieslowski had a striking moral authority.” (38)

In these appraisals of Kieslowski intuition, grounding, artistry, and moral integrity are interpreted as being expressions of a spiritual perspective on life. Indeed, if one explores the eight attitude-virtues of humility, self-acceptance, responsibility, self-commitment, friendliness, concern, contemplation and trust outlined by Evans (39) as a vision of the moral life there arises the fascinating question of the extent to which the perspectives of acclaimed film-makers such as Kieslowski, Zanussi, Wajda, Kurosawa, and Bergman, for example, can be creatively utilised to explore the spiritualities that are presented in their films. Indeed, all these directors can be recognised as presenting not only a moral vision and authority “rooted in the treadmill of reality” but also explore the dynamic interaction between the self, society, relationships and the environment suggested in the Forum for Values and the human, devotional and practical spiritualities of Bradford.

Spring 1999 saw the first major exhibition in Britain, at the Royal Academy, of the paintings of the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) who is often regarded as being the first abstract painter. Although the exhibition undoubtedly provides the opportunity to view rarely seen works the exhibition

may also provide the catalyst for what can be regarded as a long overdue rediscovery and reappraisal of Kandinsky's pioneering book Concerning The Spiritual In Modern Art. In this text Kandinsky commented that "The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness. This feeble light is but a presentiment, and the soul, when it sees it, trembles in doubt whether the light is not a dream, and the gulf of darkness reality." (40)

If one relates Kandinsky's declaration to the perspective of Keenan explored earlier, it is perhaps apposite to suggest that what all models of spirituality and spiritual development can share, including philosophies of spiritual education in schools, is their affirmation of the necessity to actualise light in the darkness.

The Passionate Self

“Where are the placid landscapes of my childhood? Where are the forests, full of birds? Where is the silence of my homeland? Are we the last romantics who yearn for the beauty of the changing seasons? Where are the flowers we gathered near stream waters when we were children? Where is the whiteness of the snow? Does it only live on in paintings? Remember! The face of the earth is similar to that of a human being. Don't forget that you are but a traveller on this planet and nothing belongs to you. (1)

This reflection by the artist Ivan Lacovic Croata upon his childhood in former-Yugoslavia presents the theme of the loss of innocence of former times. He recognises that there is a contrast between what he perceived as being the almost idyllic world of nature he encountered as a boy and the suffering of his country as an adult as a result of civil war, ethnic cleansing and partition.

In relation to his 1893 version in oils of his painting The Scream, the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944) declared : “One evening I was walking along a path, the city on one side, the fiord below. I felt tired and ill....The sun was setting and the clouds turning blood-red. I sensed a scream passing through Nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The colour shrieked.” (2)

It can be suggested that the experience of “...a scream passing through nature...” and “...the clouds as.... blood....” presented in Munch’s late nineteenth century painting can be appropriated and interpreted in terms of the late twentieth century experience of the conflict in former-Yugoslavia. The almost archetypal horrors of Munch’s painting can also serve as a powerful evocation of the six million screams of the Holocaust.

As a result of his experiences in the Dachau, Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) (3) developed an approach to psychiatry which recognises the primacy of humankind’s search for meaning. Frankl believed that existential frustration and spiritual problems can lead to the development of what he termed “noogenic neurosis” in which individuals struggle to come to terms with the value and meaning of their lives. Central to Frankl’s philosophy is a psychotherapeutic approach called Logotherapy which aims to facilitate exploration of questions of meaning.

This chapter aims to explore significant elements of Frankl’s philosophy of existence with reference to a Scheme of Work I have developed entitled The Passionate Self which can be taught as a module in Years 12 or 13 within the framework for Religious Education outlined in the 1983 (4) and 1996 (5) Bradford Agreed Syllabus.

The 1983 Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education is presented in the form of four Attainment Targets which relate to all Key Stages. (6) These are: (i) awareness and appreciation of life experiences and the questions they raise; (ii) appreciation of religious faith and the varieties of faith; (iii) awareness of the practical and social consequences of religious faith and (iv) responding to life experiences and religion.

For each Attainment Target there are related Attainment Statements which can be used as a basis for developing, teaching, and assessing schemes of work. Analysis of The Passionate Self module can suggest that exploring the Holocaust has the potential to realise all four of the Attainment Targets. The Attainment Targets are not content-driven; they are expressed in terms of the three key words of appreciation, awareness and response. The 1996 Bradford Agreed Syllabus, however, has two Attainment Targets rather than the four of its 1983 predecessor. It therefore reflects the approach of the SCAA Model Syllabuses (7) in that the focus of Attainment Target 1 is learning about religions whereas Target 2 is concerned with learning from religion.

The eight sections of The Passionate Self module explore themes which aim to enable students to realise the Attainment Targets. The module is developed to link with the Bradford Agreed Syllabus'

Study Unit Religion, Philosophy and Experience. The key themes explored include defining the Holocaust, the nature of suffering, the relationship of the Holocaust to contemporary suffering, suffering and religious experience, the character of sacrifice, humankind's search for meaning, hope, wonder and transcendence and the nature of God.

This chapter offers a rationale for developing, teaching and assessing The Passionate Self module. This is achieved through a detailed analysis of the content, themes and perspectives of the Scheme of Work including examination of the teaching and learning strategies utilised. It illustrates how The Passionate Self module relates to the two attainment targets of the Bradford Agreed Syllabus and it previews an interdisciplinary philosophy of Spiritual Education which is developed in Chapter Three.

This chapter also relates The Passionate Self module to the perspectives on Spiritual Education explored in Chapter One and it offers a contribution to the current debate about the nature of Spiritual Education and its relationship to Religious Education. A particular focus of the chapter is an exploration of significant themes and issues which arise from study of the life and work of Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who are introduced in Sections 4 and 5 of The Passionate Self module respectively.

Section One of The Passionate Self module utilises Edvard Munch's celebrated painting The Scream as a stimulus for introducing the theme of suffering which is developed in detail in Section Two which incorporates exploration of Henryk Gorecki's acclaimed Symphony of Sorrowful Songs and Towering Inferno's blistering Kaddish. Students are encouraged to carefully observe the minutiae of the painting and, following feedback to the teacher, they are required to enter into an imaginative and empathic dialogue with the picture in order to establish what the figure who is the focal point of the picture is thinking and feeling. The picture is supported by an outline of key themes in Munch's art in order to stimulate debate.

This Section, therefore, powerfully sets the scene for the seven other sections of The Passionate Self module in that by exploring the general theme of suffering in Munch's painting it prepares students for the particular life experiences of, for example, Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The Scream, therefore, is designed to encourage students to give an informed and considered response to a significant dimension of human experience. Indeed, Munch's painting prepares students for the poignant declaration in Section Two that "There is so much evil around us. We have to try and look for something positive. Even in the worst person you hope to find something good. This is absolutely important. My Third Symphony.... Yes. it's tragic, but not in the sense of tragedy. I wanted to

express a great sorrow.... I have no words to say what I mean.... The war, the rotten times under Communism, our life today.... the starving, Bosnia. What madness! And why? Why? This sorrow, it burns inside me; I cannot shake it off...." (8)

This reflection by the Polish composer Henryk Gorecki upon his experience of the Second World War and of some of the events which have followed it has as a central theme the encounter with sorrow which is the outcome of the tragic nature of much of human existence. If sorrow is defined as "the feeling of sadness, grief or regret associated with loss, bereavement or sympathy for another's suffering." (9)

it is perhaps understandable why Gorecki has given his Third Symphony the title The Symphony of Sorrowful Songs. The Third Symphony is a reflection and meditation on the nature of suffering which is written from the perspective of Christian faith.

Henryk Gorecki was born in Czernica, part of Silesia, in December 1933 and his childhood was spent amidst the violence and destruction of the Second World War. He received his musical education in the city of Katowice where in the 1950's he studied composition at the Katowice Conservatory. Gorecki studied for a time in Paris before returning to Katowice to teach and compose in his own right where in 1976 he composed his Third Symphony, which he dedicated to his wife. It received its

premiere in 1977 when it was performed by the orchestra of South-West German Radio. Section Two of The Passionate self module utilises The South Bank Show film, directed by Tony Palmer, and broadcast on Palm Sunday 1993, which includes a performance of the Third Symphony by the London Sinfonietta, conducted by David Zinman and features the soprano soloist Dawn Upshaw. The performance is intercut with an interview with Gorecki in which he explains his motivation for composing the Third Symphony, together with footage of his visit to Auschwitz where he reflects upon the experience of the Holocaust. The film also features harrowing images from the Holocaust and contemporary scenes of violence and suffering from Bosnia, Somalia, Israel, and Iraq.

The film acts as a catalyst to encourage students to explore and reflect upon the nature of the Holocaust and facilitates consideration of the relationship of contemporary suffering to the events of the Second World war. Exploration of the words from the Third Symphony illustrate why it is known as The Symphony of Sorrowful Songs and it provides a stimulus for analysis of the Jewish and Christian dimensions of the Holocaust. Gorecki is a Roman Catholic Christian and the words of his symphony reflect Christian imagery. Gorecki has acknowledged that the inspiration for composing the work originated from reading in 1970 a book about the Nazi occupation of Poland which made reference to the words of a young girl written on the

walls of the notorious Gestapo prison which the Nazis had established in Zakopane. Gorecki has commented that "It was well known that if you finished up in this prison, this meant certain death. And this young girl had written, nothing tragic, nothing melodramatic; not "I am innocent" or "Kill them!. Simply, "Mama, don't cry". (10)

His reflection of the suffering of people during the Nazi occupation has led Gorecki to conclude that "The only way to confront this horror, to forget...., but you could never forget, was through music.... Somehow I had to take a stand, as a witness, and as a warning." (11)

It is possible to suggest, therefore, that it is the experience of the Second World War and of the Holocaust for which the Nazis used Poland as a base for the extermination of the Jewish people and of other groups designated as undesirable which is at the heart of the Symphony of Sorrowful Songs. Although the symphony utilises Christian imagery it can be suggested that its meanings are multi-dimensional in which one of its perspectives can be interpreted as a reflection upon the Jewish experience of the Holocaust.

Gorecki has said: "I remember, when I was twelve years old we went on a school outing to Auschwitz; I had the feeling that the huts were still warm. The piles of hair, glasses, teeth, suitcases and false limbs.... The size of it! We walked along the famous

railway line.... The human ashes had been used to fertilise the cabbages.... growing between the huts. But the paths themselves.... And this image has never left me.... The paths were made from human bones.... Thrown onto the path like shingle. We boys.... How to walk on this? This is not sand, not earth.... we were walking on human bones.... This was my world." (12)

His question "How to walk on this?" can be regarded as being ultimately an existential question. He is not raising the issue of the mechanics of human movement; rather, it is a cry from the heart which expresses the enormity of the horror of the Holocaust. In his Third Symphony, The Symphony of Sorrowful Songs, Gorecki reflects on the nature of the suffering of the Holocaust for which the words of the symphony present religious perspectives and he relates this to the suffering in the world today.

The symphony presents a dialogue between a mother and her son which begins with the words: "My Son, My Beloved.... Share your wounds with your Mother and because, my dearest son I have you always in my heart, and will always serve you lovingly, speak to me, your Mother, and make her happy.... alas, alas.... I know you are already being taken away...." (13)

The imagery of Gorecki's words echo the imagery of the Hebrew Bible in its presentation of the Suffering Servant: "He was despised and rejected by men; a

man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted." (14)

The image of the suffering Jew, therefore, can be interpreted as having messianic overtones. This raises the question of the religious dimension of the suffering of the Jewish people throughout history and particularly in the Holocaust. Study by students of the words of Gorecki's Third Symphony can, therefore, act as a stimulus for exploration of the theological significance of the Holocaust in which different perspectives about the nature and activity of God are examined.

The theme in Gorecki's Third Symphony of the Suffering Servant anticipates the imagery in Section 3 of The Passionate Self module presented in the paintings of the Jewish artist Marc Chagall and it also links to the exploration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christology, particularly his concept of Jesus as the man for others, presented in Section 5 in which extracts from Bonhoeffer's prison correspondence is accompanied by portrayals of Jesus by artists such as Salvador Dali, Emil Nolde and Georges Henri-Rouault. From a teaching and learning perspective, therefore, it is the aim that all the sections of The Passionate Self module interlink and as students explore the concepts, themes and ideas presented

in the module's eight sections their learning is reinforced by the interrelatedness and cross-referencing of each section.

It can be suggested that in these words Gorecki is presenting an image of suffering which reflects his Christian identity and spirituality, but which also explores the pain of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust and relates this to suffering in the contemporary world. From the perspective of Christian belief the words can be interpreted as those of Mary as she mourns for the death of Jesus; they reflect the imagery of the Passion. However, the words can also be viewed as expressing the pain and grief of the millions of Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

Exploration of Gorecki's Third Symphony can, therefore, contribute to the spiritual development of students because it enables them to explore the links between existential questions and religious perspectives about people, the world and the universe, including theological perspectives, and reflection on the meaning of the Holocaust provides them with the opportunity to articulate their own experiences of their search for personal identity and meaning.

Pianist Artur Rubenstein often felt in his concerts a tangible energy reaching out into the audience. He said that "It is something floating, something unknown that has no place to disappear to" (15).

The ineffable character of this link or connection between the artist and the audience meant that Rubenstein struggled to articulate and define what he called "... this thing in us, a metaphysical power that emanates from us" (16) In such a perspective the power of music to actualise Transcendence is recognised and affirmed. This way of interpreting the encounter between performer and listener suggests that music has the capacity to create an awareness of what may be called "something other". Indeed, Gorecki's Symphony of Sorrowful Songs testifies to the capacity of music to engage the listener with themes that transcend the present moment. The Third Symphony was written as a vehicle for coming to terms with the fact of the Holocaust; the music assumes a prophetic role through its capacity to remember, to challenge and to warn. It acts, as Gorecki has suggested, "as a witness, and as a warning".

Rubenstein's understanding of the power of music represents what may be called an experiential perspective in which the capacity of music to generate intense feelings and emotions is affirmed. For Gorecki, however, although his Third Symphony is a profoundly and painfully moving work, its genesis and inspiration is rooted in what may be termed its transformative power. It is, perhaps, the synthesis of the experiential and the transformative in music that allows us to talk in terms of its spiritual nature. Indeed, Pablo Casals affirmed that "In music, in the sea, in a

flower, in a leaf, in an act of kindness.... I see what people call God in all these things" (17).

It would appear, therefore, that although it is often the case that art, including music, is often explored in terms of its aesthetic dimension it can be suggested that music has the potential to be explored in terms of its spiritual nature. Indeed, the relationship of the aesthetic to the spiritual has been discussed by Hans Kung. He suggests that artists "With their sensible codes, signs, and symbols, with colours, forms and shapes, they can give new meaning to life and thus produce more vital energy, more profit to life, more joy in life." (18)

An issue which arises from Kung's statement is the extent to which it is possible for artistic works, including Gorecki's Third Symphony, which deal with what may be termed the dark side of life, to be appraised in terms of their aesthetic qualities. Put more directly the question can be expressed in the form of: "Is it possible for a work of art which deals with suffering and death to be, in any sense, a thing of beauty?" Indeed, this question is brought into sharp focus in Section Two of The Passionate Self module because in addition to Gorecki's Symphony of Sorrowful Songs the Section includes exploration of the powerful and, at times harrowing, work Kaddish by Towering Inferno which has been acclaimed as a major musical event of recent years. Musicians Richard Wolfson and Andy Saunders are Towering Inferno and they have created in Kaddish

a work that "... hovers between indignant catharsis and dread. At one moment it howls with Industrial noise-fest frenzy, the next it's the solemnity of Bartok or mock-mediaeval choral work, the oscillating trance dreamworlds of Southeast Asia or crunching Heavy Metal riffs." (19)

The word Kaddish refers to the Jewish prayer for the dead and has been selected as the title for Towering Inferno's production because "... its rich array of musical influences - from Hungarian folk song and Jewish prayer to Industrial and Heavy Metal - has been distilled into a tone-poem on the one single event which casts an inescapable shadow over this troubled century: the Holocaust." (20)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iw34CD3IZo>

Students are encouraged to respond to the music of Gorecki and *Towering Inferno* by preparing a collage on the theme of suffering. This collage can incorporate images which suggest the universal experience of suffering together with examples of contemporary affliction and sorrow. This activity is also complemented by their selection of musical extracts which they regard as evoking the images presented in their collages. The module actively encourages students to relate the material being explored to the contemporary experience of the modern world but also facilitates articulation of their personal response to the material. The module, therefore, consistently explores the question of the relationship of the past to the present and the meaning of history for individuals today. Gorecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* and *Towering Inferno*'s *Kaddish* resonate with memory. Although contemporary students do not share the circumstances and the experiences of the individuals and communities presented in *The Passionate Self* module's eight sections it can be suggested that the dimensions of memory, remembrance, reflection, a sense of loss and (re)discovery of meaning, including its relationship to the Transcendent, are universally identifiable. The music of Gorecki and *Towering Inferno* can act as the catalyst by which students can develop new insights and understandings about the past as well as simultaneously developing a deeper awareness of their own selves. The module, therefore, can

facilitate the spiritual development of students because it explores ways of seeing the world which reflect what Pascal has identified as “.... the development of the inner self, with self-knowledge, relationships, questioning our place in the universe, the purpose of our lives, and our ultimate destiny.” (21)

Section 3 of the module utilises paintings by the Jewish artists Felix Nussbaum and Marc Chagall as a stimulus for investigating the characteristics of suffering and the forms it can take. The paintings selected reflect themes of the sufferings of humanity, the nature of Jewish identity, and the relationship between Jewish and Christian imagery. The paintings of Chagall and Nussbaum become the medium through which the aforementioned themes are explored in the classroom, and they anticipate the detailed examination of the experiences of those who perished or survived the extermination camps. The broad themes of Jewish and Christian society and culture presented in the paintings act as a point of entry for exploration in Sections 4 and 5 of the module of the personal encounter of Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer with the horror of the Holocaust.

Moshe Shagall was born on 7 July 1887 into a poor Jewish family at Pestkovatik, a village in what was then Tsarist Belorussia. Moshe was the eldest of nine children and he grew up as the son of a fishmonger in the enclosed environment of Jewish life. The family

moved to the nearby town of Vitebsk a few years later. Moshe studied painting in St Petersburg from 1907-10 during which time he met Bella Rosenfield who he married in 1915.

In 1910 Moshe visited Paris for the first time. The visit was to be significant for him because he was impressed by the warmth and colour of the work of Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin together with the architectural power of Cubist painting. Indeed, the influence of the French environment was such that Moshe Shagall adopted the gallicised Marc Chagall as his name.

After the Revolution of 1917 Chagall became Commissar for the Fine Arts at Vitebsk and he was commissioned to create a mural for the State Jewish Theatre in Moscow in 1918. In 1922 Chagall left Russia to work in Berlin where he developed a worthy vocation in etching and lithography. A factor contributing to his departure from Russia had been the increasing incompatibility of his work with the prevailing movement of Realism in Soviet art. After 1923 the religious dimension to Chagall's work assumed greater prominence and he frequently combined imagery from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Gospels to produce works of great passion, energy, warmth and sensitivity. It can be suggested that his Crucifixion paintings, for example, were his way of seeing and representing the sufferings of humankind as a result of war and conflict. In 1941 Marc fled to New York city as a result

of the Nazi programme in Europe. He lived there until 1948 where he designed costumes and decor for Stravinsky's ballets.

1948 saw another change of country when Marc returned to France, settling for the rest of his life in Vence, in the south. Following his wife Bella's sudden death from a viral infection in 1944 he married Juli Valentina (Vava) Brodsky in 1952. Chagall's work became very popular in the 1950's and 1960's and he received a range of prestigious commissions which included the stained-glass windows The Twelve Tribes of Israel for the Synagogue of the Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem (1960-61); the ceiling for the Paris Opera (1964); murals for the Metropolitan Opera at the Lincoln Center in New York (1966) and his stained-glass windows for the Zurich Minster which were consecrated in 1970. Chagall died on 29 March 1985, aged 97, following a long and prolific life of creativity in which his Jewish identity and his humanity were vividly expressed.

Chagall's War, painted during 1964-66, presents images of violence and destruction which can be interpreted as having a universal significance. Harris (22) has noted that in the picture "Vitebsk burns and the fleeing people are Jews, but Chagall certainly meant the painting to have a more general application."

Indeed, it is likely that students who do not have any prior knowledge of Chagall's life and work would

acknowledge the painting as a representation of the experience of war wherever and whenever it occurs. The destruction of life and property by fire, individuals and families escaping and the bleak atmosphere suggested by the largely dark colours would enable most students to make a connection between the images of the painting and those presented on television and newspapers in contemporary coverage of, for example, the conflicts in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Chechenia. Although the painting may have been inspired by memories of pogroms and Nazi persecutions its imagery has a universal significance which can facilitate reflection by students on the nature of war and suffering. This exploration of the universal dimension to suffering acts as an overture to examination of the specific suffering of those who experienced the Holocaust.

Chagall's paintings Jew at Prayer and Solitude (1933) introduces a Jewish dimension to the module. Whereas Jew At Prayer unaffectedly presents the private devotions of a man with his head bowed in prayer Solitude presents a Jew, cloaked in his tallith with the scrolls of the Torah unopened in his left hand. The man, deep in contemplation, appears melancholic and the sorrowful atmosphere of the picture echoes the Psalmist's declaration that "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion". (23) The unopened scrolls suggest that the religious tradition of his ancestors do not offer him answers or hope in his

situation; he is rootless. The image of the cow recalls the words of the prophet Hosea: "Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn". (24)

The imagery of the painting appears to point to an element of the experience of the people of the Jewish diaspora, namely, the phenomenon of losing connections with their geographical and spiritual roots. Chagall's painting suggests that the Jews are alienated from their land and religion. Indeed, although Chagall broke away from the orthodox tradition Gryglewicz (25) has suggested that "(his) creative imagination was determined by a life-long feeling of nostalgia for the lost paradise of his childhood."

This nostalgia for the past may have exacerbated the mood of melancholy and alienation which reflected Chagall's unease about the threatening atmosphere which accompanied Hitler's rise to power. Indeed, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933, the year in which Chagall completed the painting. For Walther "The picturesque old man can be seen as Ahasverus, the eternal Wandering Jew, roaming the world in uncertainty as to his future. On the horizon, beyond a countryside which is on the whole seen with tender affection, storm clouds are gathering, and their blackness is threatening the angel in the sky." (26)

This image of the gathering storm can be related to the rise of Nazism in the 1930's and introduces to The

Passionate Self module the dimension of the Jewish experience of suffering. Whereas War presents a universal perspective on suffering, Solitude initiates exploration in the classroom of the suffering of the Jews in the context of the rise to power of the Nazis. Indeed, the work previously undertaken by students in Key Stage 3 History in which the Era of the Second World War is studied will have provided an overview of Hitler's rise to power and the Nazi anti-Semitism which facilitated the Holocaust. Post-16 students, therefore, should be in a position to explore Chagall's Solitude with a significant degree of empathy and understanding.

Reference has been made earlier in this chapter to the emotion of sorrow as articulated by the composer Gorecki. In War and Solitude Chagall reflects this sense of sadness and loss from the perspectives of the universal experience of war and from the Jewish dimension of alienation and exile. The fourth painting included in Section 3 of the module is White Crucifixion which Chagall painted in 1938 which introduces the theme of the relationship between Jewish and Christian suffering.

In this painting images of the persecution of the Jews are accompanied by an image of Christ on the cross which is the focal point of the picture. Around the crucified Christ what may be Nazi storm-troopers attack and loot a small town and burn a synagogue in which they desecrate the scrolls of the Torah. Refugees in a boat try to flee but they appear to be

crying for help. The image of the Wandering Jew passing over a burning Torah scroll is also present. Chagall stated in 1933 that “If a painter is a Jew and paints life, how is he to keep Jewish elements out of his work? But if he is a good painter, his painting will contain a great deal more. The Jewish content will be there, of course, but his art will aim at universal relevance.” (27)

Indeed, Chagall combines Jewish and Christian imagery to present his perspective on suffering. He emphasises the Jewishness of Jesus by wrapping him in a striped prayer shawl and the depiction of the Menorah at the feet of Jesus suggests that Christ's suffering is the incarnation and embodiment of the sufferings of the world, including the Jewish people. This picture, therefore, can enable students to begin to explore the nature of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism. In the painting the sufferings of Jesus are also the sufferings of the Jews; the sufferings of the Jews represent the passion of Christ which symbolises the suffering of God. In this juxtaposition of Jewish and Christian imagery, however, the universal suffering of humankind, based on Chagall's awareness of the experience of the 1930's, is portrayed. Through a recognition and awareness of the historical, cultural, religious, and spiritual connections between Judaism and Christianity and of the experience and imagery of suffering articulated in both faiths students can respond to the universal dimension of suffering, sorrow and loss.

In addition to the four examples of Chagall's paintings Section 2 of The Passionate Self module includes two works by the Osnabruck born painter Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944). Nussbaum has expressed and recorded in his paintings the experiences he underwent as a Jew in the context of the emergence of the Nazi ideology during the decades following the First World War. In 1939 Nussbaum witnessed the outbreak of the Second World War as A German Jew living in Brussels. On 27 September Warsaw, the home city of Felka Platek, Nussbaum's wife from 1937, surrendered to the Nazis and on 8 May 1940 the Germans invaded Belgium as a result of which Nussbaum was deported to the concentration camp of St Cyprien in the Pyrenees. In August 1940, however, he managed to escape and returned to Brussels to join Felka. Following the beginning of the deportation of the Jews to the extermination camps in the east Nussbaum's paintings became a testimony to, and a record of, of the isolation of the Jews who had to hide from the Nazi regime, particularly following the May 1942 legislation forcing all Jews in Belgium to wear the Star of David. In July 1944 Felix and Felka were taken prisoner after being betrayed as a result of which they were deported to Auschwitz.

18 July 1998 saw the opening of the Felix Nussbaum Building designed by the Polish-born architect Daniel Libeskind in Osnabruck, Germany. This extension of the city's Museum of Cultural History is

dedicated to the life and work of Nussbaum who is increasingly regarded as a major artist of the twentieth century. The museum includes a collection of more than one hundred and sixty of Nussbaum's paintings and graphic works, together with biographical materials and historical documents. The *Passionate Self* module includes Nussbaum's paintings Threesome (1944) and In The Prison Camp (1940).

In Threesome, one of his last pictures, painted in January 1944, Nussbaum portrays himself as pious Jew in hiding with his wife Felka and his son Jaqui. In contrast to the Jew of Chagall's Solitude who appears to be alienated from his religion, Nussbaum intimately identifies with the Jewish faith to which he was thrust as a result of the Nazi persecution. Felka, however, appears to tolerate their situation. It can be suggested that in this picture Nussbaum is presenting the circumstances of all those who are persecuted which is a situation characterised by a simultaneous fear of death and uncertain hope.

In The Prison Camp, however, Nussbaum presents not only his personal experience of incarceration in St Cyprien but also portrays the universal encounter with suffering and sorrow. The image can be regarded as representing every (wo)man who has suffered. The painting can, therefore, be interpreted as transcending the historical particularity of Nussbaum's experience and can be affirmed as a powerful symbol of humankind's experience.

Indeed, the image echoes the posture of the woman in Vincent van Gogh's Sorrow to which students are introduced in Section 7 of The Passionate Self module. The Nussbaum and Van Gogh figures evoke the universal experience of sorrow and suffering. Indeed, they anticipate the media images which record the late twentieth century experience of, for example, the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The detailed analysis of examples of paintings by Nussbaum and Chagall together with the exploration of the theme of sorrow in Gorecki's Third Symphony acts as the prelude to all the material which is explored in Sections 4-8 of the Passionate Self module because, consistent with the Attainment Targets of the Bradford Agreed Syllabus, it enables students to be aware of the existence of suffering as a dimension of human experience and provides the opportunity to appreciate Jewish and Christian experience as models of suffering from which a response can be developed which relates specific expressions of suffering to the global human condition of the contemporary world. Indeed, it has been noted that "Simultaneity is one of the key characteristics of Chagall's art. Chagall envisaged his paintings not as distinct scenes or moments from reality as we see it, but as collections of associated images designed to evoke, in a more abstract way, a particular idea or theme." (28)

Section 3 of the module, therefore, aims to facilitate the students' perception of the simultaneity of the relationship between Jewish, Christian, and universal suffering. Through appreciation of the multi-dimensional nature of the paintings students are introduced to ways of seeing the Holocaust which recognise the centrality of the Jewish experience of suffering, but which also relates this to the relationship of Judaism to Christianity and sets this encounter within the context of universal human experience.

The *Passionate Self* module, therefore, can be regarded as simultaneously engaging in Religious Education and Spiritual Education because through the music of Gorecki and *Towering Inferno* and the paintings of Chagall and Nussbaum students are introduced to the religious traditions and heritage of Judaism and Christianity and are encouraged as part of the module's teaching and learning strategies to undertake research in order to explore further some of the significant concepts, beliefs and practices of both religions but the module is also simultaneously engaged in exploration of the existential questions which arise from the relationship of Judaism and Christianity to the Holocaust. The module aims to engage students in a process of creatively integrating the phenomenological approach which has characterised much Religious Education, particularly since the 1960's, with the approach of Spiritual Education suggested by Slee in her proposal that "... religious education must

move beyond an objective study of religion to an exploration of inwardness, a grappling with existential questions, a search for spiritual identity, an encounter with mystery and transcendence.” (29)

Indeed, she declares that “I am not alone in my conviction that religious education must be centrally concerned with spirituality.” (30)

Sections 4 and 5 of The Passionate Self module develop the religious and spiritual dimensions of suffering introduced through exploration of Chagall and Nussbaum’s paintings by presenting detailed studies of two individuals whose lives were dramatically transformed by the events of the Second World War, Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Although the module incorporates material which introduces students to the experiences of people such as Etty Hillesum, Anne Frank and Maximilian Kolbe who went to their deaths in the Nazi extermination camps together with the perspectives of, for example, Isabella Leitner and Alfred Kantor which reflect the experiences of people who survived the death camps, the aim of Sections 4 and 5 of the module is to facilitate exploration of how two very different individuals experienced and responded to significant experiences and dimensions of the Second World War.

Through exploration of the lives of Korczak and Bonhoeffer students are encouraged to develop

insight into the reality of the pain of suffering and of the fact that the Holocaust does not refer to an abstract historical event but clearly concerns the individual and collective ordeal of real persons. The module, therefore, facilitates recognition of the personal and human dimension to the Holocaust.

The material for Section 4 of The Passionate Self module is inspired by Andrzej Wajda's 1990 film Korczak which presents a profoundly moving, powerful and compelling portrayal of Janusz Korczak's dedication, altruism, and self-sacrifice. Wajda's film is a powerful resource for exploring the experience of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, particularly of children, and presents a compelling portrayal of Janusz Korczak's dedication, altruism, and self-sacrifice. The interplay of Wajda's direction, Agnieszka Holland's screenplay and the performance of Wojtek Pszoniak as Korczak combine to produce a moving and powerful presentation of courage in the face of man's inhumanity.

Janusz Korczak was born on 22 July 1878 as Henryk Goldszmidt in Warsaw. His parents were Cecylia and Josef Goldszmidt. The name Janusz Korczak was originally adopted by Henryk as a literary pseudonym. This pseudonym was adapted from J I Krazewski's nineteenth century novel Janusz Korczak and the Pretty Sword Sweeper Lady. Although Josef Goldszmidt was actively involved in Jewish causes, particularly education, Henryk grew

up in an assimilated Polish speaking middle class Jewish family which appeared to have little affinity for Jewish tradition. Following the death of his father at a psychiatric clinic in 1896 Janusz had to support himself while graduating from secondary school and then studying at Warsaw University's Institute of Medicine. In addition to his medical career, however, Korczak developed a successful literary career, particularly as a writer of stories for children, together with a significant profile in radio broadcasting for which he hosted a children's programme which he called Gadaninki Starego Doktora (The Old Doctor's Little Wisdoms). Although it appeared that Korczak would be destined for a prolific academic career he chose instead to utilise his skills for the benefit of the poor and orphans in Warsaw's slums.

In his novels Dzieci Ulicy (Children of the Street) (1901) and Dziecko Salonu (Children Of The Parlour) (1904) Korczak emerged as an advocate of the rights of children which he believed were all too often denied by adults. Korczak's later books including Krol Macius I (King Matty the First) and Kroll Macius na Bezludnej Wyspie (King Matty on a Desert Island) explore the theme of how children can gain dignity and affirmation and a place in which they can articulate their dreams. In addition to his medical, literary and radio careers Korczak was also one of the founders and head from 1912-1942 of the Jewish Dom Sierot (The Orphans' Home) and the orphanage Nasz Dom (Our Home) for Polish

children from 1916- 1936. In these childrens' homes Korczak put into practice the principle that children should be treated as equal partners with adults with rights including the right to be loved. Following the Nazi invasion of Poland Korczak and two hundred of his charges, together with about 400,000 other Jews were forced into a walled Ghetto in Warsaw. Despite the inhumane conditions of the Ghetto Korczak aimed to maintain a civilised regime in order that the children could still thrive as far as possible. On the 5th of August 1942 the Nazis ordered the children to leave the orphanage from which they were transported to their deaths at the concentration camp at Treblinka. Friends from outside the Ghetto made arrangements for Korczak to escape but he chose to remain with his children. Korczak felt that it was not necessary to inform the children of their destination. Instead, he and his staff said that they were going on a visit to the country for which they could take along a few toys. They marched out of the building holding their heads high carrying the flag that Korczak had designed, green with white blossoms together with the blue Star of David. Two weeks after the evacuation of the orphanage the Warsaw resistance movement commenced. It can be acknowledged, therefore, that "The Old Doctor devoted all his life, until he died a martyr's death, to children. He became known all over the world as a man faithful to the most noble and dignified human ideals. To the Polish people the tragic life of the wise and good Doctor is especially important." (31)

Section 4 of The Passionate Self module introduces students to aspects of Korczak's life and legacy primarily through an exploration of Andrzej Wajda's film Korczak, extracts from Korczak's Ghetto Diary (33), Alina Kentof's play Dr Janusz Korczak (34) and examples of monuments to Korczak and his children. From an analysis of this section of the module it is possible to formulate perspectives regarding the nature of, and relationship between Religious Education and Spiritual Education.

The section commences with Reflections on Janusz Korczak by Honey Tern (35), a New York teacher. Her reflections introduce Korczak to The Passionate Self module through her evocative description of her visit to the old Jewish cemetery in Warsaw where she sees the statue of Janusz Korczak holding a small child in his arms as other children surround him. Tern's account concludes with contemplation of what she would have done had she been in Korczak's position and she declares her fascination for his devotion and compassion. This short account, therefore, acts as the stimulus for the students' introduction to significant aspects of Korczak's life, work and legacy. Students are encouraged to explore a key element of Attainment Target Two of the Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education as analysis of Tern's account enables them to "identify and respond to questions of meaning and value within religions" (36). Tern's account can facilitate debate about the meaning and value of

Korczak's life and its significance for people today. The research tasks that students are set in relation to Tern's account prepares them for viewing of Andrzej Wajda's powerful film Korczak which presents a powerful vision of the impact of the Nazi occupation of Poland upon the Polish people and particularly the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto. Wajda's film, although emotionally very demanding, leaves students in no doubt about the horrors of the Holocaust but also illustrates the capacity for human beings to demonstrate noble values of love, idealism, social activism, courage, altruism and sacrifice in the midst of darkness and despair.

The conclusion of Wajda's Korczak in which Korczak and his orphans board the train for deportation to Treblinka anticipates the students' examination of Alina Kentof's (37) play Dr Janusz Korczak which also presents a poignant vision of the reality of the Ghetto experience. The composer Henryk Gorecki's declaration, explored earlier in this chapter, that his music serves "... as a witness, and as a warning" echoes Korczak's declaration in Kentof's play: "The night with its nightmares! The day with its nightmares! I must not give room for despair. We must live! We must react! That is our only way to resist! The Germans will succeed when we stop reacting!" (38)

In this declaration Korczak is affirming what Frankl (39) has termed the Will to Meaning. In Frankl's perspective it is possible for human beings to create and discover meaning even in the darkest

circumstances. Korczak, therefore, presents the requirement to resist the Nazis as the Will to Meaning of the life of himself and his orphans. Resistance to the Nazis is articulated in a refusal to succumb to despair. Indeed, Korczak affirms how despite the inhumane conditions of the Ghetto he is "... trying to do the best that I can! Here in the Ghetto on 300 calories a day, we conduct classes, concerts, choirs. The children live by an honour system. We try to lead a civilised life. Our rabbis knew. They said, in a place where there is no man, strive to be a man." (40)

The play presents a meeting between Korczak and Abrasha, a boy musician whose parents have been killed by the SS. Korczak suggests to Abrasha that his violin playing can be his protest. This affirmation of the creative and transformative power of music and the arts to transcend suffering is challenged by Misha who, upon informing Korczak that his father was taken by the SS the previous day, declares "He did not do anything bad. He was a good man. He believed in God. Why doesn't God help him? Why did he let my mother die? Doesn't God believe in us?" (41)

In this cry from the heart Misha is presenting the question which has haunted humankind for centuries: why does an all-powerful, loving God allow innocent people to suffer? The Hebrew Bible explores the question of the sufferings of the innocent in the Book of Job. Job presents the view that God is indifferent to suffering in the declaration:

“If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness.” (42)

Although Korczak states that he does not have an answer to Misha’s question he is clear that her parents were not killed by God but by man. Korczak affirms humankind’s freedom before God: “Man has a free choice. The Tree of Knowledge is here with us all the time. We must know what to pick. We must choose carefully.” (43)

As the play closes, however, it appears that Korczak himself has doubts about his explanation to Misha. Knowing that he and the children are to be deported to Treblinka he asks God: “Our Father in heaven, our Tattee! How can you be so uninvolved? Be just an observer, a looker, all the way to the end? What about Your choice? Did our free choice limit yours?” (44)

Exploration of Korczak’s life by students includes discussion of the question “Does Korczak’s death in the extermination camp mean that his lifelong commitment to caring for orphans was invalidated?” In Steven Spielberg’s film Schindler’s List Yitzhak Stern echoes the Talmud in his declaration that “He who saves the life of one man saves the life of the world.” The Passionate Self material stimulates exploration by students of the

meaning of Stern's statement and they are encouraged to attempt to relate this to the life of Janusz Korczak. The students, therefore, are engaged in exploration of the meaning of Korczak's sacrifice.

Korczak commented: "I no longer wonder over the fact that God has no beginning and no end, for in him I see the harmony of an infinity of stars. It is creation which testifies to the existence of the creator, and not the priest. I have created a new religion for myself, it has no direction yet, but it is the manifestation of spirituality." (45)

It can be suggested that Korczak's declaration that the personal religion he created is the "manifestation of spirituality" presents a perspective about the nature of religion and spirituality which can make a significant contribution to the current debate about the relationship between Religious education and Spiritual Education. The terms "religion" and "spirituality" are often used interchangeably. Indeed, the 1985 Manchester Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education stated that "The term "religion"; is used broadly and includes the usual meanings given to the terms "spiritual" and "ethical"." (46)

Implicit in this statement is the belief that the "spiritual" and the "ethical" are, to use mathematical terminology, subsets of the total set "religion". In such an analysis spirituality and ethics

are perceived as expressions of the religious dimension of life. However, it would appear that Korczak takes a contrary view. In Korczak's perspective religion is an expression of the spiritual dimension of life. For him the words "religion" and "spirituality" do not appear to be synonymous. Korczak's declaration that he has created a new religion for himself can suggest that whereas Religious Education is concerned with exploring the many and varied ways in which humankind has expressed their quest for meaning, the focus of Spiritual education is the creative expression of the child as she articulates her journey of existential understanding. Indeed, Korczak passionately believed that "Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be - "the unknown person" inside each of them is our hope for the future." (47)

Exploration of the life and work of Janusz Korczak can, therefore, contribute to the spiritual development of students because it can enable them to explore the links between existential questions and spiritual perspectives about people, the world, and the universe, including theological perspectives, and reflection upon the meaning of the holocaust can provide them with the opportunity to articulate their own experiences of their search for personal identity and meaning.

It can be suggested that there is real potential for the development in schools of a programme in which teachers and students attempt to explore Janusz Korczak from the framework of human potential presented in Landsman's concept of the Beautiful and Noble person. Indeed, it can be affirmed that Janusz Korczak was truly a Beautiful and Noble Person. He was a person who valued himself, others, and the world in which he lived. He was a Passionate Self; a person who said a resounding Yes! to life. Jaworski has suggested that "The bodies of Janusz Korczak and his children were burnt. What is left of them is a handful of ashes buried somewhere which the wind has scattered to the four corners of the world. Together with this smoke, Korczak's ideas circulate around the world - ideas which nothing can destroy or consign to oblivion now." (48)

In early 1996 a major exhibition was held at the Whitechapel Gallery in London of the work of the painter Emil Nolde. Nolde can be regarded as a representative of the Expressionist movement in modern art which developed earlier this century and has become associated with the work of groups and artists in Berlin, Dresden, and Munich. The pioneering Expressionists were a group of architectural students who believed that German society needed to undergo significant change. In their manifesto (49) they declared that "We believe in development and in a generation of people who

are both creative and appreciative.... We want to acquire freedom for our hands and our lives, against the will of the established older forces.”

The group believed in the efficacy of art as an agent of change, so they developed painting as a vehicle for bringing about spiritual transformation in society. They found inspiration in the life and work of Vincent Van Gogh whom they believed represented the ideals they stood for. Despite a life of emotional turmoil, which included the loss of the Christian faith of his youth, Van Gogh articulated deep spiritual feelings in his drawings, paintings, and letters. With Vincent as their inspiration the group of young Dresden artists adopted the name Die Brücke, a name which was to symbolise the building of a bridge between the past and the present, the old and the new.

It may be possible, if defined broadly, to suggest that in the context of the Europe of the Second World War Janusz Korczak was also an Expressionist. He too testified to the primacy of feelings; indeed, his feelings for others, the world and his God were always characterised by their clarity, integrity, and intensity. Like the young artists of Dresden earlier in the twentieth century Korczak and his orphans wished to “acquire freedom for (their) hands and lives against the will of the established older forces”. Indeed, Korczak (50) affirmed that “Children and young people are a third of humanity. Childhood is a third of life. It is not that children will become men

in time - they are already men. They have a right to one third of the fruits and treasures of this earth. They deserve one third of the victories of human thought."

In common with the Expressionists of pre-World War One Germany Korczak testified to the requirement for spiritual and moral change. For Korczak this spirituality was rooted in a total commitment to the well-being of the child; for artists such as Max Pechstein, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Eric Heckel it was established on the basis of recognition of personal and social transformation through the primacy and efficacy of aesthetic feeling. Although the Dresden artists would not have defined themselves in terms of a specifically religious identity the closing years of the twentieth century have seen the term Expressionist resurrected by philosophers and theologians to describe a perspective on the world which is post-Christian, this-worldly and life-affirming which does not interpret human existence in terms of belief in God as an objectively existing supernatural Being. However, what contemporary Expressionists such as Cupitt (51) share with Korczak and the Dresden Die Brucke is the awareness that the material, physical, natural world, and the human experience within it is the arena in which the Transcendent (however defined) can be encountered.

Although Expressionism as a movement in art is rooted in the early twentieth century it can be

suggested that its recognition that art is a way of feeling and being echoes the affirmation by existentialist philosophy of the primacy of subjective experience. It can be suggested that the teaching and learning strategies employed in The Passionate Self module are also an example of an Expressionist approach because they affirm the relationship between feeling and response.

This approach affirms the role of feeling in the response of students to the subject matter. It aims to develop the affective dimension of experience in which students respond to the ideas, themes, concepts, beliefs and values explored in the classroom from a perspective characterised by empathy which facilitates exploration of the meaning of the material being studied for the individual's inner life. The Passionate Self module, therefore, aims to enable students to recognise that, echoing Buber (52), they are the "I" who encounters the "Thou", the spirituality, of Janusz Korczak.

In this relational approach characterised by dialogue and encounter the Holocaust, including the life and work of Korczak, is not studied from a perspective which views the past exclusively as a series of historical events but rather is responded to in a spirit of enquiry characterised by autonomy, rationality, altruism and responsibility which Kay (53) defines as the attributes of a morally educated person. Indeed, the Expressionist approach to teaching and learning has the potential to

empower students, like the Die Brücke artists, to “acquire freedom for (their) hands and lives against the will of the established older forces”. In this process the life and work of Janusz Korczak can act as a powerful model and inspiration.

The Expressionist approach, therefore, affirms that education is concerned with the students' dialogue with the subject matter; they are able to respond to the content, themes and issues explored in the classroom from a perspective characterised by empathy which facilitates exploration of the meaning of the material being studied for the individual's inner life. Through exploration of the way of seeing the world articulated by Korczak students are introduced to a teaching and learning strategy which can be called Biographical Philosophy. This approach suggests that through a sensitive and empathic study of an individual's life it is possible to discern the spirituality they articulate. This spirituality can then be explored in terms of its relationship to, and meaning for, the world of today. The approach of Biographical Philosophy would acknowledge that in exploring the life of Janusz Korczak there are three dimensions which can be investigated in order to appreciate the depth of his spirituality.

The first dimension would aim to enable students to explore what can be called the Historical Korczak. This would require a detailed study of Korczak's life in order to facilitate an accurate reconstruction of the events of his life in the context of the world in

which he lived. The second dimension can be termed the Post-Historical Korczak. In this dimension students would be encouraged to explore responses to Korczak's life as expressed by, for example, artists, musicians, painters, and poets. In this dimension it would be possible to explore the work of Zofia Wozna, Xavery Dunikowski, Stanislaw Kulon, and Anthoni Mehl who through their sculptures have aimed to represent and respond to the man Korczak and his work with children. Musical responses to Korczak could be explored by reference to the three piano etudes dedicated to Korczak by the composer Michal Kruszynski. These etudes could be complemented by Gorecki's Third Symphony which presents a response to the Holocaust which is the historical context in which Korczak and his children lived their final years. Andrzej Wajda's film Korczak discussed earlier is also a powerful contemporary example of how the life of Janusz Korczak has challenged and inspired people to respond to the values he articulated and embodied. In addition to Kentof's play Dr Janusz Korczak explored above literary responses to Korczak include two plays both entitled Korczak and the Children by G E Farrell and Erwin Sylvanus.

These artistic, musical, literary and cinematic responses to Korczak and the Holocaust can be called Post-Historical because they release Korczak from his specific historical and cultural context and facilitate the rediscovery and reinterpretation of his life and work by contemporary and future

generations. Through the responses of artistic and literary creativity the story of Janusz Korczak is told anew and he therefore transcends historical particularity. Exploration of the Post-Historical Korczak can enable students to begin to articulate a third dimension which can be called the Expressionist Korczak. In this dimension students can begin to explore what meaning and significance the life and work of Janusz Korczak may have for their lives in the world today. Indeed, a significant feature of The Passionate Self module is to be found in its encouragement of students to creatively articulate their understanding of, and response to, Korczak's life and work through a range of media including, for example, painting, collage, poetry, prose and drama.

It can be suggested that through his capacity to integrate his Polish and Jewish identities Korczak transcended the religious and cultural categories of his time. He articulated and embodied in his life an approach to existence which has universal significance. It is his universality and his capacity to transcend cultural difference which makes his life and legacy a gift to humanity. Indeed, Wojtyzsko (54) has commented that "It is very difficult to consider (Korczak) a representative of one nation, one religion, one science or one teaching method. Everyone who would like to take Janusz Korczak as his own and say, "Korczak was like that and only like that", will lie. He was a Pole and a Jew, a theoretician and a practitioner, the advocate of

Liberty and Moral Rigour. He was a martyr and a victor. He commanded respect from the communists and the Christians, the aesthetes and the teachers.”

Exploration of Korczak's life and work, in the context of the Holocaust, can facilitate the development of an approach to teaching and learning which can affirm, with Cupitt, that “We should cast ourselves joyfully into the flux of existence. We should give, give our all, give out, and give up, turning loss into oblation.” (55)

The concept of oblation, with its connotations of sacrifice, offering and total commitment to that which is Transcendent can be regarded as affirming Cohen's suggestion that “According to Korczak, all of us are on the way to God, and by the struggles of our stormy lives, in our diverse and different acts, in our tireless forward striving, in our incessant search, in our joys and sorrows, and especially in our hours of great loneliness, we confront God face to face.” (56)

It is in Section 5 of The Passionate Self module, The Man for Others, which explores key elements of the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in which the theme of confronting God face to face in the hours of great loneliness is developed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in Breslau on 4 February 1906. In 1912 his family moved to Berlin and in 1923 Dietrich left school and began his theological studies in

Tubingen. In 1927 he gained his doctorate with Sanctorum Communio. Following seizing of power by Hitler in 1933 Bonhoeffer became involved in establishing opposition to the attempts by the state to influence, control and dominate the Church. The Nazis aimed to co-opt the Church into the service of their Aryan philosophy. In October 1933 Bonhoeffer took up a pastorate in London during which he attended a Conference of German Evangelical Clergy from 27-29 November in Bradford, West Yorkshire. The Conference issued the Bradford Declaration which was to be later presented to the Church authorities in Germany. Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin in 1935 where he became the head of the Preachers' Seminary of the Confessing Church in Finkenwalde, near Stettin. In 1937 the Preachers' Seminary was closed by the Gestapo as a result of which Dietrich undertook further work in illegal collective pastorates. In 1939, the year in which war broke out, Bonhoeffer went to the United States to take up a visiting lectureship in New York. However, he returned to Germany after only three weeks. In 1940 Dietrich commenced his involvement in conspiracy against the Nazis as a courier for the resistance group in the Abwehr. Prior to his arrest and imprisonment in the Wehrmacht prison of Tegel, Berlin in April 1943 Dietrich became engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer. From his prison cell Dietrich corresponded with Maria, his family and his friend Eberhard Bethge. Some of this correspondence has been published posthumously as Letters and Papers From Prison (57) and Love Letters From Cell 92. (58)

In 1944 an attempt to assassinate Hitler failed and following implication of his involvement in the conspiracy Bonhoeffer was moved to the Gestapo basement in Prinz-Albrecht Strasse from where he was moved to the Buchenwald concentration camp in February 1945. He was transported to Schonberg and then to Flossenburg concentration camp where he was executed on 9 April.

In his letter from prison dated 18 July 1944 Bonhoeffer wrote that “Man is summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of a godless world. He must therefore really live in the godless world, without attempting to gloss over or explain its ungodliness in some religious way or other. He must live a ‘secular’ life, and thereby share in God’s sufferings.....It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life.” (59)

In these words, Bonhoeffer appears to be integrating two distinct traditions. On the one hand he acknowledges the existence of what he calls a “godless” world yet on the other he suggests that man is therefore summoned to live a “secular” life. Indeed, he suggests that Christian identity cannot be defined in terms of a “religious act”. In his statement he appears to overturn the perspective of much Christian history which has defined the response to a fallen world in terms of the development of a specifically Christian identity and spirituality. Much Christian theology has seen

salvation from a secular, godless world as being possible only through a flight or escape from the world into the spiritual realm. However, Bonhoeffer's perspective subverts such an approach by suggesting that salvation can only come through a total involvement and engagement with the world. Indeed, he defines Christian identity in terms of a secular spirituality which is developed through active "participation in the sufferings of God".

Exploration of Bonhoeffer's perspectives can enable students to recognise that theology is always undertaken in a specific historical context; theology does not exist in a vacuum. In his prison cell Bonhoeffer was engaging the Biblical imagery of the suffering of God with the political reality of the spread of Nazism. Although faithful to the Biblical tradition his perspective challenged many of the assumptions of Christian thinking of his time. For Bonhoeffer, Christian identity is realised in the altruistic, autonomous responsibility of the primacy of engagement in the suffering of God in the world. His reflection on the nature of Christian identity is not theoretical abstract speculation; rather, it is rooted in his experience and orientated towards liberation, both physical and spiritual, in the future. Exploration of Bonhoeffer's thought by students can, therefore, simultaneously introduce them to the ideas of a major twentieth century Christian martyr and thinker and also to an understanding of how Bonhoeffer's experience and perspectives have been creatively, and often radically, interpreted by theologians and

philosophers, particularly since the 1960's. Indeed, the focus of Section 5 of The Passionate Self module is an exploration of how Bonhoeffer's concept of Religionless Christianity and Jesus as the Man for Others has been understood, particularly by radical theologians and is also related to students' awareness and understanding of contemporary issues.

Indeed, students' exploration of Bonhoeffer's life and work incorporates reference to his visit to Bradford, West Yorkshire to attend a Conference of the German Evangelical Clergy which took place from 27-29 November 1933. The Conference issued the Bradford Declaration which was ultimately presented to the Church authorities in Germany. This section of The Passionate Self module, therefore, clearly relates the Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education to what can be regarded as a significant event in Bradford's own religious history. Harrison-Zehelein has commented that "During their Conference in Bradford, the Ministers stressed the need to protect the central tenets of the Christian faith from any attempt to change or modify in accordance with (National Socialist) ideology. They agreed that the doctrine of Justification through Grace and the Unity of Holy Scripture must be vigorously upheld." (60)

Exploration of the concepts of Justification through Grace and the Unity of Scripture introduce students to two significant elements of the Lutheran Christian

tradition. They are, therefore, encouraged to realise Attainment Target 1 of the Agreed Syllabus, Learning about Religion, because this section of the module incorporates study of significant elements of Christian theology. However, in addition to addressing the specifically religious dimensions of Bonhoeffer's life and work The Passionate Self module simultaneously facilitates the realisation of Attainment Target 2 of the Agreed Syllabus, Learning from Religion, which can be regarded as the dimension of the syllabus which explores the spiritual dimension of life, particularly when perceived from the perspective of Gotz for whom spirituality "... connotes... a quality of lived experience rather than a mode of knowing, though obviously such living involves reflection and may include profound cognitive interests....Such living involves some sense of self-transcendence, not necessarily toward a god or higher power, but certainly beyond the narrow, selfish confines of ego...." (61)

Indeed, students are encouraged to study and evaluate different perspectives and to formulate and articulate through a range of media their own responses to questions of meaning and they are provided with the opportunity to appreciate and value reflection, including reflection upon the relationship between the experience of Korczak and Bonhoeffer and its meaning and significance for the world of today. Although the module facilitates Gotz's "profound cognitive interests" it

also provides the opportunity for students to engage with the experience of Korczak and Bonhoeffer at an empathic level. Indeed, students are encouraged to reflect upon the meanings of silence and solitude through their consideration of Bonhoeffer's correspondence from his imprisonment in Tegel and Korczak's memoirs written in the Warsaw Ghetto.

In his letters from prison Bonhoeffer outlined plans for a book in which he would explore a non-religious interpretation of Jesus. In his outline for chapter two of the book Bonhoeffer commented "Who is God? Not in the first place an abstract belief in God, in his omnipotence etc. That is not a genuine experience of God, but a partial extension of the world. Encounter with Jesus Christ. The experience that a transformation of all human life is given in the fact that "Jesus is there only for others". His "being there for others" is the experience of transcendence. It is only this "being there for others", maintained till death, that is the ground of his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Faith is participation in the being of Jesus (incarnation, cross and resurrection)." (62)

Although Bonhoeffer utilises traditional Christological terminology of incarnation, cross and resurrection as key elements of participation in the being of Jesus it can be suggested that he is presenting a radical interpretation of the Christian experience through his declaration that Jesus'

being there for others is the experience of transcendence. This perspective suggests that God, the Divine, the Other, the Transcendent is actualised in the authentic encounter and relationship of persons who in their lives aim to follow the loving example of Jesus in his relationship to others. Indeed, Bonhoeffer suggests that "... our relation to God is a new life in "existence for others", through participation in the being of Jesus. The transcendental is not infinite and unattainable tasks, but the neighbour who is within reach in any given situation." (63)

In this perspective Bonhoeffer presents a "theology from below", an approach to understanding the nature of God which begins with the contemporary historical situation in which the Christian believer encounters God through a life of radical discipleship. This discipleship is expressed in a commitment to actualising the love of God in authentic human relationships. In this perspective God is discovered in the human; the Transcendent is actualised in the Immanent; Theology is rooted in a radical Christian Humanism. This radical humanism, however, is established on the basis of living in the present moment a life which reflects the commitment of the Jesus of the Gospels to the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the meek, the merciful, those who hunger for righteousness, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted (Matthew 5: 3-13)

Indeed, Bonhoeffer's life can be regarded as embodying this radical Christian discipleship. His theological perspective can be regarded as a theology which actively engaged with the realities of the rise and spread of Nazism. In addition to extracts from Bonhoeffer's prison correspondence, The Passionate Self module particularly encourages students to reflect upon the significance of Bonhoeffer's life and work through exploration of two documents. The first is an article by Hardy Arnold (64), a member of the Bruderhof, in which he reflects upon his meeting with Bonhoeffer in South London in June 1934. The second is a report from August 1996 (65) which announced the decision of a German court to exonerate Bonhoeffer of treason. These documents facilitate reflection by students upon Bonhoeffer's life, particularly in terms of the morality of his decision to become actively involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, and they are encouraged to articulate their own perspectives about the relationship between peace-making and violence, particularly in the modern world.

The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in its Post-16 Study Unit Religion, Philosophy and Experience suggests that students should "Know the outlines of the theological, philosophical, and mystical traditions of religions selected (and) become familiar with the main features of the thought and experience of key thinkers." (66)

The Man for Others section of The Passionate Self module, therefore, can be regarded as facilitating Attainment Target 1, Learning About Religions, because in its exploration of key themes of Bonhoeffer's life and work it introduces students to significant elements of Christian belief and practice such as the doctrine of the Incarnation, the concept of Kenosis, Jesus as the Suffering servant, the nature of the Church and models of Christian discipleship. Bonhoeffer's perspectives are also explored in terms of their relationship to contemporary theological perspectives, particularly radical theologies. Indeed, The Man for Others section introduces students to the ground-breaking book The Gospel of Christian Atheism (67) published in 1967 by the American theologian Thomas Altizer, a leading exponent of the phenomenon of Death of God theology which had a high profile in the theological debates of the the period 1963-1967.

The phrase 'Death of God' derives from the work of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche of whom Magee (68) has commented that "Nietzsche was the first philosopher fully to face up to Western man's loss of faith in religion, or in the existence of any world other than this one. If there are no God and no transcendental realm, then morals, values, truth, rationality, standards of every kind, are not given to man from outside himself but are created by man to meet his own needs."

Altizer, together with theologians such as William Hamilton (69), Gabriel Vahanian (70) and Paul Van Buren (71) attempted to offer a new radical interpretation of the Christian faith which aimed to take seriously Nietzsche's proclamation of God's demise. Although the Death of God theologians presented a range of perspectives Altizer's is particularly explored in The Passionate Self module because it clearly attempts to relate the Death of God phenomenon to the Pauline doctrine of Kenosis. In Altizer's thought there is therefore presented a theology which attempts to take the implications of the Kenosis Christology to its radical limits. Indeed, he suggests that "The radical Christian refuses to speak of God's existence because he knows that God has negated and transcended himself in the Incarnation, and thereby he has fully and finally ceased to exist in his original or primordial form. To know that God is Jesus, is to know that God himself has become flesh: no longer does God exist as transcendent Spirit or sovereign Lord, now God is love." (72)

It can be suggested that Altizer's perspective arises from his radical interpretation of the Biblical tradition. It is likely that he would claim that his position reflects a truly Scriptural interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation. The term "radical" in common usage denotes a person who supports extreme or fundamental change in existing ideas or institutions. In this sense it may be appropriate to label Altizer as a radical because he is clearly calling

for a revolution in the Christian understanding of God.

However, Robinson has commented that “..... a radical has to be a person of roots and deep roots, with the freedom and courage, as Jesus did, to go to the source and speak from the centre.” (73)

It is from such a perspective that it may be more appropriate to describe Altizer as a radical. Indeed, in his interpretation of the Incarnation he aimed to go to the Scriptural sources in order to discover the roots at the centre of the Christological affirmation that “..... though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”(74)

The Man for Others section of The Passionate Self module, therefore, introduces students to an approach to modern theology which, like Bonhoeffer's call for the participation of humankind in the sufferings of God in the world, exemplifies a dialogue between the Biblical tradition and the existential realities of the present moment. For Bonhoeffer his world was overshadowed by the evil of Nazism and for Altizer in his Death of God perspective his world was profoundly aware of the absence of God. The representation of Christ's crucifixion by artists such as Nolde, Dali and Rouault which are incorporated into The Man for Others section of The Passionate Self Module and

complement the Christological perspectives and reflections of, for example, the Bible, Bonhoeffer and Altizer together with W H Auden's poem Friday's Child (75), which was written in memory of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom at Flossenburg on 9 April 1945, can be regarded as providing a poignant stimulus for reflection by students upon some of the realities of the contemporary world.

Although it is indeed appropriate to define Altizer as a radical it is also perhaps apposite to suggest that, in common with Bonhoeffer, he is a representative of the liberal tradition. In his articulation of the Death of God Altizer enters into a creative dialogue with the literary and philosophical perspectives of Blake, Nietzsche and Hegel together with the roots of his Christian tradition. It is the dialectical encounter between the faith of the past and its present-day expression with the wider contemporary culture that is a characteristic feature of liberalism. Exploration of key aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought together with analysis of his Christology as seen from the perspective of Death of God Theology can introduce students to a significant movement in twentieth century theology which can be regarded as being the precursor of the contemporary non-realist perspectives articulated by Cupitt, Freeman and Hart which are introduced in The Outsider, Section 7 of the module. Indeed, Cupitt, in his conclusion to his most recent work, compares the attitudes to life of the playwright Samuel Beckett and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He suggests that

“Beckett.... is perhaps the greatest of “life-atheists”. His characters move in a region where there seems to be no longer any possibility of enjoying or loving life.... In stark contrast, consider Bonhoeffer, writing in his prison letters during the summer of 1944, and with his chances of getting out alive steadily fading. In the most celebrated passages of these letters, the words live, living and life are used with remarkable frequency.... Bonhoeffer is attempting to write his protestant faith into the new religious world of “life”.”(76)

Although Cupitt interprets Bonhoeffer's prison correspondence as articulating a life-affirming theology Fackenheim has suggested that “Clear-sighted witness, apostle of Christian self-exposure to the secular world and himself martyr to his cause, Bonhoeffer nevertheless failed wholly to grasp - almost no one to this day has succeeded in wholly grasping - the monstrous evil in the actual world about him. This painful truth, in retrospect inescapable, cannot escape his Jewish reader.” (77)

Indeed, Section 6 of The Passionate Self module, entitled Theology After Auschwitz, provides students with the opportunity to explore and reflect upon theological perspectives on the Holocaust. Philosophers and theologians have asked the question “Where was God in the Holocaust?”. Such a question confirms Frankl's viewpoint that meaning is central to existential questions; the question of

God's relationship to the Holocaust can, indeed, be regarded as the primary concern arising from the suffering of six million Jews. This section facilitates exploration of a range of responses to this question and encourages students to formulate their own response. In his experience of the death camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald Wiesel asked God the following question: "What are You, my God! ... compared to this afflicted crowd, proclaiming to you their faith, their anger, their revolt? What does Your greatness mean, Lord of the Universe, in the face of all this weakness, this decomposition, and this decay? Why do You still trouble their sick minds, their crippled bodies?" (78)

In this declaration Wiesel is questioning the traditional Judaeo-Christian view of the omnipotence of God and His activity in history. A perspective which refutes the belief in a providential God has been developed by Rubenstein (79) who believes that after the Holocaust it is no longer possible to support the view that God has selected the Jews as His special people or that He takes any special interest in them. For Rubenstein the God of the Jews is the Ultimate Nothing; the Holocaust, therefore, can act as the impetus for affirmation of the positive value of human life without the requirement to maintain belief in the traditional view of God as being omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.

Exploration of theological perspectives on the Holocaust can also incorporate examination of Christian non-realist views of God, such as that developed by Cupitt for whom God is "... the sum of our values, representing to us their ideal unity, their claims upon us and their creative power.... To speak of God is to speak of the moral and spiritual goals we ought to be aiming at and about what we ought to become.... The true God is not God as picturesque supernatural fact, but God as our religious ideal." (80)

Although Cupitt's view of God has not been developed as a theological response to the experience of the Holocaust it can be suggested that his perspective can offer a way of looking at suffering which recognises the primacy of values in any response to it. Indeed, for Cupitt, Transcendence is to be discovered within human lives and values; it does not need to be searched for in a supernatural dimension above and beyond this world.

Rubenstein and Cupitt, therefore, can be regarded as presenting contemporary theological perspectives which have the potential to affirm and keep alive the values of people of faith who perished in the Holocaust without having to construct a theodicy which attempts to reconcile the love and power of a supernatural Being with the fact of the extermination of millions of innocent people.

The Theology After Auschwitz? section of The Passionate Self module is followed by Section 7, The Outsider, which aims to relate the experience of the Holocaust and Judaeo-Christian understandings of it to significant developments in modern theology and spirituality particularly during the second half of the twentieth century. The Outsider section of The Passionate Self module does not strictly speaking introduce students to a modern theological, philosophical or spiritual movement or to the thought of an individual theologian or philosopher. Rather it attempts to explore the theme of being an outsider, a marginalised, excluded, and displaced person as a metaphor for the development of new forms of spirituality as we approach the next millennium. The section explores themes and issues which arise in the lives of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Janusz Korczak, and it relates them to ways of seeing spirituality, spiritual development and spiritual education suggested by the life and work of, for example, the artist Vincent van Gogh.

This section provides students with the opportunity to acknowledge that individuals like Van Gogh do not appear to be believers in a conventional sense; rather they appear to exist on the boundaries, between faith and unbelief. It is in this sense that they are outsiders and marginalised. This section, therefore, can facilitate the development of students' awareness that in addition to faith and

unbelief there may exist the potential for what Hamilton has called 'a third space'.

Indeed, a creative synthesis of perspectives such as the Religionless Christianity of Bonhoeffer, the Death of God theologies of Altizer and Hamilton, the non-realist, expressionist Solar Ethics of Cupit and the Post-Historical Jesus of Hamilton can all be regarded as ways of seeing, experiencing and interpreting the world which anticipate the perspectives on spirituality and spiritual development introduced in Chapter One and explored in Chapter Three.

The Outsider material enables students to explore further the relationship between religion and spirituality. Through exploration of the beliefs, values, and way of seeing the world articulated by Van Gogh students are enabled to discern that religion and spirituality are not synonymous. Indeed, the Bradford Agreed Syllabus confirms this when it suggests that "Religion is an expression of the spiritual dimension of life." (81)

This perspective acknowledges that "There is a difference between the words 'spiritual' and 'religious.' Not everyone interprets their own life or experience of the world in a religious way. It is true to say..... that everyone does have an inner way of 'looking at' or 'making sense' of their experience. It is this which schools must seek to develop in pupils." (82)

It can be suggested, therefore, that Religious Education through its exploration of the spiritual dimension of experience has the potential to facilitate the development of Beautiful and Noble persons. Such persons value themselves, others and the world in which they live; they are people who say Yes! to life. Indeed, Cupitt has also described his philosophy of ecstatic immanence in terms of a cosmic humanism, world-mysticism, or solar ethics. By solar ethics he means “..... an ethic or lifestyle of all-out religious expression, the best kind of life that one could hope to live.” (83)

This anticipation of the development of a Spiritual Green Humanism which is this-worldly and life-affirming is also reflected in exploration of the ways of seeing the world in the work of artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Caspar David Friedrich and Emil Nolde. The artistic perspectives are complemented by the viewpoints of philosophers and theologians, including Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This section encourages students to relate these ways of seeing to their own understanding of the world.

Vincent van Gogh's paintings are supported by Cupitt's declaration that 'Solar ethics lives like Van Gogh paints'. (84) Indeed, it can be suggested that in his life Van Gogh actualised the transition from a religious to a spiritual perspective; from a Christian ethic to a Solar ethic. As a young man Vincent had been a passionate advocate of the Christian faith.

He aimed in his life to put into practice the radical demands of Jesus' life and teaching. As a result, he went to the poor mining community of the Borinage in Belgium where he preached the Gospel and lived a life of poverty. However, during his short life Vincent relinquished his Christian faith and attempted instead to express his deep spiritual feelings through art. Despite a life of emotional turmoil Vincent articulated sensitive and profound perspectives about the world around him. Indeed, "For Van Gogh, the artist had become a kind of priest, devoted to showing in his art the divine shining in the world." (85)

It is likely, however, that for Vincent the divine which shines was immanent in the world, not externally transcendent. In his paintings he attempted to reflect a pantheistic perspective in which the sacred is found in the world. Following the loss of the religious perspective of his Christian faith it can be suggested that Vincent developed a radically spiritual way of seeing the natural world.

It can be suggested that the transformation in perspective in Vincent's life can be viewed as a metaphor for the metamorphosis in understandings of Religious Education. The Religious Instruction which taught Christian belief and practice following the 1944 Education Act developed in the late 1960's into the approach of multi-faith Religious Education which forms the framework for many contemporary Agreed Syllabuses. However, it is possible that the

1988 Education Act through its requirement to develop the religious, spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils has provided a context in which the multi-faith Religious Education of today will become the radical cross-curricular, multi-disciplinary, expressionist, existential and Spiritual Education of the third millennium.

The Austrian psychiatrist Frankl has commented that "Man's struggle for his self and his identity is doomed to failure unless it is enacted as dedication and devotion to something beyond his self, to something above his self." (86)

As a result of his own personal experiences in the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps he has developed an approach to psychiatry which recognises the primacy of humankind's search for meaning. He believes that existential frustration and spiritual problems can lead to the development of a form of neurotic illness which he has identified as noogenic neurosis in which the individual struggles to come to terms with the value and meaning of his life. Frankl has developed a psychotherapeutic approach called Logotherapy which explores questions of meaning. Indeed, exploration of the suffering experienced in the Holocaust can initiate debate in the classroom of existential or ultimate questions such as "What is the meaning of life?"; "Why do people suffer?"; "Why does an all-powerful God permit Suffering?" and "Is there life after death?".

Section Eight of the module has the theme of Light in The Darkness. It forms the concluding lesson of the module and provides students with the opportunity to reflect upon the material explored in the module and attempts to relate this to the contemporary world. A significant feature of this section is the displays of work which students are required to arrange to accompany the lesson's meditative and reflective content. The display is to be developed from the contents of a portfolio of work developed by students during the module which will consist of written tasks which demonstrate knowledge and understanding of dimensions of the Holocaust, together with reflective material expressed in artwork, poetry or music, for example, which express awareness of and response to the multi-dimensional meanings of the Holocaust.

This portfolio and display could be assessed by the teacher on the basis of the knowledge, understanding, evaluation, interpretation and presentation skills articulated. The assessment could take the form of a detailed Religious Education Record of Achievement and could be complemented by an appropriate form of external certification such as that developed, for example, by the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement (NPRA). The module may also be incorporated into a General Studies G.C.E. Advanced Level programme and could also have the potential to be accredited as part of a Post-16

GNVQ course. There is the possibility, therefore, of the module being assessed in several different, yet complementary, ways simultaneously.

Assessment of the module can also incorporate the dimension of student assessment. This includes students' reflection on their own achievements in the module but also covers feedback by students to the module teacher by which they review the teaching and learning strategies employed in the course. This can contribute to the teacher's professional development by facilitating awareness of what has been most effective in the module together with recognition of the aspects of the course which have the potential for further development. Janusz Korczak's *Ghetto Diary* and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Prison correspondence* are documents which illustrate poignantly the reflective dimension of existence.

Exploration of the experience of Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer together with perspectives on the Holocaust presented in the music of Henryk Gorecki and *Towering Inferno* and the paintings of Marc Chagall and Felix Nussbaum can enable students to develop their own perspectives about the nature and meaning of suffering and the relationship of suffering of the past to the experience of suffering in the present and the future. The *Passionate Self* module empowers students to enter into a dialogue with the perspectives presented so that they are able to empathise with the experience

of those who suffered. Through a range of resources and stimuli, including music, poetry, paintings and biography students are encouraged to articulate their response to the Holocaust and to dimensions of experience such as faith, belief, memory, hope and transcendence. The module, therefore, can contribute to the spiritual development of students because it has at the centre of its approach to the Holocaust experience exploration of what the National Curriculum Council (87) has identified as beliefs, a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; experiencing feelings of transcendence; search for meaning and purpose; self-knowledge; relationships; creativity and feelings and emotions. The spiritual dimension of the module, therefore, reflects Frankl's recognition of the primacy of meaning; students are encouraged to reflect on the experience of the Holocaust in order that they may develop perspectives about its meaning and significance for themselves and the contemporary world. Such perspectives, however, are not restricted to ways of seeing the Holocaust in terms of knowledge and understanding of historical events; the module also aims to significantly engage the students at the level of feelings and emotions.

As I complete this chapter the Jewish festival of Passover which recalls the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt and Holy Week, during which Christians reflect upon the Passion, the trial, death and the resurrection of Jesus, coincide. The quality press in particular has included a range of articles in

which Jews reflect upon their understanding of Passover and Christians explore the nature of Easter in what is increasingly perceived to be a secular society. For example, in an editorial The Guardian explores the contemporary phenomenon of the decline of Easter as a major religious festival. In the same issue Cupitt (88) reflects theologically upon this religious and cultural shift and comments, however, that "... Good Friday, Holy Saturday and hopes of rebirth have been central to 20th-century experience, even for atheists.

The key period was the 20th century's Holy Saturday, the period around 1945, just after the European war. The Nazi catastrophe had left central Europe in a condition of utter spiritual darkness and devastation. Heidegger called it a world-midnight, saying that the only thing possible was to wait patiently in the darkness for dawn to come."

What is striking about these reflections is that they appear in an issue which also includes a review by Anne Karpf of three new biographies of Anne Frank (89, 90, 91). The review, after acknowledging that Anne Frank's diary is still the highest selling book after the Bible, explores the enduring appeal of Anne and suggests that a mythicisation of her life appears to have developed in which emphasis is given to the triumph of the human spirit over adversity. Karpf suggests that "Anne Frank, in short, has been hijacked by those who want their Holocaust stories

to be about the triumph of the human spirit over evil and adversity." (92)

Indeed, this triumph of the human spirit over adversity has recently been articulated in Roberto Benigni's Oscar-winning, albeit controversial, Holocaust film Life Is Beautiful. Karpf, however, suggests that the reality of the Holocaust is such that rather than presenting the triumph of the human spirit over adversity Anne Frank's death in Auschwitz clearly confirms that the Nazis were trying to exterminate the Jews.

During the same week that these newspaper articles and reviews appeared the international Polish Television Broadcasting Station TV Polonia featured a presentation of Andrzej Wajda's acclaimed 1996 film Wielki Tydzien (The Holy Week). It can be suggested that in The Holy Week Wajda is returning to the themes he explored in his 1990 film Korczak to which students are introduced in Section 4 of The Passionate Self module. Whereas the focus of Korczak is the experience of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, in particular the work of Janusz Korczak with the orphans in his care, The Holy Week explores the effect that a young Jewish woman who is being sheltered by her Polish friends has upon the lives of individuals and the community in which she is being sheltered. The film ends with Christians attending Good Friday worship whilst at the same time the young Jewess is forced to leave what she believed to be the security of her place of safety by some

Polish neighbours who believe, incorrectly, that she is responsible for the negative dynamics and emotions that have overtaken the neighbourhood during Holy Week. The image of the Jewish woman returning to the blazing Ghetto because she has nowhere else to go at the same time as Nazi soldiers who have clearly been involved in the destruction are leaving the Ghetto is juxtaposed with the scene of Christians worshipping in the Church on Good Friday. Attending worship is a woman who is the Jew's friend and protector. The images of the Jewish woman returning to the Ghetto and her Christian friend worshipping in the Church are violently interlinked by the portrayal of the murder of the Christian woman's husband at the hands of people who have betrayed him. The husband is murdered in the street at the precise moment that his wife in the church prostrates herself before the image of the crucified Christ.

What is particularly poignant and striking about The Holy Week is that it powerfully, yet sensitively, illustrates the sense in which Jewish and Christian histories are inextricably intertwined. The irony of the film is found in its presentation of the reverence being offered to Jesus Christ in the Church in which there does not appear to be any suggestion of, or reference to, his Jewishness whilst at the same time a Jewish woman is expelled from the community. In the midst of the remembrance of the death of Jesus the film presents the contemporary brutal death of an innocent man. It can be suggested, therefore,

that Wajda's The Holy Week, in its poignant, profound, subtle and almost subliminal exploration of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, powerfully explores and illustrates what Dietrich Bonhoeffer affirms as the primacy of the "... participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life" (93) and it enables the viewer to ask, with Janusz Korczak, the question "Are decent people of the higher orders of men to be infinitely condemned to Calvary?" (94). It is possible to regard The Holy Week as a deeply theological film because it raises questions about the nature of, and relationship between, Judaism and Christianity particularly in its presentation of suffering. Wajda utilises the historical context of the experience of Jews and Poles in Nazi-occupied Poland as the vehicle for this theological exploration.

This chapter has outlined, through an analysis of the themes explored in The Passionate Self module, a rationale for teaching and learning about significant elements of the lives and work of Janusz Korczak and Dietrich Bonhoeffer together with a range of perspectives on the Holocaust presented in film, music and art which encourage students to explore the relationship of Korczak and Bonhoeffer's experience to the experience of students in the modern world. Teaching of The Passionate Self module can, therefore, be justified on the grounds that it explores the Attainment Targets of the Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education through development of students' awareness,

appreciation and response to ways of seeing and interpreting the experience of suffering which includes that of Jews, Christians and the worldwide human community. Students simultaneously Learn about Religion (AT 1), particularly Judaism and Christianity, and they Learn from Religion (AT 2) because the module can facilitate the spiritual development of students through exploration of questions of meaning from existential, philosophical, aesthetic and theological perspectives. Through a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning, particularly through the perspectives presented by art, music, poetry and biography, the module articulates a philosophy of Religious Education which reflects what can be called an Existential Encounter approach.

The Existential Encounter approach affirms that education is to do with the students' dialogue with the subject matter; they are able to respond to the content, themes and issues explored in the classroom from a perspective characterised by empathy which facilitates exploration of the meaning of the material being studied for the individual's inner life. The Passionate Self module, therefore, can enable students to recognise that they are the "I" who encounters the "Thou" of the Holocaust. In this relational approach the Holocaust is not objectified and studied simply as a series of historical events but is responded to with the head and the heart and explored in terms of its contemporary existential significance. However, it

can also be suggested that a significant element of the spiritual development of students can be discerned in the discussion above which explores the issues arising from reviews of biographies of Anne Frank at the same time as analysing the phenomenon of the eclipse of Easter as a religious festival in contemporary society whilst simultaneously commenting on the theological significance of Andrej Wajda's The Holy Week. What the above discussion does is make connections between what on the surface appear to be a range of unrelated articles and topics. These connections are then discussed in terms of their relationship to concepts, themes and ideas presented in The Passionate Self module. The Existential Encounter approach recognises and affirms, therefore, that although Spiritual Education will find in the history, beliefs and traditions of world faiths explored in Religious Education a treasury of resources which it can creatively utilise in the classroom it is in the capacity of students to engage with questions of meaning and make creative connections utilising a dialectical framework that authentic Spiritual Education is to be discerned.

Janusz Korczak, in his Ghetto Diary, contemplated the possibility in the coming five thousand years of what he described as "A contest of poets and musicians in the most splendid of Olympic Games (and) a contest for the most beautiful prayer, for a world hymn to God once a year." (95)

Perhaps it is in the capacity for schools to contribute to the Religious and Spiritual Education of students and to the development, however modestly, of what Landsman has termed Beautiful and Noble Persons (95) that Korczak's vision will ultimately be realised!

Towards a Philosophy of Spiritual Education

Frankl (1) has suggested that life can be made meaningful in three ways: "... first, through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second, by what we take from the world (in terms of our experiencing values); and third, through the stand we take towards a fate we no longer can change (an incurable disease, an inoperable cancer, or the like)".

This tri-dimensional understanding of meaning derives from the interpretation of life as "... a chain of questions which man has to answer by answering for life, to which he has to respond by being responsible, by making decisions, by deciding which answers to give to the individual questions." (2)

Although Religious Education is concerned with exploring the many and varied ways in which humankind has expressed their quest for meaning, including the paths of the major world faiths, if Frankl's perspective outlined above is integrated into the curriculum, the focus of Spiritual Education becomes the creative expression of the child as she

articulates her journey of existential understanding. In such a perspective living is an ultimately creative act. Each individual is an artist who out of the raw materials of existence strives to fashion something which has meaning, value and significance.

Implicit in such a perspective on the nature of Spiritual Education, however, is the acknowledgement that teaching and learning is not exclusively concerned with, for example, a national curriculum, testing and recording of achievement, preparation for working life and career choices but is ultimately concerned with the whole child. In such a perspective education would have to address, in relation to the uniqueness of each child, what may be termed existential or ultimate questions. Exploration of ultimate questions, however, will require a recognition that in addition to celebrating life's positive experiences the spiritual dimension of life will almost inevitably involve facing up to what may be termed the "shadow side" of life. Indeed, the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority in its draft guidance for pilot work in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development recognises that "Most of us have experienced, at some point in our lives, a temporary loss of spirit. This can make us feel powerless, lethargic, and hopeless because we no longer believe ourselves to be equal to the challenges of life." (3)

The theme of the loss of spirit would appear to be complemented by the perspective of the philosopher Sam Keen who has suggested that “The spiritual quest is the reverse of the religious pilgrimage. The quest begins when an individual falls into a spiritual “black hole” in which everything that was solid vaporizes. Certainties vanish, authorities are questioned, all the usual comforts and assurances of religion fail, and the path disappears. A spiritual quest is the effort to discover the meaning of life.” (4)

This experience of falling into a spiritual “black hole” is powerfully and poignantly presented in Joseph Roth’s short story The Legend of the the Holy Drinker (5) which was written a few months before his death, at the age of forty-four, in May 1939. In 1988 the film (6) of the book was released to critical acclaim. The film won a Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in that year and four Italian Oscars during 1988-89. The film was directed by Ermanno Olmi and stars Rutger Hauer as Andreas, an ex-miner jailed for an accidental murder, now released from prison and living homeless in Paris.

A mysterious old man offers Andreas two hundred francs on the condition that he repay it the following Sunday to the church of Sainte Marie des Batignolles. The film chronicles Andreas’ encounters with faces from the past and present and presents a scenario in which each time he spends the money he wakes up, usually from a drunken stupor, to find

that the bank notes have miraculously reappeared in his wallet.

There is a sense in which Joseph Roth's own life echoed that of Andreas. Alcoholism had destroyed his health and in 1938 he suffered a heart attack which left him severely incapacitated. It is possible to utilise the Legend of the Holy Drinker as a teaching and learning resource because it can be suggested that it is a profoundly spiritual film which can facilitate exploration in the classroom of the experience of the loss of spirit and the concept of the spiritual black hole. Indeed, the film presents a profoundly moving portrayal of what may be termed spiritual distress.

In what can be regarded as being perhaps the most powerful and painful scene in the film, Andreas escapes from the torrential rain by spending the night drinking alone in a bar. Throughout the night his solitary drinking contrasts with the experience of deep respect, caring and love displayed in the interaction of others in the bar. Andreas, in his isolation, reflects upon the past and present and appears to experience despair, meaninglessness and a sense of loss. Is this an experience of what the Christian mystic John of the Cross called the Dark Night of the Soul?

Through his promise to repay the money to the Church Andreas has the possibility of finding a purpose, goal or mission to his life. When Andreas'

money runs out it is always unexpectedly replaced. Is this chance, coincidence or providence? He encounters friends and loved ones from the past who have a significant effect on his present life; how is this to be explained? The task of returning the money to the Church allows him to transform his apparently aimless life into a life lived from a transcendent perspective. Indeed, a central feature of Frankl's philosophy of existence is the belief that "Existence falters unless it is lived in terms of transcendence towards something beyond itself." (7)

In his experiences, both joyful and despairing, Andreas appears to be searching for meaning to his life. Frankl has suggested that "man is characterised by his "search for meaning" rather than his "search for himself". (8) Indeed, Andreas appears to be engaged in an existential quest. Ultimately, the film can pose the question "Is death the premature and tragic end to Andreas' life or is it the fulfilment of his mission?"

Through such themes and concepts the film can be used effectively to explore the nature of existence, both the joy and the pain of life, together with examination of the relationship between meaning and well-being. It can also be used in interdisciplinary work in which the links between film, literature and spirituality are explored. Indeed, Kung (9) has suggested that "... artists can help us human beings, often so lacking in ideas, so helpless in all our

activism, to test our attitude to reality as a whole and especially to ourselves, to perceive our condition of alienation and to find our integrity.”

It can be suggested that in his life the artist Vincent Van Gogh also actualised the transition from a religious quest to a spiritual quest; from a Christian ethic to what Cupitt (10) has called a Solar ethic. Like Andreas, the holy drinker, Vincent's life, and ultimately his spirituality, was characterised by the constant struggle to form authentic human relationships and establish financial independence and security.

Frankl (11) has suggested that frustration of what he terms the “will to meaning” can result in noogenic neurosis. He defines noogenic neuroses as being “.... psychological illnesses which are.... rooted in collisions between different values, or in the unrewarded longing and groping of man for that hierarchically highest value - an ultimate meaning to life.

To put it simply, we are dealing with the frustration to man's struggle for a meaning to his existence - a frustration of his will to meaning.”

As a young man Vincent van Gogh had been a passionate advocate of the Christian faith. He aimed in his life to put into practice the radical demands of Jesus' life and teaching. As a result, he went to the poor mining community of the Borinage

in Belgium where he preached the Gospel and lived a life of poverty. However, during his short life Vincent relinquished his Christian faith and attempted instead to express his deep spiritual feelings through art. Despite a life of emotional turmoil Vincent articulated sensitive and profound perspectives about the world around him. Indeed, following the loss of the religious perspective of his Christian faith it can be suggested that Vincent developed a radically spiritual way of seeing the world. This perspective, however, would appear to have developed as a result of Vincent's desire to transcend his noogenic neuroses and discover an all-encompassing meaning to life. Exploration of Vincent's life and work can be incorporated into the Religious Education curriculum because it can provide students' with the opportunity to explore a range of religious perspectives, including theism, pantheism, panentheism and atheism but it can also provide a context in which teachers and students are able to explore together what may be termed the existential dimension of Vincent's work. In addition to the celebratory dimensions of Vincent's paintings and drawings this existential dimension can also involve analysis of his life's struggles, challenges and disappointments.

Spiritual Education, therefore, has the potential to facilitate the development of what Hamilton (12) anticipates as a "third space" between belief and unbelief. Spiritual Education neither confirms or refutes religious "belief" or secular "unbelief"; rather,

it enables pupils to explore the possibility of a third way which transcends the belief-unbelief, religious-secular polarities. Exploration by teachers and students of a range of artistic perspectives can create an environment in which questions of meaning, value and purpose can be explored in order that a creative dialectic may be initiated between the religious thesis and the secular antithesis.

1994 saw the presentation of two major exhibitions in London of Romantic Art. The National Gallery presented Caspar David Friedrich To Ferdinand Hodler - A Romantic Tradition and the Hayward Gallery at the South Bank Centre presented The Romantic Spirit In German Art 1790-1990.

“Romanticism” is a term used to describe a cultural movement which spread throughout Europe during the nineteenth century which has its roots in the ‘Romances’ (stories and myths) told in the Middle Ages. The Romantics aimed in their art to reawaken in society consciousness of values and ideals which were perceived as being lost in the developing new scientific and technological age.

Romanticism initiated a debate about the nature of reality. The man-made world of the machine was contrasted with the world of nature; was reality to be found in the “natural” world of the sun, moon, mountains and human feelings and emotions or was it to be discovered in “unnatural” scientific and

technological constructions which were used to dominate and control the world of nature? Romanticism, therefore, can be regarded as a reaction against the spread of scientific and rational thought which were characteristic of the Industrial Revolution.

These exhibitions can suggest that the contemporary rediscovery and reappraisal of the Romantic Movement can make a significant contribution to our understanding of themes and issues explored in Spiritual Education. The exhibitions detailed above presented a panorama of artists to whom the term "Romantic" can be applied. A selection of paintings by Caspar David Friedrich in particular provided an evocative stimulus for exploration of how the theme of the primacy of meaning affirmed by Frankl can be explored in the classroom in a creative and interdisciplinary way.

In his summary of the implications of Frankl's philosophy of existence for educators Thorne (13) has commented that "In an age when values and traditions are in the melting pot, the individual receives very little help from his environment as he seeks to confront the ultimate questions of his own meaning and value. Indeed, he may for a while be separated altogether from these questions by an all-embracing materialism."

It can be suggested that exploration of what may be termed the romantic vision of Caspar David

Friedrich has the potential to encourage students to transcend this all-embracing materialism and explore perspectives on the world which reflect Frankl's concept of the primacy of the Will to Meaning.

Friedrich was born in 1774 in the north German town of Griefswald on the Baltic coast. He received his artistic education at the Copenhagen Academy and in 1798 he moved south to the city of Dresden where he was to spend most of his life and where he also died in 1840. Friedrich's paintings deal with existential issues including the search for meaning, an awareness of the Transcendent, the world as an icon, a sacred melancholy and the role of empathy.

In paintings such as The Wanderer Above The Sea Of Fog (c.1818), Two Men Contemplating The Moon (1819) and Woman Before The Setting Sun (1818) Friedrich presents scenes in which human contemplation of the world appears to reflect a spiritual quest in which people interpret the natural world as a giver of meaning and focus for Transcendence.

The artist portrays the experience of contemplation and reflection in the presence of nature; through silence, stillness and meditation and encounter with the living environment humankind discovers a sanctuary, a sacred space. In Friedrich's work this encounter appears to assume the status of a spiritual discipline. Friedrich was an artist who

frequently incorporated traditional Christian imagery into his paintings, particularly his landscapes. His Cross and Cathedral In The Mountains (1812), Morning In The Riesengebirge (1811) and Abbey In The Oak Forest (1809-10), for example, combine powerful, evocative views of nature with religious imagery. In these paintings God and the world are united; there is no separation between nature and the Transcendent. Encounter with nature is perceived by Friedrich as the focus of experience of the Divine.

Friedrich can be regarded as a painter with an iconic and incarnational perspective in the sense that in his paintings the natural world is a medium through which the the Transcendent is revealed. It is through the physical, material world that humankind encounters God. Indeed, from the perspective of twentieth century Process Theology it can be suggested that Friedrich does not simply present a pantheistic view of God in which nature and the Divine are synonymous but rather he offers a panetheistic model in which "... the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but (as against pantheism) that His Being is more than, and is not exhausted by the universe." (14)

Friedrich's spirituality, therefore, appears to reflect the perspective that God is in everything, and everything is in God. The world becomes an icon which acts as a focus for encounter with the Divine.

Indeed, in his paintings “... Friedrich transports us to an otherworldly experience of rapt meditation in which the next movement - the setting of the sun, the rising of the moon, the passing of a cloud - may take us beyond the threshold of the natural world.” (15)

The capacity of Friedrich in his paintings to “take us beyond the threshold of the natural world” can enable teachers and students to consider perspectives which are future-orientated. Being “taken to the threshold...” suggests the potential for entry into a new world, dimension, stage or state. This forward-looking dimension of Friedrich’s work reflects a central feature of Frankl’s psychotherapeutic technique called Logotherapy.

Logotherapy, based on existentialist thought, regards depression as a lack or frustration of meaning. Friedrich’s paintings, however, present perspectives on the world which take seriously questions of meaning. Although Friedrich’s paintings celebrate the beauty of nature and its power to inspire awe and wonder they also evoke an awareness of the transitory nature of existence which borders on the melancholy. For example, in Winter (c.1826), which was inspired by the ruined abbey of Eldena near Griefswald, and in Cemetery In The Snow (1826) Friedrich incorporates images of decline, death and decay into his presentations of nature. However, the melancholic overtones of such pictures are not reflections of a world view

characterised by a deep pessimism; they reflect a perspective which recognises that in the midst of the beauty of the world suffering, death and decay are inevitable. All living things are subject to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Indeed, Friedrich's works reflect the changing of the seasons and the passage of time. The vibrant greenery of Summer (1807) and the serenity of Meadow Near Griefswald (c.1820-22) contrasts with the almost morbid Skeletons In The Cave (c.1834) and the decaying Oak Tree In The Snow (c.1829).

Friedrich's insights into existence would appear to complement Buddhist perspectives on life. Buddhism recognises the transitoriness of life and the fact that all existence is suffering. For both Friedrich and Buddhism, however, there is the awareness that despite the reality of suffering humankind is able to live life from perspectives of Transcendence which have the power and potential to facilitate and actualise personal and social transformation.

The National Curriculum Council (16) has identified beliefs; a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; experiencing feelings of transcendence; search for meaning and purpose; self-knowledge; relationships; creativity and feelings and emotions as some of the many aspects of spiritual development. It can be suggested that exploration of the life and work of Caspar David Friedrich can be a vehicle for exploration of perspectives on

existence which recognise and affirm the primacy of this spiritual dimension.

What can permeate all aspects of spiritual development is the quality of empathy. The capacity to understand and imaginatively enter into another person's experience can be encouraged through exploration of Friedrich's paintings.

Students can be encouraged to interact and enter into a dialogue with Friedrich's painting The Traveller, for example, in order to sensitively interpret the nature of the Traveller's thoughts and feelings. Indeed, it is possible to creatively explore Friedrich's The Traveller, and recognise the themes of awe and wonder, joy and pain, together with an awareness of what may be regarded as the Transcendent nature of what he may be experiencing, with reference to the perspective of the Polish composer Wojciech Kilar who, in his work Koscielec 1909, (17) recalls the death of the composer Mieczyslaw Karlowicz under an avalanche in Maly Koscielic, a summit in the Tatra mountains, on the 8th of February 1909. Ironically, Karlowicz expressed his feelings about the mountains when he commented that "When I stand on the top of a steep mountain, having only the blue hemisphere of the sky above and the sea of the plateau with waves of other summits beneath, I feel as if I were blending with the surrounding space. I cease to perceive myself as a unique entity; instead, I sense the eternal and

mighty breath of the universe, Hours spent in such a mood of semi-consciousness are felt as a temporary return to the state of non-existence. This experience rewards me with peaceful thoughts on life and death; it tells me about an eternal joy of melting in the universe.” (18)

Coincidentally, Viktor Frankl also affirms the Transcendent nature of the mountain experience. He declares in his autobiography: “I go to the mountains as some go the desert: to gather my strength on solitary walks, as on the plateau of the Rax mountain. Every important decision I have made, almost without exception, I have made in the mountains.” (19)

Fritjof Capra, Director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California has outlined a vision synthesising recent scientific discoveries including the theory of complexity, Gaia theory and Chaos theory (20). He has developed what he has termed “ systems thinking” which recognises that the basic tension in contemporary culture is between a reductionistic, mechanistic and atomistic perspective which emphasises the constituent parts of a system and an integrated, organismic and ecological framework which recognises the primacy of an wholistic paradigm. Capra articulates this reverential awe when he talks of: “... the core spirituality that comes from deep ecology. When I see people cutting down forests, I feel real pain. I have a real emotional

connection to the earth. The other side is that I feel very much at peace by the sea or by mountains.

Those are moments when I feel most alive - this rush of feeling alive - most spiritual in the sense of the "spirit" as the breath of life... (21)

The capacity of Friedrich's art to transform and transcend the ordinary echoes Frankl's affirmation of the primacy of meaning and self-transcendence and supports the perspective of Capra for whom the spiritual refers to that which is life-giving and energising. As we approach the end of the twentieth century we appear, therefore, to be entering the age of the artist-theologian-philosopher who provides us with a model enabling us to "..... see life in more 'aestheticist' terms,..... the practice of life as a kind of abstract religious performance art." (22)

Indeed, it can be suggested that a spiritual framework consistent with such a perspective is presented by Keen (23) who suggests that a spiritual calling involves four elements: a gift, a delight, a need, and a discipline. He believes that in order to discover your vocation you should ask yourself the following four questions: What are my gifts? What delights me? Whom does my gift serve? What discipline am I willing to follow?

Keen would appear to be suggesting that vocation is larger than work. Indeed, Keen's perspective on

vocation has close affinities with the perspective of the mythologist Joseph Campbell who believed that it was essential for each individual to discover and follow their bliss. Campbell observed that “We are having experiences all the time which may on occasion render some sense of this, a little intuition of where your bliss is. Grab it. No one can tell you what it is going to be. You have to learn to recognise your own depth.” (24)

John Barry, the acclaimed film composer, in the sleeve notes to his latest work (25), reflects upon the relationship between his childhood in the North of England and his adult life in New York. He suggests that “Both these visions, past and present - “The Old Country” and “The New World” - harbour dreams, memories and reflections beyond the norm: The Beyondness of Things.” (26)

It can indeed be suggested that, echoing Barry, critical and creative exploration of music, film, painting and literature can facilitate an approach to Spiritual Education which can enable students to discover their bliss and recognise their depth and affirm, with Handy, that “We need a new dream for our society. Not a dream where the economy grows (though that would do no harm), but one where everybody is enabled to be an artist in this great game of life. We must all strive after this.” (27)

Exploration of the perspectives, the ways of seeing the world, the memories, dreams, and reflections (to

borrow a phrase from Carl Gustav Jung) of artists of whatever kind, including the creative power of Frankl's philosophy of existence, and the inspirational values to be discovered in the lives of, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Janusz Korczak, may empower students and teachers to discover and actualise their own dreams and visions. Such dreams and visions may provide the resources and act as the inspiration by which future generations may create their own meanings and, indeed, discover something of the Beyondness of Things.

References

Chapter One

(1) Keenan, Brian: Spirit In The Shadows (The National Society's RE Centre Annual Lecture 1996) (The National Society; 1997) p. 4

(2) Keenan, Brian: An Evil Cradling (Hutchinson; 1992)

(3) Gallagher, Kenneth T: The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel (Fordham University Press; 1962) p. 69

(4) Gould, William Blair: Viktor E. Frankl - Life With Meaning (Brooks/Cole; 1993) p.115

(5) Bunyan, John: The Pilgrims Progress

(6) Eliot, T S: Four Quartets in Collected Poems 1909-1962 (Faber & Faber; 1970) p. 222

(7) Mounier, Emmanuel: Be Not Afraid - Studies In Personalist Sociology (Harper; 1952)

(8) Cupitt; Don: The New Religion Of Life In Everyday Speech (SCM Press; 1999) p. 102

(9) The Education Reform Act (HMSO; 1988)

(10) OFSTED Guidance On The Inspection Of Secondary Schools (HMSO; 1995) p. 88

(11) Ibid p. 90

(12) Spiritual and Moral Development - A Discussion Paper (National Curriculum Council; 1993)

(13) Bradford, John: Caring For The Whole Child - A Holistic Approach To Spirituality (The Children's Society; 1995) p. 1

(14) Ibid p. 35

(15) Ibid pp. 3 - 12

(16) Maslow, Abraham: Motivation and Personality 2nd Edition (Harper & Row; 1970)

(17) McCarthy, Kevin: Learning By Heart - The Role of Emotional Education In Raising School Achievement (Remembering Education :1998) p. 5

(18) Baines, Don: The Value Of Spiritual Intelligence in SPES - A Magazine for the Study of Spiritual, Moral and Cultural Values in Education (The RIMSCUE Centre, University of Plymouth; Issue Number 5; November 1996) pp. 19 - 25

(19) Gardner, H: Multiple Intelligences (Basic Books; 1993)

(20) Postle, D: The Mind Gymnasium (Macmillan; 1989)

(21) Miller, Donald E: The Case For Liberal Christianity (SCM Press; 1981) p. 65

(22) Spiritual and Moral Development - A Discussion Paper Op Cit p. 7

(23) Education For Adult life - The Spiritual and Moral Development of Young People (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority; 1996) p. 14

(24) Consultation on Values in Education and the Community (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority; 1996)

(25) Jourard, Sidney M and Landsman, Ted: Healthy Personality - An Approach From The Viewpoint Of Humanistic Psychology 4th Ed (Macmillan; 1980) pp. 10-12

(26) Consultation on Values in Education and the Community Op Cit p. 4

(27) Ibid p. 3

(28) Ibid

(29) Ibid p. 4

(30) Skolimowski, Henryk: A Sacred Place To Dwell - Living With Reverence Upon The Earth (Element ; 1993)

(31) Fromm, Erich: To Have Or To Be ? (Jonathan Cape; 1978) p. 33

(32) Ibid

(33) Ibid p. 197

(34) Clements, K W: Martin Buber in Wakefield, Gordon S (Ed) : A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality (SCM Press; 1983) p. 60

(35) Van Deurzen-Smith, Emmy: Everyday Mysteries - Existential Dimensions of Psychiatry (Routledge; 1997) pp. 146 - 149 : Ludwig Binswanger

(36) The Prince of Wales: A Vision For The Millennium in Perspectives On Architecture (February/March 1996) p. 35

(37) Stok, Danusia: Quoted in The Guardian (14 March 1996) p. 15

(38) Zanussi, Krzysztof: Quoted in The Guardian (14 March 1996) p. 11

(39) Evans, Donald: Struggle and Fulfilment : The Inner Dynamics of Religion and Morality (Collins; 1980)

(40) Kandinsky, Wassily: Concerning the Spiritual in Modern Art Translated by Sadler, M T H (Dover; 1977) p. 2

Chapter Two

(1) Lacovic Croata, Ivan: Quoted in Porritt, Jonathon: Save The Earth (Dorling Kindersley; 1991) p. 18

(2) Munch, Edvard: Quoted in Gregory, Clive (Ed) : Munch in The Great Artists : Their Lives, Work and Inspiration; Volume 74 (Marshall Cavendish; 1986) p. 2352

(3) Frankl, Viktor E: Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning (Insight Books; 1998)

(4) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Religious Education In Today's World (Bradford Education; 1983)

(5) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Faith In Our Future (Bradford Education; 1996)

(6) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Religious Education In Today's World Op Cit

(7) (Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority; 1994)

(8) Gorecki, Henryk: The Symphony Of Sorrowful Songs - The South Bank Show Television Interview (1993)

(9) The New Collins Concise English Dictionary (Guild Publishing; 1985) p. 1106

(10) Gorecki, Henryk: Op Cit

(11) Ibid

(12) Ibid

(13) Ibid

(14) Isaiah 53: 3f

(15) Rubenstein, Artur: quoted in Fox, Matthew: Original Blessing (Bear & Co; 1983)

(16) Ibid

(17) Casals, Pablo: quoted in Fox, Matthew: Original Blessing Op Cit p. 88

(18) Kung, Hans: Art and the Question of Meaning (SCM Press; 1981) p. 54

(19) Paytress, Mark: Towering Inferno in Record Collector (June 1995)

(20) Ibid

(21) Pascall, David: From a Speech as Chairman of the National Curriculum Council to the SACRE Forum at the School of Education, University of Birmingham; 5 December 1992

(22) Harris, Nathaniel: The Life and Times of Marc Chagall (Parragon; 1994) p. 68

(23) Psalm 137: 1

(24) Hosea 4: 16

(25) Gryglewicz, Tomasz: Marc Chagall ie Cultural Dialogue (From: <http://www.eurodialog.org.pl/ed/2/gryglewicz.html>.en)

(26) Walther, Ingo F and Metzger, Rainer: Marc Chagall 1887-1985 Painting As Poetry (Benedikt Taschen; 1987) p. 60

(27) Walther, Ingo et al Ibid p. 62

(28) Gregory, Clive (Ed): Chagall in The Great Artists : Their Lives, Work and Inspiration; Volume 85 (Marshall Cavendish; 1986) p. 2720

(29) Slee, Nicola: Heaven in Ordinarie: The Imagination, Spirituality and the Arts in Religious Education in Watson, Brenda : Priorities in Religious Education-A Model for the 1990's and Beyond (Falmer Press; 1992) p.42

(30) Ibid p. 40

(31) The Old Doctor Janusz Korczak in Korczak Alive International Theatre Festival Programme (1996)

(32) Wajda, Andrzej: Korczak (1990)

(33) Korczak, Janusz: Ghetto Diary/Memoirs in in Selected Works of Janusz Korczak (National Science Foundation; 1967)

(34) Kentof, Alina: Dr Janusz Korczak (<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/sitemap>)

(35) Tern, Honey: Reflections On Janusz Korczak (www.igc.apc/learn/hgp/)

(36) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Faith In Our Future Op Cit

(37) Kentof, Alina: Op Cit

(38) Ibid

(39) Frankl, Viktor E: Op Cit

(40) Kentof, Alina: Op Cit

(41) Ibid

(42) Ibid

(43) Ibid

(44) Ibid

(45) Korczak, Janusz: Confessions Of A Butterfly Quoted by Arnon, Yoseph in his article The Faith of Janusz Korczak in Studies In Education, 19 (June, 1978) p. 8

(46) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Religious Education In Todays World Op Cit p. 2

(47) Korczak, Janusz: Quoted in A Voice for the Child - The Inspirational Words of Janusz Korczak edited by Joseph, Sandra (Thorsons; 1999) p. 4

(48) Jaworski, Marek: Janusz Korczak (Interpress Publishers; 1978) p. 206

(49) Quoted in Anderson, Janice: The Art Of The Expressionists (Siena; 1995) p. 5

(50) Korczak, Janusz: The Spring and the Child in The Child's Religion translated by Zvi Arad (Beit

Lochamei Hagetot & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publications; 1978) p. 249

(51) Cupitt, Don: The Last Philosophy (SCM Press; 1995)

(52) Buber, Martin: I And Thou (T&T Clark;)

(53) Kay, William: Moral Education (Allen & Unwin; 1974)

(54) Wojtyzsko, Maciej: Janusz Korczak Does Not belong To Anybody in Korczak Alive International Theatre Festival Programme (1994)

(55) Cupitt, Don: Solar Ethics (SCM Press; 1995) p. 18

(56) Cohen, Adir: The Gate of Light - Janusz Korczak, the Educator and Writer Who Overcame The Holocaust (Associated University Presses; 1994) p.77

(57) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Letters and Papers From Prison The Enlarged Edition (SCM Press; 1971)

(58) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich & Von Wedemeyer, Maria: Love Letters From Cell 92 (Harper Collins; 1994)

(59) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Letters and Papers From Prison Op Cit p. 361

(60) Harrison-Zehelein, Ruth: The Position of the German Congregations and Their Ministers at the

Time of the Church Struggle in Germany in celebrating Critical Awareness - Bonhoeffer and Bradford 60 years On Conference Papers and Proceedings p. 4

(61) Gotz, Ignacio L: On Spirituality and Teaching
(From: www.ed.vivc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/97docs/gotz.html)

(62) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Letters and Papers From Prison Op Cit p. 381

(63) Ibid

(64) Arnold, Hardy: Bonhoeffer and the Bruderhof
(From: www.bruderhof.org/hold/bruderhof/bonhoeffer.htm)

(65) German Court Exonerates Bonhoeffer of Treason

(66) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Faith In Our Future Op Cit p. 65

(67) Altizer, Thomas: The Gospel of Christian Atheism
(Collins; 1967)

(68) Magee, Bryan: Magee, Bryan : The Great Philosophers - An Introduction To Western Philosophy
(BBC Books; 1987) p. 234

(69) Hamilton, William: Radical Theology and the Death of God (1968)

(70) Vahanian, Gabriel: The Death of God (1961)

(71) Van Buren, Paul: The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (1963)

(72) Altizer, Thomas: The Gospel Of Christian Atheism
Op Cit p. 24f

(73) Robinson, John AT: The Roots of A Radical (SCM Press; 1980) p. 5

(74) Philippians 2: 6-7 (RSV)

(75) Auden, W H: Fridays Child Quoted in Bethge, Eberhard; Bethge, Renate and Gremmels, Christian : Dietrich Bonhoeffer - A Life In Pictures (SCM Press; 1986)

(76) Cupitt, Don: The New Religion Of Life In Everyday Speech (SCM Press; 1999) pp. 105-106

(77) Fackenheim, Emil: On Faith In The Secular World in Friedlander, Albert : Out Of The Whirlwind (Shocken Books; 1987) p. 497

(78) Wiesel, Eli: Night (Penguin; 1981) p. 5

(79) Rubenstein, Richard L: After Auschwitz

(80) Cupitt, Don: The Sea Of Faith (British Broadcasting Corporation; 1984) p. 269f

(81) The Bradford Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education : Religious Education In Todays World Op Cit

(82) Ibid: The Spiritual Area Of Experience : A Framework For Development

(83) Cupitt, Don: Solar Ethics Op Cit p. 13

(84) Ibid p. 27

(85) Timmerman, Peter: It Is Dark Outside - Western Buddhism from the Enlightenment to the Global Crisis in Batchelor, Martine & Brown, Kerry (Eds) : Buddhism And Ecology (Cassell; 1992) p. 68

(86) Frankl, Viktor E: Psychotherapy and Existentialism : Selected Papers On Logotherapy (Penguin; 1973) p. 83

(87) Spiritual and Moral Development - A Discussion Paper (National Curriculum Council; 1993)

(88) Cupitt, Don: Saturday Night Fervour in The Guardian (3 April 1999) p. 22

(89) Lee, Carol Ann: Roses From The Earth - The Biography of Anne Frank (Viking; 1999)

(90) Muller, Melissa: Anne Frank: The Biography (Bloomsbury; 1999)

(91) Pressler, Mirjam: The Story of Anne Frank (Macmillan; 1999)

(92) Karpf, Anne: Lets Pretend Life Is Beautiful in The Guardian (3 April 1999) p. 10

(93) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: Letters and Papers From Prison Op Cit p. 361

(94) Korczak, Janusz: Ghetto Diary/Memoirs in Selected Works of Janusz Korczak (National Science Foundation; 1967) p. 587

(95) Ibid p. 582

Chapter Three

(1) Frankl, Viktor E: Psychotherapy and Existentialism : Selected Papers On Logotherapy (Penguin; 1973) p. 25

(2) Ibid p. 27

(3) The Promotion of Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Draft Guidance for Pilot Work (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; 1997)

(4) Keen, Sam: Hymns To An Unknown God - Awakening The Spirit In Everyday Life (Piatkus; 1994) p. 77

(5) Roth, Joseph: The Legend of the Holy Drinker (Picador; 1989)

(6) The Legend of the Holy Drinker (Artificial Eye: ART 021)

(7) Frankl, Viktor E: Op Cit p. 23

(8) Frankl, Viktor E: Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning (Insight Books; 1998) p. 84

(9) Kung, Hans: Art and the Question of Meaning (SCM Press; 1981) p. 54

(10) Cupitt, Don: Solar Ethics (SCM Press; 1995)

(11) Frankl, Viktor E: Psychotherapy and Existentialism : Selected Papers On Logotherapy (Penguin; 1973) p. 50f

(12) Hamilton, William: The Quest for The Post-Historical Jesus (SCM Press; 1993)

(13) Thorne, Brian: Person-Centred Counselling-Therapeutic and Spiritual Dimensions (Whurr Publishers; 1991) p. 115

(14) Panentheism in The Oxford Dictionary Of The Christian Church edited by FL Cross & EA Livingstone (Oxford University Press; 1974)

(15) Rosenblum, Robert: Friedrichs From Russia: An Introduction in Rewald, Sabine (ed): The Romantic Vision Of Caspar David Friedrich : Paintings And Drawings From The USSR (The Metropolitan Museum Of Modern Art, New York; 1990) p. 9

(16) Spiritual and Moral Development - A Discussion Paper (National Curriculum Council; 1993)

(17) Kilar, Wojciech: Koscielic 1909 Featured on the CD Requiem For Kolbe (Jade: Number: 7 4321 39653 2)

(18) Ibid. Karłowicz, Mieczysław: Quoted in sleeve-notes.

(19) Frankl, Viktor E: Recollections - An Autobiography (Insight Books; 1997) p. 42

(20) Capra, Fritjof: The Web of Life (1996)

(21) Capra, Fritjof: Quoted in Griffiths, Jay : The Untangled Web in The Guardian (Society Section) (6 November 1996)

(22) Cupitt, Don: Creation Out of Nothing (SCM Press; 1990) p. 201f

(23) Keen, Sam: Op Cit

(24) Campbell, Joseph: The Power of Myth
(Doubleday; 1988) p. 118

(25) Barry, John: The Beyondness Of Things (London
Records: Number: 460 009 2)

(26) Ibid

(27) Handy, Charles: The Search For Meaning
(Lemos & Crane; 1996) p. 66

EXPLORATION 5: The Meaning of Life

“For peoples, generally, their story of the Universe and the human role within the universe is their primary source of intelligibility and value. Only through this story of how the Universe came to be in the beginning and how it came to be as it is does a person come to appreciate the meaning of life or to derive the psychic energy needed to deal effectively with those crisis moments that occur in the life of the individual and in the life of the society. Such a story communicates the most sacred of mysteries and not only interprets the past, it also guides and inspires our shaping of the future.”

-Thomas Berry in “A Question of Story”

<https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=1002>

In relation to his 1893 version in oils of his painting *The Scream*, the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944) declared:

“One evening I was walking along a path, the city on one side, the fiord below. I felt tired and ill.... The sun was setting and the clouds turning blood-red. I sensed a scream passing through Nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The colour shrieked.”
(p.64)

It can be suggested that the experience of “...a scream passing through nature...” and “...the clouds as.... blood....” presented in Munch’s late nineteenth century painting can be appropriated as a starting point from which to consider the question ‘Are there good reasons for describing life as ‘absurd’ or ‘meaningless’? Munch’s celebrated artwork has become a potent symbol for the human condition in which many people are, at times, overwhelmed by their experience of life which can lead them to engage with questions of meaning, purpose and value, particularly in relation to what can be termed the ‘dark nights of the soul’ which can arise in response to the experience of the pain and suffering of existence. Indeed, in the ancient Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes the writer declares: “I have seen everything that is under the sun, and behold, all is

vanity and a striving after wind" (1:14)

The world of the twenty-first century can be regarded as a world in which the only constant is change. Nothing stays the same. All things are in a constant state of flux and development. In a post-modern world in which there are no fixed, unchanging, eternal and absolute truths but instead there is a world of a multiplicity of perspectives, ideas, beliefs, practices, world views and lifestyles existence can be experienced as being disorientating, lacking a coherent vision of what life can mean and uncertainty and ambiguity in relation to how people can live authentically.

It is possible to view a relativist approach to life as being a liberation from the dominant political, religious, moral, and economic systems of the past. The evolving technology of the virtual world of the internet, for example, can be viewed as presenting creative opportunities for human beings to become the persons they truly wish to be unfettered by geographical boundaries and political restrictions. This can be seen as opening a new world of freedom and creativity in which each individual has available to them economic, educational and technological resources which promote freedom of expression and the potential for a higher standard of living and an enhanced quality of life.

However, there is a contrary view which suggests that in a context of widening inequalities between

the developed world and the developing world, where environmental degradation is rampant and where violence, conflict and war affect millions of people the post-modern vision can be regarded with some suspicion. Even in affluent societies addiction in its many and varied forms is widespread and many people experience high levels of stress, insecurity and depression and suicide is a significant phenomenon. In such a scenario the challenge with which people are presented concerns the question of how is it possible to find the motivation, energy, and resources to adapt to unpredictable and rapidly changing circumstances?

In such a world how is it possible to develop and maintain, for example, any degree of political, economic, social, and moral consensus? Is it possible to formulate a vision of society to which most people would voluntarily subscribe? Or are we actually heading inevitably and irreversibly to a world of nihilism, breakdown and anarchy? Like the prisoners in Plato's analogy of the Cave the human condition can, at times, be characterized as appearing to be like being in a state of imprisonment, living in darkness, experiencing a superficial world of appearances and shadows unable to live an authentic, liberated life of wisdom which is in harmony with the world of the Forms and particularly the Form of the Good. Echoing the First Noble Truth of Buddhism that 'All existence is suffering', the human condition can be viewed as being a state in which people, both individually and

collectively, experience a profound sense of despair, alienation and meaninglessness in which life is perceived to be absurd and futile.

Although since the end of the Second World War in 1945 Europe has enjoyed many years of peace the conflict in former-Yugoslavia and the ethnic cleansing associated with it brought back to many the harrowing images of former times, evoking the sense of terror presented in Munch's *Scream*. The recent experiences of Beslan, Rwanda, and Darfur, for example, can raise profound questions about the nature and direction of the contemporary world.

Speaking of the modern condition the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1988) declared:

“Today we live in an age of crumbling and vanishing traditions. Thus, instead of new values being created by finding unique new meanings, the reverse happens. Universal values are on the wane. That is why ever more people are caught in a feeling of aimlessness and emptiness or, as I am used to calling it, an existential vacuum....”
(p.64)

Frankl's perspective recognises that the process of change has been accompanied by humankind's incapacity in relation to developing new meanings, creative and innovative perspectives, new ways of seeing and being in the world. He suggests that the

decline of what he terms 'universal values' has been accompanied by the phenomenon of an absence of meaning and purpose. Frankl's use of the word 'feeling' in his view that people are experiencing aimlessness and emptiness suggests that an 'existential vacuum' is not to be perceived purely as an abstract philosophical problem or question to be solved but, rather, refers to a profound existential and ontological experience, a crisis which strikes at the very core of one's being. Indeed, the philosopher and theologian Don Cupitt (2006) has explored what he terms

"the beliefless religiosity of modern people for whom everything has failed. They look into the void and ask: What am I and how can I become myself? How can I pull my life together and assume responsibility for it? How can I find a way of seeing the truth about life and saying Yes to it? Modern life is getting to be so spiritually desolate that I want to know how we can inject meaning and value into our lives. And finally, I want to be at ease and free, above all, *free*." (p.65)

For Cupitt, therefore, the task facing each person in contemporary society is that of responding to existence head on and addressing the questions which life presents particularly in terms of considering seriously how one can become an authentic integrated self who perceives and affirms life as being meaningful, worthwhile, significant, and

characterised by a radical sense of freedom.

This paper considers Frankl's perspective on the human condition and its exploration of the primacy of meaning with particular reference to aspects of Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (1973) and Albert Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* (2005) as these works can be regarded as presenting significant explorations of both the challenges and opportunities presented by existence and their relationship to meaninglessness and absurdity. Indeed, Sartre explores key themes such as, for example, the experience of anxiety, despair, abandonment, and forlornness which can be regarded as relating closely to absurdity and meaninglessness and Camus (2005) declares:

“... man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.” (p.26)

Sartre (1973) declares that “Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man in consequence is forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers, forthwith, that he is without excuse” and that “...man is condemned to be free.” (p.34) In this perspective, therefore, living in a godless universe means that human beings are faced with the burden of being responsible for their choices and

actions and the consequences of how they live. They cannot project on to anyone or anything the responsibility for choosing and acting autonomously and exercising their freedom. The awareness of being alone and having to choose, however, can be perceived as being a significant burden to carry. Each person, in effect, is Camus' Sisyphus, presented with the experience of being alone, forlorn, being solely responsible for the manner in which they respond to their existential predicament. Particularly when faced with life's, at times overwhelming insecurities, uncertainties, pains and sorrows it can be seen as understandable why life can be viewed as ultimately being meaningless and absurd.

Indeed, Camus' declaration that "man stands face to face with the irrational" and Cupitt's observation that human beings "look into the void" can be regarded as sharing the perspective that the human condition is characterised by the interplay between the experience of the "irrational" and the "void", being in a world which is experienced as not making sense, not being ordered or purposeful, lacking a goal, direction, purpose or *telos* and being confronted by an emptiness, a profound sense of hollowness at the heart of existence.

The analysis of the human condition presented by Sartre and Camus will be considered in this paper from the perspective of Frankl's philosophy and therapeutic approach of Logotherapy and related

perspectives in order to consider whether it is justified to suggest that life is meaningless and absurd.

The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA) (1997) in its draft guidance for pilot work in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development recognises that:

“Most of us have experienced, at some point in our lives, a temporary loss of spirit. This can make us feel powerless, lethargic, and hopeless because we no longer believe ourselves to be equal to the challenges of life.”

The experience of not being “equal to the challenges of life” can be viewed as succinctly capturing the essence of Camus' and Cupitt's exploration of irrationality and the void and, it can be suggested, the profound experience of life at its challenging extremes can be regarded as a rationale for Camus' (2005) declaration that:

“There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the restcomes afterwards.” (p.1f)

The QCA's recognition of the experience of the 'loss of spirit' would appear to be complemented by the perspective of the philosopher Sam Keen (1994) who has suggested that:

“The spiritual quest is the reverse of the religious pilgrimage. The quest begins when an individual falls into a spiritual “black hole” in which everything that was solid vaporizes. Certainties vanish, authorities are questioned, all the usual comforts and assurances of religion fail, and the path disappears. A spiritual quest is the effort to discover the meaning of life.”
(p.77)

Keen’s perspective presents the view that that the quest, journey, search for the meaning of life is, ultimately, a spiritual issue. He clearly indicates that he is not equating spirituality with religion, and he dramatically articulates the intensity of the experience of what he terms the ‘black hole’ of existence. It appears that, in Keen’s perspective, there is a profound sense of loss, an experience of existential bereavement, at the heart of the process of discovering, discerning and creating meaning. Such a perspective can be regarded as echoing the psychiatrist and psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski’s (1964) theory of personality development termed Positive Disintegration which affirms that the anxieties and stresses of daily living and the energy utilised to attempt to resolve the challenges which life presents enable the essence, the core self or potential of the individual to be actualised through an existential process of change, growth and development. This process of personal growth, however, can be characterised by significant

personal change, what can be regarded as a letting go, a dissolution of the self, at times characterised by intense anxiety and, in extreme cases trauma, from which the core potential, the essence or true self can evolve and emerge. The significance of Dabrowski's theory in relation to consideration of life as being meaningless or absurd can be viewed as being located in its recognition of the intensities and extremes of human existence, that facing life with all of its challenges and opportunities, although having the capacity to bring about positive change and a new perspective on life, can involve, as Cupitt suggests, 'facing the void' and confronting what Camus calls the 'irrationality' of the world. It can be suggested if that one authentically and profoundly confronts the irrationality of the void, there may well be a significant existential cost, in which order, meaning, purpose, significance and value appear to be absent or disappear. The, at times, savage intensity of such an experience, for individuals and groups, can be viewed as presenting a perspective on existence in which a sense of meaninglessness and absurdity is understandable and justified.

By the claim that man's existence precedes his essence Sartre means that human beings are born into the world, they are thrown into existence with no pre-existing, pre-determined, fixed meaning, or purpose. They do not enter the world with an already existing *telos* or goal to which their life is directed. This view arises from Sartre's atheism. He declares (1973) that "Thus, there is no human nature,

because there is no god to have a conception of it. Man simply is.” (p.28) As he does not believe in the existence of a supernaturally existing divine transcendent Being who is regarded as being the creator of all things and the giver of meaning, unlike religious Existentialists such as Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers and Soren Kierkegaard, his view is that each individual is responsible for their existence. The consequence of living in a world without God is that each individual is free to make of their life what they wish. Each person is a meaning maker who fashions out of their freedom, and the choices and actions which result from the exercise of freedom, their own personal identity. There is, therefore, in Sartre’s view, no pre-determined view of what each individual should become; each person is a free, autonomous, and independent agent creating their life. Existence, therefore, is a ‘work in progress’ reflecting a creative and dynamic process of change, development, and personal transformation in which each subjective self develops their own personal way of seeing the world. Each individual, therefore, has their own ‘weltanschauung’, world view, their own unique perspective on the world, their personal way of perceiving and experiencing existence. For Sartre (1973) “... man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world-and defines himself afterward. (p.28) He affirms, therefore, that each human being are the makers of their own meaning. Each person “encounters himself” which suggests that at the heart of existence is the experience of facing up to who one is and what one might

become. There is, in effect, an internal dialogue within the developing and changing self which necessitates self-awareness and self-understanding. To become the person one has the potential to be, therefore, requires reflection upon experience. For Sartre, "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." (p.28) Such a perspective can suggest that life is a dynamic process of creative change, growth and development in which the challenges and opportunities with which human beings are presented are the vehicles through each person can actualise their potential. There is, therefore, inherent in Sartre's philosophy, a forward looking, future orientated way of seeing and being in the world characterised by the realisation of one's potential. Such an affirmative understanding of life may be viewed as being contrary to any perspective which perceives existence as being absurd or meaningless.

Sartre's understanding of individuals as meaning makers and controllers of their own destiny can be evaluated in terms of what can be considered to be its positive and negative aspects. His view that 'existence precedes essence' can be regarded as positive in the sense that his philosophy affirms human freedom. It ascribes to humankind the actuality of the freedom inherent in the potential to become the person they are capable of becoming. In this respect, therefore, Sartre's philosophy affirms the capacity for human beings to grow, change and develop. At the heart of it, therefore, is the

recognition that a key feature of human existence is the possibility of transformation at both the personal and social level.

A positive aspect of the affirmation of transformation is that Sartre's views can be regarded as complementing the perspectives presented in the therapeutic philosophies of, for example, Viktor Frankl, (2010) Carl Rogers (1977) and Abraham Maslow (2011) who recognised the centrality of transformation in human life. For Frankl his philosophy of Logotherapy affirmed the primacy of the "will to meaning"; each person is a unique individual who, out of the raw materials of their existence, strives to fashion a life of value, purpose and significance. Rogers' non-directive, person-centred counselling recognises that, central to the therapeutic process, is the belief that each individual is responsible for the life they create. Each person can transcend what might appear to be their life's limitations and challenges and create a life of meaning, purpose and value. In this sense, Sartre's philosophy of personal freedom, with its view that "existence precedes essence" can be regarded as anticipating key concepts, themes and ideas which underpin much of the philosophy of the modern Human Potential Movement and the key features of Humanistic Psychology.

In addition to the connections with modern perspectives on personal development Sartre's ideas can also be regarded as illustrating key

aspects of what has become known as the Narrative Self approach to exploring human identity and self-understanding. In the Narrative Self approach, articulated by writers such as Jerome Bruner (2003), Dan McAdams (1997), Adriana Cavarero (2000) and Anthony Rudd (2012), each human life is a creative work, a work of telling one's story. Each individual is the creator and author of their own life script. Echoing Shakespeare's view that "All the world's a stage", the approach of the Narrative Self affirms that each individual's "life script" is continuously evolving, it is free-flowing and dynamic; it is in a constant state of flux. One's life, therefore, is akin to a dramatic improvisation or like musicians jamming and not following a pre-written score. Sartre's philosophy, which has as its central foundation the view that "existence precedes essence", can be regarded, therefore, as presenting to modern man an approach to life which affirms change, development, process, transformation, creativity, and innovation. It can be regarded as being a philosophy which is appropriate and relevant for a post-modern, wired, world of change and is not consistent with any perspective which regards life as meaningless or absurd.

However, although it is possible to recognise and affirm these positive features of Sartre's philosophy it can be suggested that there are also aspects of it which can be considered as having potentially negative implications. Firstly, insights of the Social

Sciences including psychology, sociology and anthropology indicate that man is not born or, to use Sartre's expression, 'thrown' into an empty world. Each human being is born into a specific historical, social, political, economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious context. From the moment of birth, therefore, each human being is engaged in a creative and, at times, challenging dialogue with their environment and they navigate and negotiate encounters with, for example, their family, friends, and peer group together with a range of social, political, educational, commercial, and religious organisations, institutions and networks. There is a dynamic dialectic between the subjective self and the social and the physical world, one's environment. Even within highly developed, economically prosperous countries there are very significant variations in, for example, the health, educational and economic opportunities which people have access to and these can impact profoundly upon personal and social physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. There is, therefore, a dynamic interaction between nature and nurture, between the experience of the individual being, as Sartre indicates, 'thrown into the world' and the opportunities and life chances available to them. Although such a perspective does not necessitate the holding of a deterministic perspective on people's life chances it does recognise that, although the exercise of freedom is a characteristic of human existence, some people are more able to exercise this freedom than others.

It can be suggested, therefore, that in his existential philosophy, Sartre affirms and promotes the centrality of human freedom and the capacity to create meaning at the expense of downplaying the significance of the powerful interaction between nature and nurture and the impact of this upon authentic choice, decision-making and action and the capacity for persons to actualise their potential. Indeed, experience clearly indicates that human beings have very diverse life experiences. Although the Social Sciences do not argue for a deterministic view of human existence it can be acknowledged that, for many people, their life chances, choices, and opportunities are significantly limited by the context into which they are born and socialised. In a very real sense, therefore, it can be suggested that there are perhaps significant numbers of people who, in respect of their life situation and the impact upon their lives of factors largely beyond their control, experience what can be described as lives which, at times, can be characterised as meaningless and absurd.

A powerful and dramatic example of a life lived at the extremes of existence is embodied in the experiences in the Dachau, Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps of Viktor Frankl (1984) who developed an approach to psychiatry which recognises the primacy of humankind's search for meaning. Frankl believed that existential frustration and spiritual problems can lead to the

development of what he termed “noogenic neurosis” in which individuals struggle to come to terms with the value and meaning of their lives. Central to Frankl’s philosophy is a psychotherapeutic approach called Logotherapy which aims to facilitate exploration of questions of meaning, value and purpose.

Frankl (1973) has commented that

Man’s struggle for his self and his identity is doomed to failure unless it is enacted as dedication and devotion to something beyond his self, to something above his self. (p.83)

For Frankl, meaningful existence is found in a person’s commitment to someone or something beyond themselves; meaning, therefore, transcends the ego. History confirms that despite the many and varied challenges that human beings, both individually and collectively, have faced people have the tenacity and resilience to dedicate themselves to a cause, passion or ideal beyond themselves. The achievements of the arts and culture, the discoveries and inventions of science and technology, the exploration of the natural world and of space and the deep faith embodied in the spiritual traditions of the world, for example, illustrate vividly that humankind displays a dynamic and innovative capacity for creating, discerning, and discovering ever evolving multifaceted meanings. Can such a history and

such a world really be experienced and described as meaningless and absurd?

Maria and Edward Marshall (2012) have noted that:

A literal translation of the term 'logotherapy' is 'therapy through meaning' ... it could also be translated as 'healing through meaning'... (p.44)

Frankl's Logotherapy is affirming that questions of meaning, value and purpose are at the heart of being human and he (Frankl; 1973) has suggested that life can be made meaningful in three ways:

.... first, through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second, by what we take from the world (in terms of our experiencing values); and third, through the stand we take towards a fate we no longer can change (an incurable disease, an inoperable cancer, or the like). (p.25)

This tri-dimensional understanding of meaning derives from the interpretation of life as

.... a chain of questions which man has to answer by answering for life, to which he has to respond by being responsible, by making decisions, by deciding which answers to give to the individual questions. (p.27)

Such a perspective complements Sartre's

affirmation of the necessity for exercising freedom, making choices, and acting authentically.

In his summary of the implications of Frankl's philosophy of existence for educators Thorne (1991) has commented that

In an age when values and traditions are in the melting pot, the individual receives very little help from his environment as he seeks to confront the ultimate questions of his own meaning and value. Indeed, he may for a while be separated altogether from these questions by an all-embracing materialism. (p.115)

Thorne's reference to what he terms "an all-embracing materialism" introduces the point of view that in modern society people can be distracted from exploring issues of meaning, purpose, and value as there exists a culture which promotes 'having' rather than 'being'. The psychologist Erich Fromm (1978) has delineated two modes of existence and articulated an analysis of human values in terms of the distinction between the modes of Having and Being. He suggests that:

In the having mode of existence my relationship to the world is one of possessing and owning, one in which I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property (p.33)

In the Being mode of existence, however,

...we must identify two forms of being. One is in contrast to having, ... and means aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world.

The other form of being is in contrast to appearing and refers to the true nature, the true reality of a person or thing in contrast to deceptive appearances... (p.33)

It is possible to view the “all-embracing materialism” to which Thorne refers as being itself symptomatic of the awareness, which can often be repressed, of the experience of meaninglessness and absurdity of life. In such a view materialism can be viewed as a way of avoiding life’s ultimate questions; it can become an anaesthetic, a drug, by which one hopes to ease the pain of existence. Vincent Van Gogh’s artwork *The Bearers of the Burden* starkly and powerfully portrays the experience of the literal burdens that people carry but it can also be regarded as presenting a poignant reminder of the existential burdens that life confronts each individual with. Each person carries, like Sisyphus, their personal rock, their own burdens.

Although Camus’ reflections can initially appear to suggest that, like Sisyphus’ experience of rolling the rock up the mountain only for it to fall down and the task therefore requiring repetition *ad infinitum*, there is both absurdity and meaninglessness to

existence, he does conclude his analysis of the human condition with the declaration (Camus; 2005) that:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (p.119)

There appears, therefore, to be a paradox at the heart of Camus' philosophy presented in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The relentless, constant task that Sisyphus faces on the mountain can be viewed as meaningless and even absurd. What does it really achieve? What is its purpose? Does it really have any significance or value? If Sisyphus' task, although appearing in one sense to be heroic in its struggle, is, in reality, devoid of meaning and purpose, then it can be understandable why life can be perceived as being both meaningless and absurd to which an appropriate and justified response could be suicide. However, this is not actually the way of seeing the world with which Camus concludes his work. Indeed, he appears to present a contrary, even hopeful,

view. It can be suggested that he is articulating an approach to life which, whilst agreeing with Sartre that we live in a godless universe (“...the universe...without a master...”), recognises and affirms that meaning and purpose can be discerned and located in the very act, the process, of engaging heroically and authentically with the challenges with which we are presented in life. Although Sisyphus’ task may, understandably, appear to be almost tragic in nature, destined to repeatedly engage in activity devoid of meaning, it is in his attitude and approach to, and his engagement with, his task that meaning and purpose is to be found. In his declaration that “Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world” Camus is affirming that, the stone, the burden which Sisyphus has to constantly and carry, is, in effect, the very vehicle, the channel, through which he can locate meaning. The very fact that he has to struggle with a demanding task is a giver of meaning and purpose; the rock which in one sense is the burden which he literally carries, is also simultaneously the provider of meaning. Camus’ perspective, therefore, can be regarded as being congruent with Frankl’s affirmation that life can be made meaningful “...through the stand we take towards a fate we no longer can change...” (p.25) and complements Sartre’s (1973) affirmation of optimism in his declaration that:

Existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to

draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position. Its intention is not in the least that of plunging men into despair...; what man needs to do is to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, it is a doctrine of action...." (p.56)

Sartre, therefore, presents a way of seeing and being in the world which affirms that it is through living authentically in a world without God that each person can make sense of their life, discover who they really are and act in the world accordingly. This view is a celebratory, hopeful, and ultimately optimistic response to the human condition and is compatible with Camus' perspective that "The struggle towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart."

It can be suggested, therefore, that although the existential philosophies of Sartre and Camus present a clear and direct exploration of the human condition with its profound challenges, their analyses also present an approach to life which complements that of Frankl in his affirmation of the primacy of meaning and ultimately cogently negates the view that life is meaningless and absurd.

Indeed, such a philosophy of hope and optimism is affirmed by Cupitt (2007) in his declaration that:

We should not attempt to escape from the terrors of existence. Instead, we should by faith cast ourselves into existence in all its one way temporality, its contingency, and its transience. We must both recognise clearly what our life is and find the courage for the solar living that nevertheless says "Yes" to life, and steps boldly out over the abyss. (p.85)

References

Bruner, Jerome: *Making Stories – Law, Literature and Life* (2003) Harvard University Press

Camus, Albert: *The Myth of Sisyphus* Translated by O'Brien, Justin (2005 edition) Penguin Books

Caverero, Adriana: *Relating Narration – Storytelling and Selfhood* (2000) Routledge

Cupitt, Don: *The Old Creed and the New* (2006) SCM Press

Cupitt, Don: *Impossible Loves* (2007) Polebridge Press

Dabrowski, Kazimierz: *Positive Disintegration* (1964) Little Brown

Ecclesiastes 1:14 in *The Bible; Revised Standard Version* (1965) Nelson

Frankl, Viktor: *Psychotherapy and Existentialism – Selected Papers on Logotherapy* (1973) Penguin

Frankl, Viktor: *Man's Search for Meaning – An Introduction To Logotherapy* (1984; Third Edition) Touchstone/Simon & Schuster

Frankl, Viktor: *The Will to Meaning – Foundations*

and Applications of Logotherapy (1988)
Expanded Edition; Meridian

Frankl, Viktor: The Feeling of Meaninglessness –
A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy
(2010) Marquette University Press

Fromm, Erich: To Have or To Be? (1978)
Jonathan Cape

Keen, Sam: Hymns to An Unknown God -
Awakening The Spirit In Everyday Life (1994) Piatkus

McAdams, Don: The Stories We Live By –
Personal Myths and the Making of the Self
(1997) Guilford Press

Marshall, Maria and Marshall, Edward:
Logotherapy Revisited – Review of the Tenets of
Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy (2012) Ottawa
Institute of Logotherapy

Maslow, Abraham: Toward A Psychology of
Being (2011 Edition) Wilder Publications

Munch, Edvard: Edited and Translated by
Holland, Jill G The Private Journals of Edvard
Munch - We Are Flames Which Pour Out of The
Earth (2005) University of Wisconsin Press

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority The
Promotion of Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and

Cultural Development Draft Guidance for Pilot Work 1997); QCA

Rogers, Carl: On Becoming a Person (1977)
Constable

Rudd, Anthony: Self, Value and Narrative – A Kierkegaardian Approach (2012) Oxford University Press

Sartre, Jean Paul: Existentialism and Humanism (1973 edition) Translated by Mairet, Philip Methuen

Thorne, Brian: Person-Centred Counselling – Therapeutic and Spiritual Dimensions (1991) Whurr Publishers

EXPLORATION 5: *Is an Alternative Future Possible?*

12 February 2023; Manchester, England

“My thoughts on life today: the purpose of life is surely gratitude. To be grateful for the beauty of this world and to be thankful for any transcendences that flash us the totality of life.

“My thoughts for today: what does it mean at the beginning of the twenty-first century to live a ‘noble’ life? This question concerns me greatly.

Is this escape from the complexities of modern life ‘noble’? To me, here in the artic at least, a noble life seems to one where man has regained the freedom of a pre-industrialised existence, a freedom that is borne from his reconnection with the natural world. More generally, a noble life is surely also one where you feel you have gained a purity in spirit, one where you have the strength to fight your cause (no matter how hopeless) to the bitter end.”

- Stephen Pax Leonard in
‘Annals of Solitude- A Year in a Hut in the Artic’

The above quotations are from the diary of the writer, linguist, and traveller Stephen Pax Leonard in which he records his daily experiences of the year he spent living in a hut in the Arctic, in a remote area in the north of Greenland.



Photograph by Stein Egel Liland

www.pexels.com

Throughout the book, Leonard reflects upon how his time spent in the Arctic can be regarded as being, in some way, 'noble', a nobility in which he was able to experience a sense of freedom which he suggests was characteristic of

pre-industrialised societies. He declares that this sense of freedom is closely related to a (re)connection with the natural world.

Historians have written extensively about the transition, particularly in what can be termed 'the West', from an agrarian way of living to an industrial economy. Although one should not romanticise the, often hard and harsh, experience of working with the land, it can be suggested that the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrialised, largely urban, economy was, for millions of people, a degrading, traumatic experience in which life was, all too often, short, harsh, and brutal.

For example, the German philosopher Friedrich Engels, who lived in the city of Manchester, England for many years, commented, in his 1845 work 'The Condition of the English Working Class in England', that living conditions in industrial towns and cities were 'the highest and most unconcealed pinnacle of social misery existing in our day'.

Engels discovered that the life expectancy of the industrial populations of the 19th century was lower than that during the Black Death of 1348-1350.

Engels noted that: "What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together."

Engels, therefore, was acutely aware of the tragic human costs of the development of an industrialised manufacturing economy.

The poet Mary Oliver wrote:

“Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean-

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and

down-

who is gazing around with her enormous and

complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her

face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the

fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?"



Photograph by Altered Snaps

www.pexels.com

On 17th January 2019, Mary Oliver died. In the above poem entitled "The Summer Day" Oliver, reflecting upon her experience of the natural world, asks a series of

questions. She begins with the question of origins and causation in her declaration "Who made the world?" She begins her poem, therefore, by introducing an aetiological dimension as she encourages the reader to consider the identity of that which gives rise to the genesis of the earth. She is inviting us to consider beginnings, what is the source of all that is? Following the poem's opening line, Oliver then moves on to enquire of the origin of specific forms of life such as the swan, the black bear, and the grasshopper. It may be that Oliver is not asking a question to which she wishes to receive a specific answer; it could be that her questions are rhetorical which aim to bring about reflection not so much on the actual origins of things but upon their very nature or essence, that which makes them what they are. In her description of the grasshopper, she observes that the insect has jumped from the grass into her hand, eats sugar which is on her hand and this gentle creature moves her jaws back and forth and looks around with her

large eyes. Oliver recognises the large size and complex structure of the grasshopper's eyes and notes that with its forearms it can wash its face. The poet testifies to the impermanence of the encounter with the grasshopper by stating that it flew away. Throughout her exploration of her meeting with the grasshopper Oliver does not refer to this living creature as 'it', rather she refers to this beautiful creature as 'she'. The poet, therefore, is not relating to the grasshopper as an object but, instead, by ascribing a gender to the insect she is, tangentially, referring to the grasshopper as, utilising the terminology of the Jewish personalist philosopher Martin Buber, a 'Thou', a creature which has its own individual unique identity to which one can relate in some depth. Although the grasshopper is a non-human life form, it can be suggested that there is a sense in which, implicit in Oliver's exploration of her fleeting meeting with this insect, is an attribution of, in some sense, 'personhood' to it.

The description of the meeting with the grasshopper is then followed by Oliver presenting the declaration "I don't know exactly what a prayer is". It is possible to regard this statement as the turning point of the poem which transports the reader to the experience of paying attention to the phenomena of the natural world which surround us. Although Oliver appears agnostic about the nature of the phenomenon of prayer, she is able to affirm that she can 'pay attention', to fall and kneel down in the grass, to be idle and to stroll, activities and experiences which she regards as 'blessed'. 'Blessed', in an informal and general sense can be defined as 'to be lucky to have a particular thing' or the experience of 'bringing you happiness, luck or something you need.' However, there are also more specific and formal meanings of the word 'blessed', utilised in religious contexts, which describe that which is holy or sacramental. Oliver's poem, therefore, despite its agnosticism regarding the nature of prayer, can be

regarded as articulating a way of seeing and being in the world which recognises, affirms, and testifies to the experience of the sacred within our midst. Oliver's poem can be viewed as illustrating a profound existential fact: that the experience of paying attention to the glorious multiplicity and diversity of the earth's life forms takes place in the context of the passage of time; the recognition that, in the fullness of time, all phenomena come to an end. The poem, therefore, testifies to the reality of impermanence, that everything changes, nothing stays the same, all things are in a state of flux, they come into being, mature and grow and, eventually, will cease to be. It is Oliver's recognition of this existential reality which leads her, in the last two lines of her poem, to present the reader with a question: 'Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?' This conclusion to the poem presents a challenge to the reader: it clearly and directly invites us to consider very carefully what kind of life are we

going to live when we face up to the fact that we only have the one life and that it is time limited? For Oliver, this life is 'precious' and her description of it as being 'wild' can suggest that it has a spontaneous dynamic energy which can be channelled into whatever our life's vision, mission, calling, vocation, or goal might be.

I have indicated earlier that Oliver died in 2019. That year was also the tenth anniversary of the passing of Thomas Berry (1914-2009) which was marked by the conference TB19 which took place in North Carolina which reflected upon and celebrated his life and vision. In addition, 2019 was the bicentenary of the birth of John Ruskin, (1819-1900) the Victorian writer, artist, critic, social reformer, philanthropist, and visionary. Events were held internationally to celebrate, respond to, engage with, and reappraise his ways of seeing the world. Russell, in reflecting upon Ruskin's views, has commented: "the core of his claims remains relevant and important. That is to say: our aesthetic experience, our

experience of beauty in ordinary life, must be central to thinking about any good life and society. It's not just decoration or luxury for the few. If you are taught how to see the world properly through an understanding of aesthetics, then you'll see society properly." Ruskin's interests and projects were many and varied and he can be regarded, like Thomas Berry, as being truly a polymath. Ruskin and Berry were both interdisciplinary in their ways of seeing and being in the world and, particularly following the Ruskin Bicentenary year, I have begun to reflect upon what I perceive as being deep connections between Ruskin's philosophy, indeed his spirituality, and that of Berry.

The ever-present outpouring of news in the multiplicity of media today can easily lead us to the view that all is lost, that there is no hope, that things cannot change. The reality of global heating, climate change, species extinction, desertification, and water scarcity, for example, can appear to be overwhelming and intractable issues for

which no straightforward responses and solutions appear to be available. As I write, the world is shocked and grief stricken, by the wide-ranging impact of the major earthquake which has, in recent days, devastated Turkey and Syria, and the ongoing destruction of Ukraine by Russia's invasion of an independent country can, understandably, lead us to despair at the sheer scale of suffering in the world. However, Berry's response to the realities with which the world of the early years of the 21st century is faced can be regarded as transcending any 'problem-solution' approach. Problems do have to be responded to and solved whenever and wherever possible. However, Berry reminds us, in 'The Great Work' that "The human venture depends absolutely on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and all that lives and grows upon the Earth" and he also affirms that "... we will recover our sense of wonder and our sense of the sacred only if we appreciate the universe beyond

ourselves as a revelatory experience of that numinous presence whence all things came into being. Indeed, the universe is the primary sacred reality. We become sacred by our participation in this more sublime dimension of the world about us." Berry is, I feel, taking us back to the very basics: he is drawing our attention to the foundational attitude, way of seeing and responding to the world in which we live and to recognise and affirm that humankind, non-human life forms and the Earth are all part of a great unfolding, evolving Cosmic narrative, the story of the Universe. Each person, every living thing, is part of what Frijtof Capra has termed the Web of Life, an interconnected, ever changing, developing, great chain of being.

There is a deep sense, therefore, in which, like Ruskin, Berry's cosmic vision presents a profound counter-cultural and radical ecological and spiritual vision which, I suggest, can speak directly to the world of the early years of the 21st

century. They can be regarded as calling humankind to reconsider the values by which they live and the vision of society which they aspire to work towards creating. Their lives can be interpreted as being prophetic in that they point us towards a vision of a better, transformed world, an Ecozoic future. In effect, therefore, an Ecozoic future can be thought of as being that of a world characterised by political, economic, technological, business, commerce, educational, legal and, indeed, spiritual traditions, which can be described as *regenerative* and *restorative*.

'Regenerative' can be defined as *'to regrow, be renewed or restored, particularly after being damaged or lost'* and *'restorative'* can be understood as *'having the capacity to restore strength, health and well-being'*.

Critics of Ruskin and Berry may take the view that they share a vision of a romanticised and idealised pre-industrial past but, I suggest they can, instead, be thought of as articulating a vision of a transformed future, an ecologically sustainable

and harmonious alternative way of being in which humankind and the natural world and its diverse creatures live together; I regard their ways of seeing and being in the world as being both *regenerative* and *restorative*, presenting a holistic vision of what is possible, and I also regard their philosophies of life as being, ultimately, *spiritual* because they have the capacity to inspire. To inspire is to breathe into, to give life, energy, and vitality and to animate the spirit. In this tentative, and brief, proposal for a Ruskin and Berry encounter and dialogue, I draw attention to what I suggest are three initial areas for exploration in such a meeting which are characterised by both a regenerative and restorative vision. By firstly, the response to industrialisation and global capitalism; secondly, the affirmation and celebration of beauty and, thirdly, the experience of what David Hay has termed 'Relational Consciousness'.

Firstly, I suggest that in their ways of seeing the world, both Ruskin and Berry present critiques of industrialisation and the

consequences of this upon the well-being, the flourishing of life, both human and non-human. Ruskin, in response to the increasing urbanisation of Victorian Britain and the consequent movement of populations from a rural economy to work in the factories and mills of cities such as, for example, Bradford and Manchester, which polluted not only the bodies and souls of the workers but also impacted upon the quality of the air that people breathed and the water they drank. In his essay 'Unto this Last', originally published in the Cornhill Magazine in 1860, Ruskin railed against the industrial revolution, in particular free trade, competition and market economics. He commented that economists such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill were restricting 'multitudes of human creatures' to a 'dim eyed and narrow-chested state of being'. In the preface to 'The Queen of the Air', in 1869, Ruskin declared "I have seen strange evil brought upon every scene that I best loved, or tried to make beloved by others. The light which once flushed those pale summits with its rose

at dawn, and purple at sunset, is now umbered and faint; the air which once inlaid the clefts of their golden crags with azure is now defiled with languid clouds of smoke, belched from worse than volcanic fires; their very glacier waves are ebbing, and their snows fading, as if hell had breathed upon them...The light, the air, the waters, all defiled!" Berry has commented that "When we awaken to a revelation that the industrial world, as now functioning, can exist for only a brief historical period, we might begin to consider just how we can establish a more sustainable setting for our physical survival and personal fulfilment." Ruskin and Berry, therefore, in their different historical contexts, have both testified to the limitations of industrialisation and its capacity for, often irreversible, damage to the web of life. They both look to what can be termed the "bigger picture", a consideration of that which contributes to the flourishing of life. Indeed, Ruskin, in 'Unto this Last, a publication which significantly impacted upon the thinking and philosophy of Gandhi, affirmed that

“There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest numbers of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest, who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.”

Berry, in the ‘The Sacred Universe’ explores the concept and experience of alienation. It can be suggested that at the very heart of the contemporary ecological crisis is humankind’s alienation from themselves, from others and from the natural world. There is, therefore, in many and varied ways, a profound sense of disconnection which permeates deeply into all dimensions of life: politics, economics, business, science and technology, ecology, the arts and spirituality. Although there are, indeed, significant positive developments, ideas, and innovations to be found in all of these areas of human activity it can

be suggested that the truly creative, inspiring and empowering initiatives are, in a sense, ultimately responses to the experience of 'dislocation' or 'alienation'.

Berry has commented:

“Alienation is, in some sense, the oldest and most universal human experience. It is our human condition: the difficulty of discovering our personal identity and our proper place in the universe. Particularly in Western civilisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, humans have experienced the challenge of authentic existence while moving through a series of rapid historical transformations.... In the opening years of the twenty-first century, we are experiencing a new alienation in our inability to relate effectively to the integral functioning of the Earth. This alienation, which results from an extreme anthropocentrism and dedication to consumerism, is causing the exploitation and degradation of the planet. Until recently, few people have realised the extent to

which human fulfilment depends on the integral functioning of the Earth in all the grandeur of its natural landscapes – the forests, mountains, woodlands. Rivers and lakes – and in the wonder of its wildlife: animals, insects, fish and songbirds.”

I suggest that at the heart of what Berry is saying is that humankind is losing (or has already lost) a sense of the *grandeur* and *wonder* of the Earth. We have related to the Earth in a utilitarian, instrumental way so that everything, and anyone, is viewed as being a resource to utilise as we please, to satisfy our own ends. This is what Martin Buber terms an 'I-It' way of relating to the world around us.

In effect, therefore, I believe that what Berry is calling humankind to is the project of a rediscovery of a deep sense of the sacred; he is encouraging us to see the world anew and to be transformed. He invites us to develop new ways of seeing and being and to live in right relationship with our self, each other and with the Earth.

Berry affirms the importance of what he terms 'The Great Work, which he defines as:

"... the task of moving modern industrial society from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence Our own special role, which we will hand to our children, is that of managing the arduous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic era, the period when humans will be present to the planet as participating members of the comprehensive Earth community."

Berry, therefore, holds the view that in these early years of the 21st century, humankind is faced with significant choices about the future direction of the entire Earth community. He calls us to a radical reconsideration of the ways in which we relate to the web of life and his philosophy invites us to be agents of change in bringing about a renewed and transformed world. However, poetic, and philosophical such a call to radical change

may sound, he is, in fact, calling humankind to a radical new vision of what is possible. Berry reminds us that “We lose our souls if we lose the experience of the forest, the butterflies, the song of the birds, if we can’t see the stars at night.”

This ‘loss of soul’ reminds us, I suggest, that without acknowledgement of the existential fact of alienation, which Berry has clearly and unambiguously drawn our attention to, it will not be possible to transcend our myopic ways of doing things. ‘Business as usual’ is not an option. A new vision, a new worldview, a cosmic perspective is required. I suggest that Thomas Berry’s ‘Universe Story’ and his concept of the Great Work, complemented by ways of seeing and being such as those of, for example, Arne Naess, Mary Oliver, Rachel Carson, Frijtof Capra, David Suzuki, and Atsuko Watanabe, can be transformative sources of inspiration inviting us to respond to, and engage with, the challenges and opportunities

which face us in the early years of the 21st century.

In addition to their critiques of industrialisation, Ruskin and Berry affirm the significant value of the experience of beauty. In 'Beauty and Nature' Ruskin commented that "The sensation of beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other, but is dependent upon a pure, right and open state of the heart, both for its truth and intensity, insomuch that even the right after-action of the intellect upon facts of beauty so apprehended, is dependent on the acuteness of the heart feeling about them ...". He recognises, therefore, that apprehension of the beautiful closely relates to the response of the heart. He reminds us that whenever and wherever beauty is located, it has the capacity to inflame the heart, to inspire and empower the person to, as Berry has indicated earlier in this document, "... become sacred by our participation in this more sublime dimension of the world about us." Artur Schopenhauer, in 'The World as Will and Representation'

explored the relationship between beauty and the sublime. He recognised that they are distinct, yet connected, and I find in Ruskin's exploration of beauty and Berry's understanding of the sublime, the potential for a fruitful dialectic. It is in such a dialectic that I suggest that the third dimension of a Ruskin-Berry encounter, the affirmation and celebration of the primacy of relational consciousness, can be discerned.

The phenomenon of Relational Consciousness has been explored by David Hay, particularly in his studies of the spiritual development of children. "The Encyclopaedia of Religious and Spiritual Development" notes that "It refers to an awareness of our interdependence with other beings, including God, animals, and other humans. It suggests a nuanced sensitivity to the complexity and connection of all creatures. More specifically, the phrase refers to an intuitive, experiential awareness, a felt sense, rather than a mere intellectual awareness." I regard Mary Oliver's

encounter with the natural world presented in her 'Summer's Day' poem presented earlier in these reflections as being an example of Relational Consciousness in its profound, sensitive, and evocative presentation of a connection with that which is outside and beyond the self. This relational consciousness, the capacity to understand and imaginatively enter into another person's experience, is echoed, I suggest, by the Deep Ecologist Arne Naess' observation that: "Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our intimate relation to something bigger than our own ego, something which has endured for millions of years and is worth continued life for millions of years. The requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceived as protection of our very selves."

Although neither of them used the term Relational Consciousness, I suggest that Ruskin and Berry can be regarded as visionaries who testify to its centrality to life in

their ways of seeing and being in the world. Berry's declaration that "Our studies in what we call ecology must lead to such intimacy with our natural surroundings. Only intimacy can save us from our present commitment to a plundering industrial economy" can be regarded as being congruent with Ruskin's declaration that "The greatest thing that a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion-all in one." The artist Vincent van Gogh declared that "Poetry is all around us". Like Ruskin, Berry, and Oliver, to be an Ecozoian includes, I suggest, the capacity to be able to see the world anew, to envision the re-enchantment of the world, to recognise and affirm the sacredness of all life, and to live and act in ways which promote flourishing for the whole of the glorious, fragile, beautiful, and inspiring creation. Our task is to be agents of

transformation creating spaces and places of beauty, nobility, inspiration, contemplation, and action. As Oliver has asked each one of us: 'Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?'

In these reflections upon the question 'What is regenerative economics?', I have not attempted to delineate what can be termed a blueprint or a roadmap of the nature and characteristics of a regenerative and restorative economy. Rather, I have explored perspectives from Thomas Berry, Friedrich Engels, Mary Oliver and John Ruskin which, together, I suggest, indicate the vision and values, an Ecozoan philosophy, which can characterise and underpin a regenerative economy. As the dialogues of the Restorative Economics Study Group (RESG) continues, I look forward to exploring how the values and vision of a regenerative and restorative economy can potentially be translated into proposals for transformative activism and political change which, provides some form

of an answer, however tentative, to the question Stephen Pax Leonard considers in the prologue to this document, “... *what does it mean at the beginning of the twenty-first century to live a ‘noble’ life?*”

EXPLORATION 7: 'Lost in Wonder -The Child's Experience of Nature'

Abstract:

This paper explores perspectives upon nature with particular reference to the ways in which the educational philosophies of Janusz Korczak and Vasily Sukhomlinsky affirm the child's encounter with the natural world and it relates their perspectives to the experience of a community study group which met during 2015-2016 in Manchester, United Kingdom to consider the cosmological concepts, themes and ideas of the philosopher and theologian Thomas Berry and how the film and book *Journey of the Universe* illustrate how an understanding of the evolution of life can impact upon our ways of seeing and being in the world. It suggests the development of approaches to teaching and learning which place the child's encounter with, and response to, the natural world, and the experience of awe and wonder, at the heart of the school curriculum.

Key Words:

Nature; Janusz Korczak; Vasily Sukhomlinsky; Thomas Berry; *Journey of the Universe*; evolution; ways of seeing; teaching and learning; awe and wonder; curriculum; Fukushima; Joenji monks; spaces and places; Viktor Frankl; Henryk Skolimowski

Vincent Van Gogh declared: *"I experience a period of frightening clarity in those moments when nature is so beautiful. I am no longer sure of myself, and the painting appears as in a dream."*

As I write this paper Spring has begun. The sun is shining, the flowers, trees and bushes are bursting into life and the birds are singing. There is a very real and positive sense in which things are now very different from the recent wet, windy, and cold weather of late winter. The arrival of Spring can have very positive effects upon our ways of seeing the world as each day brings more daylight and the glorious sunlight and Vincent Van Gogh yellows bring about a positive effect upon our mood and our general sense of well-being. Spring can bring about thoughts, feelings and ideas of new beginnings, a fresh start, and hope for the future and the anticipation of the eventual arrival of summer.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow out of life..."

These are the words of Henry David Thoreau in his classic 1854 work *Walden*. In *Walden* Thoreau chronicles his experience of living simply in solitude

in a small cabin at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. His observations and reflections have inspired many to undertake their own journey to live deeply and to articulate ways of seeing and being which present radical and creative alternatives to much of what is often considered to be economic, political, educational, moral, and religious orthodoxy.

One small-scale initiative which explored the task of learning to live deeply was an informal Thomas Berry Manchester community study group which met regularly in Manchester, United Kingdom between September 2015 and November 2019 to explore together the key concepts, themes and ideas of the philosopher and theologian Thomas Berry. Berry's ideas are significant because they relate spiritual perspectives on life to the insights of modern cosmology and evolutionary theory and they locate the development of human consciousness within the wider story of the universe and its origins in the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. There is sense in which, like Thoreau, Berry inspires us "to live deep". Berry's way of seeing and being in the world is characterised by a profound recognition and awareness of the interconnectedness of all that exists and the affirmation of the sacredness of the natural world.

The starting point for the development of Berry's thought can be traced back to his experience as a twelve-year old when he encountered a field of

lilies. He has described this moment as “A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something. I know not what, that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any experience I can remember.” He recalls that:

“The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something that seems to explain my thinking at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember. It was not only the lilies. It was the singing of the crickets and the woodlands in the distance and the clouds in a clear sky.... as the years pass this moment returns to me, and whenever I think about the basic life attitude and the whole trend and causes to which I have given my efforts, I seem to come back to this moment and the impact it has had upon my feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life.”

For Berry, his encounter with the field of lilies when he was young had a profound impact upon the overall orientation of his life. His experience of the flowers, insects, clouds, and woodlands was very significant for him. It was as if his senses were heightened, and he had a finely tuned awareness of the world around him so much so that it affected the overall direction and viewpoint of his life. He acknowledges that the experience impacted upon his “feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life.” Berry’s experience illustrates how an encounter with, and a receptivity to, the natural world can have far-

reaching consequences. Such experiences can provide the inspiration and motivation to develop an outlook on life which affirms what is “real and worthwhile”.



“Magnolias”

Photograph by Malgorzata Kmita; 24 March 2017

It is likely that each one of us has experienced the sense of awe and wonder that is evoked by the beauty of the natural world. A wonderful sunrise or sunset, a starry night, a rainbow, or the radiance of a field of sunflowers, for example, can move, inspire, and even overwhelm us. Such experiences capture our attention and elicit positive feelings and emotions. They can be described as ‘wonderful’ because they are beautiful, amazing, and even breath-taking. Such experiences are, indeed, of “inexplicable wonder” and “magic moment(s)”

Berry talks of “the realm of the sacred” and of “special sacred moments” and that “myth is our approach to the deepest realities of the universe”. He talks poetically and poignantly of the earth speaking to humankind and affirming that it has “interior riches to bestow upon (us).” For Thomas Berry the recognition and affirmation of the sacredness of all that is presents a call to change. He invites humankind to respond to what is fundamentally a radically new cultural story, a contemporary great cosmological narrative of the unfolding universe which he believes can present a rationale for hope and a catalyst for change.

It can be suggested that Berry has cogently and wondrously illustrated how an understanding of the origins, evolution and development of the universe can facilitate the experience of awe and wonder as human beings reverentially contemplate their place

in the cosmos. Each person can begin to develop a sense that their existence is part of a much bigger picture, they are not separate from nature, they are part of the universe. Ultimately, therefore, each person belongs; they are at home in the cosmos.

It can be suggested that Berry's evolutionary framework can be a significant resource for facilitating an elucidation of what I term the contemplative pedagogies of Janusz Korczak and Vasily Sukhomolinsky which can be closely related to dimensions of a curriculum for the world of the 21st century which are identified and outlined below. These dimensions are: encounter with nature, aesthetic and creative sensibility, contemplation, the power of story, service and an ecological and reverential perspective.

In his celebrated work *To Children I Give My Heart*, Sukhomolinsky declares:

In one of his letters, outstanding Polish educator Janusz Korczak ... reminds us of the necessity of gaining entrance to the spiritual world of the child, without condescending to it. This is a very subtle idea, the point of which we educators must understand thoroughly. The genuine educator must assimilate the child's perceptions of the world, its emotional and moral reactions to the surrounding reality with all their distinctive clarity, sensitivity, and immediacy..

Sukhomolinsky is affirming the importance of the educator's capacity to integrate into her ways of seeing the world the child's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of the world around them including their emotional and moral response to the environments with which they interact. He recognises, therefore, the vital importance of the educator being able to enter into the multi-dimensional world of the child. Sukhomlinsky follows this statement by affirming that:

I firmly believe that there are qualities without which a person cannot become a genuine educator, and foremost among them is the ability to penetrate into the spiritual world of the child.

For Sukhomolinsky, therefore, the child's way of seeing and being in the world is, ultimately, a spiritual response. Korczak commented:

"I no longer wonder over the fact that God has no beginning and no end, for in him I see the harmony of an infinity of stars. It is creation which testifies to the existence of the creator, and not the priest. I have created a new religion for myself, it has no direction yet, but it is the manifestation of spirituality."

Korczak appears to be articulating a perspective in which the existence of the cosmos, the infinity of stars, is a pointer to a transcendent reality, the ground of being of all that exists. However, he

acknowledges that this ultimately spiritual perspective does not necessarily have to be rooted in a traditional theistic framework although he affirms that it is a new form of religion. Although Korczak's perspective may be regarded as pantheistic in approach it can be viewed as the expression of an emerging view of the universe which has found its expression in Thomas Berry's *Universe Story* and in the insights of the Polish-American Eco-Philosopher Henryk Skolimowski who has affirmed that:

"To think reverentially is first of all to recognise human life as an intrinsic value; is to recognise love as an essential and indispensable force of human existence; is to recognise creative thinking as an inherent part of human nature; is to recognise joy as an integral part of our daily living; is to recognise the brotherhood of all beings as the basis of our new understanding of the Cosmos at large."

It is possible to consider such perspectives in relation to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child because they powerfully suggest that a significant vehicle for the development of the child's capacity for articulating their voice, for affirming their right to be heard, is the teacher's capacity to relate to, and engage with, the child's ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Ultimately, therefore, it can be suggested that, echoing the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's affirmation of the primacy of meaning, the child's

right to be heard is grounded in a dialogic encounter between the child's view of the world and the educator's engagement with this.

Sukhomlinsky articulates an approach to education in which the child's encounter with nature is affirmed:

We went to the meadow in the quiet of early evening. A pensive pussy-willow with tender foliage stood before us, and in the pond was the reflection of the endless firmament. A flock of swans flew across the clear azure sky. We listened attentively to the music of the beautiful evening. We heard a surprising sound from somewhere in the pond, as if someone were softly striking the keys of a clavicord. It seemed that the pond itself, the bank and the firmament were all ringing with the sound.

It is possible to suggest that his evocation of the sights and sounds of nature echoes, and connects deeply with, the reverential respect for nature presented in the 1930 film *Zemlya* (Earth) by the Ukrainian director Alexander Dovzhenko in its poetic and lyrical portrayal of the deep connection with, and to, the land.

Sukhomlinsky encouraged the children to engage with the sights and sounds of the natural world and to relate in depth to what they experienced. His declaration that "we listened attentively" illustrates that he was affirming a response to the beauties

and joys of nature which required focus, concentration and an attitude of being fully present to, and with, the phenomena he and his children encountered. Such an approach echoes Korczak's declaration in his *Ghetto Diary*:

Thank you, Merciful Lord, for the meadow and the bright sunsets, for the refreshing evening breeze after a hot day of toil and struggle. Thank you, Merciful Lord, for having arranged so wisely to provide flowers with fragrance, glow worms with the glow, and make the stars in the sky sparkle.

He is offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the beauties of the earth. His cosmic gratitude is rooted in an appreciation of the natural world which, despite the challenges he and his children faced, presented to him a vision of beauty and joy. Korczak's pedagogical approach sensitised his children to the positive and the good which was present even in the midst of what often appeared to be the chaos which surrounded them in the wider world.

A curriculum which engages children with the natural world also encourages the development of the aesthetic, creative and contemplative dimensions. Sukhomlinsky illustrates the importance of the aesthetic dimension in his declaration that:

The chief aim for me was to teach (the children) the ability to relate emotionally to the beautiful and to

give them a need for impressions of an aesthetic nature. Beauty must become an integral part of people's lives, and this task is accomplished by education.



“Lost In Wonder” by Kelvin Ravenscroft
Acrylic on Paper; 2016

Indeed, he celebrates the transformative power of beauty in his affirmation that:

Working to create beauty enobles the young heart and prevents indifference. In creating beauty on the earth, the children become better, purer and more beautiful.

Sukhomlinsky recognises, therefore, that beauty is not only to be perceived and discerned, it has also to be actively created. For example, he reflects upon the creation by the children of what he terms a Nook of Beauty:

Between the school plot and a thicket of bushes, the children found a clearing covered with thick grass by the slope of the ravine. There was a lot of moisture during showers. We weeded the clearing and began to transform it into a green lawn. 'Our nook will be a Kingdom of green', I told the children ... This dream inspired the children.

It can be suggested that a key element of Korczak's contemplative approach was his recognition that the telling of stories is a powerful vehicle for exploring the world and for making sense of our experience. In works such as *King Matty*, *King Matty and the Desert Island*, and *Kajtek the Magician* together with the stories he told as the Old Doctor on Polish Radio, Korczak introduced children of all ages to the experience of wonder, inspiration, of being

spellbound by the power of an unfolding story. He recognised that we all need myths, narratives, dreams to live by; they provide meaning, hope and motivation in an all too uncertain world. Where can we look as a source of stories for the young people of today? Thomas Berry suggests that an understanding of the origins and unfolding of the Universe and our place within it provides an all-encompassing cosmic story for our times.

Sukhomlinsky echoes Korczak in his affirmation of the power of story. He wrote:

Why do children listen to stories so eagerly? Why do they love the twilight when the very atmosphere supports flights of the imagination so? Why do stories develop the speech and strengthen the thought processes of the child? Because the images of stories are clearly emotionally coloured. The words of a story live in the child's imagination. The child's heart stops when it hears or pronounces the words painted by fantasy.

His recognition that stories 'develop the speech and strengthen the thought processes of the child' can be regarded as presenting a pedagogical foundation for the development of the child's voice, their capacity for authentic self-expression, affirming their right to be heard. For the child to present their voice can involve them sharing their story, their experience, aspects of their personal narrative, their own perspectives or ways of seeing things. Through

listening to stories, enacting them and through writing their own stories children are encouraged and empowered to find their personal voice through which they are given the confidence to assert who they are and to share their memories, dreams and reflections, their concerns, hopes and aspirations.

It can be suggested that programmes of Teacher Education in the world of the 21st century, therefore, should have at their heart the themes of personal, social, and ecological awareness, respect for others and the world in which we live and for the development of values such as respect, empathy and compassion. The developing curricula of the future can creatively combine academic rigour, practical skills and positive values, facilitating a contemplative appreciation of the sheer gift of being alive. Such a pedagogical approach can be regarded as being truly faithful to the radical, deeply spiritual, contemplative humanism of Janusz Korczak and Vasily Sukhomlinsky.

Through this creative activity the children are being socialized into the dimension of service as a significant feature of life. Through articulating their creative voices, they are being inspired, encouraged and motivated to act not only with regard to self-interest but they are also being nurtured into an altruistic understanding of the world. Indeed, Viktor Frankl affirms that:

... being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself – be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself – by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself.

Korczak and Sukhomlinsky both recognized and affirmed in their work with children that meaning, value, significance and purpose is located in encounter with, and service to and for, others. Their pedagogies, therefore, are infused with a profound moral dimension. This moral dimension and the capacity for the child to be heard and express their voice are also located in the storytelling dimension.. The interplay of the aesthetic, service and storytelling dimensions of the curriculum is consolidated by what can be termed the contemplative dimension which is characterised by, for example, attention, focus, mindfulness, reflection, meditation and prayer. A contemplative curriculum recognises that both teachers and pupils require opportunities for silence and stillness so that they are liberated from the all too pervasive barrage of concepts, themes, and ideas which the curriculum can overwhelm and overload us with.

For Korczak trust is at the heart of the pedagogical enterprise. The essence of trust is located in providing the child with the opportunity, and environment, a safe space, in which her views can

be articulated. The child should be able to share her perceptions, thoughts, concerns, anxieties, hopes, aspirations and dreams in an atmosphere where she will be truly heard by the adults who listen to her. The relationship between educator and child is that of a dialogue in which the child learns to trust the adult as a result of genuinely being given a voice. As a result of being heard the adult gains respect. Respect, therefore, is mutual and grows from trust. Mary Rose O'Reilly has explored the concept of what she terms Radical Presence, and she draws upon Parker Palmer's idea that "To teach is to create space..." In *To Know as We Are Known* Parker identifies three key features of a learning space: openness, boundaries and an atmosphere of hospitality. For Parker, hospitality denotes "...receiving each other, our struggles, our new-born ideas, with openness and care." It can be suggested that the "space" to which Palmer refers includes both the physical space, the material environment, which is the location for teaching and learning, and also the nature and quality of the relationships and interactions within the classroom. "Space", therefore, can be regarded as having both inner and outer, subjective and objective, dimensions in which the existential encounter, the learning dialectical space, between teacher and students is located in a physical space, the classroom environment. Indeed, recent years have seen the emergence of an interest in educational circles in the relationship between physical spaces and children's wellbeing with particular reference to

the ways in which experience of the natural world promotes flourishing of both children and teachers. Point (e) of Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to ...the development of respect for the natural environment.” Indeed, it can be suggested that ‘respect for the natural environment’ underpins all aspects of Article 29 because, ultimately, the ‘environment’ is not restricted to the physical, material, natural world but also refers to the dynamic network of relationships and interactions, the ‘web of life’ which characterises the whole of creation.

Ultimately, therefore, “to create a space”, in an educational context, can be regarded as creating sanctuaries, places of safety, security, meaning and value. I have previously explored the importance of places of sanctuary and their relationship to the natural world in two of the five Janusz Korczak Projects I developed during the summer of 2009 which were introduced at the International Korczak Association meeting in Warsaw in September 2009 and which were subsequently distributed by e-mail to Korczakians throughout the world.

The Space for Reflection and Sanctuary Projects explore the concept of respect for the natural environment through the planning, development, creation and maintenance of natural spaces which embody the values of peace, tolerance, equality,

friendship, understanding and responsibility which characterised Korczak's life and are affirmed in the United Nations Convention. The Projects aim to explore Korczak's affirmation of the primacy of oases of calm through the creation of Spaces for Reflection, Sanctuaries, what Henryk Skolimowski has called Oikos, a Sacred Enclosure.

The Projects have two distinct, yet related aspects to them. Firstly, they aim to create physical spaces in which, for example, pupils, students, teachers, therapeutic groups and faith communities can create what can be termed a sanctuary, a space apart, a place of quiet and calm. Secondly, the creation of these physical spaces is complemented by the establishment of reflective, contemplative, meditative and mindfulness-based programmes, teaching and learning activities, which aim to actively foster the positive peaceful values articulated both in Korczak's vision and in Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Unused or underutilised spaces in schools, colleges or universities, for example, are identified with a view to transforming them into Quiet Spaces and Places. Alternatively, land adjacent to museums, galleries or public parks or land belonging to faith communities could be identified.

Thomas Berry has declared:

“We have no inner spiritual development without outer experience. Immediately, when we see or experience any natural phenomenon, when we see a flower, a butterfly a tree, when we feel the evening breeze flow over us or wade in a stream of clear water, our natural response is intuitive, transforming, immediate, ecstatic. Everywhere we find ourselves invaded by the world of the sacred..... An absence of the sacred is the basic flaw at many of our efforts in ecologically or environmentally adjusting our presence to the natural world. It has been said ‘We will not save what we do not love.’ It is also true that we will neither love nor save what we do not experience as sacred.”

Echoing Berry, the Korczak inspired Spaces and Places projects can be regarded as affirming the creation of environments which are loved in which transformative teaching and learning and community engagement and activities can take place. Such places and spaces can be regarded as laboratories for the creation of freedom, trust and respect.

“It has not yet crystallised within me, nor has it been confirmed by reasoning, that the child’s primary and irrefutable right is the right to voice his thoughts, to active participation in our considerations and verdicts concerning him. When we will have gained his respect and trust, once he confides in us of his own free will and tells us what he has the right to do there will be less puzzling moments, less mistakes.”

This declaration by Janusz Korczak in his work *How To Love A Child* affirms the importance of the child's right to be heard, to be an active participant in a process of creative dialogue in which she can find her authentic voice.

The existential therapy of the Austrian Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, complementing Korczak's pedagogical philosophy, affirms the primacy of the search for meaning. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child can be regarded as connecting deeply with the pedagogical process of nurturing the authentic voice of the child at the heart of which is a profoundly spiritual way of seeing, and engaging with, the world.

Frankl has commented that:

Man's struggle for his self and his identity is doomed to failure unless it is enacted as dedication and devotion to something beyond his self, to something above his self.

As a result of his own personal experiences in the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps he developed an approach to psychiatry which recognises the primacy of humankind's search for meaning. He believed that existential frustration and spiritual problems can lead to the development of a form of neurotic illness which he has identified

as noogenic neurosis in which the individual struggles to come to terms with the value and meaning of his life. Frankl developed a psychotherapeutic approach called Logotherapy which explores questions of meaning, value and purpose. Frankl noted that:

A literal translation of the term 'logotherapy' is 'therapy through meaning' ... it could also be translated as 'healing through meaning'...

Frankl is affirming that questions of meaning, value and purpose are at the heart of being human and it can be suggested that Janusz Korczak's pedagogical philosophy consistently and profoundly engages with the nature and meaning of existence and the questions which arise from it. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account. Point 1 of the article states that:

... parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express these views freely...

The reference "to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views" suggests that at the heart of this Article is the recognition and affirmation of the developing autonomy and capacity for self-

expression of the child. The pedagogical enterprise can be regarded as having at its heart the aim of facilitating, developing and nurturing the capacity for children to grow in their ability to discover and articulate their own unique voice and to express their ways of seeing and being in the world cogently and confidently. Indeed, programmes of, for example, Citizenship Education, Personal, Health and Social Education and Critical Thinking can all be regarded as playing an important role in encouraging and empowering children to develop a growing sense of independence in a framework for the management of schools and creation of a teaching and learning ethos in which active pupil participation in decision making is affirmed.

However, although it can be recognised that there are many creative, innovative and inspiring contemporary examples of curriculum programmes and initiatives which aim to reflect and actualise the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Article 12, it can be suggested that there is a much more fundamental question which needs to be addressed and explored in relation to the development of the capacity for children to express their views freely, namely the question of what philosophies or pedagogies of education can be considered as authentically creating an environment and an ethos in which the nurturing and development of the child's capacity for autonomous self-expression is found to permeate every aspect of the curriculum?

Ultimately, the child's capacity for self-expression, to share their personal voice, does not develop in a vacuum, it is nurtured in an affirming context in which personal growth and development, in all its many and varied forms, is encouraged.

Janusz Korczak's approach to the child is encapsulated in his affirmation that:

An educator who does not enforce but sets free, does not drag but uplifts, does not crush but shapes, does not dictate but instructs, does not demand but requests, will experience inspired moments with the child.

Such an approach can be regarded as one in which the child is, indeed, empowered, encouraged, and enabled to articulate their voice, their often unheard cry for meaning, and enables them to have a voice and be listened to. It can be suggested that in order to actively nurture and develop children's capacity for self-expression, to embark upon a journey of creating mechanisms through which their voice can be heard, it is possible to propose a creative synthesis of the pedagogical approaches of Korczak and Sukhomlinsky and Frankl's affirmation of the vital importance of creating and/or discovering meaning in life together with the Journey of the Universe cosmic narrative of Thomas Berry.

Reflecting upon the explorations undertaken in the

Journey of the Universe community study group, amongst the diversity of perspectives discussed, there are five dimensions in particular which can be considered.

Firstly, the experience of Wonder, Re-enchantment, and Transformation. Common to the spiritual traditions of the world is the experience of transformation. Sacred scriptures tell of individuals and communities who have undergone a turning around, a leaving behind of the old self and the emergence, at times involving significant loss and pain, of a new identity. Using Biblical language, it is possible to talk of metanoia, conversion, a reorientation of the self to the Divine. For Thomas Berry, rooted in the Roman Catholic Christian tradition, and, in many ways echoing the spiritual vision of Francis of Assisi, he articulated a spirituality which encompassed the whole of creation, affirming the importance of awe, wonder, reverence and a sense of the unity of all things at the heart of which is cosmic creativity. In essence, Berry invites us to undergo the task of rediscovering the enchantment at the heart of life. He calls us to abandon any sense of despair, cynicism and nihilism and to (re)discover the glorious gift of life in all its fullness.

Secondly, related to the experience of Wonder, Re-enchantment and Transformation is the relationship between Worship and Value. We worship that which is of worth. Echoing the theologian Paul Tillich, it can

be said that Berry calls us to reappraise and re-evaluate that which, in our individual and collective lives, is our Ultimate Concern. At the heart of Berry's way of seeing is a profound reverence for life.

In *The Dream of the Earth* Berry declares that:

"If the earth does grow inhospitable towards human presence, it is primarily because we have lost our sense of courtesy towards the earth and its inhabitants, our sense of gratitude, our willingness to recognise the sacred character of habitat, our capacity for the awesome, for the numinous quality of every earthly reality."

This sense of the "numinous quality of every earthly reality" suggests a third significant dimension of Berry's way of seeing, namely, what can be termed Contemplative Awareness. It can be suggested that Berry's vision has significant implications for the experience of teaching and learning in all its diverse contexts. The development and introduction of a Journey of the Universe curriculum into schools, colleges, and universities, and also within community groups and faith communities, has the potential to nurture the contemplative capacity, the capacity of what Simone Weil termed "attention" which she said is "the rarest and purest form of generosity." The Biblical tradition frequently invites us to "Behold!" To behold is to look deeply, to see in depth, to transcend superficiality, and to, ultimately, experience things in a new way and be transformed.

Experiencing things in a new way and being transformed connects with what can be regarded as the fourth dimension arising from Berry's Universe Story which is the concept of Sacred Activism. It is possible to creatively explore Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan through the lens of the Journey of the Universe and retell and rediscover its core message anew through a recognition that the man attacked and wounded on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is the wounded earth who is responded to with compassion by the unexpected outsider, who nurtures, renews and restores through reverential Sacred Activism. Thomas Berry calls us to love the Earth and each other. Echoing Jesus' parable, we love God when we love the earth, our host and neighbour, in all its bounteous diversity. Jenny Grut, in her book *The Healing Fields*:

Psychotherapy and Nature to Rebuild Shattered Lives has commented:

"If we do not consider ourselves connected with nature we are in a state of disconnection and this is what shattered lives are about. If we cannot make a link with what is outside ourselves, we cannot get to know ourselves."

The link with "what is outside ourselves" is powerfully and beautifully articulated by the poet Wendell Berry:

*“When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may
be.*

*I go down and lie where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron
feeds.*

I come into the peace of wild things....

I rest in the grace of the world and I am free.”

Berry's poem illustrates that it is possible for nature to provide a sanctuary from despair and fear. He suggests that the natural world can provide a space for rest, peace, grace, and freedom. It can be an oasis offering physical and spiritual refreshment when faced with existential challenges. Fifthly, however, it is important not to romanticise nature and to view it as a panacea for curing all of the ills of contemporary society. Indeed, in his cosmological narrative, Thomas Berry acknowledges and recognises that the origin, process and evolution of the universe is characterised by change which is, all too often forceful and destructive in its power and energy. Nature can, indeed, be restorative, but it can also, as evidenced by regular news bulletins from around the world, be a cause of great suffering to both humankind and the animal kingdom.

Reflecting upon the experience of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, Koyu Abbe,

the Chief Monk of the Joenji Temple community has declared: “To put Buddhist belief in one word: life doesn’t go as you wish. Everyone runs into obstacles; therefore, in order to overcome this disaster we should accept that this disaster had happened and need to face the reality squarely.” He is recognising the reality that existence is characterised by contingency, finitude and impermanence. As the experience of the Buddha in his encounter with old age, sickness and death confirms, life presents challenges, which are all too often unexpected, which can shake the very foundations of our being. Suffering in its many and varied forms can have the effect of destabilising and subverting what we consider to be the reassuring predictable reliability of the positive routines and experiences of daily living. When suffering breaks into our lives it is understandable why individuals and communities ask “Why has this happened?”, “What does this all mean?”, “Why do people suffer?” “Is there any purpose to what has happened?”, “What can we do?” and “How should we respond?”. The irruption of dukkha, suffering, into our lives can present a profound existential challenge because it powerfully and painfully illustrates that our understandable and laudable aim to construct individual and social lives characterised by order, routine, predictability, and some degree of certainty can, often violently, be sabotaged by forces beyond our control.

Indeed, the experience of Janusz Korczak and his

orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto of Nazi-occupied Poland was located in the context of an apocalyptic vision of a world which appeared to have gone mad. The old order had been subverted and a chilling ideology was systematically and clinically defining millions of people as undesirable, as being less than human, for whom the only fate was certain death. The early years of the 21st century have also seen many challenging examples of war, conflict, and injustice which, at times, can be perceived as overwhelming and rendering individuals, communities and nations powerless to restore order, security and peace.

The significance of transformation, both personally and socially, and the primacy of the “will to meaning” has been demonstrated in the action undertaken by the Zen Buddhist monks of the Joenji Temple in Japan following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. Koyu Abbe, declared: “I contemplated what I could do. I decided to receive the radiated dirt at my Temple. The Temple ground is vast.” Together with his community, Koyu Abbe made the decision to undertake transformative action in order to try to alleviate the radioactivity emanating from the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The Temple took large quantities of the radiated soil and stored it in the Temple grounds and established a project entitled “Hana ni Negaiwo”, “Make A Wish Upon Flowers” which encouraged the local population to plant sunflower seeds and mustard seeds together with other plants in order for

them to absorb and transform the radiation. In effect, the Joenji monks have taken their practices of meditation, mindfulness, contemplation and reflection and made connections between their individual and collective spiritual disciplines and the wider ecology of their Temple grounds and the surrounding towns and villages. The spiritual disciplines, therefore, engage with the environmental, social and economic challenges presented by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The deep inner contemplative spirituality of the monks makes profound and practical connections with the outer transformative challenges and opportunities of the wider environment. In his 14 Principles of Engaged Buddhism Thich Nhat Hanh indicates: "Do not avoid suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering, including personal contact, visits, images and sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world." Through their sunflower project the monks of Joenjai Temple are, indeed, awakening themselves and others to the reality of suffering in the world and are undertaking action aimed at alleviating some of this suffering motivated by "metta", loving kindness. The Joenji monks and the Make A Wish Upon Flowers project in their planting of sunflowers to transform the radiated soil can be regarded as saying a joyous Yes! to life and are presenting a simple, yet profound illustration of the capacity of spiritual traditions to engage with the challenges and opportunities of

life. Their transformative action affirms and embodies Frankl's declaration that man's struggle for self-identity is rooted and located in "... dedication and devotion to something beyond his self, to something above his self."

Koyu Abbe has declared: "My hope is, as we wish upon flowers, the seeds of sunflowers and many other flowers we have distributed will bloom in Fukushima and become everyone's flower of hope and happiness for the future. I wish this from the bottom of my heart." In this perspective the act of growing sunflowers is a practical meaningful act of transformation. As the sunflower plants absorb the radiation from the surrounding area they act as a profound symbol of transformation in the personal, social and ecological dimensions of existence. What can be regarded as a simple act of planting and nurturing seeds illustrates that simple actions have the potential to have significant, even far-reaching, consequences. Confirming the understanding of the Buddhist law of karma, actions do have consequences. How we live, what we do and say, how we relate to, and connect with, others and with our wider ecologies, all have significance. It is like the pebble tossed into the lake. Once the pebble is thrown into the water, we are no longer in control of what happens. We are actively involved in the casting of the stone into the water, but we are not in control of, and we cannot ultimately predict, the extent and the force of the ripples on the lake which arise from the act of casting the stone. There is a

profound sense, therefore, in which in a world in which we can easily become overwhelmed by the sheer scale of “dukkha”, suffering, in its many and varied forms, the inspiring and ennobling example of the monks of the Joenji Temple present us with a contemporary role model illustrating how small acts can have very significant consequences. Indeed, from a small seed a mighty oak can grow. It can be suggested that in his declaration that “The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed” Jesus, in harmony with the Buddha, draws our attention to the importance of “planting seeds”, preparing the ground for, and nurturing actions, activities, initiatives and projects which can transform lives and transform, in the process, darkness into light, hopelessness into hope and despair into meaning and purpose. The Kingdom of God, therefore, is present wherever and whenever positive transformation is manifested.

In *The Boarding School* Janusz Korczak wrote:

“Is it not enough that I experience a feeling of joyful gratitude? As I see them grow and toughen? Is this in itself not a sufficient reward for the work done? Haven't I the right to be a disinterested worshipper of nature, to watch the shrub become green?”

In this metaphor Korczak is affirming that as a pedagogue, a sculptor of childrens' souls, he experiences a sense of joyful gratitude when he sees the children in his care blossom and flourish and reach maturity. Every pedagogue, therefore, can

be regarded as being a “sower of seeds” which she nurtures and cherishes so that the fruits can be made manifest in the lives of the children in their care.

In 2017 during the season of Lent, the community of St Margaret’s Church in Whalley Range in Manchester hung on the branches of an acer tree labels on which were written their names together with details of what they considered to be their personal “roots”, the places, spaces, people, and experiences which have grounded them and provided a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. The labels became the “roots” and “fruits” of the tree. To be a pedagogue, therefore, can be regarded as acknowledging a calling, a vocation, to embark upon the life-long journey of being a sower of seeds of wisdom, knowledge, understanding and inspiration who, in dialogue and encounter with the child creates and nurtures teaching and learning environments in which the children can blossom and flourish.



"Roots and Fruits" St Margaret's Church, Whalley Range, Manchester; 26 March 2017

Photograph by Malgorzata Kmita

In his *'Ghetto Diary'* Korczak declared:
*"Thank you, Merciful Lord, for the meadow and the bright sunsets, for the refreshing evening breeze after a hot day of toil and struggle.
Thank you, Merciful Lord, for having arranged so*

wisely to provide flowers with fragrance, glow worms with the glow, and make the stars in the sky sparkle.” He is offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the beauties of the earth. His cosmic gratitude is rooted in an appreciation of the natural world which, despite the sufferings of life, presented to him a vision of beauty and joy. Korczak’s contemplation, reflection and meditation were undertaken in the midst of the challenging life of the orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto at a time when the lives of he and his children hung in the balance. The future was most uncertain. Despite this Korczak took the time to mindfully and attentively focus not solely on the challenges, stresses and strains of running the orphanage but, instead, he took the time to be grateful for each positive aspect of the children’s existence. He said a glorious Yes! to life when it would have been understandable for him to have been ground down by the daily challenges he and his children faced.

The Monks of the Joenji Temple gently, humbly, yet powerfully, illustrate that significant transformation can arise from relatively small acts of “*metta*”, loving kindness, in which individually and collectively persons can create and leave a legacy. Each human being, responding to the precious gift of life in all of its fragile glory, can create the ripples on the pond confirming that, ultimately, all things exist in a dynamic, creative and interconnected web of life. Each person begins where they are, in their own context and situation. From this context they

exercise their freedom to choose and act and, in this process they can actualise transformation. Inspired by the teaching and way of the Buddha, the “*Dharma*”, the Joenji monks affirm the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path and mindfully, creatively and with compassion for all beings bring about, at times almost imperceptibly, profound personal, social, and ecological change. The Joenji monks and the Make a Wish Upon Flowers project articulates clearly and unambiguously the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre’s perspective that “Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.” To be a person is to be embodied and engaged; we do not exist as disembodied minds engaging purely in rational thought. Thinking and reflection is translated into engagement with the world. We are what we do. Who we are is how we act.

The concluding section of this paper reviews the key concepts, themes and ideas explored in several of the Thomas Berry Manchester community study group meetings held in Manchester, United Kingdom, between September 2015 and December 2016 and includes examples of approaches to teaching and learning which can be regarded as being in harmony with the pedagogical philosophies of Janusz Korczak and Vasily Sukhomlinsky.

HRH The Prince of Wales has commented:

“If people are encouraged to immerse themselves in Nature’s grammar and geometry, they are often led to acquire some remarkably deep philosophical insights.”

The Thomas Berry Manchester meeting in December 2015 began by considering a quotation from Thomas Berry alongside a painting *Eternity* (watercolour on paper; 2011) by the artist Joseph Raffael. The group discussed what the painting suggested to us, and we shared a range of perspectives on the possible meaning(s) of the artwork.

It was suggested that the fossil image connected with Thomas Berry’s *Journey of the Universe* because it illustrates that the earth and its many and varied life forms has a long history which is itself part of a much greater history, the history of the Big Bang until the present day. It is particularly striking that in the unfolding of this story humankind are relative newcomers. The sharing of ideas also suggested that the fossil illustrates that the past, even the greatly distant past, is, in some sense, always with us. At all times we are surrounded by, and immersed in, that which has preceded us. This view also closely connects to those persons whom we have known and loved and who have greatly influenced us but who have passed away. There is a very profound sense in which our connection with them continues

to be real, present and sustaining. Indeed, both Janusz Korczak and Vasily Sukhomlinsky are no longer with us yet their lives and legacies continue to inspire and motivate us to develop meaningful and transformative pedagogical approaches and strategies. The shape of the fossil in Raffael's painting raised the theme of patterns and design in nature. Indeed, the shape, form, and pattern of the fossil in the painting was also presented in a variety of examples from nature in the film *Harmony* which we viewed together.

Harmony, which had its world premiere at the Sundance film Festival in London in April 2012, is inspired by HRH Prince Charles' long-standing recognition of the requirement for a new way of seeing and being in the world and it presents contemporary case studies from the United Kingdom, the USA, India and Canada in which humankind works with nature, not against it, in sustainable and harmonious ways.

The film inspired wide ranging discussion of ways in which the values and principles embodied in the projects could possibly be applied to our local contexts in Manchester. How could we translate the vision, the new ways of responding to the ecological, economic, political, educational, and spiritual challenges and opportunities, articulated in the film to our local contexts? In particular, how is it possible to nurture spaces and places which people will love and respect? Can a sense of the sacred

and a reverential way of seeing, being and relating to oneself, others and the world be developed? How might the citizens of Manchester, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Kiev, Berlin, and Paris, for example, create spaces and places and develop projects and initiatives which inspire and facilitate flourishing and well-being? Exploration of this question connects significantly with the themes and ideas explored in the Korczak projects developed in 2009 which are discussed earlier in this paper.

The January 2016 Thomas Berry Manchester meeting commenced with a reading and exploration together of pages one and two of Richard Louv's book *The Nature Principle – Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*. In this introductory section of the book entitled *Nature-Deficit Disorder for Adults* Louv recounts the experience, twenty years earlier, of visiting the home of friends in New Mexico. After settling into the home (from which his friends were away) Louv describes the experience of sitting alone and looking out over a field towards "a line of distant cottonwoods that rimmed the Pecos." He notes:

"I watched the afternoon thunderheads rise above the high desert to the east and the layers of sandstone across the river. The field of chili shivered in the sun. Above me, leaves rattled and tree limbs scratched. My eyes settled on a single cottonwood at the river, its branches and upper leaves waving in a slow rhythm above all the others. An hour, perhaps

more, went by. Tension crawled up and out of me. It seemed to twist in the air above the green field. Then it was gone. And something better took its place."

Louv's account illustrates that he is clearly paying attention to the detail of the environment around him. He is aware, for example, of the thunderheads, the layers of sandstone, the field of chili, the rattling and waving of leaves. He is silently observing carefully and thoughtfully the phenomena of the natural world. He is giving time to this activity. However, this experience is not detached, dispassionate and clinical monitoring of the world around him. The experience affects him profoundly because it has palpable somatic consequences in his declaration that "Tension crawled up and out of me." The experience of sitting, watching, and waiting results in a profound cathartic physical release. The tension which is released from his body is described as "(twisting) in the air above the green field." It is as if something which was not positive, tension, was let go of and, as Louv affirms, something positive, "something better took its place."

Louv recalls this experience in the introduction to his book because it had a deeply restorative and life enhancing effect upon him. He comments that:

"I often think about the cottonwood at the river's edge, and similar moments of inexplicable wonder,

times when I received from nature just what I needed: an elusive it for which I have no name."

In his affirmation of such "moments of inexplicable wonder" Louv's experience can be regarded as an illustration of the transformative power of nature which we explored in the first meeting of the Thomas Berry Manchester group in September 2015 in which we considered together the experience of Thomas Berry as a twelve-year-old encountering a field of meadows. Berry describes this experience as "A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something. I know not what, that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any experience I can remember."

Following our exploration of the extract from Richard Louv's book we viewed the DVD *Thomas Berry Speaks* which consists of two short films: *Thomas Berry – The Great Work* and *Thomas Berry – The Power of Story and the Capacity for Change*. In our discussions following the films we recognised that running through them was the concept of the sacredness of the natural world. Berry talks of "the realm of the sacred" and of "special sacred moments" and that "myth is our approach to the deepest realities of the universe". He talks poetically and poignantly of the earth speaking to humankind and affirming that it has "interior riches to bestow upon you." For Thomas Berry the recognition and affirmation of the sacredness of all that is presents a call to change. He invites humankind to respond to

what is fundamentally a radically new cultural story, a contemporary great cosmological narrative of the unfolding universe which he believes can present a rationale for hope and a catalyst for change.

The meeting concluded with consideration of the challenge presented in Richard Louv's declaration:

"What would our lives be like if our days and nights were immersed in nature as they are in technology? How can each of us help create that life-enhancing world, not only in a hypothetical future, but right now, for our families and for ourselves?"

The focus of the February 2016 Thomas Berry Manchester meeting was the viewing and exploration of the concepts, themes and ideas presented in the film *Animate Earth*.

Animate Earth is written and presented by Dr Stephan Harding, and it presents the personal and professional transformation which Harding has undertaken. In the January 2016 meeting we explored the experience of Richard Louv and his deep transformative encounter with the natural world. His response was profoundly visceral in its impact, and it radically affected his way of seeing and being in the world. Stephen Harding too has undergone a significant transformation in his experience and perception of the world. Since childhood he has had a deep fascination with the natural world, which inspired studies in Zoology at

the University of Durham and then a doctorate on the behavioural ecology of the muntjac deer at Oxford University.

He recognises that his studies of the muntjac deer involved careful and systematic observing, measuring, recording, and quantifying of data with mathematical precision. However, in the film he also talks passionately of sitting still in nature in which “calmness enveloped” him. Such experiences have led him to an “intuitive connection” with the natural world and with all creatures. For Harding, intuition is a valid way of knowing which can contribute to the development of a holistic science combining numerical and intuitive minds. Such an approach to science, Harding believes, can provide a rationale for revering everything around us. In the dance between intuition and reason Harding is of the view that green technologies and a new economics have the potential to emerge which manifest a new moral attitude to the earth, characterised by a deep intuitive knowing and a recognition and awareness, echoing Thomas Berry, of the sacredness, the divinity, of the earth. Such a way of seeing and being in the world can, Harding affirms, embody and promote coherence, health and vitality and positive qualities such as beauty, wellbeing, joy and love.

Discussion of the concepts, themes and ideas explored in the film raised the issue of the relationship between transformative experiences

and holistic and reverential ways of seeing and being in the world. Thomas Berry, Richard Louv and Stephan Harding can all be recognised as undergoing in their lives transformative, life changing experiences which have profoundly impacted upon how they relate to themselves, others (including non-human life), the earth and the cosmos. Is seeing the earth as sacred inextricably related to, and dependent upon, such transformation and can transformation actively be nurtured and developed? If nurturing and development of transformation is a possibility then what are the vehicles or channels for bringing about personal and social change and what are the potential implications, for example, for parenting, education, healthcare, ecology, science, technology, the arts, and spirituality?

Such questions can be regarded as relating closely to the observation by Thomas Berry in *The Dream of the Earth* that:

“If the earth does grow inhospitable towards human presence, it is primarily because we have lost our sense of courtesy towards the earth and its inhabitants, our sense of gratitude, our willingness to recognise the sacred character of habitat, our capacity for the awesome, for the numinous quality of every earthly reality.”

The Thomas Berry Manchester meeting held in March 2016 commenced with listening to an audio

recording of an extract from Richard Louv's book *The Nature Principle – Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*. In this introductory section of the book entitled *Nature-Deficit Disorder for Adults* Louv recounts the experience, twenty years earlier, of visiting the home of friends in New Mexico which is explored above.

Listening to Louv's account of his profound and transformative experience reminded us that for many people an encounter with the natural world can be a life changing and life enhancing phenomenon. Although nature can be powerful, overwhelming and, all too often, violent and destructive, there appears to be a sense in which an encounter with the beauty of the natural world in all its glorious diversity can evoke a powerful sense of awe and wonder in which people perceive that they are, in some sense, aware of something, a power, energy or reality, beyond, yet at times related to, the self.

We followed listening to Louv's experience with an exploration of the 1818 painting *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* by the Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich. In responding to the artwork, the group considered two questions:

What is the man in the painting experiencing as he stands on the rock?

Is there any sense in which the man has been changed by his experience?

Viktor Frankl has reflected upon his experience of mountain climbing and the way in which it has impacted upon his life. His reflections have as central themes the concepts of encounter and dialogue. Frankl regarded mountain climbing as an activity in which he engaged in dialogue with himself; he was in an environment in which he could contemplate, reflect, and meditate upon his experience and be inspired and empowered to make meaningful life choices. The mountain sojourns also were opportunities for Frankl to be refreshed, renewed, and strengthened. The solitary nature of these experiences meant that Frankl was able to know himself more deeply and, in view of his work as a psychiatrist, it is likely that this self-knowledge impacted positively upon his knowledge of his clients and the ways in which he engaged in meaningful dialogue and encounter with them.

In addition to self-dialogue and the way in which this related to his dialogue with his clients it can also be recognised that Frankl entered into a profound dialogue, encounter, and engagement with the natural world. The world of the mountains is the physical world, the world of the challenges and opportunities presented by the experience of nature.

The Polish composer Wojciech Kilar, in his symphonic poem *Koscielnic 1909* recalls the death of Mieczyslaw Karlowicz as a result of an avalanche in Maly

Koscielic, one of the summits of the Tatra mountains in February 1909. Karlowicz declared:

When I stand on the top of a steep mountain, having only the blue hemisphere of the sky above and the sea of the plateau with waves of other summits beneath, I feel as if I were blending with the surrounding space. I cease to perceive myself as a unique entity, instead, I sense the eternal and almighty breath of the universe.

For Karlowicz, his experience of the mountain was one in which he became aware of a dimension to life, a presence, a reality, which affirmed his connectedness with all things.

In our exploration of Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer* painting a range of ideas were expressed. It was suggested that the man in the painting was experiencing a sense of freedom. He had left behind the burdens and responsibilities of his daily life and had been liberated, albeit perhaps temporarily, to experience the fresh mountain air which invigorated and renewed his spirit. It could be that as a result of walking in the mountains he gained a new perspective, both literally and existentially, as a result of which he was able to understand his life context in a new way. He may have been able to be open to the possibility of a new way of seeing the world. As in the experience of Viktor Frankl explored above the man in the painting may have gone to the mountains to make

a decision. Being away from his usual context may have given him the place, space, and time to consider what course of action he should possibly take. In addition, his sojourn in the mountain provided him with the opportunity to experience the awe and wonder of the majesty of the natural world. Perhaps Friedrich's painting portrays the archetypal experience of humankind's encounter with the forces of nature of which they are, ultimately, a part. Each human being is not separate from, but a part of nature, an element in the web of life.

Following exploration of Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* painting the group viewed the film *Earth Pilgrim-A Spiritual Journey into the Heart of Dartmoor*.

This BBC Natural World film, originally broadcast on BBC2 in 2008, presents a reflective autobiographical and spiritual journey into the awe-inspiring landscape of Dartmoor (in the south-west of the United Kingdom) with Satish Kumar, the internationally acclaimed ecologist and Editor of Resurgence and The Ecologist magazine.

As the seasons change and unfold Satish walks the moor and he explores and responds evocatively to the ancient woods and rivers in which lives a diversity of wildlife including, for example, red deer, foxes, emperor moths, kestrels and starling roosts. His meditations on the relationship between ecology, peace, non-violence and the natural world can be

regarded as profoundly complementing the way of seeing and being in the world of Thomas Berry in its recognition of the sacredness of life. Satish has commented that:

"We can relate to our planet Earth in two ways: either we can act as tourists and look at the Earth as a resource of goods and services for our use, pleasure and enjoyment, or we can act as Earth Pilgrims and treat the planet with reverence and gratitude. Tourists value the Earth and all her natural riches only in terms of usefulness to themselves. Pilgrims perceive the planet as sacred and recognise the intrinsic value of all life. The living Earth is good in itself with all its grace and beauty."

The *Earth Pilgrim* film is available to view at:

<http://vimeo.com/130017834>

An interview with Satish Kumar by John Vidal published in the Guardian newspaper in 2008 prior to the broadcast of the *Earth Pilgrim* film is available at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/jan/16/activists>

The first annual cycle of Thomas Berry Manchester meetings concluded in December 2016 when we met together to explore themes and ideas which related to, and connected with, our previous

monthly meetings. Our meeting began with each member of the group identifying something positive that had happened in their lives during the previous week. The experiences that were shared affirmed the importance of holding on to those aspects of our lives which are positive particularly when faced with challenges and stressors individually, collectively and on a global scale. It was recognised that it is all too easy to let go of the positive in our lives and focus on that which challenges us giving rise to the experience of anxiety and uncertainty about where we are heading.

This introductory activity of identifying examples of the positive was followed by a visualisation exercise in which each member of the group was invited to imagine in their mind's eye a place or space, either real or imagined, which they regard as being a positive, meaningful, and safe space. They were invited to visualise the details of this place or space, being aware of the sights, sounds and smells, for example, of the environment which they visualised. The group was also invited to become aware of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions they experienced in relation to the space or place of which they found themselves immersed.

Each member of the group shared their experience of the visualisation exercise all of which were of significant memorable experiences of the natural world. The experiences gave rise to responses of awe and wonder, a sense of an awareness of, and

a connection with, a power or reality beyond oneself, together with a profound sense of gratitude, appreciation, and thankfulness. The responses from the group members testified to the restorative power of nature and their relationship to meaningful life-enhancing memories and their capacity to transform our perspectives, our ways of looking at the world.

This visualisation exercise was then followed by a viewing of the short film *Crows* which is one of eight short films which together make up the feature *Dreams* directed in 1990 by the late Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa. *Crows* begins with a Japanese man in an art gallery viewing paintings, in silence, by Vincent Van Gogh. He passes from one artwork to another looking briefly at each one. When looking at one of the paintings he suddenly finds himself transported to, and located within, the painting which has come alive. He has become a character in the drama which is unfolding in the painting. He asks a group of women, who are washing their laundry in the river, if they have seen Vincent Van Gogh. They point him in the direction where Vincent can be found but they warn him that Vincent has been in what they describe as a lunatic asylum.

The Japanese man walks through the landscape looking for Vincent, but the landscape is made up of changing scenes from Vincent's paintings. It is as if Vincent's artworks have come alive and the

boundary between the observer in the art gallery and the paintings he is viewing have been dissolved. The Japanese man, in effect, has become a living part of Van Gogh's visual world.

The man sees Vincent (played by the acclaimed auteur Martin Scorsese) in a wheat field painting and as they meet there is a short exchange of questions and responses. Vincent appears to be in a hurry, determined to capture on his canvas the scene he sees before him. He is impatient with the Japanese man, asking him why he is not painting. Vincent expresses the view that the beauty of nature should be captured in creative activity, and he declares "The sun, it compels me to paint." Vincent declares that there is so little time in which to paint, and he declares that he feels driven like a locomotive. Vincent walks away from the man and he appears to disappear from the scene. The Japanese man continues to search for Vincent and, as the figure of Vincent slowly disappears over the horizon, a flurry of crows burst into the foreground filling the wheat field. In the final scene of the film, we find the Japanese man back in the art gallery gazing at Vincent Van Gogh's painting *Wheat Field with Crows*. He looks at it carefully and attentively and, respectfully and reverentially, takes off his hat. The viewing of the film was followed by a discussion responding to the question "What do we make of this?" A variety of perspectives were presented regarding responses to the film. In summary, it can be said that the film raised the question of how

humankind responds to nature, is nature something that we simply pass through without giving it attention and really observing what is before us? Are we observers who do not fully experience and participate in the world? What is the relationship between beauty and creativity? How can each of us respond positively, meaningfully and creatively to the environments we experience? In what ways can we respond to the world around us, and our relationships within it, in an existence which is finite in which each human being is a traveller on the earth? The *Crows* film presents Vincent and the Japanese man both located within a specific place, space, and time in which, in a very powerful sense, they are both challenged to be transformed.

This sense of a call to personal, social, and ecological transformation led into the conclusion of the Journey of the Universe meeting in which we revisited the experience of Thomas Berry (which was explored in the first Thomas Berry Manchester meeting in September 2015) as a twelve-year-old experiencing a field of lilies, an event which he recounted in his book *The Great Work*. Thomas Berry's recounting of this transformative experience of nature points to the capacity for the natural world to act as a catalyst for providing meaning, purpose, and value to life and for its potential to frame our basic life orientation. Berry concludes *The Great Work* with the declaration that:

"The distorted dream of an industrial technological

paradise is being replaced by the more viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence with in ever-renewing organic-based Earth community. The dream drives the action."

May our dreams, inspired by the transformative visions of Janusz Korczak, Vasily Sukhomlinsky and Thomas Berry, drive our vision and our actions.

CODA:

As I write this concluding section of the Thomas Berry Manchester Spring 2023 Newsletter, Easter approaches. Within the Western Christian tradition, Holy Week commences on Palm Sunday, 2 April 2023. In anticipation of the celebration of Easter, I offer a reflection entitled 'The Gaze of God' which considers Julian of Norwich's perception of a hazelnut.

The Gaze of God

2023 will mark the 650th anniversary of the 'showings', the 'Revelations of Divine Love' which Julian of Norwich received and wrote down. This recording of her experiences is understood to be the first book published in English by a woman. In her Revelations she writes of her experience of contemplating a hazelnut:

"He showed me a little thing the size of a hazelnut, in the palm of my hand, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with my mind's eye and I thought, 'What can this be?' And the answer came, 'It is all that is made'."

At the heart of Julian's way of seeing the world is her acknowledgment of God as Creator. She recognises that the hazelnut has three characteristics the first of which is "that God made

it". Julian is affirming that all phenomena that come into being have as their cause the creativity of God. The recognition of God as the cause, the primary creative principle, which brings the hazelnut into being, can also be regarded as a vehicle through which she is also aware that her very being, her life, her existence, is rooted in the belief in, and experience of, God as Creator of all.

It is as if Julian is not simply and only contemplating the hazelnut; through this contemplation she is, in effect, also reflecting upon her own identity, her personal sense of self. Through gazing upon a small phenomenon of nature, Julian is able to perceive that she also is, indeed, an expression of the creative activity of God. Such an insight for Julian echoes the affirmation of the Psalmist (139:14 NIV): "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well."

To "know that full well" is to integrate it into the very fibre of our being; to 'know', for Julian, is to be deeply aware that the sheer fact of our existence has not come about because of anything that we have done. Rather, our origin is located in a much larger context, what can be called a cosmic context. The God who gives rise to the sun, moon, and the stars, is the God who breathes life into us. From the perspective of contemporary cosmology, we can affirm that we are, indeed, "star stuff".

Following her recognition and affirmation of God as

Creator, Julian's second dimension of awareness in relation to the hazelnut "is that God loves it." Julian, therefore, is recognising that God's creative activity is an expression of love. However, such love does not end when the hazelnut comes into being, rather, this love continues throughout its existence. God's creative activity, therefore, can be regarded as being the manifestation of relationship, an interaction, a coming together, a communion.

To be loved, therefore, means to be in relationship and to be in relationship involves a sense of movement. Love, therefore, involves both giving and receiving in which there can be discerned what I call a 'sense of spontaneous flow'.

Following on from Julian's recognition and appreciation of the hazelnut being made and loved by God, she then proceeds to affirm "that God keeps it". To "keep it" can be regarded as testifying to the belief that in His creative loving activity God sustains and nurtures that which He has made. Such a view connotes a sense of God being compassionately involved with His creation; His creativity and loving are ongoing; they are, in effect, in process.

If we are loved by God, then the consequence is that we should also love, both God and His creation. Indeed, one way of understanding the view that humankind is made in the image of God is to see this concept as testifying to the idea that, in the same

way that God loves His creation, human beings should also love God in return and this loving response to God can be affirmed in our love for others. Such a view affirms the experience of relationship and interaction. We live in the gaze of God, we gaze upon Him, each other and upon all that He has made.

As she gazes upon the hazelnut, Julian comments: "I marvelled at how it could continue." She ponders upon how it could continue to be because "it could have suddenly sunk into nothingness because of its littleness."

To 'marvel' can be defined as "to be filled with wonder or astonishment". Julian's example, therefore, can, I suggest, encourage, inspire, and nurture us to gaze upon the world with curiosity, love, kindness, empathy, care, and compassion. Julian's response to the hazelnut can be regarded as embodying a positive and holistic way of seeing and being in the world.

Where do we find wonder? What and who do we marvel at? When and where do we find ourselves being amazed and astonished? When do we find ourselves, to echo C S Lewis, being surprised by joy? May we, during this continuing season of Lent, marvel at the love of God.