PLAYING WITH GOD: TOWARDS THE CREATION OF NEW MODELS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

The study of the relationship between religion and education in the lives of children is underrepresented in the field of religious studies. Part of the problem of studying this relationship stems from various ideological and political issues that have surrounded the traditional study of religious development in children. This essay examines how certain concepts of child psychology have shaped our contemporary understating of religious education in children. In particular, I examine how James Fowler and D. W. Winnicott's theories about child psychology can be utilized to enhance our understating of the various ways children develop a religious worldview. Furthermore, I suggest that Fowler and Winnicott's theories about child development can be expanded to help foster a new understanding of the vital role religious ideas play in the education of children. In the last part of my paper, I critique the state of contemporary religious education by drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak and Paul Bramadat. Both Spivak and Bramadat suggest that an aesthetic education is required to cultivate a conversation that encompasses the broad spectrum of religious phenomenon. Most significantly, in this section I examine how the ideas of Fowler and Winnicott can be brought together in light of Spivak and Bramadat's critique, to construct teaching methodologies for children that reflect the findings of contemporary scholarship in religious education. This essay attempts to expand the dialogue with revised conceptions of religious studies in order to develop pedagogies of religious education that are centered on a child's capacity for creativity.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

       This essay examines how certain concepts of child psychology may shape our contemporary understanding of religious education in children. In particular, I examine James Fowler and D. W. Winncott's theories about child psychology and outline possible ways in which their work can be utilized to enhance our understanding of how children develop a religious worldview. This will be followed by a review of current theories about religious education as presented by Gayatri Spivak and Paul Bramadat. In light of Spivak and Bramadat's critiques, I claim that Fowler and Winnicott's theories about child development can be expanded towards creating a model of education that highlights the importance of religious ideas, worldviews, and systems of values.

       Theorists interested in studying the psychology of children tend to focus on issues relating to behavior and development and religious factors are rarely addressed in their research. Why does the relationship between children and religion often go overlooked by theorists? From an historical perspective, one possible reason is that certain scholars believed that the subject of children was problematic to study because the public debates surrounding children were narrow in scope.[1] Among the many concerns about the study of children, public discussion often gravitates toward two issues: day care and the institution of marriage. Moreover, it is the nature of children and childhood and the consequences of their development that makes it increasingly difficult to avoid using the study of children for some ideological or political purpose, particularly, when it comes to certain issues surrounding marriage and family.[2]

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[1] Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 13.

[2] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Children and Religion in the Public Square: Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly," *The Journal of Religion*, 2006: 388.

Another important reason why the study of the relationship between children and religion has been marginalized stems from the fact that the academic study of religion is in the midst of an identity crisis. The academic study of religion, which exists outside of any particular religious tradition, is still a relatively new field that is building its reputation as an academic pursuit. One of the root causes of this "crisis" in the academic study of religion stems from the difficulty of trying to identify a working definition of religion. Religious Studies scholars debate working definitions of religion that can encompass the varieties of religious understandings that exist in academic discourse, without resorting to a Judeo-Christian model. This is important because Judeo-Christian models have often played a hegemonic role in dictating how scholars value and study religion as an academic discourse.

Jonathan Z. Smith has addressed this issue in detail and established a method of defining religion that underscores the mutability of meanings associated with the term "religion." First, according to Smith, religions are not only objects of classification, but also classifications within themselves.[3] Second, there are many different ways to define religion. For example, Smith cites a list by James H. Leuba, who outlined fifty different attempts to define religion, and concludes that religion can be defined, but "with greater or lesser success, more than fifty ways."[4] And one cannot mention the work of Smith without referencing his often quoted, but often controversial, idea that religion only exists in the mind of the scholar and has no existence outside of the academy.[5] Keeping these problems in mind, it is still important to provide an operational

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[3] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Classification." In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russel T. McCutcheon (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 38.

[4] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 281.

[5] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

definition of religion. Thus, I draw on Clifford Geertz's definition of religion to anchor my

analysis. According to Geertz, religion is

"(1) a system of symbols (2) which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[6]

Geertz's definition is advantageous to my analysis because it emphasizes the provisionality of

religious systems and, according to Kevin Schilbrack, Geertz's central thesis "continues to be a

fruitful way to understand an important aspect of religious beliefs and practices."[7]

Essay Structure

This essay structure unfolds in three parts. First, I draw on Fowler's influential text,

Stages of Faith Development (1981), to explain the various ways faith develops in the life of an

individual. Fowler's ideas of faith manage to provide an approach to the study of children and

religious education that centers on the experience of the child and the maturity process the child

needs to go through. He claims that faith refers to a holistic orientation concerned with an

individual's relatedness to the external world and their relationships with others.[8] Fowler's work

is important to my research because he manages to divorce "faith" from its traditional theological

context and expand its meaning to include developmental psychology. According to Fowler,

faith is not limited to the religious imagination, but has a definitive psychological meaning.[9] It is

precisely this psychological dimension of faith that I intend to utilize as a methodological lens to

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[6] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System." In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Fontana Press, 1993), 90.

[7] Kevin Schilbrack, "Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We Through with Geertz?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73, no.2 (2005), 429.

[8] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1981), 5.

[9] Ibid, 4.

view the development of religious education in children. While Fowler's viewpoint is not comprehensive, or without flaws, it strives for simplicity and as a result, is highly adaptable.

In the second part of the essay, I look at D.W. Winnicott's contribution to object-relations theory as represented in his classic work, *Playing and Reality* (1971). Winnicott has developed various influential theories that are useful to the contemporary study of the relationship between religion and children. While other object-relation theorists, such as Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn and Harry Guntrip have provided their own understanding of the psychology of religion, Winnicott's work stands out because of his concept of transitional phenomena. In general terms, transitional phenomena refers to a holding space between the self and external reality based in terms of their mutual "relationality."[10] This concept is important to the study of religious development in children because, according to Winnicott, transitional phenomena signify a position of separation between child and parent that is later replaced by religious ideation and emotion.[11] Moreover, Winnicott also developed a unique style of child-therapy revolving around the idea of play. According to Winnicott, play therapy presents an opportunity for both the child and therapist to construct a more "relational" environment that allows more freedom for the child to express him or herself in the security of the therapy session. I suggest that Winnicott's work provides a robust psychology that can help to explain the relationship between play, reality, and religion in the life of a child.

Finally, in the last section of the essay I critique the state of contemporary religious education by drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak and Paul Bramadat. Both Spivak and Bramadat suggest that an aesthetic understanding of education is required to cultivate a more comprehensive dialogue about the study of religion. Both scholars have conducted extensive

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[10] D.W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena – A Study of the First Not-Me Possession," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34 (1953): 89.
[11] Winnicott, "Transitional," 92.

work in the field of education and claim that an individual can benefit greatly from a religious education that focuses on social justice.[12] Following the observations of Spivak and Bramadat, I examine how their ideas regarding religious education can be utilized to develop a critical understanding of how certain social policies shape the relationship between children and education. Most significantly, in this section I suggest that the ideas of Fowler and Winnicott can be brought together in light of Bramadat and Spivak's critique, to realize the promise of an open-ended and child-centered approach to constructing meaning in religious education. Ultimately, my goal is to expand the dialogue between representatives of a revised conception of religious studies and current educators in order to develop pedagogies of religious education that are centered on a child's capacity for creativity.

James Fowler and Stages of Faith

James Fowler created the reference book for religious scholars known as *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (1981). In this work, Fowler examines the developmental conditions that shape the different stages of human life to explain how faith develops in the individual at each stage. However, Fowler's work is somewhat limited because his central concept, "faith," privileges a Eurocentric, Christian context. A new definition of faith is required in order to broaden its applicability for the contemporary study of children and religious education.

The term "faith" is derived from the Hebrew Bible and became associated with a Christian mindset through the work of medieval theologians.[13] Fowler managed to appropriate

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[12] It should be noted that in addition to being a University Professor at Columbia University, Spivak has spent 25 years providing education for children in rural India. She has been invited to NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) conferences to speak about her project about providing quality education to children in the rural areas. While Bramadat does not work specifically in education, his critiques of religious education were similar to that of Spivak. The similar critiques he provides is a fascinating coincidence considering the two work in different fields.

[13] John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion (*Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 23.

the term faith from the hands of theologians and apply it to the field of developmental psychology. Fowler focuses on its existential significance in reference to the universal process of 'being.'[14] In basic terms, Fowler's intention is to keep the definition of faith focused on the developmental processes of human psychology rather than religion. To understand Fowler's definition of faith requires a discussion of the work of the influential theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr.

Richard H. Niebuhr's Contribution to Fowler's Understanding of Faith

Niebuhr's outlines his understanding of faith in his work, *Faith on Earth* (1989). Niebuhr claims that every person has faith in something. Even those individuals who lack religious belief and are committed to the idea of rationality are still engaged in a "secular" form of faith. For example, Niebuhr stipulates that scientists have faith that their scientific method will still be applicable in the future.[15] Accordingly, Niebuhr claims that every person possesses a form of faith, regardless of his or her religious belief.[16] A difficult question that arises, however, is how to define faith in terms that can accommodate both its secular and religious meanings. For Niebur, the term faith is not meant to imply a *sui generis* belief in an omnipotent or omniscient God, as it has been deployed traditionally by Christian theologians. According to Niebuhr, the meaning of the term "faith" refers to a realm of inter-personal relationships that exist beyond the domain of any particular religious tradition.[17]

The first element in the structure of faith, according to Niebuhr, is the interaction of self and other persons, which begins in the act of believing in the authenticity of the "other."[18] The modern colloquialism of telling a person they have 'no faith' is a reference to someone who does

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[14] Ibid, 36.
[15] Richard H. Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), 12.
[16] Ibid, 16.
[17] Ibid, 16.
[18] Ibid, 46.

not trust that a situation will work according to the plans of another person. Whereas having

'faith in someone' is the assurance that a person is reliable. However, for this structure of faith

to exist in a relationship with another person, there needs to be a full understanding of the "self."

According to Niebuhr, the self has a social character and "it can know itself and be itself only as

it confronts another knower who knows the self."[19] Faith only takes root in an individual when

he or she is honest with himself or herself because honesty is the foundation for trust in a

relationship. Faith is shaped by a process of reciprocity, however, one cannot speak of faith as

simply the trust that appears, but must speak "to which trust is the response."[20] Children are

fearless and honest, both with themselves and with others, and quickly build trust if it is

positively reinforced by their environment. Since trust is the corner stone of the development of

faith, children become the role model for adults. Children are willing to build trust with anybody

so long as they are provided with a positive environment. However, children can easily lose trust

in others if they sense that the people they are dealing with are uncertain about themselves.[21]

This structure of faith works in a similar manner within a social community. The

community is dependent on the relationship between the self and the other, or based on what

Niebuhr refers to as the "I-Thou" relationship. The sustainability of a community in an "I-thou"

relationship is dependent on maintaining a sense of trust that responds to fidelity or its opposite:

a distrust responding to infidelity.[22] This is what gives meaning to the idea of a faith community,

which has been typically thought of as a community that subscribes to a religious belief. For

instance, in a traditional religious community, the I-thou relationship is based on a personal

relationship with God. In the Christian tradition, God signifies the "thou" to which people of the

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[19] Ibid, 47.
[20] Ibid, 47.
[21] Ibid, 49.
[22] Ibid, 50.

community build their trust. To remain a part of a faith community, individuals must participate

in this I-thou relationship, which cultivates a reciprocity of trust with God and each other. This

I-thou relationship becomes important in faith development theory because a lack of trust with

God, or others, is a common reason why people leave faith communities. Faith, in this regard, is

not situated solely in the individual. Rather, it is the inter-personal relationship among the faith

community working together in order to strive for some mode of consciousness that finds life to

be meaningful.

Fowler's Faith Development Model

Fowler takes Niebuhr's idea of faith and extends it to create a faith development model,

which some religious educators used as a guide for developing religious education curriculum.

Faith, according to Fowler, is understood as a human universal and can include, but is not limited

or identical to, religion as belief. Belief is one way of expressing and communicating faith, but

belief and faith are not the same thing.[23] A dilemma confronting the use of the term faith,

however, is whether it can ever be divorced from its Judeo-Christian heritage. Fowler presents

three working arguments in response to this issue of separating faith from belief. First, faith is a

dynamic pattern of personal trust towards a center of values. This expands Niebuhr's concept of

faith, which is based on an inter-personal relationship that provides a sense of trust and fidelity.

From this perspective, we tend to focus our lives on persons, causes, ideals or institutions that we

highly value.[24]

Second, faith also refers to a dynamic pattern of personal trust in certain images and

realities of power. The question remains as to what images of power and realities do we align

ourselves in order to feel secure in life? These images and realities of power began from the

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[23] James W. Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 99-100.
[24] Ibid, 100

moment of infancy and are constructed during the early years of childhood development. Object relations theory, as represented by the work of D.W. Winnicott, refers to these images and symbols as transitional objects and phenomenon. The images and realities of power constitute the internal world of a child, who looks towards these as a source of comfort, similar to the way in which a child grows attached to a blanket, teddy bear or doll.[25]

Finally, faith refers to a personal dynamic of trust towards a shared master narrative that is meant to give direction to our lives.[26] Fowler's understanding of faith presupposes that all human beings attempt to find meaning in their lives when he or she faces the reality of their own mortality. This extends beyond a mere religious understanding to an existential one and provides a more inclusive and "humanizing" framework that does not privilege the worldview and system of values that define any one particular religion. In other words, Fowler attempts to construct an existential concept of faith that can include, but is not limited to, religious belief.

Fowler categorizes the evolving process of faith into seven different stages. The pre-stages of faith occur at infancy, which Fowler calls "Undifferentiated Faith."[27] Faith in this context is composed of our first experience of "mutuality" with the external world. However, Fowler points out that there is a danger of sustaining faith if there is a failure to provide mutuality in either direction.[28] This is addressed in detail by psychoanalytic theory, specifically, object relations theory. For example, John McDargh, draws on Fowler's definition of faith and object relations theory to suggest that an infant's first relationship is shaped by fragmentary perceptions of the individual.[29] The infant then moves from a fragmented perception of reality to the realization that they are not the center of the external world. This is the moment when

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[25] Winnicott, "Transitional," 89.
[26] Fowler, *Weaving*, 101.
[27] Ibid, 119.
[28] Ibid, 121.
[29] McDargh, *Psychoanalytic,* 105.

images and symbols start to take hold in the child's worldview. At this stage of development,

faith begins to form when the child begins making associations with the symbols she trusts.

After this period of infancy, Fowler identifies the first stage of faith as occurring between

the ages of two and six.[30] Children during this period will use speech and symbolic

representation to organize the meaning of their sensory experience. They start piecing together

the symbols and language they have acquired through a process of enculturation to create their

own significant associations dealing with faith. Their thinking during this period is fluid and

forms the basis for the development of faith.[31] However, children at this age are unable to

conceptualize two different perspectives on one particular topic. For instance, children will view

someone breaking five glasses putting away dishes after dinner as far worse than someone

breaking a single glass while stealing a cookie. The child tends to focus on the act itself than the

intent of the act.[32] During this stage, Fowler also claims that faith is universal and applicable to

every child, regardless of the household where they are raised. Since religious symbols and

language are so widely present, Fowler concludes that virtually no child reaches school age

without having constructing an idea of religion, or an image of God.[33] This is a formative stage

of faith development for the child because in adulthood they must break down these images and

re-create them in light of their evolving formation of faith.

Criticisms against Fowler

While Fowler's faith development theory is foundational to future work in religious

education, there are some areas of critique that need to be addressed. For example, David

Heywood argues the efficacy of faith development theory depends on how people construct

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[30] Fowler, *Stages*, 123.
[31] Ibid, 123.
[32] Ibid, 125.
[33] Ibid, 129.

meaning for their lives in relation to the surrounding culture. Heywood claims that Fowler's

understanding of the development of faith is disingenuous because he overstates the importance

of culture at the expense of religion.[34] Moreover, in his attempt to provide a working definition

of faith that exists outside of religion, Fowler does not acknowledge that his work was designed

with religion in mind. Further, "the attempt to fit this complex pattern into six or seven stage

descriptions may in fact do violence to the manifold of the variety of the paths by which people

arrive at the meaning of their lives."[35] The same argument can be leveled against other theories

of stage development if the assumption is that the purpose of stage development is to present a

hierarchy in which an individual advances from one stage to the next. However, Fowler asserts

that a hierarchal model is not a mold into which everybody fits. Rather, stage development must

be situated on a horizontal plane where continuous transactions between different stages occur

throughout one's life and "it should never be the primary goal of religious education simply to

precipitate and encourage stage advancement."[36] In other words, paying attention to stage

advancements helps us create teaching methods that are malleable and more applicable to

changing contexts. Stated simply, the purpose of faith development theory is not religious

indoctrination, but to identify an individual's capacity to realize faith on his or her own terms.

Applying Fowler's Model to Education

There is an opportunity to revision Fowler's understanding of faith development to

address the unique needs of children without pushing a particular religious agenda. Current

educational practices for children acknowledge that the cultural symbols that shape a child's

worldview will eventually be challenged. It is at this point that faith can be utilized to reshape

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[34] Revd. Dr. David Heywood, "Faith Development Theory: A Case for Paradigm Change," *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 29, no. 3 (2008), 270.

[35] Ibid, 270.

[36] James W. Fowler, "Faith Development at 30: Naming the Challenges of Faith in a New Millennium." *The Journal of Religious Education* 99, no. 4 (2004), 417.

the meanings attributed to these early symbols. Rebuilding these symbols requires a maturity in faith, which is characterized by a new appreciation for imagination and the capacity to participate in a more fluid, magical type of thinking.[37] This mature form of faith offers a sense of stability in the face of life's many challenges. As Fowler states, "each of us in early childhood forms a 'script' – a kind of unconscious story that takes form in us before we are five years of age."[38] Faith shapes the way an individual realizes his or her personal script.

Primal faith occurs at infancy and signifies the earliest form of faith. The purpose of primal faith is to ease the infant separation from the parent, or "other," without undue anxiety or fear of the loss of self. This process of primal faith development, coupled with the findings of object relations theory, calls attention to the importance of the infant's first relationship with the extended world. Object relations theory suggests that a child uses a transitional object to soothe the separation process. John McDargh claims that we cannot fully understand what compels human beings to seek faith, without first understanding something about our relationship to transitional objects.[39] Although the relationships to transitional objects do not determine the course of faith, it provides a foundation for its development.[40] The integrity of an infant's sense of faith is secured by how he or she utilizes objects to navigate the world beyond them.

During the second period of faith development, the "intuitive projection stage," representations of objects take conscious form and are shaped by a child's experiences of their parents or other adults. If a child has a positive experience with her father and is then introduced to the idea of a creator God, the image and narrative of "God" will be reflective of the child's

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[37] Fowler, *Weaving*, 92.
[38] Ibid, 101.
[39] McDargh, *Psychoanalytic*, 17.
[40] Fowler, *Weaving*, 103.

image of her father.[41] Even if the child stops believing in God, during a moment of crisis, he or she could potentially turn to an earlier image of God as a way to mitigate the anxiety associated with the situation.[42] This period is crucial because they underscore both the positive and negative importance of forming lifelong orientations of faith.[43] It is also important to point out that parental figures play a vital role in structuring an infant's understanding of faith, but the culture also contributes to this process by valuing the reciprocity of trust.[44]

Examples of Fowler's faith development theory are seen in Catholic education in Canada. Traditionally used as a method for teaching ecclesial truths about the Catholic tradition, it has since evolved into identifying the faith stages of the individual, while using religion as a backdrop for the analysis.[45] This helps facilitate the process of faith, but it still does not provide symbols and images that are accessible to the worldview of the students. This presents a challenge for education, but the outcome is worthwhile, provided the focus is on putting the students at the center of the educational pedagogy. It involves making a privileged place for the faith development of children and attending to the capacities of the child in each stage of their growth.[46] Prior to a child's capacity to form an understanding of religious teachings, they apprehend those teachings through the images and practices of faith. Rather than trying to take abstract concepts conceived by theologians and finding ways to simplify it for children, engaging children in faith helps them to create and sustain their own appreciation for imagination, knowledge and moral development.[47]

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[41] Fowler, *Stages*, 140.
[42] Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 8.
[43] Fowler, *Weaving*, 103.
[44] Fowler, *Weaving*, 108.
[45] Examples can be found in Ontario Catholic Religion Curriculum posted at www.carfleo.org
[46] James W Fowler, "Faith Development at 30: Naming the Challenges of Faith in a New Millennium," *The Journal of Religious Education*, no. 4, 2004: 413.
[47] Ibid, 413.

It is not enough to merely give children symbols and teach them how to implement them in their own faith. According to Fowler, "true symbols have depths and breadth of meaning that spill over our interpretative categories and abilities. They grow in depth and richness as our abilities to interpret them develop."[48] Regardless of the source of these symbols, being able to convey the images in narrative, art, and ritual can awaken a spiritual imagination. A child's worldview is already primed for this type of imagination and building a strong foundation early can help bridge transitions into other phases of their life. Doing so will stimulate the growing child to claim a shared sense of identity in relation to the grand narrative of their lives. This does not reduce faith development to a tool designed to forcibly mature a child, but helps guide them through the process of faith maturation while still allowing them to be children. For those who embrace structural development theories, "they find that the scaffolding that the theory offers is also helpful in shaping the educational aims involved in teaching and exploring faith traditions."[49] It provides a good structure, as long as the fluidity of the stages are kept in mind; that is, a horizontal understanding of stages, not a hierarchal one.

A Survey of Psychoanalysis

Historically, the psychoanalytic study of religion has focused primarily on Western religious traditions. This is due to the fact that the array of fields that opened religious studies to interrogation by scholars working out of 'non-Western' worldviews were in their infancy by the time psychoanalytic theory gained prominence in the West. Thus, the initial interrogations of religion by Sigmund Freud are limited in scope, but laid the foundation for object relations theory, which provides a more inclusive framework for the psychoanalytic study of religion. Summarizing Freud's understanding of religion is not an easy task as his statements dealing with

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[48] Ibid, 414.
[49] Fowler, "Faith Development," 416.

religion are unsystematic and unevenly distributed throughout his writings. Perhaps his most

salient contribution to the study of religion lies with his application of the Oedipus complex.

According to Freud,

> "Psychoanalysis has made us familiar with the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God; it has shown us that a person God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father… Thus we recognize that the roots of the need for religion are in the paternal complex; the almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother, or rather as rivals and restorations of the young child's ideas of them."[50]

Though Freud refers to both the father and the mother in his conception of the God-image, his

work clearly privileges the role the father plays in the development process as key to

understanding religion.

The Limitations of Freud

There are several limitations in Freud's understanding of religion, especially when it

comes to the lived experience of children. There is little mention of the lived experience or idea

of religion in relation to the world view of the child in the work of Freud. Although a number of

psychoanalytic researchers have expanded Freud's analysis by examining a range of religious

phenomena, Freud remained interested in studying of the origins and functions of the image of

God in the life cycle of the adult.[51] Since Freud's study of the god-image, and religion for that

matter, is centered on the resolution of a boy's conflict with his father, this leaves out two

important people in society: the daughter and the mother.[52] Pursuing the logic of Freud's own

arguments, he also concludes that the female equivalent to the oedipal complex, penis envy,

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[50] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (Taylor & Francis, 1999), 85.
[51] McDargh, *Psychoanalytic*, 140.
[52] David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* (Massachusetts: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1997), 320.

generates a weaker form of morality and connection to civilization.[53] According to Naomi

Goldenberg, although Freud's contributions to the study of religion are still debated by scholars,

"his ideas about religion are usually not lauded as especially valuable components of his life's

work."[54] This puts a significant strain on using Freudian psychoanalysis as the primary method

for the study of religion and children.

A close contemporary of Freud, who is also another significant figure in the

psychoanalytic tradition and worth mentioning in the scope of this study, is Carl Jung. Although

his work is contrasted with Freud, the two share many assumptions about psychology and

religion. Specifically, Jung suggests that religion resides in the collective unconscious and

manifests as a form of projection.[55] The mind for Jung consisted of archetypes, which he spent a

great deal of his work describing and differentiating from one another. Briefly, archetypes are

forms without content that represent the possibility and readiness to produce perceptions, actions

and mythical ideas.[56]

Certain feminist theorists initially embraced Jung's theories about religion because he

tended to place a high value on female images and symbols, which challenged stereotyped

understandings of gender.[57] However, more recent feminist scholarship maintains that Jung's

concept of the archetypes is plagued by assumptions of female inferiority and devalued

embodiment. Thus, while Jung's ideas of projection and archetypes could be useful in

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[53] Diane Jonte-Pace, "Analysts, Critics, and Inclusivists: Feminist Voices in the Psychology of Religion," *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain* (2001): 130.

[54] Naomi Goldenberg, "The Relevance of Melanie Klein's Work to the Psychology of Religion," Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 2004.

[55] Stewart Elliott Guthrie, "Projection," In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russel T. McCutcheon (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 234.

[56] Wulff, *Psychology*, 427.

[57] Jonte-Pace, "Analysts," 135.

understanding children's relationship to religion, they perpetuate an androcentric model of female inferiority.[58]

Object Relations Theory

In light of the shortcomings of Freud and Jung's work, psychoanalytic theory developed a new theory of analysis that offers a more comprehensive view on the individual, while acknowledging the valuable role of both genders and their equal contribution to the understanding of religion. Object relations theory opens up the field of psychoanalytic theory to include the modes of understanding absent in Freud's original thinking; specifically, it focuses on the relationship with the mother and not the father.[59] It is also a field that can be used across a number of theoretical frameworks that focus on the individual and their relationships. This includes such fields as feminist theory, post-colonialism, post-structuralism and, in line with this essay, developmental psychology and religion. In general terms, object relations theory focuses on the individual and their relation to an object, highlighting how an individual makes a transition from a relationship centered on the mother to a relationship with the world. The term "object" in object relations theory is malleable and can refer to an image of one's mother or father, or a part of a person, such as a mother's breast. The following discussion outlines the contributions of various theorists. I suggest that each of these theorists played an important role in developing a psychoanalytic concept of child psychology that culminates with the work of D.W. Winnicott.

The important role that the parental figure plays in the development of religious ideation was proposed before the emergence of the object-relations theory. The Norwegian psychologist, Harald Schjelderup and his brother Kristian, identified three main forms of religious experience:

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[58] Wulff, *Psychology*, 455.
[59] Wulff, *Psychology*, 321.

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father religion, mother religion and self-religion – all corresponding to three different stages of childhood development.[60] Their work allowed psychoanalytic theorists to extend the study religion beyond western traditions, and the God the father motif, and apply it to the variety of religious experiences in the world. Foreshadowing the views of object relation theory, the Schjelderup's claim that, "the mother motif plays an equally if not more important role in the religious attitude."[61]

Object relations theory is a distinct school of thought within psychoanalytic theory and involves a revision of Freud's original work. In contrast to Freud, object relations theory focuses on the *pre*-oedipal stage, which places the emphasis on development with the child's first relationship with the mother. It also emphasizes the interrelatedness of human beings and the significance of objects in human development (Jonte-Pace 2001, Wulf 1996). Object relations theorists such as Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, Donald Winnicott, Harry Guntrip and Heinz Kohut argue that this pre-oedipal period is crucial to the development of a subject's sense of self, a sense of other, and the capacity for morals and ethics.[62] The early relationships that form during this pre-Oedipal period are internalized by the infant and remain in the unconscious mind throughout their life. For instance, an adult who is consistently suspicious against authority figures might be viewing them through a template of his or her frustrations with the mother as an infant. Perhaps the mother was not always available at every beck and call of the child and this caused a sense of frustration that shaped how he or she responds to authority figures as an adult. Otto Kernberg, offers this description of the approach:

> "In broadest terms, psychoanalytic object-relations theory represents the psychoanalytic
> study of the nature and origins of interpersonal relations, and of the nature and origins of
> intrapsychic structures deriving from, fixating, modifying and reactivating past

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[60] Wulff, *Psychology*, 321.
[61] Wulff, *Psychology*, 321.
[62] Jonte-Pace, "Analysts," 136.

internalized relations with others in the context of present interpersonal relationships. Psychoanalytic object-relations theory focuses upon the internalization of interpersonal relations, their contribution to normal and pathological ego and superego developments, and the mutual influences of intrapsychic and interpersonal object-relations."[63]

A question that immediately arises is if the focus is on relationships with other persons, why use the term object-relations? According to McDargh, "the term is a technical one original to Freud that has become fixed in psychoanalytic discourse… and therefore useful for communication within the discipline."[64] It points towards the infant's first relationship as being with only fragmentary perceptions of the person, primarily the mother's breast and eyes. It is precisely as these parts become identified and consolidated with the child's experience that a relationship with the whole person can become a reality.[65] It is misleading to view object-relations as static images that are fixed on the individual. Rather, it refers to a continual dynamic, affective relationship that impacts an individual throughout his or her life. This dynamic process makes object relations theory useful to the study of children because it does not assume a strict ordering of developmental processes, that is, it adopts a fluid method that can adapt to the complexities of each individual.

One of the first trailblazers in the field of object-relations theory is the Vienna born analyst Melanie Klein (1886-1960). Her approach to the field of object relations theory and contribution to psychoanalysis has created its own following, drawing upon a classic analytic model between therapist and patient. While Klein was sympathetic to the approach of "classical" Freudian psychoanalysis, she understood the idea of self-hood as developing much earlier than Freud. In contrast to Freud, Klein focuses primarily on the pre-oedipal development of the child, but the development of the psyche does not derive from a phallic-centered economy.

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[63] Otto Kernberg, *Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psyhoanalysis* (New York: Aronson, 1976), 56.
[64] McDargh, *Psychoanalytic*, 18.
[65] Ibid, 18.

Klein believes that an individual's relationship with his or her mother's breast signifies our first encounter with life and thus it is this relationship with the object of the mother that plays the most pivotal role in shaping the psyche.[66] At the beginning stages of life an infant is immersed in a narcissistic mode of being and their impression of the world is based on their ability to attain self-gratification. If an infant does not receive the breast when he or she cries out, they become frustrated and this anxiety causes them to divide good and bad objects in their psyche. As a result, according to Klein, the ground of our being is based on ambivalence.[67]

For Klein, the mind is structured as two mental positions: the "paranoid schizoid" and "the depressive." The paranoid schizoid position is derived from an internalized sense of persecutory anxiety and is characterized by a tendency to split things apart in a move to safeguard our internalized objects from damage. However, there comes a point in the process of development in which a subject realizes that an object can possess both good and bad qualities. This is the point that Klein describes as ego maturity, which is the goal of being.[68] The depressive position motivates an individual desire for reparation during the maturation process, but it is the modes of ideation and emotion associated with the paranoid schizoid position that most often shapes our understanding of religion. One of the key concepts informing Klein's understanding of religion and its relation to the paranoid schizoid is phantasy. According to Klein, phantasy is a constant and unavoidable accompaniment of real experiences. Phantasies are prime motivators and important forces for development. Klein expresses a concern that religious instruction can hinder a child's development and that notions of religion can shatter a child's reality to the point where the child does not reject something that is unreal.[69] There is a

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[66] Randall Klein, *Object Relations and the Family Process* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 27.
[67] Wulff, *Psychology*, 330.
[68] Klein, *Object*, 41.
[69] Goldenberg, "Relevance," 2004.

concern that a child who is unprepared for an introduction to religion can never be divested from such modes of thinking. However, every infant builds up a world of internal objects that interact with the ego and other objects. The child must find a means to build these objects and interact with them while still maintaining his or her autonomy. Further, when objects cause anxiety, there needs to be a method to interrogate them and relieve that anxiety.

Ronald Fairbairn (1889-1964) is another important contributor to the field of object relations theory who address the study of religion in a much more positive fashion than Klein. Fairbairn abandons the drive theory first postulated by Freud (and later expanded upon by Klein) and suggests that the inner object world is derived from external objects that have proven unsatisfactory. Fairbairn also has a positive view on religion and recognizes "the influence of religion has played a much greater and more important part than any other influence in the development of culture and the advance of civilization."[70] He suggests that religious symbolism and language presents a clearer expression of psychological insight because it looks for the source of the religious need. The patient internalizes both good and bad objects and it is the task of the psychotherapist to release the patient from bad objects.

Drawing on the work of Fairbairn, Harry Guntrip (1901-1975) attempts to extend object-relations theory approach to the study of religion by promoting a personal wholeness through satisfactory object relations. Guntrip understands religion as having a therapeutic goal and as a way of enhancing our experience of life and our relationships. According to Guntrip, relationality is at the heart of human existence and the need to cultivate healthy relationships, especially during childhood, are often met with a sense of inadequacy that foster a persistent state of anxiety. The clinical applications of Guntrip's study of religion focuses on the individual's yearning for salvation from the negative impact of bad object relations. David M.

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[70] W.R.D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 188.

Wulff summarizes Guntrips views by explaining that with the attainment of mature dependence, one experiences communion with others and with the "Ultimate."[71] Guntrip's understanding is useful in tracing the trajectory of the relationship between psychoanalysis and children because his concept of the mature adult is aimed at teaching religion in a manner that fosters the growth of a "true self" that is not subordinate to external authority. While all these theorists have something to contribute to the field of object relations theory, their theories do not easily lend themselves to developing models of education for children and religion. Drawing on the work of the mentioned theorists, D.W. Winnicott, developed the idea of transitional objects and transitional phenomena. These two ideas, alongside his development of play therapy, provide a positive framework that can be used to examine the relationship between children and religion in order to provide a form of education that centers on the child's developmental processes.

D. W. Winnicott

Although Winnicott rarely addresses the study of religion in detail, his ideas about the transitional phenomena have contributed greatly to broadening the scope of the psychology of religion. Winnicott's views about religion tend to be favored over Sigmund Freud's treatment of the subject for two reasons. First, Winnicott frames religion as valuable source of cultural expression. Second, similar to the spheres of art and science, Winnicott recognizes religion as a domain of human experience that makes life feel worthwhile.[72] In contrast to Freud, who tends to criticize religion because of its illusory qualities, Winnicott interprets these illusory qualities as both necessary and comforting. It is precisely this positive interpretation of certain "religious" qualities that makes Winnicott's work so appealing to psychological theorists who are

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[71] Wulff, *Psychology*, 388.

[72] Goldenberg, "Relevance," 2004.

sympathetic towards religion.[73] It is this sympathetic aim that makes Winnicott's understanding

of object relations theory beneficial to the contemporary study of religion, children and

education. In particular, his clinical practice of utilizing "play" as a means to communicate with

children offers an advantage over traditional analytical methodologies and will be addressed in

the following case study.

Case Study (Anne Costello Galligan)[74]

The case study involves a nine year old girl named Lena who demonstrates certain

negative behaviours, such as lying, stealing, opposing authority and destroying other people's

property, which is symptomatic of abandonment and abuse. Her mother abandoned Lena at

infancy and she was forced her to live with a maternal aunt. She was encouraged to participate

in play therapy to see if it would help rectify her negative behaviour. Once Lena was situated in

the protective atmosphere of the playroom she was eventually able to develop enough trust in her

therapist to reveal that she was a victim of parental abuse. The unsafe conditions of Lena's life

at home precluded any opportunities for her to play since her energies were focused on

survival.[75] With more freedom to play in her therapy sessions Lena began to show improvement

in her behavior and emotional state. Moreover, she was also able to use increasingly more

complex play activities, such as imagery, metaphor and storytelling, as a means of

communicating her experiences. At the end of her therapy sessions, Lena demonstrated her

renewed ability for creativity and began to reclaim portions of her childhood that she lost by

indulging her imagination and internalizing the therapeutic desire to play.[76] Most significantly,

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Anne Costello Galligan, "That Place Where We Live: The Discovery of the Self Through Creative Play
   Experience," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 13, no.4, 2000:173-174.

[75] Ibid, 174.

[76] Ibid, 174.

by developing a positive attitude of trust towards others she was able to benefit from her engagement in the transitional process, or what Winnicott refers to as transitional phenomena.

Transitional Phenomena

Transitional phenomena refer to a continual process of ego-maturation that begins before an infant is even born. During the last few months of pregnancy and the first few weeks after birth, the mother becomes pre-occupied with the state of her unborn child. Her entire focus revolves around the infant in order to ensure a secure environment of food, shelter and nurturing care. The hyper-attentiveness at this stage creates an environment in which the infant experiences itself as "omnipotent" and the "creator" of his or her environment.[77] The infant learns that she is the centre of focus and the mother is there to meet her every need. This becomes the beginning of the infant's journey into the external realities of life, which is characterized by the narcissistic illusion that he or she is the creator of his or her own reality. When the infant cries, the mother provides instant attention. However, if the illusion is prolonged, the infant is ill prepared to deal with the harsh realities of the external world.[78] An infant's sense of autonomy emerges when he or she moves to separate from the mother, which is a source of profound anxiety for the infant.

This separation process in which the infant moves toward an external reality beyond his or her own ego is a transitional space. It is a space, or phenomenon, which never disappears, but acts as an internalized safe haven against anxiety. The transition to an external reality requires the following procedure: a moment of illusion, a good enough holding environment, a time of disillusionment, an intermediate area in which one can play, and the growing ability to

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[77] Stephen Parker, "Winnicott's Object Relations Theory and the Work of the Holy Spirit," Journal of Psychology and Theology 36, no. 4 (2008): 286.
[78] Ibid, 287.

symbolize.[79] Problems can arise when any of these elements are not sufficiently present, as demonstrated by the case of Lena. According to Winnicott, "it is assumed that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.)."[80] In other words, religion acts as a vital part of the person because this transition process is on-going and religion can act as the intermediary between fantasy and reality.

Winnicott claims that transitional phenomena refer to a unique quality of experiencing both internal and external reality that is always present in the development of an individual's life.[81] This unique quality of experiencing reality signifies the creative aptitude of an individual, which requires him or her to invite the participation of an "other." In the case study, Lena had to invite the analyst to participate in her reality otherwise there would be no opportunity for therapy to occur. Winnicott suggests that playing is an ideal method of cultivating an invitation to communicate the "illusionary" (play) quality of reality and it is this act of communication that serves as the foundation for the therapeutic process. In contrast, Freud claims that the idea of illusion was detrimental to the therapeutic process and maintained a critical view about religion because he believed that religious ideation helps to support the space of illusion.[82] In Freud's concept of temporal progression, the individual moves from the self toward a self that is separate from the world. Winnicott's theory corresponds to this progression, in which the external object is both independent and real, yet conditioned and animated by the ego of the child.[83] In

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[79] Ibid, 288.
[80] Winnicott, "Transitional," 96.
[81] Volney Gay, "Winnicott's Contribution to Religious Studies: The Resurrection of the Culture Hero," *Journal of the Academy of Religion* 51, no. 3 (1983): 379.
[82] Ibid, 380.
[83] Ibid, 382.

Winnicott's view, there is no separation between the self and the other because there is a constant need to return to a safe holding environment.

According to Winnicott, life is mediated by transitional phenomena.[84] One's own life is experienced in this transitional space as a result of taking two distinct realities and merging them together into a single creative outlet. One becomes the creator of his or her own world as a result of continuous navigation between the world, the self, and one's encounter with external reality. All experience is marked by the subjective perception of the individual because what is objectively perceived is subjectively conceived. This is a continual paradox in which objective reality is mediated by one's experience and perception, but there can be no experience unless there is an objective reality to encounter.[85] Since an experience of an event is largely shaped by the individual's perception, two people can witness an event and have entirely different experiences.

Religion has a part to play in this conception of reality because religious rituals and symbols contribute to shaping the experience of reality. For example, the role of adult baptism in Christian symbolism is to convert someone into the Christian religion. The ritual involves a submersion into water after agreeing to the tenets of the religion. The symbolism involved, including an authority figure and textual references, give the participant the perception that being submerged into water is more than a mundane task. However, the environmental function of the transitional phenomena is holding, handling and object presenting.[86] It is a holding environment for the person and the place where reality is handled. It is the place where objects are presented and manifested into external realities. In the instance of Christian baptism, the water represents the holding environment, the authority figure represents the object handling and the scripture

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[84] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 64.
[85] Ibid, 71.
[86] Ibid, 111.

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represents the object presenting. By giving authority to these objects, they create a reality in which a transitional phase is occurring in the initiate's life.

There is a wide range of phenomena whose shared identity revolves around their relation to transitional space. The phenomena emerge and retain a unique style of experiencing and engaging reality.[87] Winnicott is referring to a unique quality of experiencing that pertains exactly to this transitional space. Parents provide a way of experiencing reality which does not require the child to become "objective."[88] The child is presented with an external reality, in which the child has become a co-creator with the guidance and symbols presented by the parents. The child is permitted to live their own subjective reality because that is what the parents expect. However, there is a certain domain of experience in which one retains a style that is entirely objective, namely, the transitional space.[89] This is an on-going process in which the person lives within the transitional space because that is where he or she locates their identity. This identity is a construction of the subjective and external realities brought together through learned processes and experiences; which is the fundamental category in Winnicott's analysis as it stretches beyond transitional phenomena and into an intermediate area of experience.[90] This is an area of illusion and it provides a relief from the strain that is required to retain the inter-subjective orientation. The individual develops and retains a capacity to engage with reality by mediating this illusory world.[91] This process is a crucial part of an individual's identity because this is where creativity occurs. This illusory world soothes the individual and signifies the source of art, religion and other dimensions of human creativity and culture. Understanding

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[87] Chris Schlauch, "Illustrating Two Complementary Enterprises at the Interface of Psychology and Religion Through Reading Winnicott." *Pastoral Psychology* 39, no. 1 (1990): 50.

[88] Ibid, 54.

[89] Ibid, 54.

[90] Ibid, 55.

[91] Ibid, 55.

objective reality and one's self is a result from the interaction of "self" and "other" in this relational space. It is a process that begins at infancy and continues throughout one's life.[92] The importance of the transitional space is tied to another concept that Winnicott refers to as a transitional object.

Transitional Objects

The transitional object is an object that a child creates in order to soothe the process of transitioning between their internal desires and the external demands of reality. This object could be a childhood toy such as a teddy bear, blanket, or doll, but that is not always the case. Simply put, the purpose of these objects is to act as a bridge between the world of illusion and objective reality. According to Winnicott, there are six characteristics that an object needs to retain in order to help this transition:

> "1. The infant assumes rights over the object, and we agree to this assumption.
> 2. The object is affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.
> 3. It must never change, unless by the infant.
> 4. It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating, and, if it be a feature, pure aggression.
> 5. Yet it must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own.
> 6. It comes from without our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination."[93]

A child who cannot sleep without an object, such as a teddy bear, but spends all day thrashing it while playing, has effectively created a transitional object. The child may have the option of playing with several objects, but takes ownership of one particular object to facilitate the transitional process. The object is not an internal object - it is a possession, like a teddy bear, blanket, or particular toy the child needs to fall asleep. The transitional object is never under

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[92] Galligan, "That Place," 172.
[93] Winnicott, "Transitional," 91.

magical control like the internal object, nor is it outside control as the real mother, or parent.[94] It

is an object under direct control by the child and used by the child in order to facilitate the

transition process.

Certain parameters must be in place prior to the object actually being used by the child.

First, the object must be part of a shared reality.[95] The object must not be an internalized object,

or hallucination, but part of an external reality that relates to both the parent and the child. Both

the parent and child must be able to share the same object, but that does not imply they both

project the same subjective meaning onto the object itself. As outlined in my discussion of

transitional space, the parent and child will have two different experiences of an object. While

they can both approach the object, a teddy bear for instance, it is the child who takes control of it.

However, in order to use the object, the child must have developed a capacity to use it.[96] It is not

enough that the child attains ownership of the object; he or she must be familiar with the object

until it becomes part of their reality. A child who sleeps with the same blanket every night will

eventually become familiar with the blanket and will start to use it as a transitional object.

Winnicott outlines five steps that are necessary in order for a subject to use an object:

1. Subject relates to object.
2. Object is in process of being found instead of placed by the subject in the world.
3. Subject destroys object.
4. Object survives destruction.
5. Subject can use object.[97]

The first two steps have already been described, but the third to fifth steps need to be understood

as transitional steps for a transitional object to be created in the internal world.

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[94] Ibid, 94.
[95] Winnicott, *Playing*, 88.
[96] Ibid, 89.
[97] Ibid, 94.

Destroying an object does not require a physical action, such as tearing apart a teddy bear, but destroying the symbolism of the object as it is presented to the internal reality of the child. While the object is being destroyed, however, it must also hold up to the physical punishment that the child imposes upon it. The object must be able to handle the aggressiveness of the child and be able to withstand the illusionary terror of the transitional period. The child will be repeatedly aggressive to the object: throwing it, yelling at it, dragging it in the mud and only when the object survives this behaviour will the child use the object as a bridge to their inner reality. The importance of this transitional object is its ability to reveal the underlying intermediate area of how the subject is experiencing reality.[98]

The use of the transitional object becomes a key in understanding the world of the transitional phenomenon of the child. Objects in the child's world have the ability to bridge the gap between the child's fantasy world and the external world.[99] Just as the teddy bear or blanket soothes the child during unfamiliar situations, the transitional object becomes part of the process in moving from the internal world to the external world. Transitional objects assist the child in its movement from being "merged" with the mother to becoming a separate individual through its ability to allay anxiety.[100] The transitional object becomes a source of comfort and entry point into their inner reality, or illusory world, of the child during points of transition. It is important to note that, much like the transitional phenomena, the transitional object does not disappear in adulthood, but is replaced. However, the transition from object relating to object usage is complex and involves the child's growing ability to integrate his or her positive and negative experiences of both self and other.[101] The child is continuously developing a sense of

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[98] Schlauch, "Illustrating," 51.
[99] Parker, "Winnicott's," 287.
[100] Ibid, 287.
[101] Ibid, 288.

autonomy and trying to accommodate the positive and negative experiences of his or her own life, which can cause confusion and anxiety. This confusion and anxiety causes the child to be aggressive towards the object, perpetuating the next stage of the transition process. The object's survival of this process indicates that it possesses a reality that is different from the child's fantasies about the object and is now available for a different kind of relationship.[102] The relationship shifts as the subject begins to take on different experiences and make sense of them according to his or her inner reality.

The ability to navigate the external world is paramount to the survival of the individual. The loss of coping mechanisms can lead to problems that manifest in childhood and continue to develop throughout one's life. In the case of Lena, she had little opportunity for creativity because her world revolved around survival. Taking ownership of a transitional object during her therapy sessions allowed Lena to mediate her internal and external reality and resolve the on-going issues. According to Freud, the ego cannot continuously bear the tension of living in a world of objects and other entities which frustrate it.[103] Having one object to rely upon and trust soothes the ego and prevents it from delivering undue anxiety to the subject. Since the individual creates the transitional object, the object becomes a comforting tool and allows the possibility to escape from other objects, or external realities. Transitional objects are created by an child to build an illusion and represent ideas what will always be important to the child.[104] The objects may change over time, but will be replaced by another object of the individual's creation. Since the object has become a source of comfort in helping to navigate the inner and external reality, it is prized over any other object in the individual's experiences. As the transitional object loses its meaning, the individual begins to accommodate to reality, even

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[102] Ibid, 288.
[103] Gay, "Winnicott's," 379.
[104] Galligan, "That Place," 170.

though acceptance of that reality is never fully accomplished – thus, the object ultimately serves a transformational function.[105]

The Relationship to Religion

Winnicott did not write extensively on the subject of religion. However, his psychological ideas lend themselves to the study of religious discourse because the personal and cultural meanings associated with certain religious ideas and practices appear to conform to his ideas of transitional phenomena and transitional objects. While the connection to religion may not be dominant for a child, the child's connections to transitional objects can anticipate the relationship that he or she may have with religion. I suggest that by seeking to understand this relationship from the perspective of the child, we can develop a model of education that can more accurately reflect a child's experience of reality. Winnicott's theories are helpful in this regard because the transitional object calls attention to the vital role that the inner reality of the child plays in his or her development.

Winnicott considered the transitional space the source of creativity for humanity. His direct commentary on religion is addressed in light of what religion is and what function it serves. The transition in human thinking, according to Winnicott, occurs after we have left the infancy stage. In referencing Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1937), Winnicott points to monotheism as a point in human history when humans never found certainty.[106] It would no longer be useful for humanity to associate itself with a need to worship a deity because these early periods of religious worship did not allow men and women to be integrated into time and space and live creatively. Just as the individual begins the process of transition, humanity experiences the same transitional process.

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[105] Ibid, 171.
[106] Winnicott, *Playing*, 70.

Rather than elaborate on religion, Winnicott focused more on the idea of culture. Cultural experience for Winnicott occurs in the transitional space of the individual. From this perspective, religion is not an external reality, or identified with the internal reality of the self, but is located in the space between the two. The use of this space for each individual is determined by life experiences that take place at the early stages of the individual's development. A child has intense experiences in the potential space between the subjective object and the objectively perceived reality. In Winnicott's words, "this potential space is at the interplay between there being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control."[107] The initial experience with the mother shapes the environment in which the child begins to formulate their subjective reality. The mother needs to create a good enough holding environment for the child that helps facilitate this transition from the inner to external world. Every child has their own favourable or unfavourable experiences that dictate their level of dependence on the object of the mother. The potential space happens only in relation to a feeling of confidence on the part of the child, which is directly related to the dependability of the mother and her confidence on being dependable.[108] This relationship is crucial for cultivating a child's sense of confidence and acceptance of reality.

Generally speaking, Winnicott's ideas can be interpreted in two different ways: either as a psychology of religion or a psychology functioning as religion.[109] Understanding the religion of Winnicott's psychology contributes to understanding how and why his concepts are so applicable to the psychological study of religion. While there are points of Winnicott's ideas that lend themselves to the study of religion, they should not be taken as Winnicott's complete understanding of the subject. According to Chris Schlauch, Winnicott's psychology functions as

[107] Ibid, 100.
[108] Ibid, 100.
[109] Schlauch, "Illustrating," 48.

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a psychology that resembles the logical form of religion, but Winnicott did not set out to write a theology and he did not develop a theory of God.[110] The 'God-representation,' which dominated the religious ideologies during the time of Winnicott, is not sufficient in explaining the variety of religious experiences; however, it serves as a starting point to the discussion. According to Schulach, the God-representation functions as a transitional object. In addition to what the child is taught, the child creates the representation of God in the transitional space.[111] Based on the experiences of the child, he or she begins to piece together fragmented ideas in order to create an understanding of cultural phenomenon.

In her book, *Birth of the Living God* (1979), Ana Maria Rizzuto sets out to explore the 'God-representation' in people who have both developed an idea of God and in those who did not. From her findings, she observed that the idea of God is a special type of object representation, or transitional object, created by the child in the transitional space.[112] God only exists in this transitional space and the image of God is real in the sense that the rest of the transitional space is real to the child. This highlights two different experiences of one external reality: the child's understanding of the God-representation and the understanding of his or her parent. God is located simultaneously outside, inside and at the border of this illusory world. The process of creating and finding God, this personalized representational object, never ceases in the course of human life.[113]

Rizzuto's conception of the God-representation underscores the theory of transitional object use that Winnicott defined in his work. The object of God can continually be broken and destroyed, transitioned into something else and used by the subject in order to facilitate the

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[110] Ibid, 59.
[111] Ibid, 56.
[112] Rizzuto, *The Birth*, 177.
[113] Ibid, 177.

transition from self to the other. In his work *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion* (1983) John McDargh examines the god-representation in detail to create a link between object relations theory and the study of religion. The concept of God as an omnipotent creator emerges in the life of the child when questions of causality and explanation are cognitively central and when the child begins to understand her own mortality.[114] This early understanding of God moves from an anthropomorphic view to an engagement with certain ideas that God symbolizes. While this approach draws attention to some important features of the total phenomena of human religiousness, it fails to grasp the psychological uniqueness and complexity of an individual's relationship with the God-representation. Children construct their own idea of religion and God and these internal ideas help to shape the way they value and relate to their religious traditions.[115]

The idea of religious experiences arises when a transitional space permits creativity and growth. For Freud, civilization is a necessary evil that induces neurotic conditions; whereas Winnicott claims that civilization, including religion, as an indispensable source of solace and hope, which prevents the ego from slipping into a state of schizoid terror.[116] From this perspective, religion is just as relevant to social and cultural development as any other human institution. The creation of all of human institutions, however, requires a form of interpretation and subjectivity, yet they retain a sense of objectivity in relation to our conventional sense of reality. The transition between objectivity and subjectivity is a necessary paradox. In his initial analysis of the ego, Freud claims that the ego's primary function is to attain both libidinal and narcissistic gratification and both of these aims are repetitious, symbolic, socially defined, and

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[114] McDargh, *Psychoanalytic*, 125.

[115] Ibid, 129.

[116] Gay, "Winnicott's," 372.

culturally elaborated; both modes of gratification are ritualized.[117] Certain religious practices

offers a repetitive and ritualized sense of gratification that can be characterized in terms that

resemble the meanings that Winnicott attributes to transitional objects and transitional

phenomena. As an institution, religion is an object that builds trust within an individual,

allowing him or her to use religion as an object to navigate external realities. It is also an object

that can be continually destroyed and rebuilt through subjective experience, allowing for an on-

going relationship. However, if an experience of religion is marked by negativity, this creates a

problem within the individual.

Play Therapy

Winnicott's work provides a framework for the development of certain forms of religious

education that can create a positive experience for children. The concepts of transitional

phenomena and transitional objects merge together in Winnicott's understanding of play therapy.

For Winnicott, the act of playing is natural to a child and comes as an easy form of therapy.

Psychotherapy, for Winnicott, consists of two people playing together: the therapist and the

patient.[118] Both the therapist and the patient have a role to play when they meet and a therapy

session is dependent on the two properly acting out their role. The act is similar to a stage

magician who entertains audiences. The magician is an actor, playing the part of a magician and

the audience is willing to suspend a belief in objective reality in order to accept that role.[119] In

the clinic, the patient must also accept the therapist's role and be willing to give themselves over

to the process. The patient's world of illusion takes the form of an agreed upon "objective"

reality that the therapist aims to validate. In order for the therapist to validate that reality, he or

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[117] Ibid, 386.

[118] Winnicott, *Playing*, 38.

[119] Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), 137.

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she must take part in the illusion. Children tend to respond positively to this type of therapy because their developmental processes are designed to permit magical thinking and accepting illusion as instrumental to the construction of our shared reality.

Playing is not wishing or thinking, but a continuous performance of self-expression. According to Winnicott, playing is universal and leads to a healthier sense of well-being.[120] Modern scholarship has begun to study the vital role play has in our understanding of human development. This scholarship and its practical applications can be seen in the works of play theorists such as Jane McGonigal, who design games specifically to improve lives and solve real world problems.[121] For Winnicott, the individual is most creative when he or she is playing.[122]

In using play as a form of therapy, the patient is afforded an opportunity to experience a state of creativity and, according to Winnicott, when creativity is hidden, the person does not care for life and death.[123] In the case study of Lena, an improvement in behaviour occurred once she tapped into her creativity while engaging in playing. Without creativity, there is no pursuit or passion and reality becomes a daily chore involving repetitive behaviours in order to carry the person from morning to night. The space of transitional play is also the place of culture.[124] While the act of playing extends beyond culture, the rules of play, is informed by and dictates culture. In playing, one can learn a child's perception of religion, while at the same time partaking in the illusory world and helping to inform that space. However, play is not oriented towards a finalized goal. It is a continuous process that is spontaneous and must never be forced, otherwise, it ceases to function as a "playful" act.

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[120] Ibid, 41.
[121] Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken*: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World, (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).
[122] Winnicott, *Playing*, 54.
[123] Ibid, 68.
[124] Gay, "Winnicott's," 386.

The space in which the act of play takes place is crucial in therapy. Play-space is believed to be more important than the interpretation of play, precisely because it relies on the child's creativity, rather than the demonstration of cleverness by the therapist in making an interpretation.[125] Playing must take place where children can be in control of both the situation and themselves, where no one can criticize or dictate the parameters of their private world. With the potential space left empty, the child is not only deprived and restless due to the inability to play, but also vulnerable.[126] However, it is necessary to tread carefully because bad objects can invade the play space and cause a traumatic experience. Further development would be impeded if the play space is associated with a traumatic event and the child would feel insecure and unprotected, having lost trust and confidence.[127] This occurred with Lena, who never had the opportunity to participate in a safe, free-form of play. Once the play-space was safely established, Lena managed to create good objects in her transitional space to help facilitate her creativity. It is the therapist's role to follow the child's lead at all times so the child will gain a sense of agency from the experience. The act of playing begins with the child and allows them to take the lead until they build enough confidence to permit the therapist to engage with their inner reality. The paradigm of the child leading the therapy session breaks the mold of learning about children and can be applied to religious education, which is limited by its tendency to privilege the experiences of adults over the experiences of children.[128]

Winnicott's understanding of transitional objects and transitional phenomena, and his play technique, can help to enhance the way we engage with the "reality" of religion. According to Winnicott, we acquire and retain a certain domain or world - an illusionistc world - that is

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[125] Galligan, "That Place," 171.
[126] Ibid, 172.
[127] Ibid, 172.
[128] Curriculum documents for Ontario Religion Courses can be found at www.carfleo.org

neither autistic nor realistic.[129] Winnicott views illusion as a positive aspect of development because illusion leads to the ability to play, and play is what allows for the emergence of culture, art and religion. From this perspective, religious experience can be creative and adaptive, rather than defensive.[130] As a result, religious experience does not need to be dictated to the child and the child will have the freedom to engage with religion in a way that allows them to create ideas they can trust and implement in their own life. Rather than religion acting as a point of conflict, or necessary navigation point between the self and external reality, it becomes one object among many that the child creates. However, Winnicott's theories are only applicable if there are models of education that allow for this creativity and also value the contributions of religion.

Children and Education

According to current scholars in the field, including Gayatri Spivak and Paul Bramadat, the importance of a religious education extends beyond learning the traditional history of the world religions. A curriculum that includes a religious education can provide the tools necessary for young people to critically engage with various social and cultural issues and create a "holistic" sense of self. Spivak is interested in constructing a method of education that focuses on issues surrounding social justice. The will for social justice is an idea that anyone, regardless of class, can identify with. This is important because it highlights the role social justice plays in shaping certain cultural ideas. If education focuses on issues relating to social justice, then it would become more difficult to challenge the way certain social justice issues shape public policy.

Spivak is university professor and she also teaches primary education in subaltern communities. As a teacher of literature and an activist, Spivak is convinced that the "pride of a

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[129] Schlauch, "Illustrating," 58.
[130] Parker, "Winnicott's," 290.

transcendental reality is a cultural need."[131] For Spivak, the logic of consistency is what binds

the world. Replicating the need for consistency across a variety of educational platforms, such

as elementary and university allows for a partnership and connection to others in a manner that

promotes social justice. In Cathy Caruth's interview with Spivak about the views of aesthetic

education, Spivak states the only way she can make the slightest difference for the future is

through teaching.[132] The future that Spivak speaks of is a singular, unverifiable future that is set

with complete uncertainty.[133]

Similar to Spivak, Bramadat values the subject of religious studies as a rich source of

insight in helping to cultivate "social capital." According to Bramadat, social capital refers to

the non-material wealth that accrues to a person as he or she matures and forms relationships in

the context of a well-defined group.[134] Being part of a religious group, or organization, gives a

person a community to belong to where he or she will not feel alienated from society. The

danger in downplaying religion as a serious subject of public discourse is that it could possibility

lead to the alienation of an entire religious community. This process of alienation results in

increased tension between religious groups and society.[135] Both Spivak and Bramadat share a

similar interest in calling attention to the important role that religious studies can play in

developing a wider appreciation for issues relating to education and social justice. I suggest that

the findings of Spivak and Bramadat can be integrated with Fowler and Winnicott's views about

children to create a model of religious education that is dedicated to fostering an aesthetic

appreciation of reality.

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[131] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Speaking for the Humanities," *Occasion: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2009): 3.

[132] Cathy Caruth, "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *PMLA* 125, no. 4 (2010): 1020.

[133] Ibid, 1021.

[134] Paul Bramadat, "Religion, Social Capital, and 'The Day that Changed the World,' "*Journal of International Migration and Integration* 6, no. 2 (2005): 203.

[135] Ibid, 212.

The Importance of an Aesthetic Education

Bok Young Kim, who analyzed the connection between Holistic Education and the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin, suggests that we can experience the aesthetic dimension of life only if the education system emphasizes our sense of being as an integrated whole.[136] Education that focuses on only educating fragmented parts of an individual is limited because it fails to make a connection between how an individual's sense of self is conditioned by the larger spectrum of human understanding. According to Kim, only an aesthetic education can help students achieve what is the ideal goal of all of education, namely, the growth of the whole person through responses to our total environment.[137]

Aesthetic education values both reason and imagination as an equal source of knowledge. In Spivak's case, the training of the imagination is carried out as an epistemological performance, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and critiquing the values of the status quo. In Spivak's words, "It is simply that without aesthetic education, in my sense, without training the imagination for epistemological performance, there is only stupid politics."[138] The philosophy of her thinking is expressed in her methodology, which provides training for this epistemological performance at the beginning of education. The earlier this process can begin, the easier it is for the person to develop a transitional space that is able to challenge and make sense of changing environments.

Why Education Needs Religious Studies

Religious studies can be used to engage an individual in current social, cultural, and political issues such as globalization, social justice, economics and environmental concerns.

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[136] Bok Young Kim, "Teilhard de Chardin and Holistic Education." *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education,* Eds. John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, Diana Denton, Deborah Orr, Isabella Kates. Albany: State University of New York Press, (2005), 83.

[137] Ibid, 84.

[138] Caruth, "Interview," 1024.

Restricting religious studies to a memorization of facts about religious beliefs in different cultures diminishes the full spectrum of what religion is and what it has to offer. However, in order to distance itself from a survey of beliefs and move towards a more robust cultural critique, the pedagogy of religious studies needs to support this new direction. This will be examined in closer detail after I outline the advantages of pursuing religious education in contemporary culture.

The globalization of society has put people in contact with each other at a closer proximity than any previous generation. With the influence of mass media, the rise of communication technologies, and the instant access to information, the effects of globalization are occurring at a rapid pace. Learning how to encounter and navigate through this connected world and communicating with people across cultures is a necessity. Religious Studies can assist in this process because it can enhance our understanding of the beliefs and practices of other cultures. Peter Beyer examines the privatization and public influence of religion, arguing that the globalization of society favours the privatization of religion. Moreover, he also suggests that the study of religion also provides fertile ground for a renewed discussion about the various ways public discourse influences our understanding of religion.[139] However, the general public tends to resist this move to discuss the relationship between religion and public policy when it comes to the issue of childhood education.

Danny Brock has written about teaching religion to teenagers based on his twenty years of experience as a high school religion teacher in British Columbia. He states that "knowing what the world religions believe is essential to becoming culturally and historically literate."[140] Brock's point is valuable, but must be qualified in light of the critiques of post-colonial theory.

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[139] Peter Beyer, "Privatization and the Public Influence of Religion in a Global Society," Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity. Ed. Mike Featherstone. London: Sage Publications, (1990): 373.
[140] Danny Brock, *Teaching Teens Religion* (Toronto: Novalis, 2009), 31.

For example, in her essay on postcolonial imagination, Kwok Pui-Lan stresses that Christianity continues to serve as the prototype of religion and the standard for evaluating other wisdom traditions.[141] She asks, "How do we deal with the fact that Western Christian theological discourse about religious difference is constructed in such a way as to justify a hierarchal ordering of religious traditions, which always puts Christianity at the top?"[142] This is part of the internal conflict within religious studies, one that can be mitigated by including an aesthetic component of education that challenges students to continuously critique worldviews that support the status quo.

Harold Coward suggests that a significant contribution can be made to public policy, both locally and internationally, if a new approach is taken within religious studies departments. Religious studies departments, and religious education in general, must venture into new territory that can build upon an inter-disciplinary approach that can bridge the gap between the classroom and the community.[143] To face the challenges of global problems, industry and governments expect solutions from scientists, non-governmental organizations and economists. However, radical changes in social behaviour are needed in order for such policies to systematically take effect.[144] It is a difficult task to change an individual's behaviour, especially if it is a cultural norm. Religion can play a role in helping change social behaviour because, according to Coward, religious ideas and practices are designed to transform people's lives.[145] Organized religions are becoming increasingly aware of the human potential for change. After all, this is what they advocate as a benefit to participating in their institutions.

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[141] Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Toronto and Montreal: Novalis Publishing, 2006), 189.
[142] Ibid, 205.
[143] Harold Coward, "The Contributions of Religious Studies to Public Policy," *Studies in Religion* 28, no. 4 (1999): 489.
[144] Ibid, 490.
[145] Ibid, 491.

Coward was conducting field research into public policy and fishing ethics when he gained first-hand knowledge about the various ways that privileged social classes cause damage to the environment. According to Coward's findings, it was the child who has the most, that is, "the first world child," that the world could least afford.[146] Richard Falk, professor emeritus of international law at Princeton, suggests that the great potential of religions is their ability to create certain social, economic and environmental norms and encourage individuals to apply them in their daily lives.[147] Religious institutions have an established language to communicate these norms directly to its followers. From this perspective, the problem of overconsumption for example, could be mitigated by persuading these religious institutions to raise awareness about this issue and encourage its followers consume less. The followers would feel that they are fulfilling an obligation to their religious tradition and to the world. Most significantly, religious organizations must be included in any discussion about the internationalization of public policy because they have the ability to mobilize people around the world more directly than any other societal institution.[148]

What Religions Accomplish on a Deeper Level

Whereas Coward examines how Religious Studies can be utilized to enhance public policy about overconsumption, social norms and the instrumental role educators can play in this process, Bramadat focuses on the relationship between religion and the psychological well-being of its followers. His particular study focused on the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), which refers to a group of Protestant undergraduates that have chapters on almost every

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146 Ibid, 493.
147 Ibid, 495.
148 Ibid, 495.

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university campus in North America.[149] However, while Bramadat's field research focused on this particular group, the findings of his research is relevant to the examination of any organized religious group that values social solidarity.

Bramadat claims that belonging to a religious group helps increase social capital. Recall that according to Bramdat, social capital refers to the non-material wealth that accrues to a person, but this term can also refer to social wealth that builds up within communities. In either case, social capital is designed to facilitate the resolution of problems. In relation to Coward's study of organized religion's capacity to mobilize people by translating policy, Bramadat's study demonstrates how the increased mobility of people can shore up social capital within a religious tradition. The advantage to this increased social capital is the transferable skills religious communities can offer to its followers. If a person is involved in their temple, mosque, or church community, and if he or she is a friendly and helpful person, he or she will gain important life skills that will be helpful in a non-religious context.[150] If that person feels a sense of solidarity while participating in their communities, it builds stronger social capital, which in turn leads to a stronger group.

The first expression of bonding within a religious group that leads to an increase in social capital occurs when a group shares a goal. When a religious group attains a shared goal, the individuals that compose the group tend to feel more at ease and are thus more apt to share this sense of bonding with members outside of their religious group.[151] However, when religious groups are confronted with an issue that threatens their survival, the individuals within the group will often view themselves in a marginalized position and this process of alienation can cause

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[149] This study can be found in his book, *The Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Student Group at a Secular University*.
[150] Bramadat, "Religion," 203.
[151] Ibid, 204.

conflict with the surrounding society. It is to this end that religious studies and an awareness of religious traditions become important in order to circumvent these social and cultural tensions. Although religion continues to play a major role in many local and global events, in Canadian provincial ministries of education, teaching students about world religions is considered optional and expendable.[152] The expendable nature of religious education classes are a detriment to understanding the impact of religion, which has influenced such social issues as immigration policies, city zoning regulations, health care, and a variety of distinctly non-private issues.[153]

There is still a movement in Canada to situate religion in a private domain and many religious groups continue to feel alienated from the rest of society. Bramadat states "because we deal religion episodically and in crisis rather than systematically and in times of stability, we deal with it poorly."[154] These poor dealings with religion stem from a view of social capital in Canadian schools that is motivated by certain political issues. However, the benefit of translating public policy into religious language outweighs the effort to convince people to read the language in a neutral manner. The importance of participating in an aesthetic education that builds social capital raises a critique that extends beyond the neutral language of public leaders.

Education is a reflection of cultural values and the inclusion and emphasis on building a solid religious studies education is beneficial because of the public influence religions have with its followers. It is not sufficient to put religion in the margins and only pay attention to it during extreme circumstances or when it is politically convenient. This type of marginalization leads to a greater societal divide in which public discourse neglects an important part of its cultural system. Spivak goes as far to say that even "those sanitized secularists who are hysterical at the mention of religion are quite out of touch with the world's peoples and have buried their heads in

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[152] Ibid, 207.
[153] Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Eds.), *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada* (Toronto: Pearson, 2005).
[154] Bramadat, "Religion," 207.

the sand."[155] Religious Studies offer a tremendous benefit to individuals in contact with religious institutions. However, it is not enough to merely add a religious studies programme to an educational institute and expect students to cultivate an appreciation for religion and how it functions in the world. There needs to be pedagogies of education that breaks from the dominator worldview and fosters creativity in the individual.

Towards a New Pedagogy of Religious Studies

The previous methods of education are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the current global climate. In order to implement religious studies as a serious pursuit of education, an examination of the fundamental goals of education are necessary. Riane Eisler defines three goals for contemporary education:

1. Helping children grow into healthy, caring, competent, self-realized adults.
2. Providing them with the knowledge and skills that can see them through the time of environmental, economic, and social upheavals.
3. Equipping them to create for themselves and future generations a sustainable future of greater personal, social, economic, and environmental responsibility and caring.[156]

The goals outlined above underscore the importance of responsibility and an education that is geared towards teaching the whole person. These goals also fit in line with an aesthetic education that Spivak advocates and the social capital outlined by Bramadat. According to Kim, "only in aesthetic education is the total person involved in the educative process, for only in formed aesthetic perceptions are the centers of sense, affectivity, conceptualization, and imagination brought to focus in a single experience."[157] To provide an aesthetic education to young people in this framework requires creativity from an educator's standpoint, and a

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[155] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Terror: A Speech After 9-11," Boundary 2 31, no. 2 (2004): 102.
[156] Riane Eisler, "Tomorrow's Children: Education for a Partnership World," *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education.* Eds. John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, Diana Denton, Deborah Orr, Isabella Kates. Albany: State University of New York Press, (2005): 48.
[157] Kim, "Teilhard," 84.

willingness to go beyond the traditional forms of education that are dictated by local governments and school boards.

Spivak maintains that the value of an aesthetic education needs to be instilled in young people when they are still in their formative years. The first step in this process begins with cultivating an understanding of the relationship between the public and private domains. While the strict distinction between public and private still holds in theory, the public and the private sectors often overlap.[158] This theory supports Winnicott's concept of transitional space. Both the internal and external realities are separate, but also overlap and influence each other. Between the public and the private, there needs to be a transitional space for young people where they can navigate the two. However, once this transitional space is established, there is no expectation that it will look similar internationally.[159] The education of young people in the context of an aesthetic education will not equate to an elimination of dominator worldviews, but will increase cultural awareness about the detrimental aspects of dominator hierarchies. No generation is born with redistributive assumptions and children need to be reared whereas adults need to be educated. In order to develop an adequate teaching pedagogy at the primary level requires humanities training on the higher level. This is important to Spivak because,

> "insofar as on the primary level a good education trains the imagination there also a humanities model is important. But the teaching of the humanities must be undertaken in a certain way for this hope to find fruit. One must cope with the fact that the humanities are not usually taught this way, anywhere."[160]

Essentially, Spivak wants to facilitate a shift away from models of education that focus strictly on fact based learning and memorization, to create a more aesthetic education that is designed to engage the imagination of the student.

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[158] Spivak, "Speaking," 4.
[159] Ibid, 4.
[160] Ibid, 5.

Putting the Aesthetic Together with Practice

Helping young people to apply their understanding of the world to gain a deeper knowledge of subjects, whether it is about religion, the humanities, or the effects of globalization, requires developing a capacity to know those subjects on a deep level. In order to know, one must be trained to construct an object of knowledge.[161] This training requires a transition from being a mere consumer of knowledge to a producer of knowledge. Spivak explains the electronic dissemination of knowledge does not require effort on the part of the individual to make connections, because the connections are already made. In contrast, an aesthetic education consists of making connections through inference, critical engagement and creativity. Spivak likens this process to wandering "in library stacks because you would see things that you hadn't thought about before."[162] In being located in a library, there is a physical connection to what is being studied, rather than a virtual distance. If there are no libraries, then the method would be to teach the mind to actively engage rather than being a passive collector of information. This requires an amount of creativity that cannot be taught, but must be developed from the early stages of childhood.

Religious Studies as a discipline fits in well with the methodological and theoretical framework of Spivak's aesthetic education and can serve as an example for other disciplines to follow. One of the advantages of Religious Studies is that it can accommodate an inter-disciplinary perspective and is open to different viewpoints.[163] This connects to Spivak's construction of knowledge through her library method, in which a person must be able to work through seemingly unrelated stacks in order to make connections with larger issues.

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[161] Cathy Caruth, "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," PMLA 125, no. 4 (2010): 1020.
[162] Ibid, 1021.
[163] Coward, "Contributions," 499.

In his case study about ethical fishing practices in the Maritimes, Coward draws on his knowledge of religious studies to demonstrate how his research team benefited from the practical and religious wisdom of the local community.[164] Since his team was focused on gaining knowledge from a variety of sources, he was able to provide a greater understanding of the problem. He goes on to explain that in his project, "oral knowledge of the wives of fisherman proved to be a better indicator of when the cod problem began, than did the data of fisheries scientists."[165] This is a shift away from placing the importance on only rationality and demonstrating how learning and understanding includes alternative sources of knowledge.

The Danger of Ignoring Religious Studies

Ignoring the importance of religion can cause societal harm on several levels, including, the individual's relationship within a group, the stability of the group itself, and the relationship the group has with others. It is difficult to dispute that fact that violence in the name of religion cannot be properly addressed if the subject of religion is marginalized from public discussion. The marginalizing of religion has consequences that can take on the form of alienation and a feeling of oppression by individuals involved in religious groups. Bramadat's study of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship discovered that the group they studied perceives the world as a literal battleground between God and Satan and one is either with them or against them in this cosmic battle.[166] This literal representation has been reinforced by the continuous marginalization and alienation of this group from society, forcing these students to develop a parallel social structure within the secular university system.[167] They are not the only group to have this experience and it is the individuals inside the groups who end up suffering the most

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[164] Ibid, 500.
[165] Ibid, 500.
[166] Bramadat, "Religion," 204.
[167] Ibid, 205.

because their sense of self-worth is contingent on the stability of the group. The intense feelings of alienation the members of these groups often experience represent a major problem for any society that promotes multiculturalism, such as Canada.[168]

The common perception that religion is too volatile to talk about in polite company is one of the first obstacles to overcome in generating public discussion about religion. There is a hesitation to approach religion in straightforward manner because of the false assumption that religion remains, or should remain, largely in the private sphere. The wisdom and knowledge religious groups have to offer public discussions are set to the side in lieu of public policies and language that are considered unbiased. To assume that traditions have nothing to contribute to contemporary public discussions represents a denial of historically powerful sources of wisdom and insight.[169] To continue to marginalize and alienate religious groups will increase the sense of oppression among its followers. Moreover, when religious people operating in a religious context are, or perceive themselves to be, oppressed, they will often employ religiously framed violence.[170]

The Combination of Fowler, Winnicott and Religious Education

Fowler's focus on the holistic development of the child, combined with Winnicott's emphasis on creativity and play, supports the findings of both Spivak and Bramadat. It has been established that studying religious education and participating in religious groups can benefit society by increasing social capital and providing an intermediary site of discourse between religious institutions and public policy. We must disregard traditional educational paradigms that do not focus on children and instead build their transitional space, which will enable them to easily navigate different sets of reality. In focusing on a holistic personal development that is

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[168] Ibid, 206.
[169] Ibid, 209.
[170] Ibid, 212.

centered on an aesthetic education, children will feel a deeper sense of belonging to the society that they will soon help to shape. The process is not designed to influence children towards a certain religious, or non-religious, bias, but to allow them to develop their own creative awareness and ability to identify with the "other." A more comprehensive understanding of the importance of transitional objects is one step towards this identification with the "other's" experience of reality.

There is also the possibility that a failure to promote creativity, wholeness, and an aesthetic attitude towards education may result in the complete dismissal of religion as a beneficial and valid source of knowledge. Religious awareness can help children learn to appreciate the worldview and values of other cultures. As already discussed, learning the variety of religious traditions offer insight into the history and context of different cultures from a global perspective. Using Fowler's concept of faith, there is an opportunity to develop this sensitivity towards religiosity without grounding it in a particular religious tradition, specifically Christianity as critiqued by Pui-Lan. This idea of religious education is not meant to prevent a child from choosing to join a religious group, but allowing a choice in the first place. Just as in the transitional space, if the child does not have the freedom to create and maneuver through their experiences, they will not develop a holistic sense of self.

The relationship between children, religion, and education is an important topic that requires further study. In this essay I attempted to add to the discussion by calling attention to the some of the alternative methodologies and pedagogies that are being developed by scholars who recognize the limitations of traditional forms of education. By interrogating the meaning of the word faith and using Fowler's faith development model as a guide to the development of children, there is an opportunity for children to take an active role in the creation of meaning.

Fowler's guide to development and the creation of meaning coincides with Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena. It is in the transition between internal and external reality where an individual discovers and develops a strong sense of creativity. Without the development of creativity, a child's development will resort to a primal state of survival. However, in order for a child to explore this creativity, there needs to be an environment that can facilitate the process.

Aesthetic education, as outlined by Spivak, provides an environment for children that enable them to create meaning in their own lives while critiquing the social atmosphere of their surrounding culture. Aesthetic education also has the added effect of boosting social capital, as defined by Bramadat, which allows religion to play a bigger role in the discussion of public policy. Most significantly, fostering the creativity of children is central to an aesthetic education as advocated by both Spivak and Bramadat. An aesthetic educational model recognizes that there needs to be a continuous re-visitation of the assumptions we have about children and a consistent testing of those assumptions for a more thorough understanding of how children respond to their environment. By adopting these principles we will discover that the relationship between children, religion, and education is an important pursuit that benefits both children and society.

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