

Vision has been an important theme in religious scripture (e.g., "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18) as well as the arts and literature (e.g., "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for" `Andrea del Sarto' by Robert Browning.) One's perspective on humankind's spiritual nature also impacts the dreams and goals one develops and how one pursues them.

Vision is also important for communities and nations and the educational systems that provide their foundation (Hiebert & Hiebert, 1993). For example, the importance of the vision of world peace cited in Isaiah is one that many Americans hold dear: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4).

Huddleston (1993) believes that our modern economic system [and the secular educational system that supports it] has a major deficiency in that it "...lacks a soul. It rests on the assumption that man differs from animals only because of his superior intelligence...there is an inexorable logic in the materialistic view that drives it towards a short-term perspective: `for tomorrow we die'. And yet vision has always been about the long-term perspective." (p. 144). He proposes that we look to the religious experience for a better vision since that has been our "main source of vision and ethical values down the ages." (p. 145) and cites five universal religious themes that can serve as the foundation for a global vision of human behavior and a global civilization:

An awareness of a spiritual dimension to life and existence as well as a material dimension.

A sense of the sacredness, interdependence and harmony of life.

A self-esteem that comes from the belief that man is the highest form of life, not simply because of his superior intelligence, but because he has a consciousness

of the
transcendental, and a spiritual side of his nature.

A recognition that the purpose of life is to nurture and develop the spiritual side of our nature; to cultivate the noble qualities: truthfulness, honesty, courage, reliability, compassion, courtesy, and so on.

An insistence on the fact that we are all Children of God--the human family (pp. 146-147).

Khavari (1999) provides a similar list on the basic features of religion and the importance of its inclusion in discussions of how we should live our lives: the claim that there is a Creator; the clear set of statements about right and wrong; the requirements for obedience to its teachings the promise of reward for the faithful and punishment for the rebellious; the emphasis on the heart and feelings, rather than the mind and reason (p. 42).

These views are very similar to those expressed by Ballou (1939, as cited in Norder, 1995) who states "...the religious need of man today is for something greater than the dogmas of a single sectarian Church...A philosophy for today needs: knowledge of mankind's many paths to God; the compassionate humanity of Christ; His conception of the Father-God; the passion for justice of the Jewish prophets; the vision of life and respect for other religions...found in Hinduism and Buddhism; wise and timeless social precepts in regard to government--such as those of Confucius; the mysticism and sense of cooperation with Nature (of Taoism); the reverence for work; and the adoration of earth and its fruits which mark Zoroastrianism." (p. 76).

Huddleston (1993) advocates that serious consideration of these spiritual or religious

themes will have a powerful impact on the quality of life for all the world's citizens. He summarizes his views with the following statement:

"finding a new vision and an associated new system of values is a vital component of the process of evolving towards a peaceful global society. It is suggested that in searching for such a vision, there should be an objective analysis of what is offered by the religious experience: the source of the great visions of the past" (p. 150).

As important as a global vision may be, it certainly does not exist today. However, we do not need for it to be fully developed before we begin considering some of the basic principles that can provide its foundation. Torrance (1994) proposes that the "spiritual" aspect of humanity "indicates the transcendent potentiality of the unknown....[S]pirit, far from being opposed to the biological (as in the Cartesian dualism of body and mind), is the potentiality of human life--through conscious positing of future goals--for purposeful creation and growth" (p. 54). It is humanity's spirituality that gives each member the ability to consciously transcend his or her biological/physical existence that separates homo sapiens from all other species. Other unique aspects such as language, culture, and abstract symbolic thought are tools to be used in this transcendence. McLean (1994) goes so far as to say that a science of human behavior must be developed that is "grounded in God, with strong convictions in the existence of the divine self and the soul" (p. 161).

It is important that we acknowledge humanity's spiritual nature as we search for ways to reform schooling and education. While most of us recognize that schools are a significant influence on the children that will someday provide leadership for the nation and the world, we are forcing them to be at cross purposes to the influence of the family and religious institutions that are also guiding children's development. Religion (the social institution that focuses on spiritual issues), as well as science and philosophy, have made valuable contributions to an understanding of what it means to be human (Potter, 1994) and should be

welcomed to the discussion of how to prepare young people for the modern (or postmodern) world.

Toynbee (1948) in his twelve-volume review of human history, stated that spiritual teachings provide the seed from which a civilization develops. Educators need to study the principles and values taught by the major world religions and incorporate them into the school curriculum. For example, The Virtues Project is a values education program that has made humankind's spirituality, as defined in the world's religious scriptures, central to its curriculum. When individuals combine understandings derived from science, philosophy and religion with their personal experiences and intuitions they will have a more complete knowledge of the reality of the universe than if any one knowledge system is relied on exclusively.

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